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Abstract: North Korea's hereditary rulers have been under a "death watch" for decades, with many pundits regularly predicting the demise of the "Kim Family Regime." Recent collapse scenarios are predicated on the sudden death of Kim Jong-un, the 32-year-old Supreme Leader, and an ensuing succession struggle ranging from an internal-faction "winner-takes-all" fight to a more chaotic transition where factions clash with assistance from outside powers. Offering China a ballistic missile defense ban on the peninsula might persuade the Chinese to acquiesce to eventual Korean unification and denuclearization.

North Korea's hereditary rulers have been under a "death watch" for almost 30 years, with pundits regularly predicting the demise of the Kim Family Regime. At present, Kim Jong-un, the 32-year-old Supreme Leader (so far without an heir apparent) appears to be effectively consolidating his power through a combination of brutal acts, tentative economic reforms, and beneficent giveaways. He executed his uncle, National Defense Commission Vice Chairman Jang Sung-taek, and 70 other senior officials and generals since assuming power in December 2011.[1] Concomitantly, Kim opened glitzy amusement parks (including a water park, a dolphinarium, and a ski resort) for use by the rising, increasingly affluent entrepreneurial class mainly located in "Pyonghattan" and other privileged enclaves of Pyongyang. These emerging Donju (masters of money) are relatively well-off, a result of leveraging government ties, Chinese connections, and tacit market-based reforms introduced over the last 15 years that permit them to earn private incomes primarily in trade and agriculture.[2]

Internal Collapse

Despite Kim's carefully calibrated moves to cement his rule, the internal collapse of his regime remains possible, plausible, and predictable due to its reliance on a single point of potential failure, namely, the Kim bloodline. Without another male Kim in the wings, Kim's

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1 Zachary Keck, "Revealed: Why Kim Jong-un Executes So Many North Korean Officials," *The National Interest*, July 14, 2015. http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/revealed-why-kim-jong-un-executes-so-many-north-korean-13332.

2 Anna Fifield, "North Korea's One-Percenters Savor Life in 'Pyonghattan'," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 2016, http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-pyonghattan-gentrification-north-korea-20160515-story.html.

sudden assassination or death is likely to precipitate a succession struggle ranging from an internal-faction "winner-takes-all" fight to a more chaotic, uncertain transition where factions clash over time with help from major outside powers.

North Korea's collapse remains a question of "if, not when," chiefly because Kim seems to be in good health despite a persistent weight problem. In addition, roughly one-third of North Koreans appear to be bolstering his regime, mainly in return for food security and other privileges. One-tenth of North Koreans have officially registered cell phones, and another tenth may have unregistered ones.[3] The rest of society constitutes a silent, hard-to-assess majority, increasingly exposed to foreign criticism of its leader, but voicing no opposition as a result of their isolation, deprivation, powerlessness, or imprisonment. The imprisonment of dissidents applies not only to offenders, but often to their extended families—with up to 120,000 currently interned in hard-labor camps.[4] On balance, the Kim Family Regime appears to be ruthless in protecting its survival as the most prominent authoritarian dynasty in the world, except for Cuba's single-generation Castro leadership.

Recent collapse scenarios conjure two potentially interrelated events: first, the sudden death or assassination of Kim Jong-un, and second, the emergence of alternative power centers within the secretive Kim Family clan itself and among key security organizations. These power elites, failing to accommodate each other in North Korea's highly authoritarian system, could clash and break up the brittle, centralized regime. Given this worst-case scenario, the "internal collapse" school anticipates a new territorial partition if internal groups align strongly along diverging Chinese and South Korean/Western interests.[5] The formal demarcation between North and South Korea might then be redrawn north of the Demilitarized Zone, where it has existed since 1953.[6]

Korean Unification

Reunification of, by, and for the long-divided Korean people has been a basic assumption of Korean studies for the last 60 years. It was reaffirmed by North and South Korean leaders at a summit held in Pyongyang in June 2000. At that time, North Korean Leader Kim Jong-il and South Korean President Kim Dae-jung declared:

1. The South and the North agreed to resolve the question of reunification independently and through the joint efforts of the

3 Ju-hee Park, "Unofficial Cell Phones in North Korea," *New Focus*, June 29, 2015, http://newfocusintl.com/unofficial-cell-phones-in-north-korea/.

4 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2015: North Korea*, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/north-korea. On July 6, 2016, the Obama administration froze property or interest in property within US jurisdictions that belongs to Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un and 10 other regime officials. This is the first time the US government has designated specific North Korean officials for their alleged complicity in human-rights abuses.

5 Bruce W. Bennett argues China "could take political control" of much of the North in the event of a regime collapse. See Bruce W. Bennett, "Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse," *Rand Corporation*, 2013, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR300/RR331/RAND_RR331.pdf.

6 Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy formalized the 38th parallel on the Korean peninsula in August 1945 in order to demarcate the areas of US- and Soviet-supervised disarmament of Japanese troops. The United States had previously invited the Soviet Union into Korea to continue the fight against imperial Japan. The 38th parallel roughly determined the 2.5-mile-wide Demilitarized Zone established in 1953.

