NUCLEAR ENDGAME
THE NEED FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH NORTH KOREA
Nuclear Endgame: The Need for Engagement with North Korea

Jacques L. Fuqua, Jr.

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Jacques L. Fuqua, Jr.
To my wife, Yoshimi, who has been to me like water for a growing tree. And my daughters, Sakura and Miyako, who have served as the source for much of my inspiration in life, so they might know anything is possible.
“I am the object of criticism around the world. But I think that since I am being discussed, then I am on the right track.”

—Kim Jong Il
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Preface

goraee saum ae saewoodung tuhjinda
—In a fight between whales, the back of a shrimp bursts

North Korea remains the enigmatic geopolitical player it has been since its inception in 1948. It continues to threaten regional peace and stability; presents a growing global threat through its propensity to proliferate nuclear weapons technology; and displays behavior that runs counter to accepted international norms. Yet after nearly sixty years of grappling with it, the international community is no closer to solving the North Korea puzzle. The purpose of this book is to provide policy recommendations for the United States and its regional allies to pursue in resolving the nuclear issue, but is premised on a set of assumptions differing from those presently in vogue: (1) that the nuclear issue is not a stand-alone issue and resolution will require a comprehensive approach; (2) because of this, more than just the usual formula of seeking international isolation, imposing economic sanctions and extending promise of economic benefits in exchange for nuclear dismantlement will be required; (3) that no resolution can be achieved without some fundamental understanding of the ideological underpinnings and historical events and relationships that have gone into constructing North Korea’s perceptual framework of the geopolitical landscape in which it exists; and (4) that constructively engaging the regime, based on the preceding assumptions, is not tantamount to capitulating to the enemy, rather it forms
the basis for strategically maneuvering the United States and its allies into a position of advantage over the regime, which they presently do not enjoy.

This book is divided into two main sections. The first section focuses on the ideological and historical foundations of the North Korean regime, treating the development and importance of the *Juche* ideology; the role of the United States and former Soviet Union in creating a divided peninsula; the regime’s historical relationships with China, South Korea and the former Soviet Union; its foreign policy and economic imperatives throughout the last half of the twentieth century; and how these coalesce to mitigate against the success of current U.S. efforts to dismantle the regime’s nuclear program. The second section examines the composition of the present North Korean threat: its nuclear, biological, and chemical arsenals; why armed conflict or forced regime change are not viable solutions to the current crisis; and why a comprehensive and aggressive economic strategy offers the best chance for achieving denuclearization in North Korea.

In completing this work, I owe a great debt to a number of colleagues who reviewed drafts of this manuscript and helped to identify areas needing improvement in order to increase its utility: Ambassador Thomas Hubbard, former U.S. ambassador to South Korea; Professor Michael Chambers, Chair of the Political Science department at Indiana State University and associate professor of international relations and comparative and Asian politics; Colonel Mark Franklin, U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer (Northeast Asia); and Mr. John Frank, history teacher at Center Grove High School in Greenwood, IN, and recipient of the 2004 Indiana Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Teaching of History. A special thanks to Mrs. Barbara Fuqua, a taskmaster of the English language, who patiently read through several drafts of this manuscript.
Abbreviations

AES  Asymmetric Economic Statecraft
ARF  ASEAN Regional Forum
CBM  Confidence Building Measures
CCP  Chinese Communist Party
CCPSU Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CVID Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement
DAP Denuclearization Action Plan
DMZ Demilitarized Zone
DPRK Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU  European Union
FAO Foreign Area Officer
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GNP  Gross National Product
HEU Highly Enriched Uranium
IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency
IED Improvised Explosive Devices
ILSA Iran-Libya Sanctions Act
JANIS Joint Army-Navy Intelligence Study on Korea
JETRO Japan External Trade Organization
KEDO Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
KWP Korean Workers' Party
LWR Light Water Nuclear Reactors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>Nuclear, Biological and Chemical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKWP</td>
<td>North Korean Workers’ Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPT</td>
<td>Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPCNK</td>
<td>Provisional People’s Committee for North Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Proliferation Security Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEZ</td>
<td>Special Economic Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>SKIG</td>
<td>South Korean Interim Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKWP</td>
<td>South Korean Workers’ Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>Special Operations Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOTW</td>
<td>Solutions Other than War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTCOK</td>
<td>United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMD</td>
<td>Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPK</td>
<td>Workers’ Party of Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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Introduction

