

PEACE IN KOREA? LESSONS FROM COLD WAR DÉTENTES

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Introduction

Leaders in Pyongyang and Seoul began in the 1970s to talk as though they wished peacefully to reunite the Korean nation. By the early 21st century, however, their words and deeds had registered few positive results. Parallel efforts to reach an accommodation between the United States and North Korea made some tentative gains in the 1990s. By 2003, however, Washington and Pyongyang were back on square one. In the early 21st century, the governments of the U.S., the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) abandoned the diplomacy of conditional cooperation they had cultivated in the 1990s. In its place, the U.S. and DPRK reverted to zero-sum confrontation while the ROK pursued the chimera of win-win.¹

By September 2003, one could hope that all the concerned parties were learning from their dance of thrust and parry.² Perhaps their sound and fury was a case of "the worse, the better." Perhaps they would still rescue a mutual victory of common sense from the brink of destruction. Even if a negotiating breakthrough takes place, however, outsiders can still ponder how and why the parties got so off track in the years after the "agreed framework" was reached in 1994 (discussed below in some detail).

This paper suggests that the protagonists on the Korean peninsula could advance their respective interests more effectively by adapting the assumptions and techniques that helped the U.S. and China to improve their relationship. Pushing and pulling Washington and Beijing toward normalization in the 1970s, Henry Kissinger and Zhou Enlai demonstrated lessons that could be useful to Seoul, Pyongyang, and Washington in the early 21st century.

¹ Writings by Howard Raiffa and other participants in the Harvard University Program on Negotiation suggest three approaches to negotiation 1. *The Win-Lose Hard-Liner* seeks values for her side alone. She assumes that what one side gains, the other must lose. Her only rule is to win. She blends force and deception. She masks her assets, weaknesses, and goals, and expect others to do the same. She values immediate profits more than a reputation for integrity. 2. *The Win-Win Cooperator* wants accords--almost for their own sake--trusting that win-win outcomes are always available. He values candor and puts all his cards on the table. He focuses on absolute gains, not relative benefits. 3. *The Conditional Cooperator* tries to advance her interests by creating values with other actors for mutual gain. If the parties can "grow" the pie, it will be easier to divide and achieve joint benefit. She conditions cooperation on reciprocal action by others, but takes precautions lest the other side feign cooperation while seeking a one-sided victory. She is neither malevolent nor altruistic. She employs leverage gracefully--not with a sledgehammer. Though slightly distrustful, she fosters openness and habits of joint problem-solving. She shares information about preferences, beliefs, and even minimum requirements. See, for example, Howard Raiffa et al., *Negotiation Analysis: The Science and Art of Collaborative Decision Making* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002) and Walter C. Clemens, Jr., *Dynamics of International Relations: Conflict and Mutual Gain in an Era of Global Interdependence*, 2d ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), chaps. 1 and 7.

² When U.S. Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton called Kim Jong-II a "tyrannical rogue," Nicholas Eberstadt at the American Enterprise Institute called this a "really interesting experiment" to see how North Korea would respond to a verbal attack. When Pyongyang said it would not talk to Bolton, Washington backed off and sent specialists in Asian diplomacy to the six-party talks held in Beijing in August 2003. See Peter Slevin, "Arms Control Hard-Liner Won't Attend Sessions on N. Korea," *Washington Post*, August 13, 2003, p. A20.

TFT or True GRIT?

To normalize a relationship requires both an appropriate strategy and tactics. At least one of the parties must make a strategic commitment to reduce tensions and move toward peace. In time--better sooner than later--the other party (or parties) must make a similar commitment. To give peace a chance, mutually suspicious rivals must back away from a zero-sum view of politics. Absent a joint commitment to mutual gain, the parties can easily be deflected by signs that appear to validate their distrust of each other.

Hard-liners in Washington and Beijing long believed that mutual gain was impossible between their two countries. What one side won, they assumed, the other must lose.³ From the late 1940s until the late 1960s, the U.S. and Communist China became deadlocked in a routine of tit-for-tat (TFT) as each side matched or exceeded the harshness of the other's words and deeds. TFT also took hold in negotiations at Panmunjom, where representatives of the United Nations Command sat across the table from those of China and the DPRK in weekly rituals of mutual acrimony.⁴ Each blamed the other for violating the armistice. An atmosphere of mutual distrust and disdain reigned. If a North Korean gave an American a piece of paper with his left hand--a sign of contempt--the American usually accepted it with his left. If the ROK built a "peace pagoda," the DPRK erected its own building--higher than the South's. Hoping to remove any doubt about its superiority, the DPRK eventually erected the highest flagpole in world at the Panmunjom "Truce Village," officially known as the Joint Security Area.

We often think of TFT in tough terms--an "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth [in Korean, *noon a noon, e a e*]." But the payback could also be a reward for a positive action. A strategy based on TFT proved to be the winning strategy in repeated plays of Prisoner's Dilemma (PD).⁵ The winning formula in a computerized PD tournament was a simple variant of TFT. "If you move first, be nice and cooperate. Thereafter, match the other player's previous move. Start nice and never initiate toughness, but be 'provokable'--immediately respond to toughness with toughness. However, you should also be 'forgiving'--return to cooperation as soon as the other side cooperates."

This version of TFT sends a clear message that you will punish force with force but reward cooperation. The downside is that if both sides follow TFT, just one tough move puts them on an endless treadmill of mutual defection. Once mutual defection begins, it persists. This explains why the Cold War conflict spiral was so hard to break. Washington and Moscow, and Washington and Beijing usually matched each other's tough deeds and ignored tentative gestures of good will. The security dilemma aggravated perceptions and realities. Each party's defensive steps looked threatening to the other. TFT logic pressed for "multiple symmetry" --matching or surpassing assets, and threatening actions in multiple arenas. Aggravating all this, Cold War TFT was self-righteous. Each side reasoned: "They started it. We're just paying them back in kind."

How to get off the treadmill of mutual hurt and move toward mutual gain? President Richard M. Nixon and Henry Kissinger, his National Security Assistant, saw the U.S.-PRC relationship not as win-lose but as open-ended--in game theory language, variable-sum. Many outcomes were possible: Yes, one side could win and the other lose. Or both sides could lose, for example, from a nuclear war. Alternatively, both sides could win, though one might gain more or in different ways from the other. Even before Nixon's election, the future president signaled his belief that the time had come for the U.S. to normalize relations with mainland China. Kissinger planned to use a "triangular diplomacy" that played the "China card" to win concessions from Moscow and

³ On "The Myth of America's Lost Chance in China," see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapter 2.

⁴ On TFT in words at Panmunjom, see Alfred D. Wilhelm, Jr., *Chinese at the Negotiating Table: Style and Characteristics* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1994), p. 161.

⁵ Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

the “Soviet card” to influence China.⁶

Mao Zedong and his number two, Zhou Enlai, seemed to reach similar conclusions. Fearing a Soviet attack on China, Mao Zedong decided that China should partner with the United States. China would use its own version of triangular diplomacy. It would “use one barbarian against another [yi yi zhi yi].”