Korean people, who are the masters of the country.

2. For the achievement of reunification, they agreed there was a common element in the South's concept of a confederation and the North's formula for a loose form of federation. The South and the North agreed to promote reunification in that direction.[7]

Unfortunately, these goals remain vague and aspirational, flying in the face of the long history of foreign influences on the Korean peninsula.[8] To date, few concrete achievements have been recorded that would block the emergence of a new major power rivalry on the Korean peninsula, one that carves out spheres of influence for China and the South Korean/Western alliance. A renewed major power rivalry could lead to a repartition of North Korea, as many of the country's elite seek help from China to carve out a new authoritarian state underpinned by Communist and Worker Party of Korea ideology.

China after a North Korean Collapse

China has many reasons to feel conflicted about Korean unification. Removing North Korean nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula as a result of unification would eliminate a major threat underpinning the US-South Korea-Japan military alliance. Weakening the alliance would, in turn, allay Chinese fears of encirclement by the United States and its allies. In addition, unification would relieve China from supplying the bulk of foreign aid to North Korea since the breakdown in Six-Party Talks in 2009.[9] China might also be tempted to reinvigorate those talks, pursuing both denuclearization and unification, to burnish its status as a senior statesman above regional power-brokering and to draw attention away from its actions in the South and East China Seas.

On the other hand, China has long relied on North Korea as a buffer state to protect its northeastern flank. If the United States were to rebalance its military forces elsewhere in East Asia while enabling a unified Korea to deploy the latest ballistic missile defense system (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense – THAAD), China would be left with fewer offensive options and only Russia as a potential defense partner. On balance, China may have concluded it is better to leave the North Korean card on the table in some form following the possible collapse of the Kim Family franchise. As the Chinese proverb goes, "Kill the chicken to scare the monkeys." In other words, Beijing may have calculated its national security risks are more manageable if Korean unification is sacrificed in order to prevent a resurgent, stronger Korea from joining the United States and other potential adversaries. In light

7 US Institute of Peace, "South-North Joint Declaration," June 15, 2000, http://www.usip.org/publications/peace-agreements-north-korea-south-korea.

8 US-South Korean presidential summits in 2009, 2013, and 2015 reaffirmed the importance of peaceful Korean unification, but produced no new initiatives on how to achieve it. See Sung-Yoon Lee, "Optical Illusion: The US-South Korea Summit," Asia and the Pacific Policy Society, November 11, 2015, http://www.policyforum.net/optical-illusion-the-us-south-korea-summit/ for an overview of the 2015 summit.

9 Six-party talks were initiated in 2003 to pursue dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program in the wake of its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The talks included the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and North and South Korea.

of its "containment" anxiety, China seems likely to frustrate Korean unification efforts if the Kim Family's third generation collapses.[10]

Over the past decade, Chinese analysts of North Korea have emphasized the inability of Beijing to influence or restrain its neighbor, primarily because of Chinese concerns about "destabilizing" the regime and precipitating larger migrant flows into China.[11] The "Middle Kingdom" already has 2.3 million ethnic Koreans, the largest Korean population outside of the two Koreas, according to official South Korean estimates.[12] As argued below in assessing North Korean trade inspections, Beijing's passive line of thinking allows it to go only so far in levying economic sanctions against North Korea, thus helping prop up its nuclear-armed neighbor. Chinese analysts also seem to believe China can do "little to influence" any newly emerging North Korean authoritarian leaders because those leaders would fear for their personal safety, much less their privileged status, in the event of unification. China, therefore, appears to be in denial about the leverage it can, and does, exert on North Korea.

The Tumen River Valley and Below

In a post-Kim North Korea, China seems best able to influence and shape the emerging government of the four North Korean provinces along its border, notably the Tumen River Valley, as well as two mid-located provinces and Pyongyang.[13] China has four major reasons to do so. First, as noted earlier, it has a long-standing national security interest in maintaining a security buffer there. Second, it enjoys widespread economic dominance in the area and remains keen to continue exploiting the region's rich mineral resources. Third, China is likely to seek a controlling economic interest in North Korea's eastern seaports close to Russia; and finally, China may be able to draw on a large number of supportive North Korean officials, military officers, and refugees to help set up a pro-Chinese governmental system in the region. Indeed, Robert Kaplan argues China has already made the political contacts and the infrastructure investments needed to establish a "Tibet-like buffer state in much of North Korea." He opines that any new post-Kim

10 Andrew Scobell and Mark Cozad, "China's North Korea Policy: Rethink or Recharge?" *Parameters* 44 no. 1, (Spring 2014): 51-63. The authors indicate China will stay the course in bolstering the Kim and any follow-on authoritarian regime and call for the United States to persevere in a dialogue with China to avoid "misunderstandings." Exploring their call for "US perseverance," this paper contends South Korea and the United States could offer China a denuclearization-missile defense trade-off that enhances China's security in return for its acquiescence on Korean unification.