U.S. strategy for resolving North Korea’s nuclear weapons issue is in need of a paradigmatic shift. The Bush administration’s approach over the past six years, on the whole, has proven ineffective for two important reasons. First is the administration’s tendency to compartmentalize components of the issue. While it is true that the most immediate threat posed by the regime is through its nuclear weapons program and thus merits attention, the North Korean issue will not be solved through myopic focus on its nuclear program because it is only one piece of a larger whole. What is needed is a comprehensive, long-term and forward-thinking policy that weans North Korea off of its dependence on nuclear weapons as a geopolitical tool. What is meant by “comprehensive” is a strategy that recognizes North Korean nuclear weapons as only symptomatic of a much larger problem that must first be addressed if any resolution is to be achieved. Second has been the lack of clarity with regard to administration strategy and goals; there is little to distinguish one from the other. Complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of the regime’s nuclear weapons program has served, for six years, as the cornerstone of the administration’s strategy on North Korea. While CVID is viable as a goal, it is not a strategy. It defines a desired end state, not the means for attaining it. Without a clear vision on how best to move forward and to resolve the issue, the administration will likely wind up spending eight years grappling with the North Korean regime and have little to show for it. This, despite the recently concluded Denuclearization Action Plan (DAP), reached within the Six Party Talks
venue in February 2007. Although the DAP and the process undertaken to successfully conclude it is an improvement over the administration’s previous efforts, it still suffers from a myopic approach to the North Korean nuclear issue, a key characteristic of which is a lack of comprehensiveness. This topic is more fully addressed in the following chapter.

Since its inception in 1948, much has been written about the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, hereinafter referred to as North Korea: from thoughtful analyses rendered by security experts to less insightful and perhaps emotive pontifications and characterizations—axis of evil and outpost of tyranny come immediately to mind. Despite the nearly six-decadelong voluminous treatment of the topic, the world is appreciably no closer to solving the enigma of North Korea than it was when the peninsula was initially divided in the immediate aftermath of WWII. The possible exception to this is the Republic of Korea, hereinafter referred to as South Korea, a point to which I’ll return in later chapters. Current events underscore this point. In September 2005 the United States and other members of the Six Party Talks (hereinafter also referred to as the Talks) thought they had reached agreement with North Korea on important dismantlement modalities of its nuclear weapons program. Within only 24 hours, however, differences emerged between the respective U.S. and North Korean positions with regard to the timing of events contained within the agreement. The United States wanted dismantlement activities to precede any discussion of possible provision of light water nuclear reactors. The North Koreans, on the other hand, were more interested in discussing the reactors. Similarly, on July 4, 2006, the world witnessed the launch of seven North Korean missiles, to include the Taepodong-2 missile, much touted by U.S. administration officials as a potential threat to U.S. sovereign territory.¹ This, despite U.S. administration admonishment that test firing the Taepodong-2 would be viewed as a “provocative act.”

U.S. policy toward both halves of the Korean peninsula has undergone a fundamental shift since 2001, exacerbated by the events of 9/11, which has neither served well U.S. interests on the peninsula nor in the region. Luke-warm at best to former President Kim Dae-jung’s (1998–2003) Sunshine Policy and distancing itself from Clinton-era engagement policies with the North, the Bush administration crafted a policy centered nearly exclusively on nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, which manifested itself in the incessant demand for CVID of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. It has, unfortunately, been devoid of any substantive means for achieving this goal save reliance on Cold War era containment policies, which will be referred to in the aggregate as the Bush doctrine.² (It should be noted that both South Korea and China have in the past questioned the viability of such an approach, which they see as the desired end state, but not as the means to an end.) This sort of approach forces one to focus solely on manifest behaviors and consequently overlook potential opportunities to turn the situation
to U.S. advantage. Missing is a fundamental understanding of “why” the North Korean regime undertakes such seemingly rash behavior (beyond the rather trite rationale of “they are evil”). Such understanding lies at the heart of innovative and constructive policy development that potentially moves North Korea in a more desirable direction. CVID as a goal is both sound and necessary for the maintenance of regional stability in Asia. Use of Cold War era containment policies, a basic lack of understanding of our North Korean adversary, and confusing policy with goals, however, have undermined any potential progress toward CVID, subjects discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

Events of 9/11 steered U.S.-North Korean policy more definitively in the direction of the global war on terror and by the time of President Bush’s State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, North Korea had been inducted into the now infamous axis of evil. Attendant to this designation was a better defined hard-line approach to negotiations with all three nations of the axis, at the center of which emerged a greater disdain for substantive discussion with what were perceived to be rogue nations. Rather, “negotiations” came to be couched in terms of “demands” for acquiescence.