To move from hostile TFT to detente, Kissinger and Zhou Enlai adopted a form of conditional collaboration akin to “GRIT” --graduated reciprocity in tension-reduction--a negotiating technique proposed by Charles E. Osgood. A psychology professor at the University of Illinois, Osgood explored options beyond “red or dead” in his book *An Alternative to War or Surrender*, which was published in 1962. Osgood saw that tensions escalate when rivals deal with each other on the basis of an eye for an eye, a slap for a slap, an insult for an insult. Once the first blow has been struck (or imagined), the parties find themselves on a treadmill of perpetual combat. To reverse the spiral of tensions, one side must take the initiative and make unilateral but contingent concessions. Either side might initiate the process, but the stronger party can more safely accept the risks that often go with taking the first steps.

Before embarking on the first moves, the initiator should make clear its intentions. Here is the message it must communicate: “We are embarking on a strategy to reduce tensions. We will make several unilateral initiatives to demonstrate our good will. We will give you time to respond in a positive way. If you reciprocate, we will proceed to larger concessions and compromise accords. But unless tension-reducing moves become mutual, we will revert to hard-line TFT.”

GRIT encounters many pitfalls. First of all, a friendly gesture may be misconstrued. Thus, in 1970 a U.S. Army lieutenant in the UN Command at Panmunjom decided to improve the climate around the table in the Quonset hut where the two sides negotiated. Instead of glowering when a North Korean soldier indicated that he wanted to pass, the American smiled and made way for him. Shortly thereafter the American found himself surrounded by several North Koreans who began to jostle him. They interpreted his conciliatory gesture as weakness. “Knuckle practice” nearly ensued.⁷

GRIT could not begin with good will gestures by a low-level officer. For GRIT to work at Panmunjom, the U.S. president or head of the UN (U.S.) team would have to announce a new strategy and make sure that North Korean leaders and troops got the message.

A second pitfall is that small steps may lead to nowhere. To be safe, the initiator usually begins with symbolic gestures. The other side may interpret these as cheap tricks and not reciprocate. Utter cynics also do poorly in world affairs, because they are blind to prospects of mutual gain. But suckers and martyrs also fare poorly in power politics. They ignore Laertes’s advice to Ophelia: “Best safety lies in fear.”

Third, the initiator may give up and renounce GRIT if the other side takes too long to respond. During this interval, the initiator’s leaders are exposed to domestic criticism as well as external risk.

Fourth is the monkey wrench problem. Domestic foes or jealous clients can throw a monkey wrench that disrupts the process of tension-reduction. Détente is a fragile flower, easily crushed.

Fifth, governments are not monolithic. Bureaucratic inertia and vested interests can throttle GRIT. Purveyors of propaganda and “dirty tricks” may continue their standard operating routines-- business as usual.

Finally, momentum may be hard to sustain. The first steps toward conciliation may come cheap, while further moves encounter profound obstacles at home and abroad.

Without reading professor Osgood, wise leaders and diplomats might intuitively grasp the

⁶ History taught Kissinger that “it is usually more advantageous to align... with the weaker of two antagonistic partners, because this acted as a restraint on the stronger.” Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), pp. 173, 192-92.

⁷ Author’s interview at Panmunjom. See Walter C. Clemens, Jr., “GRIT at Panmunjom: Conflict and Cooperation in Divided Korea,” *Asian Survey*, 13, no. 6 (June 1973): 531-59 at 548.

essentials of GRIT. President John F. Kennedy's actions after the Cuban missile crisis and his "Toward a Strategy of Peace" speech on June 10, 1963, accorded perfectly with Osgood's principles. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev responded in kind as both men struggled to move from the brink of war in 1962 to a stable peace.⁸ Despite provocations and foot-dragging by each side, the White House and Kremlin sustained the movement toward detente. By the end of 1963 Khrushchev said that Moscow and Washington were practicing "disarmament by mutual example."⁹ Lyndon Johnson succeeded Kennedy in November 1963, eleven months later, Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksei Kosygin replaced Khrushchev. But the White House and the Kremlin continued in the 1960s to grope for detente along the lines proposed by Osgood. The monkey wrench problem however, repeatedly intruded--in Vietnam, the Middle East, Czechoslovakia, and in divided Germany. Between Moscow and Washington, detente remained episodic until 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev's began to implement his "New Thinking."¹⁰

The "China Card" and/or SALT in 1972

The first sustained application of GRIT took place in the early 1970s as two master diplomats, Henry Kissinger and Zhou Enlai, endeavored to normalize relations between their countries. How could the Nixon administration explore with Beijing the prospects of a fresh start? Washington had no representatives in mainland China, because it did not recognize the Communist government. U.S. ambassadors in Warsaw and Geneva had often met with their Chinese counterparts, but their dialogues were usually ad hoc efforts to cope with crises rather than integral contributions to long-term accommodation.

As Kissinger told the story, Washington began in mid-1969 to use "unilateral steps, intermediaries, and public declarations" to communicate with China. The latter included a public hint that Washington was prepared to accept a Chinese recommendation that the two countries agree to principles of peaceful coexistence; the easing of restrictions so that a U.S. tourist could buy \$100 worth of noncommercial goods made in China; and easier permission for scholars, journalists, and members of Congress to travel to China. Nixon also told leaders of Pakistan and Romania -- both close to Beijing -- that he wanted better relations with China. Beijing quickly signaled a response. It released two Americans whose boat had drifted into Chinese waters.

Using a Pakistani air marshal as go-between, Kissinger in October 1969 informed Beijing that the U.S. was withdrawing two destroyers from the Taiwan Strait -- the narrow water wall separating "island China" from mainland China, which U.S. ships had patrolled since the Korean War. Other U.S. warships would continue to transit the strait, but Washington meant to remove an "irritant."

As tensions grew along the Soviet-Chinese border, Nixon in November 1969 declared that the U.S. "shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens...a nation allied with us or...a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security." In effect, he offered to protect China against Soviet attack! In December China released two other U.S. yachtsmen and invited the U.S. ambassador to visit the Chinese embassy in Warsaw--not surreptitiously, as in the past, but through the front door.

⁸ The Kennedy speech was printed in full in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, June 13, 1963; Khrushchev's comments on the speech were published in *Pravda*, June 15 and *Izvestiia*, June 16, 1963. Quickly grasping the significance of these exchanges, China referred to them as "Kennedy's Big Conspiracy," *Peking Review* 6, no. 26 (June 28, 1963), pp. 12-14. For the Kennedy speech and analysis, see *Toward a Strategy of Peace*, ed. Walter C. Clemens, Jr. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965). The foreword by Robert F. Kennedy explains the background to the speech.

⁹ See Lincoln P. Bloomfield et al., *Khrushchev and the Arms Race: Soviet Interests in Arms Control and Disarmament, 1954-1964* (Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press, 1966), pp. 209-24; for background, Vincent P. Rock, *A Strategy of Interdependence* (New York: Scribner's, 1964).