11 Eleanor Albert and Beina Xu, *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder: The China-North Korea Relationship*, February 8, 2016, http://www.cfr.org/china/china-north-korea-relationship/p11097).

12 South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Current Status of Overseas Compatriots, 2009.

13 The Chinese may indeed be interested in establishing a new enclave as far south as, and including, Pyongyang. In the trial of South Korean spy Pak Chae-seo in 2010, Pak claimed a Chinese intelligence officer told him about a Chinese contingency plan named "the Chick Plan," referring to North Korea as China's chick. See Nick Miller, "Chinas's War Plans for Pyongyang," *SinoNK*, March 12, 2012, http://sinonk.com/2012/03/10/pla-plans-for-pyongyang/. This alleged plan is based on a new line of demarcation between the towns of Nampo and Wonson, including Pyongyang. Above this line, the Chinese would establish a new security buffer against South Korean and US troops and prevent refugees from entering China. Pak also claimed Chinese investment is not permitted south of this line and People's Liberation Army divisions stationed in Shenyang are trained to execute the Chinese plan across the Yalu River and Tumen River bridges. Bennett, op.cit., adds that China's Northeast Project study, completed in 2007, claims Manchuria and North Korea were "originally Chinese," enhancing the case for Chinese intervention.

authoritarian state will be "less oppressive than the morbid, crushing tyranny it will replace."[14]

South Korea, after soliciting substantial international aid, would be poised to set up a rival system in the southern part of North Korea that could attract most of North Korea's populace. Indeed, North Korea's "voiceless majority"—mainly the relatively malnourished, poor, and deprived—is very likely to migrate closer to South Korea in search of food and medical care. While South Korea may end up controlling a large swath of territory, the costs of pushing further north against regrouping North Korea Army units could prove too high, especially in light of possible Chinese support for an emerging North Korean polity. If this scenario were to play out, the South Korean Assembly Hall would still have seats vacant that have long been reserved for all of North Korea's district representatives.

Talking to China

To help avoid a new major power rivalry unfolding on the Korean peninsula, it is essential for South Korea and its key allies to work out a division of labor with China (and possibly Russia) on key stabilization challenges. Such talks would be difficult to foster, but should be pursued in light of North Korea's fourth nuclear test in January 2016. North Korea remains a dangerous repository of weapons of mass destruction that could be smuggled out to third-world countries and terrorist groups in the chaotic aftermath of a collapse.

After this fourth nuclear test, *The Wall Street Journal* reported the United States had agreed secretly, just prior to the test, to peace-treaty talks with North Korea. In the wake of the test, the United States reportedly walked away from its commitment.[15] The State Department corrected this press report, noting North Korea had reached out to the United States on peace-treaty talks before the test. At that time, the United States rejected talks because North Korea would not agree to the peace talks taking place in tandem with denuclearization talks.[16]

This State Department response is striking as it indicates the United States had relinquished its long-held position that denuclearization talks should precede peace-treaty talks. China had long urged the United States to do this, and apparently, the United States has shown the flexibility the Chinese sought. The United States seems ready to engage in peace talks with North Korea, if those negotiations include a denuclearization component.

The United States may have shown this flexibility in return for China's support for United Nations economic sanctions levied against North Korea's weapons programs. In addition, South Korea might also have temporarily backpedaled on the proposed US introduction of a

14 Robert D. Kaplan, "When North Korea Falls," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2006.

15 Alastair Gale. and Carol E. Lee, "US Agreed to North Korea Peace Talks Before Latest Nuclear Test," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-agreed-to-north-korea-peace-talks-1456076019 and http://www.marketwatch.com/story/us-north-korea-had-agreed-to-secret-peace-talks-before-nuke-test-2016-02-21.

16 Elizabeth Philipp, "China Backs Peace Talks for North Korea," Arms Control Association, March 29, 2016, https://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2016_04/News/China-Backs-Peace-Talks-for-North-Korea.

new missile defense system into South Korea.[17] If the United States and South Korea were to renounce their current plans to introduce THAAD on the peninsula, this proposal might entice China to support a leading South Korean role in Korean reunification.

The THAAD trade-off may prove unworkable for South Korea over time, however, if it increasingly believes Chinese ballistic missiles seriously threaten its national security. Moreover, Beijing might conclude a Korean commitment to forego major defensive missile investments will not stand for long. Could the prohibition of defensive missile systems be negotiable in the context of a truly denuclearized Korean peninsula? The United States may also need to renounce its military role above the 38th parallel in return for China not crossing the Yalu River.[18] On balance, this proposal, coupled with the THAAD trade-off, might provide the Chinese with enough security assurance to risk the resurgence of a unified Korea. Beijing's role, either positive or negative, appears to be crucial for a more secure northeast Asia.

