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**US POLICY TOWARDS NORTH KOREA WITH RESPECT TO
BALLISTIC MISSILES**

BY

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US Policy Towards North Korea with Respect to Ballistic Missiles

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ABSTRACT

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North Korea's emerging long-range ballistic missile capability has created debate on whether the US foreign policy toward North Korea is effective or is actually encouraging its ballistic missile programs. North Korea's ballistic missile program is critical to sustain the existence of the North Korean regime and its ballistic missile exports total about \$1 billion a year. North Korea is the world's largest exporter of ballistic missiles yet it is the largest recipient of foreign aid in the Asia-Pacific region from the US. These North Korean weapons are not viewed as operational weapons of war, but primarily as strategic weapons of deterrence and coercive diplomacy. The full development of this capability would give North Korea a potent diplomatic card in influencing US foreign policy toward North Korea, in the region and even beyond. The implication of a mature North Korean long-range ballistic missile capability presents new policy challenges to the US. The most effective US policy towards the North Korea ballistic missile threat in the near to midterm is to selectively engage North Korea, while maintaining credible conventional and nuclear deterrents and concurrently pursuing an effective National Missile Defense (NMD) system.

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US POLICY TOWARDS NORTH KOREA WITH RESPECT TO BALLISTIC MISSILES

The Korean Peninsula remains one of the most volatile areas in the world. Since the Korean War, there has been no peace treaty but an armed truce. North's Korea's ballistic missile program remains a significant concern to countries in the Asia-Pacific region and the US. Its pursuit of ballistic missile capability has raised the potential for conflict in the region. On August 31, 1998, North Korea, without warning, fired a nuclear-capable, three-stage Taepo Dong -1 missile some 850 miles in distance, traveling over the country of Japan.¹ The North Korean government claimed the rocket carried a small satellite. Western radar tracking indicated a third rocket stage failed and the satellite was probably destroyed before reaching orbit. This surprise ballistic missile launch alerted the world to North Korea's long-range missile capability.² This incident heightened tensions in the region and caused widespread repercussions. It fueled anti-North Korea sentiment on Capitol Hill and at the Pentagon. It accelerated US consideration of a missile defense system. And it prompted an overhaul of US policy towards North Korea. Japan led a storm of regional nations protest and threatened to end support for the Agreed Framework (North Korea's pledge to cease nuclear weapon development in exchange for assistance in building civilian nuclear projects).³

Kim Jong Il, the undisputed dictator and leader of North Korea, has been portrayed as a dangerous, unpredictable, drunken lunatic with the capacity to launch ballistic missiles at the United States.⁴ North Korea, a very secretive society, is generally viewed as a "rogue state".⁵ This view has driven US policy. Moreover, North Korea has been on the brink of economic collapse for years, yet it still poses one of the greatest threats to the United States security interests. There has been widespread famine and it is unable to feed itself. Approximately ten percent of its population has starved to death since 1994 despite being the largest recipient of US foreign aid in the Asia-Pacific region.⁶ Despite these major problems, there has been no evidence of dissent, indicating that Kim Jong Il's regime remains very strong and stable.

Throughout this period, the Clinton Administration continued to assert that its foreign policy was not failing. In response to growing concerns and following the North Korean missile launch, Congress required a complete interagency policy review. President Clinton named former Secretary of Defense William Perry to lead this review.⁷ A major issue was whether the current policy towards North Korea had prevented development of long-range ballistic missiles or actually financed and encouraged it. The Clinton Administration's aid to North Korea was designed to persuade Kim Jong Il to abandon his ballistic missile program and reduce his threatening. (Threats are a standard negotiating tactic for North Korea).⁸ North Korea's pursuit

of discourse could be used to deliver weapons of mass destruction; a ballistic missile capability, which directly threatens the security of the US and this, requires a comprehensive strategy. This paper examines US policy options towards North Korea with respect to their ballistic missile programs and proposes that the US adopt a strategy of selective engagement complemented by credible conventional and nuclear deterrents and the development of National Missile Defense (NMD).