¹⁰ Walter C. Clemens, Jr., "Gorbachev's Role in International Détente: True GRIT?" *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 20, 1 (1993), pp. 51-76.

Nixon and Kissinger's actions dovetailed with some but not all the principles of Osgood's GRIT strategy. They initiated small steps that, if reciprocated, could snowball. Contrary to Osgood's advice, however, they did not begin with an open and clear explanation that the White House was embarking on a new strategy. Instead, they conveyed their orientation to Beijing indirectly and hoped the Chinese would smile back. They enjoyed secret diplomacy and claimed it was necessary to fend off domestic critics in case Beijing spurned U.S. overtures.

Washington entered into what Kissinger called "an intricate minuet" with Beijing "so intricately arranged that both sides could always maintain that they were not in contact." Between November 1969 and June 1970, there were at least ten instances when U.S. officials abroad talked to the Chinese at diplomatic functions -- four times initiated by Chinese.¹¹

In December 1970, Pakistan's president sent a message handwritten by Premier Zhou Enlai for Pakistan's ambassador to read to Kissinger. It invited a special U.S. envoy to Beijing to discuss "the vacation of Chinese territories called Taiwan." The White House sent back an unsigned, typed reply on Xerox paper (not official stationery). It welcomed discussions in Beijing on the "broad range of issues, which lie between the People's Republic of China [emphasis added] and the United States, including the issue of Taiwan."

Here was another change--cheap, but potent: Washington began to speak not of "mainland" or "Communist" China but of the "People's Republic of China." Washington had long called the Communist Chinese capital by its former name, Peiping; now it used the Communists' terminology, Beijing (or Peking) -- "northern capital." (This offended Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists who regarded Nanjing -- "southern capital" -- as China's true capital.) Zhou Enlai told a Japanese visitor in April 1971 that he "took specific note of the fact that for the first time an American President called China by its official name."

On March 15, 1971, Washington removed all restrictions on travel to China, adding: "We hope for, but will not be deterred by, lack of reciprocity." Two days later Beijing denounced what it called the "renegade" Soviet regime in terms that told Kissinger: "The Soviet Union had replaced us as [China's] principal enemy."

Beijing now used sports to continue GRIT. Later, this was called ping-pong diplomacy--using sports to shape state-to-state relations. On April 6, Chinese officials invited to Beijing a U.S. ping-pong team, then in Japan, having been authorized by Mao himself to do so.¹² When the Americans arrived in Beijing, Zhou Enlai hosted a banquet and announced "a new chapter" in Sino-U.S. relations. As Kissinger observed, Zhou "knew how to make gestures that could not be rebuffed." He was preparing the Chinese public and party leaders for a shift. His tactics implied too that, if official Washington held back, Beijing could appeal directly to the American people.

Kissinger had prepared for this moment a list of "unrejectable steps"--stages of trade relations that could be expanded as Beijing reciprocated. Responding to Beijing's ping, Nixon ponged: He approved the sale of French trucks to China even though they contained U.S.-made engines.¹³

Nixon and Kissinger, although devoted to realpolitik, were acutely aware that low-level exchanges might evolve into accords of high political significance. On April 14 -- as the U.S. table tennis players got a warm reception in Beijing -- the White House relaxed U.S. restrictions on trade with China. The previous day Kissinger had informed the Soviet chargé d'affaires of the impending shift, and had assured him it had no anti-Soviet intent. Kissinger's memoirs explained: "This is the conventional pacifier... by which the target... is given formal reassurance intended to

¹¹ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, pp. 187-88.

¹² While in Japan, a U.S. player hitched a ride with a Chinese van and received a gift. He reciprocated with a gift the next day and hinted a desire to play in Beijing. Soon the PRC Foreign Ministry was debating the issue. According to Chinese sources, the Foreign Ministry leaned toward inviting U.S. journalists rather than ping-pong players. Zhou asked Mao what to do. He was silent for days, leading the Foreign Ministry to phone Japan and say no. When Mao changed his mind and said yes, the Foreign Ministry switched gears.

¹³ *White House Years*, p. 712.

unnerve as much as to calm, and which would defeat its purpose if it were actually believed.”¹⁴ Nixon on April 21 declared that he would cooperate with an invitation for the Chinese table tennis team to visit the U.S.

Kissinger later wrote that his secret diplomacy and back channels sought to circumvent normal procedures. But for every agency excluded--usually the State Department--Kissinger became dependent upon another's facilities--increasingly, the CIA's. Kissinger blamed the State Department for its tendency to circulate every cable throughout its bureaucracy. But Nixon and Kissinger paid for their close-to-the-vest diplomacy. Ignorant of the new approach to China, Secretary of State William Rogers and Vice President Spiro Agnew spoke out like broken records from the past. Rogers even stated in April 1971 that a presidential visit to China could not take place until Beijing complied “with the rules of international law.” Fortunately for détente, Zhou Enlai listened to Kissinger instead of Rogers. On July 9, 1971, after long and secret preparations, Kissinger flew to Beijing from Pakistan. All went well. On July 15, Nixon told the world about Kissinger's trip and announced that he too would visit China. In February 1972, the famed anti-Communist clinked glasses with the world's leading revolutionary, Chairman Mao Zedong. Meanwhile, Kissinger and Zhou drafted the Shanghai Communiqué, which defined the framework for normalization.¹⁵

GRIT across the DMZ

GRIT can fail--especially sham GRIT, when one side (or both) fakes its desire for reconciliation or puts jokers into its negotiation deck, sure to scupper a deal. Pyongyang in the 1970s often proposed steps it said could lead to North-South reunification. But South Koreans were skeptical and fearful. They had not forgotten North Korea's massive attack in 1950 and its many acts of terrorism since.¹⁶

In the 1980s, things changed. Growing prosperity in South Korea buoyed ROK diplomacy.¹⁷ In the early 1980s, Seoul proposed a summit meeting with Pyongyang and twenty pilot projects to help the North and South cooperate. Now it was the North Koreans who balked. They demanded withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea as a precondition for high-level dialogue.

A pattern emerged: North Korea demanded “all-or-nothing” while South Korea advocated “step-by-step” reconciliation. This was not true GRIT, but a propaganda war. Each side put the onus for stalemate on the other. Neither side made concessions to show its sincerity.

As Pyongyang's Soviet patron expired in 1991, North Korea became somewhat more conciliatory to Seoul. It half-way acknowledged the ROK government as a legitimate entity, and signed with it a treaty banning nuclear arms from the Korean peninsula. Seoul affirmed that U.S. nuclear arms had been withdrawn, in line with a commitment by the 41st U.S. president, George Bush. Both North and South agreed to a summit meeting in Seoul--an encounter that, more than a decade later, had still not materialized.