US and South Korean talks with China can be pursued through a series of consultations held within existing bilateral diplomatic exchanges or via multi-national deliberations under a Six-Party-Talks-like framework.[19] These talks should be held before any collapse, but remain a long shot with the Kim Family Regime still going strong, and are more likely to unfold with emerging North Korean leaders after a collapse. The Korean focus group will need to stand up a sub-group immediately tasked with sharing critically needed information on the evolving attitudes and dispositions of North Korea's security apparatus and the country's formidable standing army and related organizations.[20]

Key Stabilization Tasks

A leadership succession crisis, engendering widespread social instability, will almost certainly lead to a single Korean federation or another two-state solution. The execution of key stabilization tasks will set the stage for the eventual outcome. What should an international focus group pursue with the North Korean authorities who will quickly emerge after a collapse? What are the key stabilization challenges that could arise in

17 On July 8, 2016, the South Korean Defense Ministry announced it would deploy THAAD by the end of 2017 and complete site selection soon. While the South Korean side stressed THAAD would be focused solely on the North Korean missile threat, China immediately urged South Korea and the United States to halt deployment, arguing it would destabilize the regional security balance without achieving "anything to end North Korea's nuclear program." See Reuters, "South Korea, the US to Deploy THAAD Missile Defense, Drawing China Rebuke," July 8, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-thaad-idUSKCN0ZO084.

18 Even if the United States and China were to renounce any major military intervention, they may still agree to joint operations to secure North Korea's weapons of mass destruction, as discussed below in this article.

19 Bennett, op. cit., argues China would have a strong preference for talks within the United Nations Security Council, seeking UN authorization for any foreign troops dispatched to North Korea in the event of instability. He acknowledges, however, that a UN Security Council Resolution would "take time" and China would probably intervene first if North Korean instability unfolds rapidly and the international community did not react.

20 China is already preparing for this, according to a reported Chinese People's Liberation Army contingency plan published by the *Kyodo News* in May 2014. See Shannon Tiezzi, "Does China Have A Contingency Plan for North Korea," *The Diplomat*, May 7, 2014, http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/does-china-have-a-contingency-plan-for-north-korea/.

security, humanitarian assistance, justice, economic infrastructure, and governance?[21] Key tasks in order of priority are discussed below.

Near-Term Priorities (Undertaken Immediately)

Weapons of Mass Destruction Control – Identifying the highest priority task, analysts are unanimous in calling for securing North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as soon as possible. Some analysts assume US Special Forces should play a "significant" role in searching for North Korea's nuclear and biological-chemical weapons.[22] A Special Forces mission would entail "teaming up" with South Korean experts as well as friendly North Korean Army units possessing the weapons who could be under siege by other North Korean Army units.[23]

When confronting WMD issues, it is not safe to assume the United States and South Korea would be first on the scene or best situated to gain control of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction. China is likely to be in first contact for two reasons. Most of North Korea's weapons fabrication and storage facilities appear to be closer to China, and the responsible North Korean military units would be more disposed to Chinese influence than that of South Korea, the United States, Russia, and, most certainly, Japan. China's natural lead on this task, if correct, clearly puts it in the driver's seat in terms of whether denuclearization can be achieved.[24]

Beijing's role in demobilizing and disposing of weapons of mass destruction, even if agreed upon, could still be carried out ambiguously in order to preserve China's options to promote a North Korean polity. Chinese hesitation or refusal to help disarm North Korean Army units may be easily obscured by the fog of instability rolling in after the collapse of the North Korean regime. Will China persuade North Korean units to account for their weapons caches, much less surrender them? China's response to this task will, in turn, shape the conditions for either setting up a new buffer state or reunifying Korea.

Since both geography and political links appear to put China at point on this stabilization task, multi-party talks with Beijing should seek agreement on the rules of engagement with North Korean Army units in the event of a Kim collapse, the procedures for reporting and securing the weapons, and the verification of their final disposition. In this regard, China may actually prefer to work with the United States rather than risk South Korea "inheriting" North Korea's weapons.[25] Ultimately, all parties should commit to implementing a denuclearized

21 Bennett, op. cit., leads the way in thinking about stabilization tasks. Please refer to his monograph for an alternative assessment of these tasks.

22 South Korean officials and journalists have periodically expressed sensitivity that US Special Forces planning not restrict South Korean sovereignty, that is, the United States not "take command" of securing weapons of mass destruction and other installations in North Korea. See GlobalSecurity.org, "OPLAN 5027 Major Theater War - West," http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan-5027.htm.

23 WMD units may be the most ideologically aligned with the Kim regime, but many analysts view their loyalty as variable. See Michael O'Hanlon, "North Korea Collapse Scenarios," *Brookings East Asia Commentary, No. 30*, June 2009, http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2009/06/north-korea-ohanlon.

24 Bennett, op. cit., adds that any US effort to reach WMD facilities north of Pyongyang would force China to secure these sites "before the United States. can reach them."

25 Bilateral disarmament talks with the United States might hold more allure for China, but, once public, would alienate South Korea.

Korean peninsula, a long-standing goal of the international community. However, other parties simply do not know whether China would help to carry out this key task or support other parties in doing so.

Humanitarian Aid – North Korea's collapse will confront the international community with the world's greatest humanitarian disaster, due to the populace's malnutrition and lack of medical care. South Korea has the responsibility here as the putative leader and well-off sibling of its poorer northern neighbor. Further increasing the stakes, South Korea's initial effectiveness in providing relief will likely be decisive in shaping North Korean perceptions of a transitional government.