THE NORTH KOREAN BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT

North Korea remains the major threat to stability and security in Northeast Asia and is the country most likely to involve the US in a large-scale war. North Korea's military goal has been to reunify the peninsula by force under the Communist North's regime.⁹ The Republic of Korea (ROK) and the US have adopted a security strategy that emphasizes deterrence and defense, in order to ensure the security of South Korea. North Korea cannot match the ROK/US's technologically advanced war fighting capabilities, so it has pursued asymmetrical capabilities, such as ballistic missiles to offset the US's overall military superiority. Despite North Korea's recent pronouncements in support of a peaceful unification, it retains a strong military option.¹⁰

There appears to have been four goals for North Korea's recent (1998) ballistic missile launch. First, by demonstrating a ballistic missile capability, it created the possibility of future North Korean extortion of the US or other regional players. This demonstrated capability could deter potential US military strikes against it and potentially produces another negotiating card. Secondly, it demonstrates the legitimacy of the regime to the North Korean people. Thirdly, it demonstrates ballistic missile technological capabilities to potential buyers in the Middle East.¹¹ While North Korea has recently agreed to freeze its missile-testing program during ongoing negotiations, it is unlikely to agree to a moratorium on its missile program indefinitely. It certainly will not drop its program without receiving some substantial policy concessions or additional aid.¹²

The 1995 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), coordinated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), concluded that North Korea would need at least 15 years to develop a ballistic missile capable of reaching the US with weapons of mass destruction.¹³ The 1998 Rumsfeld Report (on future strategic threats to the US) disputed these intelligence reports and concluded that the intelligence community had been much too relaxed about ballistic missiles. Third world countries, to shorten this timetable, could use shortcuts.¹⁴ One month after the report was published, the North Koreans fired the Taepo Dong-1 missile over Japan.¹⁵

The Taepo Dong-1 is a medium range ballistic missile. It has a range in excess of 2,000 kilometers, depending on the size of the payload. The August 31 launch was a three-stage missile. Although the third stage failed, the launch culminated 10 years of effort by North Korea to acquire ballistic missile capabilities and it proved their *intercontinental* ballistic missile capability. North Korea is also developing the Taepo Dong-2 missile with a range in excess of 5,000 km.¹⁶ This capability poses a threat to US allies and interests in the region and gives North Korea the capability to reach the Continental United States with missiles and, and potentially, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).¹⁷ There are proliferation concerns as well. North Korea is selling this technology to Middle East countries such as Iran, Syria, and Pakistan.¹⁸

The Taepo Dong-1 missile is not a very sophisticated system. Its first two stages are fairly primitive...liquid-fuel. The third failed stage is what surprised US intelligence analysts. It consisted of a solid-fueled motor that reflected a major leap in North Korea capability to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The use of three stages meant North Korea had progressed to developing a multi-stage missile with the potential approaching intercontinental 10,000 kilometers ballistic missile range.¹⁹

Notwithstanding these advances, North Korea's missile technology is extremely dated. Information sharing with other nations could possibly improve its missiles but the capabilities of the SCUD type missiles (Soviet-Designed Surface-to-Surface Missiles) have about reached their limit. North Korea's missile reliability is also not good. About half of all their missile tests conducted since 1984 have failed. And some reports have claimed as many as eight SCUD missiles exported to Iran, have exploded on launch.²⁰

Nevertheless, ballistic missile technology is spreading and the threat from rogue nations continues to grow. As previously noted, the 1998 Rumsfeld Report stated that the threat from developing ballistic missile programs in countries hostile to the US, like North Korea, is developing faster than expected and could pose a threat to the US homeland in the next 5 years. According to the 1999 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), North Korea has the most advanced ballistic missile program among third-world countries.²¹

A major concern to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the US is identifying the primary goal of North Korea's ballistic missile programs. Is North Korea's primary goal that of gaining global political leverage or becoming a legitimate global military threat? There is much debate on this topic among intelligence experts. The fact remains that North Korea does not need missiles to attack South Korea. Their medium range SCUD missiles can already range the entire Korean peninsula.²²

North Korea began missile development through the purchase of Soviet-made FROGs and SCUDs and the re-engineering of these systems. In 1981, North Korea signed a joint agreement with Egypt to produce SCUD missiles. In 1984, it successfully produced SCUD-A missiles and in 1985, it succeeded in test firing the SCUD-B. In 1989, it began production of SCUD-Cs (range 400 km) and it is believed North Korea is currently capable of producing some 4-6 SCUD-Cs a month. In 1993, North Korea shocked the world with the launching of a nuclear-capable Rodong-1 missile (range 1,000 km). This incident spurred the 1994 Agreed Framework in which the US made substantial concessions and, in effect, rewarded North Korea's missile development efforts.²³