In 1991, an ROK general replaced an American as head of the UN delegation at Panmunjom.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Without naming the USSR, the document denounced efforts by any country to establish “hegemony” or “collude” with other countries to “divide up the world into spheres of interest.” In effect, Washington pledged not to cooperate with Moscow against China. Declassified documents show Kissinger less concerned to protect the interests of Taiwan than do his memoirs. See *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top-Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow*, ed. William Burr (New York: The Free Press, 1999).

¹⁶ On the origins of North Korea's totalitarian regime, see Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003). For analysis based on recently opened documents, see William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ When Taiwan became more prosperous and confident, Taipei began in 1986 to respond more positively to Beijing's overtures. Jun Zhan, *Ending the Chinese Civil War: Power, Commerce and Conciliation between Beijing and Taipei* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993).

In the early 1990s, the ROK had burgeoning ties with Beijing, Tokyo, and Moscow, as well as with the U.S. and other Western governments. Pyongyang, in contrast, was more isolated than ever. In early 1994, the DPRK called the armistice commission void, and withdrew its delegation, replacing it with a military liaison. In September 1994, the PRC delegation left the Military Armistice Commission at the “request” of the DPRK. Pyongyang also expelled the Czech and Polish delegations to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission established in 1953. In 1993-1994, Pyongyang revived its 1974 proposal to expand DPRK-U.S. talks into negotiations on a peace treaty (leaving the ROK on the sidelines).¹⁸

However isolated, North Korea had two aces: First, its million-man army, much larger than South Korea’s, was deployed within striking distance of Seoul. Second, many signs suggested that the DPRK was “going nuclear” in spite of its commitments to abjure nuclear weapons.¹⁹

U.S. policy-makers wondered how to draw North Korea from its shell and persuade its leaders to forgo nuclear weapons. The options and restraints facing the Clinton White House in the early 1990s were similar to those that the George W. Bush administration faced a decade later. Should Washington try to conciliate the North by canceling the annual maneuvers conducted by U.S. and ROK forces? Or stage them again to intimidate the North and please hard-liners in the South? Could U.S. bombers or missiles mount “surgical strikes” to wipe out DPRK nuclear facilities, as Israel destroyed Iraq’s Osiraq reactor in 1981? Perhaps, but the “Osiraq option” was unattractive. Even if U.S. bombs hit their target, radiation might spread. Even without nuclear weapons, North Korea threatened to ignite a firestorm in South Korea.

The Clinton administration blended firmness with flexibility. It began with military preparations for a possible strike on North Korea. But when Kim Il-Sung signaled to ex-president Jimmy Carter in June 1994 a willingness to trade the DPRK nuclear weapon program for a package of economic aid and international recognition, the U.S. responded promptly and positively.²⁰ U.S.-DPRK negotiations began in July, and stopped only briefly after Kim Il-Sung’s death on July 8, 1994 (at age 82), after which the designated heir, son Kim Jong-Il, became the paramount DPRK leader. Negotiations with the U.S. resumed in August.

In 1994, neither Washington nor Pyongyang followed Osgood’s GRIT principles entirely. Neither issued a public declaration of peaceful intent. Neither promised that small steps would lead to larger ones. But following another round of negotiations, from September 23 to October 21, 1994, the heads of each delegation --Robert I. Galluci and Kang Sok-Ju-- signed an “agreed framework” in Geneva. A model of diplomatic finesse, it constituted a package of conditional cooperation. The agreed framework (just a few pages) stipulated that, in accordance with a letter from U.S. President [Clinton] dated October 20, the U.S. would lead a consortium “for the provision to the DPRK of a LWR [light water reactor] project with a total generating capacity of approximately 2,000 MW(e) by the target date of 2003.” For its part, the DPRK would freeze its graphite-moderated reactors and related facilities and dismantle them “when the LWR project is completed.” The International Atomic Energy Agency would monitor the freeze. The U.S. and DPRK would cooperate in finding a method to store the spent fuel from the 5MW(e) reactor and “dispose of the fuel in a manner that does not involve reprocessing it in the DPRK.” To offset the energy lost by the freeze, the U.S. would supply the DPRK with 500,000 tons of heavy oil for heating and electricity production (an amount half what the Soviets provided annually in the 1990s) until the first LWR became operational.

¹⁸ DPRK-PRC communiqué on September 2, 1994, quoted in Larry Niksch, “North Korea’s Campaign Against the Korean Armistice,” Congressional Reference Service Report for Congress, 95-1187 F, December 11, 1995.

¹⁹ See Michael J. Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997 [original in 1995], pp. 94-99.

²⁰ Amid rising tensions, in 1994 Kim Il Sung received two U.S. groups making “private” visits to Korea. Their citizens’ “Track II” diplomacy opened the way to official “Track I” negotiations. Evangelist Billy Graham went to Pyongyang with a Columbia University professor who grew up in a missionary family in Korea. Next, Kim Il-Sung met with former president Jimmy Carter on June 16-17--less than a month before Kim’s death.

Meanwhile, the framework committed the two sides to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.” They would “reduce barriers to trade and investment, including restrictions on telecommunications services and financial transactions”; open liaison offices in their respective capitals; and, as progress was “made on issues of concern to each side... upgrade relations to the Ambassadorial level.”

The U.S. would “provide formal assurances to the DPRK, against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the U.S.” For its part, the DPRK would “consistently take steps to implement the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” and “engage in North-South dialogue....” The DPRK would remain a party to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT) and “allow implementation of its safeguards agreement under the Treaty.” The last paragraph read: “When a significant portion of the LWR project is completed, but before delivery of key nuclear components, the DPRK will come into full compliance with its safeguards agreement with the IAEA...”²¹

Japan, Korea, and later the EU joined the U.S.-led consortium known as the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), based in New York. The U.S. skillfully generated a major role for Japan and South Korea in building and financing the new power reactors for North Korea. The total cost for Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington was estimated at about \$5 billion -- not small change, but trivial next to the cost of building defenses against DPRK nuclear-tipped missiles, which might well fail if war broke out.

Like Kissinger and Zhou Enlai in the early 1970s, Washington and Pyongyang seemed quite aware in the mid-1990s that small steps could have large consequences. Seeking to sustain the détente that had taken shape in 1994, Pyongyang and Washington began in January 1995 to dismantle the trade embargo each had imposed forty-five years before. Each side would now permit direct phone calls and financial transactions. Washington would permit U.S. steelmakers to buy magnesite from North Korea to line their blast furnaces. DPRK and U.S. journalists could now open news bureaus in each other’s country. But the U.S. State Department said that further relaxation of economic sanctions would depend on progress on the “nuclear issue” and on DPRK restraint in exporting missile technology -- an issue not mentioned in the agreed framework.²²

To implement the agreed framework would be extremely complicated.²³ The LWR project moved very slowly. The target date for its completion was 2003, but key contracts were not let till 1997 -- three years after the framework was signed. Indeed, KEDO in 2002 was still soliciting bids for some components. By 2002 it looked as though the reactors could not be completed until 2009 or later.²⁴ The KEDO web site in 2002-2003 showed a glorious drawing of the LWR project but not much else.²⁵

Roughly three years after signing the agreed framework, North Korea began to cheat.