North Korea cannot adequately feed its estimated total population of 25 million people. In 2013, more than 84 percent of the households across North Korea were described as borderline or poor in terms of food consumption. A third of North Korean children under five evince substandard growth, particularly in rural areas. Chronic diarrhea is the leading cause of infant death due to inadequate sanitation. Shipments of food, medicine, and potable water will demand a large-scale logistics plan and significant contributions.[26] The size of the North Korean demand for aid indicates South Korea will need considerable help from the international community.

Displaced Population Camps – In the midst of a post-collapse environment that frees up travel, North Korea's most vulnerable populations are likely to migrate south where they will expect to find badly needed food and medical aid, housing, and education services. Most North Koreans would literally vote with their feet on for a new transitional government if they migrated closer to South Korea, whose ability to provide temporary housing will set the stage for the future of a unified Korea. The rapid installation of displaced population camps would become an urgent priority, calling for hard structures in the event migrations begin in the fall or winter.

South Korea and the international community may wish to tap humanitarian aid organizations (as well as divided families) to put a human face on first-contact groups with the North Korean side, as the community proceeds into North Korea and approaches Pyongyang. Regardless of the basic unmet needs of the North Korean people, some North Korean Army units may resist South Korean or Western soldiers providing security to humanitarian workers, while other units may opt to cooperate (hence the need for withdrawal or integration procedures discussed below).

Peacekeeping and Demobilization – To ensure freedom of movement for international-relief operations, multi-party talks must reach quick agreement on the disarmament, integration, and/or relocation of artillery, missile, and armored units close to the border with South Korea. This task represents a complex challenge in demobilization and transformation, possibly entailing the initial withdrawal of many North Korean units rather than their disarmament. Withdrawal agreements may be the only way to avoid possible conflict between South and North Korean forces, which would then open the way for swifter cross-border

26 Agence France Presse, "Widespread Malnutrition Still the Norm in North Korea Despite Increase in Food Production," *Business Insider*, November 28, 2013, http://www.businessinsider.com/north-korea-malnutrition-food-production-2013-11.

access to vulnerable segments of North Korean society. As important, North Korean units that choose to support demining operations along the border would make a significant contribution to good will and unification.

Over time, a number of North Korean conflict groups could emerge to seize financial assets, armories, supply depots, and ports. Multi-party talks will need to carve out areas of responsibility for the international security actors involved to isolate and disarm malign North Korean Army units or relocate them to other areas. The multi-party group will also need to develop coordination procedures for separating conflict groups and conducting peacekeeping and related policing actions undertaken by multinational forces.

Export/Import Inspections and Human Trafficking – In the immediate aftermath of a collapse, international actors will need to maintain and tighten vigilance on North Korean export shipments and channels for human trafficking. Export shipments may contain nuclear materials or financial assets that rogue elements are seeking to remove from the country, while human trafficking is likely to step up. Imports will need to be inspected to interdict weapons shipments slated for conflict groups and criminal gangs.

United Nations Security Council economic sanctions levied against North Korean weapons programs in March 2016 are not a substitute for a more robust inspection regime at North Korea's border points and ports. Until a reliable Korean border authority is in place, however, any cargo to and from North Korea will need to be inspected by UN members outside of the country.[27] Beijing helped draft the UN sanctions guidelines and is publicly committed to their vigorous enforcement. China accounts for more than 70 percent of North Korea's total trade volume. Unfortunately, China's border area abutting North Korea is home to burgeoning communities of smugglers who believe their business is now better than ever as North Koreans are compelled to move more goods through their illicit networks.[28] A post-collapse environment will only aggravate this situation.

As a result, official Chinese support for inspections remains crucial. China's current support of UN Security Council economic sanctions against North Korea do not portend a widening break in Sino-North Korean trade relations. The sanctions permit Beijing considerable discretion in how much pressure to apply against its neighbor. China could quickly take its foot off the sanctions brake if it, inter alia, assesses the United States will go ahead with the installation of a new missile-defense technology in South Korea and elsewhere over the near term. Beijing can explain its volte-face by reasserting its prior claim that sanctions are ineffective in deterring North Korean weapons programs while deepening the tribulations of the long-suffering North Korean people.

Rule of Law and Police – Long before any formal ratification of an inter-Korean justice system (preferably under a unified constitutional arrangement), new North Korean leaders will need to consider a

27 Under the current sanctions regime, UN members are also banned from purchasing North Korean coal and minerals if any profit might go to weapons programs.

28 Matt Rivers, "North Korea Sanctions: Is China Enforcing Them?" CNN, March 31, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/31/asia/china-north-korea-border-dandong/.

partnership with international policing units to enforce order. As these talks unfold with emerging North Korean leaders, South Korea and the United States will have a strong interest in promoting a law-enforcement partnership that is consistent with the principle of a unified Korea. Ideally, North Korean and South Korean police officers should assume the lion's share of enforcement work, with more specialized international teams brought in to advise border posts and ports in interdicting the shipment of weapons and other contraband. At the outset of these policing operations, the Chinese intent to either support or oppose an inter-Korean policing operation is likely to be determinative, at least in the northern half of North Korea. If Beijing does not recognize or permit South Korean police officers to strengthen North Korean law-enforcement bodies near the Chinese border, other international parties will be put on notice that China intends to promote a separate North Korean polity.

