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## Seven Steps to Take in Dealing with North Korea

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Two North Korean diplomats flew to Santa Fe, New Mexico to meet with Gov. Bill Richardson--who as UN Ambassador negotiated with Pyongyang under President Bill Clinton. Although supposedly visiting to discuss energy issues (Gov. Richardson also served as one of President Clinton's energy secretaries), the North Koreans proclaimed their desire for talks with the U.S. "They feel, the North Koreans, that by giving us the two American journalists, that they've made an important gesture," explained Gov. Richardson.

Apparently the North Koreans know how to spell chutzpah.

The government of Kim Jong-il is owed nothing. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a relic of the Cold War, a Stalinist remnant in which some 23 million people suffer and even starve. Since 1948 only two men have held supreme power in the DPRK: "Great Leader" Kim Il-sung and his son, "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il. The impoverished and backward nation would matter little but for its nuclear weapons program. With the latter, however, Pyongyang can command international attention.

How to respond is a recurring problem for American diplomacy. There are seven steps that the U.S. government should take in promoting peace and stability on the peninsula.

- Keep expectations low. More than once have sober-minded analysts and policy-makers proclaimed the latest "breakthrough." North Korea is one of the world's few totalitarian left-overs. It thrives on isolation, fears Western freedoms, and relies on brinkmanship as a negotiating technique. Diplomatic progress is possible, but counting on concessions from the North is more likely to yield frustration.
- Talk to North Korea. The Kim government deserves nothing, but refusing to talk is a grade-school tactic that has gotten the U.S. no where. Indeed, one of the Bush administration's great policy failures was refusing to deal with the North as it began reprocessing spent fuel that had been set aside under the so-called Agreed Framework negotiated by the Clinton administration. Pyongyang both augmented its arsenal and became more confrontational in response to the Bush administration's failed attempt at isolation. Washington should be prepared to engage in both bilateral and multilateral discussions.
- Beware making the perfect the enemy of the good. An increasing number of analysts doubt that the North will ever give up its existing nuclear materials and weapons. On the other hand, Pyongyang still might be willing to halt any expansion of a program currently capable of yielding only a handful of weapons. Although a nuclear-free peninsula remains a worthy goal, a freeze might be a more realistic objective in the short-term, while offering a potential way station toward full denuclearization as the North Korean regime evolves or dissolves.
- Treat North Korean provocations with bored contempt. When Pyongyang conducted missile and nuclear tests earlier this year, Washington should have responded: "been there, done that." The U.S. needs to reward the North when it acts responsibly and punish or ignore it when it acts badly. Reprogramming the DPRK won't be easy, but the regime has been on markedly better behavior over the last month than previously. For that Washington and other nations should respond favorably.
- Let other countries, which have the most at stake, take the lead. The DPRK is primarily a problem for its neighbors, not the U.S. A messy DPRK regime

collapse would loose refugees on South Korea and China, not America. The North's military is antiquated and has only limited reach. Even a North Korean nuclear arsenal would primarily be of concern to the region rather than to the U.S. Pyongyang lacks both an accurate delivery vehicle and the miniaturization technology to put a nuke on a missile; moreover, Washington has overwhelming retaliatory capability.

- Press China in particular to take a more active and forceful role. Economic sanctions are largely futile without the cooperation of the DPRK's northern neighbor. Yet so far Beijing has been more concerned about preventing a North Korean collapse and forestalling creation of a united Korea allied with America. However, the current situation is highly unstable, with the possibility of regime failure and all the attendant consequences anyway. Moreover, American military action, which could plunge the entire peninsula into war, remains possible and South Korea and Japan might respond to a growing North Korean arsenal by developing their own nuclear weapons. Should China cooperate against the North, Washington could offer to share in the cost of caring for any refugees created as well as promise not to take geopolitical advantage of Beijing by turning the peninsula into a permanent American military outpost.