²¹ Text and other documents are available at the web site of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Corporation (KEDO).

²² On this topic, see Dinshaw Mistry, *Containing Missile Proliferation: Strategic Technology, Security Regimes, and International Cooperation in Arms Control* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2003).

²³ James Goodby and William Drennan, “Koreapolitik,” *Strategic Forum* 29 (May 1995): 2.

²⁴ Joseph Cirincione et al., *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), p. 247.

²⁵ Responsibility for the delays fell on many shoulders. KEDO members had to resolve who would pay how much and who would build what. North Korea had demanded such high wages for its workers that KEDO looked to import labor. Pyongyang tried to exclude South Korea and deal only with the U.S. It wanted not just the reactors but also--gratis--the supporting infrastructure and communications links. Huge questions loomed: How would the LWR be integrated into North Korea’s electric grid? Where was the necessary backup power supply? How would insurance for builders and third parties be handled and financed? How could world-class safety standards be assured? Who would take the spent fuel from the old gas-graphite reactor? How would more comprehensive IAEA inspections be arranged? David Albright and Kevin O’Neill, eds., *Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Science and International Security Press, 2000); Joel Wit, “Viewpoint: The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization: Achievements and Challenges,” *Nonproliferation Review* (Center for Nonproliferation Studies), 6, 2 (Winter 1999), pp. 59-69.

Working in secret, DPRK scientists began using a second method to acquire fissile material. Instead of using spent fuel, they tried to produce weapons-grade uranium from natural uranium. They did so using Pakistani technology (high-speed centrifuges).²⁶

Why cheat? Perhaps Kim Jong-Il feared that the Americans and KEDO were stalling on the LWR.²⁷ Perhaps he just wanted to hedge his bets. Perhaps he decided that the DPRK needed nuclear weapons to deter and intimidate others. Perhaps he enjoyed dirty tricks and planned to cheat all along. The year 1997 generated an opportunity. Pakistan's economic downturn left Islamabad short of enough cash to pay for DPRK missiles. A barter of nuclear technology for missiles could meet the economic and strategic needs of both countries. But while Western intelligence suspected North Korea was conducting a clandestine nuclear weapons program, several fact-finding visits to possible sites found nothing. Not till 2002 did the CIA feel sure that the DPRK had a clandestine weapons program.

Pyongyang did not withdraw its 1989 accession to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, but in August 1997, North Korea announced it was withdrawing from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights after it was reprimanded for human rights deficiencies and for failing to report on its implementation of the accord. The covenant obliges each signatory state to uphold for individuals the rights of expression, of peaceful assembly, of association with others in trade unions, and of taking part in public life and elections. The eighteen-member UN human rights committee responded on October 30, 1997, that no signatory can withdraw from the covenant, which has no provision for termination or denunciation -- a deliberate omission, not a mere oversight.

1997 was also a bad year for North Korea's economy. While Pakistan and the ROK suffered from a financial crisis shared with other Asian countries, North Korea faced a more basic problem: famine. Besides the chronic ailments of Communized agriculture, harvests were down after two years of floods followed by a prolonged drought. The DPRK regime urged its people to get by on two meals a day—one, if they could manage.

UN observers and the NGO Oxfam concluded that North Korea was on the brink of mass starvation. The world mobilized to send food, but Pyongyang still balked at direct talks with Seoul. The ROK sent rice, but Pyongyang refused to say thanks. Instead it arrested some South Korean fishermen on charges of spying. Seoul blocked outside food aid until Pyongyang changed its tune. Even as North Korea began to receive more food and other assistance from outside, a DPRK submarine crashed onto the South Korean coast, disgorging a dozen commandos, whom the South Koreans hunted down. Even as DPRK diplomats met with U.S., PRC, and ROK representatives at Columbia University, Pyongyang demanded withdrawal of U.S. troops from the peninsula and cancellation of U.S.-ROK maneuvers scheduled for late 1997.

The year 1997 thus marked an intensification of what we might call the *juche* syndrome. The worse North Korea's economic problems, when the regime might be expected to be most responsive to foreign pressures, the more belligerent its behavior and ungrateful its words. Even without the pressures of famine, North Korea's negotiating style was crisis-oriented with a pattern of drama and catastrophe.²⁸

²⁶ Indian intelligence experts published the details long before U.S. intelligence publicly reached similar conclusions in 2002. See the reprise by B. Raman, "Pakistan and the North Korean Connection," Asia Times Online, October 22, 2002; see also Seymour M. Hersh, "The Cold Test," *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2003.

²⁷ The North Koreans may have recalled China's experience with Soviet promises. Marshal Nie Rongzhen Zhen in the third volume of his memoirs said that the Soviets deliberately stalled on their October 1957 pledge to supply China with nuclear weapons and missile technology. Even the prototype samples they sent were substandard. Nie Rongzhen hui yi lu, 3 vols., 2d ed. (Beijing: Zhan shi chu ban she, 1983).

²⁸ Scott Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), p. 43. See also Chuck Downs, *Over the Line: North Korea's Negotiating Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1999). Compare with Wilhelm, *Chinese at the Negotiating Table* and Richard H. Solomon, *Chinese Negotiating Behavior: Pursuing Interests Through 'Old Friends'* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999).

North Korea's economic problems led to speculation. Might a dying North Korea launch a last-ditch attack on the South? Might North Korea open its borders and deluge the ROK with millions of refugees? Might a "German" solution become more thinkable--collapse of the Communist government followed by a merger of non-Communist and Communist regions, endorsed by the great powers? If the DPRK collapsed, would a unified Korea inherit its nuclear arms?

Some U.S. experts suggested arms control measures to build confidence between Seoul and Pyongyang. Among the suggestions: measures to increase transparency for each side's military forces; constraints on military deployments near the DMZ; a "nonoffensive defense" military posture to replace any capacity for deep penetration across the DMZ, verified by the UN and observers from each side; a direct communications link between the ROK and DPRK defense ministers; reduced military forces (U.S. as well as Korean) on each side of the DMZ; and promises by Washington, Beijing, and Moscow not to circumvent the DPRK-ROK accords.

In the winter of 1997-1998, however, the South Korean economy also shuddered, throwing many people out of work and helping to elect a new president, Kim Dae-Jung. He had long objected to the hard-line policies pursued by South Korea toward North Korea, and launched a "Sunshine Policy" toward the DPRK in 1998. No longer would the South seek to undermine or absorb the North. Instead, the new ROK government fostered Track II relationships -- trade, tourism, and investment in special economic zones in the North. These ideas were embraced also by some ROK businesses hoping to profit from closer ties with North Korea. Pyongyang responded fitfully -- alternating frowns and menacing actions with occasional smiles.