North Korean officials and troops involved in running the Kim Family Regime's notorious internment camps—jailing up to one percent of North Korea's population—are likely to abandon these camps in the wake of a collapse. These internal security groups may seek sanctuary or anonymity to avoid possible public retaliation against them or Korean-style Nuremberg trials. Unsurprisingly, many of these camp overseers and enforcers could be reabsorbed into other North Korean security or military units and reconstituted as hard-core resistance elements opposing Korean unification. The effective demobilization and reintegration of these and other North Korean security organizations into a transitional system may partly depend upon foregoing trials for "crimes against humanity" in favor of "truth and reconciliation" hearings.[29] These hearings would require only public attestation of internment practices, rather than entail any judicial punishments, as long as camp prisoners were not killed.

Medium-Term Priorities (Undertaken in First Three Years)

Governance – Reunification, pursued in the wake of the decapitation of the Kim Family leader, has daunting odds stacked against it. Diverse segments of North Korean society, not to mention China, may reject the mutual benefits of what they perceive to be a South Korean-dominated political system. In this light, South Korea and the United States should consider advocating the establishment of dual North-South parliaments with a suggested timetable for gradual federation under a single chief executive within three to five years. The United States and South Korea should avoid advocating the rapid introduction of a powerful chief executive-led system as it resembles the Kim Family past, disregards North Korean sensitivities about domination, and could retard reconciliation efforts.[30] A powerful chief-executive system

29 David Smith et al., "Special Report: Truth, Justice and Reconciliation," *The Guardian*, June 24, 2014 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/24/truth-justice-reconciliation-civil-war-conflict.

30 John Feffer, "Korean Reunification: The View from the North," *The Huffington Post*, June 17, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feffer/korean-reunification-the_b_7597430.html. Feffer reports 34 out of 100 North Korean respondents—working or visiting in China—favored the South Korean system, 26 a hybrid system, and 24 did not care which system the unified country adopted. Incidentally, only seven percent thought reunification would follow a North Korean regime collapse, although 95 percent believed it was necessary for economic reasons.

might also impede bottom-up efforts to instill greater transparency and accountability in North Korean political and economic life.

Once convened with emerging North Korean leaders (likely to include North Korean Army senior officers), the transitional governmental system's first order of business calls for decisions on how to certify elections, recognize North Korean representatives, and ratify a "unified" Korean constitutional arrangement under which criminal and civil law can be enforced. It is ironic to propose launching this process with North Korean representatives that will not be elected and may indeed be guilty of crimes against their own people. However, failing to include such leaders (or to extend provisional amnesty to them) is likely to set back the governance task, since these leaders would then be free to work against the system rather than be co-opted within it.

Immigration Policies – Unlike the Berlin Wall, the Demilitarized Zone will not come down overnight because of the difficulty in extricating North Korean Army units stationed nearby and the number of migrants that could flood over the border to an unprepared South Korea. Over the medium term, South Korea will need to resolve the thorny issue of how to offer interested North Koreans the opportunity to relocate and reside permanently in South Korea. (China is likely to remain relatively closed to Korean immigration.) Many divided families may be quickly reunited in South Korea based on previous government-sponsored contacts. However, the great majority of North Koreans will require considerable long-term investments in housing, medical care, and job retraining.

At present, many South Koreans remain wary of North Koreans, widely seen as deprived and isolated, and uncertain about South Korea's financial ability to fund "Korean reunification." Indeed, South Korea's younger generation—especially those born after North Korean leader Kim il-Sung's death in 1994—believe reunification, while necessary in the long term, cannot be accomplished in the near future. "The South Korean economy would be unable to support the North Korean economy."[31] This view has become even more entrenched in the past three years due to rising unemployment among young South Koreans.[32]

Security Sector Reform – Security sector reform in North Korea means downsizing its bloated army—more than double the size of South Korea's army. A new transitional governmental system will need to transform the world's fourth-largest standing army, numbering about one million (and 7.7 million reservists).[33] Over the first one to three years, this army could be employed in a new National Service Corps, helping to improve basic infrastructure, housing, and health services for the North Korean populace. In this way, soldiers could be constructively engaged while continuing to support themselves and their families.

31 Tom Phillips, "Costly and Complicated – Why Many Koreans Can't Face Reunification," *The Guardian*, October 9, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/09/why-many-koreans-cant-face-reunification.

32 Avaneesh Pandey, "South Korea's Unemployment Rate Jumps to 6-Year High of 4.1%" *International Business Times*, March 16, 2016, http://www.ibtimes.com/south-koreas-unemployment-rate-jumps-6-year-high-41-2337301. The data revealed youth unemployment (for those between 15 and 29 years of age) stood at 12.5 percent in February 2016, the highest on record; and the number of unemployed college graduates surged 19.2 percent over the year.