General Thomas Schwartz, the Commander-in-Chief United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command and Commander, United States Forces Korea states that North Korea remains a contradiction and a threat to the United States. He highlights North Korea's continued development of a multiple-stage missile with the goal of fielding systems capable of striking the Continental US. Further he points out that North Korea "is one of the world's largest proliferators and sells its missiles and technology to anyone with hard currency."²⁴

After 50 years of confrontation and isolation, it would be a mistake to assume that North Korea has reformed its behavior. Since the 1994 Agreed Framework, in which North Korea agreed to halt its nuclear programs, it has continued developing ballistic missiles that will have the capability to reach the US with chemical, biological, and possibly nuclear weapons. It has produced and exported medium range missiles (No-Dong) to countries of great concern to the US (Syria and Iran).²⁵ In September 2000, it was reported that Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi had acquired North Korean No-Dong ballistic missiles capable of ranging targets in Israel and southern Europe.²⁶ While North Korea has agreed to halt missile test flights, production and sales of ballistic missiles continue.²⁷ North Korea has refused to halt missile sales unless reimbursed for \$1 US billion for lost revenue.²⁸

Recent US Intelligence has concluded that North Korea has ceased research on the three-stage Taepo Dong-1 in favor of the Taepo Dong-2. The Taepo Dong-2 is a two-stage missile that has never been flight-tested. Although North Korea has agreed to cease missile flight tests, it continues to conduct research on this technology. Intelligence analysts conclude that if North Korea conducted a successful flight-testing of the Taepo Dong-2, it would have the capability of reaching Alaska and Hawaii, but not the continental US.²⁹ The US, South Korea, and Japan regard North Korea's missile programs as a profound challenge to their security and alliances.

OPTIONS FOR DETERRENCE

In assessing the current security situation on the Korean Peninsula, it should be stated upfront that there remains the possibility of general war. North Korea has approximately one million soldiers positioned along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and more than 11,000 artillery pieces oriented towards Seoul. It also has a wide range of short-range ballistic missiles that can reach all of South Korea. A war between North and South Korea would have a devastating impact on the Pacific-region in general and Korea in particular. As a minimum, it would result in significant casualties, both military and civilian. Unlike Desert Storm, this war would not be fought in the desert, but in highly populated urban areas and the narrow terrain between Pyongyang and Seoul.³⁰ Between these two capitals exist about 33 million residents. In addition to heavy casualties, millions of refugees would also result. The consequences of an all-out war on the Korean peninsula serve as a powerful deterrent against provocations on both sides.³¹

North Korea can accept our engagement approach, it can do nothing, or it can reject our proposals (Perry Plan). North Korea currently demands compensation to end its ballistic missile programs. Presently, the US will not pay the compensation demanded by North Korea that has resulted in a policy impasse.³² With a new US presidential administration, there is some uncertainty in the future direction of our foreign policy. President Bush indicated that he will take a tougher negotiating stance toward North Korea, demanding more in return from its government.³³ This approach may complicate an already difficult negotiation challenge.

There are four plausible options for US foreign policy towards the North Korean ballistic missile threat. Option 1 is continued reliance on our nuclear deterrence capability. This option may not be credible or effective. Option 2 is massive retaliation by conventional military forces. This is may be effective but is cost prohibitive. Option 3 is to negotiate North Korea's ballistic missile program away through the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). This option is partially effective but unreliable in that verification is problematic. Option 4 is to employ a National Missile Defense (NMD) system to render the threat obsolete. This option may be effective but employs uncertain technology and is untimely. (2005 is the earliest if the technology is achieved)³⁴. This option is the most expensive in regards to out-of-pocket defense expenditures. Option 5 is the current policy recommended by former Defense Secretary William Perry called "The Perry Plan". The option combines the best aspects of options 1-4 and remains the best foreign policy approach.