- Withdraw U.S. forces from South Korea. The Republic of Korea has a vast economic and technological lead over its northern antagonist and is fully capable of constructing whatever military it thinks necessary for its defense. Nor do American conventional forces help in resolving the nuclear issue; to the contrary, by putting U.S. military personnel within reach of the North, Washington actually has created 28,000 nuclear hostages. Moreover, eliminating America's military presence on the peninsula would be the strongest possible signal to Beijing that it need not fear the security consequences of pressing the North to deal and reform, even at the risk of a state collapse.

A dozen U.S. presidents have struggled with the North Korean problem. But for the first time the life expectancy of the DPRK's leader may be shorter than the legal term of America's leader. The coming leadership transition in the North will yield both opportunities and dangers. The administration should recognize the limitations inherent to any policy towards the North, but nevertheless continue to push hard for a peaceful resolution.

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How about making North Korea feel good about itself? Tell them that large portions of the US are populated by idiots who marry their own cousins and believe the earth to be 6,000 years old. That's what I told people while I was in Russia.

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Proliferation? What, you don't it's important enough to mention?

Why don't you take a few minutes to go through the seven steps but this time, consider North Korea's ability to not only build and test bombs but sell or give away the technology around the globe? It kinda throws a spanner in the works, don't it?

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Pakistan already beat them to that one.

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The human rights situation is horrid almost beyond description. But I fear the regime is less likely to make political changes that it sees as destabilizing than to limit its nuclear program. If we can make progress on the latter, we may be more likely to be able to move forward on human rights. I fear that demanding substantive movement on the latter first will make progress on the nuclear issue even harder to achieve. We then risk continuing the worst of both worlds: a brutal regime determined to suppress human rights with a growing nuclear arsenal.

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The same arguments were made about the Soviet Union. However, the root of the problem is not that the country possesses nuclear arms. Many nations around the world possess them (including the United States).

The true problem on the Korean peninsula is that the regime has created a humanitarian situation where its neighbors fear its collapse just as much as they fear going to war. The people are so deprived and so out of touch with the modern world that if the regime suddenly fell tomorrow, Northern China and South Korea would be overrun with refugees. It has taken 20 years for West Germany to absorb and rehabilitate East Germany and that state was one of the most highly developed of the countries in the former Eastern Bloc.

Kim Jong Il's possession of nuclear weapons is simply a tool to maintain his regime. Launching a weapon would be the last act of his regime and he knows that. He will NEVER give up his nuclear weapon willingly because it is his ace in the hole.

The U.S. goal should be the goal of South Korea -- the eventual reunification of the Korean people. We should lay the groundwork for the day when the Kim regime will eventually fall -- and you know it one day will. To focus on nuclear weapons as the only issue we have with the regime is to play into Kim Jong Il's hands.

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For the past 20 years the North Koreans have been asking for one on one talks with USA and a peace agreement. This has constantly been rebuffed by the US.

WHY?

Here are a few possible reasons to think about:

- (i) The Dept. of Defence does not want to give up the budget involved in maintaining a presence in South Korea.
- (ii) The defence contractors do not want to loose the profits made from supplies and support in South Korea.
- (iii) US expenditure in ROK contributes quite a lot to their GDP and they don't want to loose that.
- (iv) If the troops came home from South Korea as advocated by Doug Badow, it would be hard to justify maintenance of the US military bases there. The US wants to maintain bases in both ROK and Japan.
- (iv) The main game is to maintain South Korea and Japan as US vassal states as a counter to the rise of China. .

Their nuclear strategy is not to maintain the regime, it is to try and force the US to genuinely talk, not posture as in the Six Party talks.

Jimmy Carter has it right when he says it could be sorted in half a day.

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The one step I am surprised that you failed to mention is that the U.S. government should make human rights the number one priority in any dealings with North Korea.

It is North Korea's repression of its own people that is the root of all of its problems. In the same way that Glastnost brought down the Iron Curtain, an opening up of North Korea to the outside world will have the most profound changes on how this regime interacts with its neighbors and the world.

The primary failing of U.S. policy in dealing with dictators around the world is to isolate the people of the oppressed country through blockades and sanctions. Kim Dae Jung, the recently deceased president of South Korea, introduced his "Sunshine Policy" which helped to create the few contacts that the North maintains with the rest of the world. More contacts with the PEOPLE of North Korea need to be encouraged.

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