33 See Global Security.Org's website for the latest military statistics, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/armies.htm.

Without a livelihood or income, these soldiers are likely to present a serious security or crime issue.

Over the longer term, converting North Korea's warriors into productive citizens will require greater economic development. With the North Korean security apparatus no longer soaking up to one third of the country's gross domestic product, those finances could be diverted to more productive uses. Former military personnel may also band together to form private companies, as in similar countries with relatively large standing armies. Since this task is linked to uncertain trends in economic growth and reorganization over the medium term, it appears to be one of the most interdependent stabilization tasks facing a unified Korea. Bridges to a more prosperous future must first be built, as discussed next.

Long-Term Priority (Persisting Beyond Three Years)

Economic Development – North Korea's population suffers from chronic food shortages, but the country is rich in mineral resources. In a post-collapse environment, many countries, likely led by South Korea, would rush to compete with Chinese firms in developing these resources, which include zinc, gold, copper, iron, coal, graphite, tungsten, and magnesium.[34] In late 2013, an Australian geologist claimed North Korea possesses the largest rare-earth oxide deposits in the world.[35] Rare-earth elements are used in key technologies ranging from cell phones to guided-missile systems.

These deposits, if they exist, are extremely attractive. Beijing currently controls about 90 percent of the world supply of strategic metals and has demonstrated its willingness to ban exports for political reasons.[36] Foreign investment in North Korea could break China's hold on this market. North Korea might have more than six times the amount of rare-earth elements as does China, and could be brought online relatively quickly after improving basic infrastructure.

Despite the overwhelming need to diversify rare-earth sources, international investors should not press quickly for foreign leases to exploit these and other resources. Foreign investment in infrastructure coupled with stronger environmental protection regulations are first needed to guard against the potential for environmental pollution and degradation. Regulatory efforts should be spearheaded by transitional governmental bodies, with the support of the World Bank and other international financial institutions. These cooperative efforts are essential to sustain long-term mining operations and to dampen local fears of North Korea's foreign exploitation. If these efforts are not shortchanged, the resulting regulatory and infrastructure improvements

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34 Dexter Roberts, "North Korea, New Land of Opportunity," Bloomberg Business News, January 19, 2012, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-01-19/north-korea-new-land-of-opportunity.

35 Frik Els, "Largest Known Rare-Earth Deposit Discovered in North Korea," Mining.Com, December 5, 2013, http://www.mining.com/largest-known-rare-earth-deposit-discovered-in-north-korea-86139/. South Korean analysts subsequently pointed out this claim is not supported by any meaningful data.

36 China banned rare-earth shipments as a result of a Japanese seizure of a Chinese fishing vessel in disputed East China Sea waters in September 2010. See Keith Bradsher, "Amid Tension, China Blocks Vital Exports to Japan," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/23/business/global/23rare.html?_r=0.

should garner more North Korean buy-in for expanded mining operations and help generate stronger foreign exchange revenues.

Cultural Assimilation – Even if China is supportive of a "reunified Korea" and international donors assist South Korea in funding the huge welfare, educational, and medical needs of the North Korean people, that population will still require one or two generations to assimilate fully into a unified Korean culture that accepts them with greater trust, inclusiveness, and acceptance.[37] A large majority of South Koreans currently believe significant socio-economic and cultural chasms separate the two Koreas. These gaps are found in election practices, legal systems, dialect, standard of living, way of life, and sense of values. North Koreans may be just as aware of these cultural differences.

A Seoul National University scholar concludes increased exchanges and visits between North and South Korea "do not guarantee mitigation of political, economic, and cultural differences. In fact, more exchanges could possibly cause more troubles."[38] Problems could include North Korean unrest over its perceived unmet needs and much-lower income levels. On the South Korean side, labor union and youth protests could spring from the perception South Korea's economic development and social safety net are being compromised by the relatively high costs of North Korean assistance.

In light of these cultural differences and risks, North-South assimilation will require gradual inter-generational changes over time. Perhaps, the growing recognition that a unified Korea will exhibit greater economic strength as a result of wedding the North and South's comparative advantages (in mineral resources and technological advancement, respectively) will help to facilitate cultural assimilation. In other words, North-South cultural convergence should increasingly be underpinned by the peninsula's stronger, self-sustaining economic growth.[39]

Conclusion

Harking back to his grandfather's party-centric doctrine and marking a milestone in his own consolidation of power, Kim Jong-un presided over the seventh congress of the Worker's Party of Korea in Pyongyang in May 2016. This congress was last held in 1980 under his grandfather. At that time, 118 countries attended the congress; this time, none were invited. Foreign press were welcomed, but only allowed in the hall when the North Korean leadership convened to confirm Kim as Party Chairman. One analyst speculated foreign journalists were permitted into the hall only to serve as a human shield in the event of an improbable South Korean or US missile attack.[40] Kim made a point of denying

37 Phillips, op. cit.

38 Kim Philo and Choi Kyong-hui, "Comparative Analysis of the Views of North and South Koreans on Unification," Korea Focus, October 2012, http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/96058773/comparative-analysis-views-north-south-koreans-unification.