Arguing the merits or shortfalls of the Bush administration’s pursuit of the global war on terror and its degree of success is beyond the scope of this book. That there exists the possibility it has diverted the administration’s attention away from the North Korean nuclear issue and impacted its efforts at achieving nonproliferation of WMD is, however, an important consideration. A reasonably cogent argument might be made that North Korea’s nuclear capability has in fact improved under the Bush administration, thus throwing into question the soundness of its policy pursuits to date. Consider, for example, the following sequence of events. In December 2002 the regime expelled International Atomic Energy Agency personnel assigned to monitor activity at North Korea’s nuclear reactors, in part a response to the cessation of heavy fuel oil shipments provided under the Agreed Framework; it reopened a nuclear facility at which were stored 8,000 spent plutonium fuel rods with an estimated yield of five nuclear weapons; it withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in January 2003; in July 2006 North Korea launched seven missiles despite U.S. demands that it refrain from doing so; and in October 2006 the regime detonated a nuclear test device. All this occurred in the face of unwavering demands for CVID and the broader Bush doctrine. This mode of engagement simply has not worked.

Other shifts in U.S. policy have taken place along with its emphasis on CVID, the cumulative effect of which has changed the tenor of the Six Party negotiations with the North and significantly impacted the U.S. role in those negotiations. First is the “Sino-fication” of the negotiation process. By this I mean the present U.S. tendency toward strong reliance, or some might argue overreliance, on China to induce North Korea to participate in the Talks and comport itself more in line with international norms, essentially ceding the
U.S. leadership role, in part, to China. Second, has been the U.S. willingness to allow itself and South Korea to take increasingly divergent paths on the North Korea issue—the United States pursuing a more hard-line approach while South Korea seeks broader engagement as a means of persuading the regime to give up pursuit of its nuclear weapons program.

Considering the foregoing, this book seeks to accomplish two important aims. The first is to address the general lack of understanding of North Korea as a geopolitical entity—its history, ideology, and how the regime is likely to respond under certain conditions. As alluded to earlier, a more in-depth understanding of our North Korean adversary would allow the United States to more effectively frame the North Korea issue in its entirety and construct a workable comprehensive policy that ultimately addresses its nuclear weapons program. Yet, this is precisely what the administration has demonstrated a reluctance to do. Such a comprehensive understanding lies at the core of international relations, whether with allies or adversaries; without it most efforts wind up superficial at best, or even counterproductive. Consequently, the first half of this book is devoted to discussing the rise of North Korea as we know it today, from ideological and geopolitical perspectives.

The U.S. Army provides a good example. The Army spends millions of dollars each year training a core group of its officers to become foreign area officers (FAO). These officers devote much of their careers to becoming military statespersons who deal with a host of bilateral politico-military and security issues with foreign governments around the world. They are trained extensively in the target country’s language, culture, history, foreign relations, and security issues and their collective contributions to our nation’s security are not insignificant. The basis of their accomplishments, however, hinge on understanding the countries and governments with which they work.

The second aim is to develop a workable and more comprehensive framework for engaging North Korea in order to more effectively wean it off its dependence on nuclear weapons as a geopolitical bargaining chip, to which the second half of the book will be devoted. To build an effective foundation for such a construct, the efficacy of various policy options will be explored: armed conflict, regime change, and economic sanctions among them. In the final analysis, the option that offers the greatest chance of success is an aggressive, comprehensive policy approach centering on the regime’s soft underbelly—its economy—in what will be referred to as asymmetric economic statecraft (AES). AES seeks to foster greater regime dependence on economic inputs Western nations are in a position to provide, with the goal of slowly eroding the North Korean command economy in lieu of a more market-oriented structure, which in turn can be used as leverage in moving the regime toward complete and permanent denuclearization. Thus, fundamental to the success of AES is the degree of access into North Korea