In the slightly mellower climate of the 1998-2000, the DPRK government renewed its efforts to normalize relations with the U.S. and other Western governments. It established diplomatic relations with the EU and with most EU governments, as well as with Australia. The Clinton Administration seemed close to a comprehensive understanding with the North that included a lifting of U.S. sanctions in return for an end to DPRK nuclear weapon and missile programs.

Kim Jong-Il received Kim Dae-Jung in Pyongyang in 2000. The ROK president agreed to a DPRK formulation holding that the North and the South would resolve the "country's reunification independently," i.e., without any role for outsiders. Thus, Kim Jong-Il managed to exploit the Sunshine Policy as a way to drive a wedge between the ROK and its major ally.²⁹

The ROK president received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in opening the way for a new era in North-South relations. The mutual trust sought by Osgood's GRIT strategy could not, however, be promoted by under-the-table bribes. In 2003, the world learned that the North's dear leader had extorted hundreds of millions of dollars for deigning to entertain his counterpart -- even so, changing the date on several occasions for their well publicized summit. Following these revelations, North Korea urged Seoul not to prosecute all those indicted for their parts in the illegal transfer of funds to Pyongyang. DPRK officials piously hoped that the suicide of Hyundai Asan chairman Chung Mong-Hun, a key figure in the bribery scandal, would not affect Hyundai's projects in the North.³⁰

It is true that Kim Dae-Jung's Sunshine Policy resembled Osgood's GRIT model in many respects.³¹ But it departed in one crucial dimension: It placed too little emphasis on reciprocity. In this, it was not prudent. The practitioner of GRIT must strike a balance between conciliatory initiatives to encourage the other side and defensive measures to guard against exploitation by a manipulative foe. Of course the stronger side can afford to be generous and give the weaker party more time to respond. Indeed, the Soviet government under Mikhail Gorbachev gave the Reagan administration more than a year to respond to unilateral Soviet moves. The Kremlin ultimately

²⁹ Nicholas N. Eberstadt, "Korea," *Strategic Asia 2002-03: Asian Aftershocks*, ed. Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg with Michael Wills (Seattle, Wash.: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002), pp. 130-82 at 149.

³⁰ "A fabulous appeal," *The Korea Herald*, August 27, 2003, editorial.

³¹ Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig, *North Korea: Through the Looking Glass* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2000), p. 242, footnote 20.

made larger concessions than the U.S. to reach some arms controls, for example, on intermediate-range nuclear missiles.³²

While Gorbachev negotiated from deep weaknesses, South Korea proceeded from relative strength. Still, the ROK government gave far more to the DPRK than it got. But economic “exchanges” were by no means symmetrical. The North would benefit directly; the South, indirectly. Seoul’s dilemma was how to sustain movement toward cooperation without “giving away the store.”³³

For decades the governments in Seoul and Pyongyang had seen themselves as participants in a zero-sum fight to the death. In 2003, however, Kim Dae-Jung and his successor Roh Moo-Hyun went to the opposite extreme. They adopted a Pollyannaish, positive-sum approach.

Two Poles: Unlimited Sunshine and Unlimited Bombast

Looking back, we can see that the sunshine orientation did not accord with GRIT, with conditional cooperation, or with the needs of coalition diplomacy. It assumed that one of the toughest regimes on the face of the earth had suddenly become angelic.

Seoul and Washington were no longer in synch.³⁴ The win-win attitude in Seoul after 1998 departed from the variable-sum outlook held by Clinton. The Sunshine course was polar opposite to the ultra hard line favored by the Bush team that took office in January 2001. While the ROK government acted as though angels administered Pyongyang, the new U.S. administration talked as though the North were ruled by devils with whom real cooperation was not feasible.

The policies of the new team in Washington destroyed any prospect that the Sunshine Policy could succeed. The Bush approach sabotaged movement toward peace on the peninsula, divided two historic allies, and broke off a promising accommodation between two historic foes.

For starters, early in 2001, the Bush team redefined China from a potential strategic partner to America’s peer rival, and treated Russia as a virtual nonentity. In the months before 9/11, the Pentagon prepared to build up U.S. forces in Asia for an eventual confrontation with China. In this context, the Bush team also scorned the value of talking with Pyongyang. Asserting that North Korea was not a dependable negotiation partner, the Bush team did not continue the Clinton administration’s negotiations with Pyongyang -- even though (or because?) those talks may have been close to limiting DPRK long-range missiles as well as nuclear weapons.³⁵ A U.S. official denied that the Clinton-era negotiations were close to limiting DPRK missiles, because they did not provide a verification mechanism. But missile tests and even missile exports can be monitored by “national means” without on-site inspection. If more verification machinery were needed, further talks might have arranged it. With talks suspended, one could never know. In 2002, the U.S. president went further and lumped North Korea with Iraq and Iran in a putative “axis of evil.” America’s bark could anticipate bite. Tough U.S. words were followed by large

³² Walter C. Clemens, Jr., *Can Russia Change? The USSR Confronts Global Interdependence* (New York: Routledge, 1990), chapter 8.

³³ The dilemma and how to cope with it were suggested by Chung-In Moon and Tae-Hwan Kim, “Sustaining Inter-Korean Reconciliation: North-South Korea Cooperation,” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 15, 2 (Fall/Winter 2001), pp. 203-45 and Dae-Sung Song, “A Peace Regime and Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula: Challenges and Alternatives in the Beginning of the 21st Century,” *ibid.*, pp. 246-69.

³⁴ Younger South Koreans had long resented the U.S. for aiding and abetting the brutality of earlier, military-led governments toward the people of South Korea. Revulsion toward the U.S. increased when the George W. Bush administration threw overboard the negotiating momentum achieved by the administrations of Bill Clinton and Kim Dae-Jung in the late 1990s and 2000. See the public opinion surveys reported by Youngshik Bong, “Anti-Americanism and the U.S.-Korea Military Alliance,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, August 28, 2003, and C. S. Eliot Kang, “Restructuring the US-South Korean alliance to deal with the second Korean nuclear crisis,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 57, 2 (July 2003), pp. 309-324.

³⁵ Edward A. Olsen, “U.S.-Korean Relations: The Evolving Missile Context,” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 1, 2 (Fall/Winter 2001), pp. 270-96.

U.S. military operations against the regimes in Kabul and Baghdad and smaller operations in the Philippines and elsewhere.

Depicting the DPRK regime as untrustworthy, the White House implicitly challenged the wisdom of Seoul's Sunshine Policy. A growing coolness in U.S.-ROK relations was manifested in the failure of President Kim Dae-Jung to telephone his condolences to President Bush after 9/11, or to offer help in the war against al-Qaeda terrorism.

The bifurcated attitudes in Seoul and in Washington converged to bolster hard-line attitudes in Pyongyang. While Seoul remained stuck in its win-win Pollyanna, Washington and Pyongyang confirmed the darkest expectations of each other. Two examples illustrate what went wrong. First, the U.S. broke from the tacit division of labor with Seoul, whereby Washington pressed Pyongyang on nuclear issues and Seoul dealt with the North's conventional arms. When the Bush team called for a reduction of North Korea's conventional forces, Pyongyang began once more to demand the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea (and even from Japan) as a condition for Korean reunification.