OPTION 1: NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

The main insurance against any attack on US territory by long-range missiles from any source remains what it has been for decades, the fear of swift and certain retaliation by the US's overwhelming nuclear and conventional forces. Nuclear deterrence sends a direct message to North Korea that the US will retaliate massively if North Korea ever launches missiles at the US or her allies. Deterrence as a foreign policy option is very effective, as proven in the forty years of mutual cold war standoff between the US and the Soviet Union. This same threat convinced Iraq not to use chemical and biological weapons in the Gulf War.³⁵ The US early warning satellite system can pinpoint the origin of any long-range ballistic missile attack, and thus can attribute any missile attack to its source facilitating retaliation.³⁶

Disengagement, however, is a dangerous option.³⁷ North Korea is dependent upon international relief and food supplies from various nations to include the US. The present regime in North Korea is probably unwilling to relax its control on the populace or open its country. A vital interest to the US is continued regional stability. Ending dialogue with North Korea, our existing Agreed Framework, and the four-party talks (North and South Korea, China, and US) would not enhance stability on the Korean Peninsula or the Asia-Pacific Region. (The four-party talks seek to replace the armistice with a permanent peace agreement).³⁸ Additionally, halting food aid to North Korea's starving masses would be inconsistent with our humanitarian policies.

Increased pressure is also not a viable option. This could possibly lead to North Korea accepting our proposals, but it is also very dangerous. This approach could instead lead to war and North Korea has stated as much.³⁹ There are clearly limitations to how much the US can increase military pressure under the present conditions. Our allies, specifically South Korea and Japan, would not support increased military pressure. Moreover, it is critical to present a united front with South Korea and Japan. Additionally, options that increase the risk of armed conflict do not receive Congressional support and thus funding.⁴⁰

OPTION 2: CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

The cornerstone of conventional deterrence is the strength of the ROK and US alliance. Deterrence has rested firmly on a combined ROK-US military since the Korean War. The US has maintained a formidable and uninterrupted ground and air presence on the peninsula. US presence has been instrumental in maintaining a cease-fire on the peninsula for over forty-six years.⁴¹ This option is effective but does not present the level of deterrence against possible

ballistic missile attacks that nuclear response does. Additionally, it is very costly. It costs approximately \$3 billion a year to maintain a US troop presence in the ROK.⁴²

OPTION 3: THE MISSILE TECHNOLOGY CONTROL REGIME

Global anti-missile proliferation efforts center around the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). The MTCR is a voluntary, informal arrangement among 33 member nations, including the world's most advanced suppliers of ballistic missiles and its related technology. It is basically a supply-side anti-proliferation regime.⁴³ It began in 1987 with the G7 nations (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, and US) as a collective group. Its original purpose was to prevent the spread of missiles capable of carrying a nuclear weapon. It was expanded in 1993 to cover chemical and biological weapons. Its stated goal is to impede the development and spread of missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. Members are like-minded nations that are interested in restricting the export of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction (WMD-nuclear, chemical, and biological).⁴⁴ The US central figure in the MTCR is Assistant Secretary of State for Non-Proliferation, Robert J. Einhorn. The US State Department believes the MTCR to be a very effective mechanism to control proliferation.⁴⁵ The US obviously cannot take on this global responsibility alone. A common sense approach as to who should receive the technology by the member states is the key to effectively controlling proliferation. The actionable word is 'control', rather than 'prohibit' weapons of mass destruction delivery systems. The MTCR monitors ballistic and cruise missiles, space launch vehicles, and UAVs.⁴⁶

Any country can apply for membership to the MTCR but membership is heavily scrutinized. To be admitted, you must have a legitimate intent to self-regulate and be in compliance with membership requirements. The US seeks to have borderline countries sign a bi-lateral missile agreement first, before being approved for the MTCR. The reason for this is that nations use membership to obtain membership access to missile technology from other members. As an example, South Korea has a bi-lateral agreement with the US (Nike-Hercules) that was revised in 1991. The initial agreement limited South Korea to development of missiles capable of 180-kilometer range and a 500-kilogram warhead. South Korea has challenged the agreement and wanted to revise it for three reasons: they view the North Korean ballistic threat as dangerous; South Korea views the agreement as a challenge to its national sovereignty; and because of the agreement's limitations, South Korean missiles were not able to range all of North Korea. The US agreed but wanted to establish other limits so future South Korean developments do not destabilize the region. The impact of relaxing the initial agreement could

potentially cause an arms race between North Korea, China and/or Japan. Recently, the US modified its agreement with South Korea on missile development by increasing the range from 180-kilometers to 300 kilometers and keeping the warhead size to 500-kilograms.⁴⁷ Another major implication is that South Korean missile development may impede negotiations with North Korea for the elimination of their missile program. The US also wants North Korea as a potential member of the MTCR, only as an alternative to not being able to negotiate the dismantling of its missile and WMD programs.⁴⁸