39 Some scholars prefer to compare Korean to Vietnamese unification since both cases involve large income differences between North and South. See William H. Thornton, *Fire on the Rim: The Cultural Dynamics of East/West Power Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 161.

40 UK Ambassador John Everard, "Parsing Kim Jong-un's Party," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, June 2, 2016, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspz?aid=3019447.

the first use of nuclear weapons unless North Korea's sovereignty was threatened "by invasive hostile forces with nuclear weapons."[41]

Contrasting jarringly with the 1980 congress, the Chinese Communist Party's message of congratulations to the 2016 congress—released by the (North) Korean Central News Agency—was very short, did not mention Kim Jong-un by name, and carried no Chinese party official's signature.[42] Presumably, China was signaling its concern with Kim's fourth nuclear test and trying to distance itself, if not discourage Kim from conducting a fifth test. It is looking ahead to the risk of an East Asian nuclear-arms race provoked by North Korea's weapons development. Beijing apparently fears South Korea, Japan, and other neighbors might pursue nuclear weapons programs, possibly first developing shorter-range missiles under both the US strategic umbrella and enhanced missile-defense systems.

More revealing, China—keeping pace with US and South Korean planning processes—has reportedly drawn up a new contingency plan in the event of possible North Korean upheaval.[43] [44] In May 2014, the Japanese *Kyodo News* published "leaked People's Liberation Army Plans" to deal with upheaval caused by, inter alia, "an attack by foreign forces" on the "country next door with the hereditary system." The plan highlights the need for greater surveillance along the Chinese border, calling for "reconnaissance groups" to observe the situation, "investigation groups" to question those entering China, "blockage" groups to prevent the entry of malign actors, and armed groups to "defend against hostile powers." The plan anticipates key North Korean figures may attempt to regroup inside China. These figures must be protected from "assassination attempts" while ensuring they cannot command any military activity or join "other forces within China."[45]

In light of Beijing's concerns about North Korean upheaval and a regional arms race, it may now be a good time for South Korea and the United States to propose a new multi-party dialogue with China on post-crisis stabilization measures that all parties can recognize as mutually beneficial.[46] In particular, US- and South Korean-led initiatives to pursue denuclearization with China risk little—and may make major headway in spurring greater information sharing and cooperation if a ballistic missile defense trade-off is offered to the Chinese. China likely calculates that multi-party talks, once grasped by the North Korean side, risk provoking hostile acts against South Korea that would require pro-

41 Euan McKirdy, "Kim Jong-un: We'll Only Use Nuclear Weapons if Sovereignty Threatened," CNN, May 8, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/07/asia/north-korea-nuclear-use-sovereignty/.

42 Everard, op. cit.

43 In August 1999, the United States acknowledged its military planning for North Korea. Then US Forces Korea Commander, General John H. Tilelli Jr., noted "it would be unusual if we didn't have (a plan)." See GlobalSecurity.org, "OPLAN 5027 Major Theater War - West," http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan-5027.htm.

44 China has reportedly drawn up earlier versions. In the trial of South Korean spy Pak Chae-seo in 2010, Pak claimed a Chinese intelligence officer told him about a Chinese contingency plan named "the Chick Plan" (referring to North Korea as China's chick). See Miller, "Chinas's War Plans for Pyongyang," http://sinonk.com/2012/03/10/pla-plans-for-pyongyang/.

45 Justin McCurry and Tania Branigan, "China Denies Making Preparations for Collapse of North Korea Regime," *The Guardian*, May 6, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/06/china-denies-preparations-collapse-north-korea.

46 Indeed, most Korean studies experts have consistently called for South Korea and the United States to seize every opportunity to share perspectives with China on a potential North Korean collapse.

portionate responses. Over time, however, the talks might nudge North Korea's Supreme Leader into taking positive steps on denuclearization that could break his country's increasing isolation.

Whether brought on by a sudden regime decapitation, a serious pandemic, or a nuclear accident, North Korea's collapse demands multi-party attention in light of the WMD stakes involved, the array of daunting tasks requiring urgent attention, and the overriding need to foster greater international cooperation. North Korea's hereditary ruler will see such talks as undermining his stature. But, heading the only 21st-century authoritarian dynasty, the North Korean leader should realize he sets up far more serious challenges for the world in the event of his demise. Addressing these challenges will hinge on constructive engagement with Chinese and emerging North Korean leaders.

Addressing the Chinese side, South Korea and the United States will need to offer hard transactional trade-offs that provide adequate security assurances to China in return for its acquiescence on unification. For emerging North Korean leaders, the socio-economic weight of South Korean and international aid, coupled with co-equal integration, may be enough to bring in most, if not all of North Korea.

Let us try to persuade these power-holders to turn away from North Korea's unproductive WMD stockpile, stark deprivation, and worsening isolation—and begin to unify Korea and build a more peaceful northeast Asia.