While the Sunshine Policy could encourage Kim Jong-Il to seek one-sided gains for North Korea with little reciprocity, the words and deeds of the Bush administration also promoted a zero-sum outlook in Pyongyang.³⁶ To be sure, one option for North Korea would be to warm to South Korea and cave in to U.S. demands. But this response was unlikely given the political culture of the DPRK (including its *juche* ideology) and the psychology of its 5'2", 176 lb. "dear leader," sometimes called "altitude" for his shoe lifts.³⁷ DPRK officials averred that "reverence" for Kim Jong-Il "is daily mounting in South Korea," where the people "worship" him for arranging the historic Pyongyang summit [in 2000] and who "wisely leads the whole nation to the cause of independent reunification with his great Songun politics..."³⁸

Given the admixture of strategic calculation and emotion in Pyongyang, a more likely response was that North Korea would "keep its powder dry" and strive to acquire a nuclear deterrent -- while doing all it could to aggravate frictions between Seoul and Washington.

Despite placing North Korea on the axis of evil, the Bush team did not threaten North Korea with a "preemptive" attack as it did Iraq. Pyongyang could reason that it did not risk an American attack by pushing for nuclear arms. As in early 1950, Washington was again encouraging North Korean leaders to imagine that they enjoyed a free hand. The Bush team was tough when it should have been conciliatory and soft when it should have been firm.

Why the divergent U.S. stances toward Iraq and North Korea? The former had oil; the latter did not. Also, Pyongyang had a far more credible -- conventional and perhaps nuclear -- deterrent than did Iraq. Few countries supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but all of North Korea's neighbors endorsed diplomatic pressure on North Korea to persuade Kim Jong-Il to renounce nuclear arms. China and Russia, however, were reluctant to take any steps that might bolster the American hyperpower.

The Bush team may also have been complacent because a DPRK deployment of nuclear-tipped missiles would provide some justification for the U.S. National Missile Defense being built in Alaska. Critics warned, however, that the antimissile defenses were not just expensive but likely to fail against decoys. If North Korea launched a dozen missiles and even one or two nuclear warheads got through, the results would be catastrophic.

Would hunger stay Pyongyang's quest for nuclear arms? Not likely. The *juche* fetish remained in place. North Korea became slightly less dependent on foreign food shipments in 2002-2003 than it was in the 1990s. Some 13 million people (of 23 million) remained malnourished in 2003. Some 42 percent of North Korean children were so malnourished that their

³⁶ For a detailed listing of what the North saw as provocative actions by the U.S., see the report on Central Broadcasting Station, Pyongyang, on May 12, 2003 at 2200 GMT, reported by the BBC on May 14, 2003.

³⁷ Oh and Hassig, North Korea, pp. 91 ff.

³⁸ Jo Il-Min, Chief of the Pyongyang Mission to the National Democratic Front of South Korea, interviewed by Korean and foreign reporters on June 12, 2003, as reported by the KCNA the next day.

mental and physical growth could be stunted, but this was a relative improvement -- down from 62 percent in 1998.³⁹

Another Collision Course

In June 2002, the CIA sent a "National Intelligence Estimate" to the White House asserting that North Korea was breaking its word and secretly obtaining the means to produce weapons-grade uranium. In October 2002, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly confronted DPRK representatives with evidence of North Korea's secret uranium enrichment. The Americans may have hoped to resolve the issue with quiet diplomacy, but Pyongyang admitted -- later boasted -- that it had a covert nuclear program. Regardless what outsiders might now think, the DPRK claimed in late 2002 and early 2003 that it already possessed nuclear weapons and intended to build up its nuclear capacity for peace and war. In May 2003, it adduced a new and more sophisticated rationale: Nukes were more cost-effective than large conventional forces and would save money.

The U.S. and its partners responded by throwing a switch. Washington said that Pyongyang seemed to have breached the agreed framework. On November 14, 2002 the KEDO announced that its oil shipments would halt after November unless the DPRK agreed to halt its covert program. (Nuclear cheating or not, however, South Korean business interests begged KEDO in 2003 not to halt construction of the power stations, since the ROK had already sunk nearly \$1 billion in the reactor project.)

Pyongyang did not bow. On December 12, 2002 it said it would reactivate the facilities frozen under the now-defunct agreed framework. It directed the IAEA to remove its seals and monitoring cameras on all DPRK nuclear facilities. Despite or because of these events, South Korea's voters elected Roh Moo-Hyun the new ROK president, after he campaigned against the hard U.S. line to North Korea. President Roh intended not just to continue, but to augment the sunshine orientation, renaming it the "Peace and Prosperity Policy." Like his predecessor, the new president talked as though win-win outcomes were inevitable in dealing with the DPRK, with no need for leverage or defensive fallback positions.

On December 21, the DPRK cut the seals and interfered with monitoring equipment at the Yongbyon's 5MWe reactor. In the next few days it removed the seals from some 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods that can be used to make weapons-grade plutonium. It began moving fresh fuel rods to a nuclear reactor building to reactivate its frozen nuclear facilities. On December 31, IAEA inspectors departed the DPRK at North Korea's request. On January 10, 2003, Pyongyang announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, effective the next day (contrary to the 90-day notice required). Some North Korean and U.S. officials wanted to get off the collision course. On the same day, Pyongyang declared its withdrawal from the NPT, two DPRK diplomats flew from New York to New Mexico to meet with Governor Bill Richardson. If the DPRK Foreign Ministry approved this trip, it flouted Osgood's call for a clear strategy by sending extremely mixed signals. The two diplomats may have chosen to talk with Richardson because of personal ties, formed when he served as Clinton's ambassador to the UN. But a Republican White House would hardly welcome any sign that the DPRK was trying to divide Americans on how to deal with Korean issues.

On February 4, Washington stated it was considering strengthening its forces in the Western Pacific. Unmoved, North Korea the next day announced it was reactivating its "nuclear facilities." On February 13, the IAEA declared the DPRK in breach of IAEA nuclear safeguards and referred the case to the UN Security Council which, on April 9, expressed concern about the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula but took no other action. Finding still another way to ratchet up tensions,

³⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 2002/3* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), map XXI.

the DPRK on February 18 threatened to withdraw from the 1953 armistice agreement. On February 25, the same day the new ROK president took office, North Korea test fired a short-range, land-to-ship missile into the Sea of Japan. On March 2, DPRK fighters intercepted a U.S. surveillance aircraft in what Washington said was international airspace. On March 4, U.S. and ROK troops began a month of war games. On March 10, DPRK forces tested another land-to-ship missile.

The winds in Seoul shifted slightly. Shortly after the U.S. invaded Iraq, on March 20, 2003, ROK President Roh supported the campaign. As the war ended, on April 2, the ROK National Assembly voted to send 700 noncombat troops to Iraq -- spurring much invective from Pyongyang.