The US is the 'big hammer' within the MTCR. If the US believes a member or potential member is selling missile technology, the US will take appropriate diplomatic action to stop the selling of missile technology. Currently, the main provider of missile technology to North Korea is China. In 1991, President Bush imposed sanctions on China for selling missile components and technology to Pakistan. Although China pledged to abide by the guidelines, they continue arms sales.⁴⁹ In 1996, the US imposed sanctions on North Korea for the transfer of MTCR Annex items and met with North Korean representatives to discuss limiting their export activities, including to countries in the Middle East (North Korea is known to export missile technology to the Middle East: Pakistan, Syria, Iran and Libya).⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the MTCR significantly limits the availability of missiles, components, and related technology among its members and it is expected to continue to serve as a substantial barrier to countries and rogue states attempting to acquire ballistic missiles. The MTCR has made positive strides through diplomatic measures and political sanctions, identifying key technologies and preventing their transfer. To date, the MTCR has been extremely effective in curbing missile proliferation. By 1992, former CIA Director Robert Gates testified that North Korea was the only remaining exporter of ballistic missiles (although allegations persisted that China was exporting as well).⁵¹ There are only six countries that have ICBMs (UK, China, France, Russia, Ukraine, and the US). The US is the only country to have ever sold ICBMs—Polaris and Trident II Ballistic Missiles to Britain. Under current protocols, the US would be forced to levy sanctions against any country exporting any ICBMs to any non-MTCR government.⁵²

Thus, North Korean missile programs are under no comparable restraints. Consequently, the MTCR has been powerless to stop progress in North Korea's missile programs. The sources of North Korea's assistance have also been non-members (China, Egypt, etc). Additionally, the MTCR is not a binding treaty but, rather, a voluntary arrangement. As such, it is open to differing interpretations and subject to varying degrees of compliance and enforcement.⁵³ Thus, North Korean membership in the MTCR would be partially effective but

not ironclad in eliminating both their continued development of ballistic missiles and their export of that technology.

OPTION 4: NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE

A decision to field a national missile defense system in the US will have regional and global impacts that should be fully assessed. The US cannot make this decision without considering the reaction of China, Russia, and our allies in Europe. The emerging ballistic missile threat from North Korea requires the President of the US to take prudent measures to secure the homeland against this threat. The Clinton Administration's plan to build a national missile defense was based primarily on intelligence assessments of the emerging threat of ballistic missiles from North Korea.⁵⁴ Newly elected President Bush stated on 26 January 2001, that he intends to go ahead with plans for building a nationwide missile defense system.⁵⁵

The stated and primary mission of national missile defense is to protect the US against the threat of a limited strategic ballistic missile attack from a rogue nation.⁵⁶ The US missile defense system is estimated to cost about \$60 billion to field.⁵⁷ Supporters of NMD argue that the rogue state threat is real and time is of the essence. They argue that the costs are but a tiny fraction of the defense budget and a small price to protect US lives, property, and troops from such attacks. Additionally, in deploying a system quickly, it will maximize US freedom of action in conflict situations and enable conventional military action that was previously constrained by the ballistic missile attack response.⁵⁸

Critics of NMD argue that missile defense technology is unproven and that the billions of dollars to fund the system will continue to grow, taking required funds from other critical conventional military programs. Additionally, deployment of these systems will subvert US efforts to improve relations with North Korea and Iran and increase those countries' hostility towards the US. Moreover, it will probably end the ABM Treaty and create a hostile relationship with Russia, China, and many of our other allies.⁵⁹

Consequently, there is little support of national missile defense in Asia and among our allies in Europe. Russia, North Korea and China strongly oppose a US missile defense system and a decision to deploy this system could actually stimulate China's efforts toward increasing its nuclear capability. Russia and China have nuclear arsenals that reflect their status as superpowers. However, a deployable national missile defense system in the US could reduce US vulnerability to these arsenals and could potentially render China and Russia's strategic nuclear missile capabilities ineffective.⁶⁰

China currently has 20 nuclear-tipped ICBMs and threatens to accelerate expanding that force if the US deploys a missile defense system. China could also cease its informal agreement to abide by the MTCR and resume missile sales to South Asia and the Middle East. Another possible Chinese response could be to maintain its strategic deterrent force at a higher state of alert. A possible Russian response could include halting further reductions in its post-Cold War nuclear forces and withdrawal from a number of existing arms control treaties. Although the missile defense technology is unproven, and many critics feel it is impossible, nuclear deterrence parity is too important to Russia and China to risk allowing the US to gain an unprecedented superiority. Russia and China have both rallied US allies against missile defense and have succeeded in getting France and Germany to question the US missile defense program. European countries have publicly expressed the harshest criticism to a US missile defense system. Their main concerns include the costs for employing comparable systems, possibly being left out of any system the US deploys in the Asia-Pacific region and negative effects on the international arms control region. Conversely, Japan and the US argue that a missile defense is necessary in light of the North Korean threat.⁶¹

To assuage Japan's concerns, Russia has told Japan that North Korea is prepared to abandon its missile program in exchange for civilian technology and another country bearing the costs of launching North Korean satellites. This solution offers a low cost, high security solution to Japan. Based upon North Korea's previous activities, Washington remains skeptical about Russia's assurances of North Korean compliance to any future agreements. However, this option may be advantageous to North Korea because it binds both countries (Russia as a nuclear superpower) to the same policy objective that may eventually guarantee survival of the regime. China does not want to see the North Korean regime collapse nor does it want Taiwan and Japan deploying anti-missile systems. Russia, in taking the lead in using North Korea as leverage against the US in opposing missile defense, would certainly get cooperation from China.⁶²

The US is in a tenuous situation. If Japan joined the list of allies critical of US missile defense, it would make that much harder for the US to pursue a national missile defense system. This is precisely what Russia wants.

A unilateral US decision to deploy a national missile defense system could irrevocably damage our relationship with key allies in Europe and Asia, and weaken the US and MTCR efforts to reduce the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

OPTION 5: THE PERRY PLAN

North Korea will more than likely reject the Perry proposal. It appears North Korea's strategy is to maximize foreign aid through intimidation and confrontation via their ballistic missile program. Possible US responses could include support for continued improvements of South Korean ballistic missile capability and similar improvements to other US allied forces. The US could also encourage both the ROK and Japan to suspend investments in North Korea and impose new sanctions. However, this action could further spurn an arms race in the region—which could destabilize the region even further.

Selective engagement, supported by credible conventional and nuclear deterrents and development of NMD may be the best and most viable foreign policy option. This option combines options 1-4, while recognizing the shortcomings of each. It is the most prudent and offers little potential for increased tension. There are several advantages to this option. It keeps the Perry Plan in effect and offers specific incentives as an inducement. Simultaneously, it maintains the four-party talks and retains the commitments under the Agreed Framework. Sanctions would be lifted against North Korea with the clear stipulation that they will be reinstated if there is a second missile launch. Additionally, food aid to North Korea would be continued. Selective engagement also encourages China to use its influence with North Korea to limit its missile and WMD programs.

The major challenge of the US is getting North Korea to end its missile programs while, building normal relations with the North Korea government. Additionally, the US must push North Korea to stop exporting missile technology to Iran, Pakistan, Syria, and Libya. Given the reluctance of North Korea to in any way restrict their sales of ballistic missile technology, this will be a profound diplomatic challenge.⁶³ However, given verifiable restraints, it may be in the US's best interest to provide financial incentives for North Korean compliance.

Following Dr. Perry's 8-month review, the US adopted his recommended policy towards the North Korea (Perry Plan). Dr Perry concluded that the current policy of engagement towards North Korea should continue. This policy involves a two-path strategy focused on US priority concerns over North Korea's missile related activities and it was developed in close consultation with Japan and South Korea. The first path is clearly preferable for the US and its allies. It seeks complete and verifiable cessation of testing, production, and deployment of missiles exceeding the parameters of the MTCR, and complete cessation of export sales of missiles and their associated technology.⁶⁴ This path is one of engagement and normalization (incentives). It involves engaging and normalizing relations (easing sanctions) between the US and North Korea as long as North Korea does not violate these measures. This path would lead

to a more stable security situation on the Korean Peninsula, create conditions for a lasting peace in the region and essentially end the Cold War in East Asia. It would also reduce pressures on North Korea and encourage it to peacefully co-exist with its neighbors.⁶⁵

If North Korea rejects the first path, then the US and its allies will have to take steps to ensure security and contain the threat. The second path is a path of containment (disincentives). This policy involves taking punitive measures when North Korea's actions are not in line with our desires. This includes sanctions levied by the US and the ceasing of foreign aid. This path is designed to contain the threat through firm but measured steps that are designed to force North Korea to return to the first path. If successful, this will avoid disrupting the security situation in the region.⁶⁶

The development of the requisite NMD technology but stopping short of actual procurement and deployment of the system, can itself be used as means to secure concessions from North Korea while assuaging the concerns of our allies, Russia and China. National missile defense must be considered part of our strategy to reduce the future threat of ballistic missiles. National missile defense is not a substitute for diplomacy and deterrence, but if pursued properly, would add another potential capability that may convince North Korea to opt for the first path and prevent North Korea from using a ballistic missile threat as a means to extort concessions from its neighbors or the US. Combining the Perry Plan with NMD development, supported by credible conventional and nuclear deterrents employs the best aspects of all four foreign policy options and secures US interests while offering the smallest measure for increased tensions.

CONCLUSION

The goal of US foreign policy towards North Korea must focus on limiting North Korea's ballistic missile capability and halting its missile and technology exports. Current US Policy has been only partially effective containing the North Korean Missile program. North Korea has demonstrated insensitivity to the needs of its people through its commitment of resources towards its military while its population starved. There are limits to what is known about the country, its current leadership and intent. However, North Korea's behavior is not irrational if taken in context with its regional and strategic environment. The regime's primary concern is survival. Notwithstanding, North Korea has moved toward reestablishing ties with the international community. Recently, it has established relations with Italy, Australia and China. It has applied for membership in the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), concluded a summit meeting with South Korea and has agreed to freeze its missile flight-testing programs.⁶⁷

North Korea is the largest recipient of US foreign aid in the Asian-Pacific region, having received more than \$645 million in terms of food and oil. Moreover, the US has recently lifted several sets of economic sanctions allowing North Korea to market raw goods and materials to the US. North Korea has demonstrated a willingness to modify its behavior for external aid and for income generated by selling goods in foreign markets.⁶⁸ The US and its allies need to exploit this tendency and build an economic relationship that can be leveraged to our advantage in the security area.

US foreign policy towards North Korea with respect to its ballistic missile programs is a very complicated and vital US security issue. North Korea's ballistic missile capability remains a serious threat to US security interests. The threat is real and it continues to grow. The only physical response option the Commander-in-Chief of the US has to a ballistic missile launch against the US is 'retaliation'. Although retaliation is a plausible deterrent against North Korea, it does not preclude the disastrous consequences of a ballistic missile attack on US territory.

With that said, the US policy of selective engagement is our best option and President Bush should continue to support the Perry Plan. Although, most experts agree that a successful ballistic missile launch by North Korea against the US is currently improbable. North Korean capabilities and the strategic environment are subject to dramatic changes in relatively short periods of time. Besides satellite coverage providing a return address for any missile launch, the US response could certainly destroy the regime and even the country. But if North Korea mastered this capability and acquired a nuclear or chemical warhead, it could potentially extort or deter the US. To avoid the possibility of economic or policy extortion, the US should pursue development of missile defense technology and continue to use diplomacy to end North Korea's missile programs.

The future is unknown and it is very difficult to predict US relations with North Korea. Ongoing discussions could lead to improved relations with the US and possibly end North Korea's ballistic missile program. Certainly ending North Korea's ballistic missile program would significantly reduce the missile proliferation threat by reducing global missile technology exports to rogue nations. This ultimately would significantly reduce the missile threat to the US and its allies. Clearly, North Korea is hostile to the US. But having a capacity to reach us with a ballistic missile does not necessarily translate into an intention. Political and military deterrence have a powerful affect on a nation's decision to use force. These factors have already had an affect on North Korea. In 1999, North Korea prepared for a Taepo-Dong-2 missile launch but backed down after US, Japan, and South Korea's use of high-pressure diplomacy.⁶⁹

Our foreign policy should be directly related to the threat. The threat from North Korea's ballistic missile program is not imminent but is possible. The US has time to use diplomatic means to reduce and possibly eliminate the threat. The potential danger of ballistic missiles delivering chemical, biological, and possibly nuclear weapons to the continental United States is too risky for the US not to pursue missile defense technology in the event that the North Korean ballistic missile threat matures. US foreign policy should continue to rest upon the Perry Plan and engage North Korea with the goal of negotiating the ballistic threat away. This is our best foreign policy option. Peace and stability are maintained and a US national missile defense will not be required.

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