The North no doubt felt some "shock and awe" at the rapid U.S. military advance through Iraq. In April, Pyongyang dropped its insistence on one-on-one talks with Washington, and said it would accept any format for dialogue, provided the U.S. made a "bold switchover" in its Korea policy. A compromise venue took shape later in the month: Diplomats from the U.S., DPRK, and China met for three days in Beijing, but seemed to move no closer to a solution.

Having considered the move for several years, the U.S. in May 2003 announced that it would gradually pull back 14,000 soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Division from two dozen small bases along the DMZ to two hubs -- Osan and Taegu -- some 75 miles to the south. The Pentagon claimed that this shift would enhance the deterrent effect of U.S. troops, because they would no longer be hostage to a massive DPRK attack with short-range artillery, but could still punish North Korea with longer-range U.S. weapons and act as "linebackers," moving up and down the DMZ in case of attack.

Critics said the Pentagon was further antagonizing both Pyongyang and Seoul. The suspicious DPRK regime might see the pullback as preparation for a first-strike. The ROK government opposed any change that could destabilize the fragile status quo. If America planned to attack the North, however, the pullback would be too gradual to safeguard U.S. forces for some years. If and when the pullback materialized, U.S. forces would be concentrated in "one basket" (or two) - quite vulnerable to DPRK missiles.

Seldom outdone in verbal martial arts, Pyongyang officials told a U.S. Congressional delegation on June 2 that North Korea had nearly completed reprocessing 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods to make more nuclear bombs.

Prospects

Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang pursued policies similar to GRIT in the mid- and late-1990s with positive effect. But ROK policies after 1998 became too soft, while U.S. policies after 2001 were too rigid. Each approach encouraged Kim Jong-Il to revert to his own version of zero-sum unilateralism.

The obstacles to a successful policy utilizing GRIT are much greater on the Korean peninsula in the early 21st century than in Washington's relations with Moscow and Beijing during the Cold War.⁴⁰

- Even if President Bush made a clear pronouncement about seeking to improve relations with North Korea, the message might not get through or ring true in Pyongyang--especially after Bush and some of his officials have insulted the top leaders of the DPRK, using language far more offensive than President Ronald Reagan's impersonal denunciation of the Soviet "evil empire."⁴¹ (When U.S. Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton called Kim Jon Il a "tyrannical

⁴⁰ Some of these problems were highlighted in a July 24, 2003 letter to the author from Michael Bujold, a Canadian scholar working in Seoul.

⁴¹ Vladimir Lenin, writing from his sickbed, advised the Soviet Foreign Commissar G. V. Chicherin to try and divide

rogue” in August 2003, Pyongyang branded him “human scum” and demanded and got his exclusion from the talks held later that month in Beijing [“Arms Control Hard-liner Won’t Attend Session on N. Korea,” *Washington Post*, August 13, 2003]—tit-for-tat, but did either side gain?).

- Initial steps may lead nowhere. If trade channels opened up, what could the DPRK sell? With what could it purchase imports? And if the promised power reactors produced electricity, could North Korea’s grid transmit electricity where it is needed? Factions in Washington, Pyongyang, and Seoul may try to subvert moves toward détente on the Korean peninsula.
- The knowledge gap also yawns wide: Americans, Soviets, and Chinese surely understood each other better than Americans and North Koreans--leaving a fertile field for misperception and misunderstanding. In summer 2003 one of the most knowledgeable and experienced Americans, Ambassador Charles L. Pritchard, quit the U.S. government because (he wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 2003), he believed it no longer wished to tap his expertise and did not name him to lead the U.S. delegation that met North Koreans in Beijing in April 2003, thereby leaving the Bush team with less expertise in case it ever wished to draw on knowledge instead of ideology.
- Last but not least, “face” may be more important in Korea than in Moscow or Washington. Can North Korea accept a U.S. concession and reciprocate without appearing weak? May Kim Jong-Il feel constrained by his own hard-liners to demand one concession after another without reciprocating? How long will Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and other outsiders put up with a regime that bites the hands that feed it?

While these and other suspicions are well grounded, outsiders have not yet adequately tested Pyongyang’s capacity to be a partner in better relations. An adequate test would begin with a GRIT-like negotiating stance maintained consistently for some years, and nourished by reasonable concessions--not under-the-table bribes.

Early in the 21st century, however, the trend was away from GRIT and toward TFT. Still, the U.S. and its partners did not immediately match North Korea’s tough words and deeds. Focused on Iraq and other parts of the Middle East, the Bush White House devoted little time or other resources to Korea. Washington continued to insist that multilateral negotiations would (and must) suffice to deal with the nuclear and other issues of the Korean peninsula. To be sure, Secretary of State Colin Powell said in June 2003 that no security issue was more pressing than that of North Korea’s nuclear program. But he was at least a year late in reaching this conclusion.

The Bush team generated the worst of possible worlds for U.S. security: It suspended what had been promising negotiations with the DPRK while fostering a defiant self-reliance in Pyongyang. Washington proffered neither carrots nor sticks. The Bush administration talked as though the U.S. would just watch as North Korea broke its arms control commitments. While the Bush team eagerly invaded Iraq looking for weapons of mass destruction, it seemed unperturbed that North Korea might join the nuclear weapons club. Washington hinted it would be content merely to stop the DPRK from exporting plutonium to rogue states and nonstate terrorists. This fallback position, however, would be hard to sustain, since plutonium is readily concealed and even small amounts can do catastrophic damage. Could it be wise for the U.S. to just watch while North Korea turns out plutonium like sausages? Could this kind of neglect be benign?⁴²

Given the peculiar circumstances of Kim Jong-Il’s upbringing and the growing isolation of

the bourgeois governments and states taking part in the 1922 Genoa Economic Conference. But he told him to avoid “venomous words [iadvotie slova].” See Walter C. Clemens, “Lenin on Disarmament,” *Slavic Review*, 23, 3 (September 1964.), pp. 504-525.

⁴² Oh and Hassig, *North Korea*, p. 203.

his regime, it was not so surprising that he would revert to a zero-sum approach to negotiation. Given the wide knowledge in South Korea of Pyongyang's domestic and foreign policies, there was no excuse for its leaders and students to adopt a naive head-in-the-sands posture.⁴³ Nor was there much basis for the self-righteous unilateralism practiced by the Bush team, which seemed intent on alienating friends and inspiring enemies.

The Bush team exuded a hubris like that which, Thucydides tells us, led ancient Athens to overreach. Though the Straussian neoconservatives close to the president fought against moral relativism, "moral clarity" was hard to establish in U.S.-North Korean relations, because neither side had completely fulfilled its agreed obligations. Believing North Korea wrong and America right, the Bush team had difficulty in seeing America as Pyongyang's leaders did--an aggressive bully. Despite its chummy ties with the Christian Coalition, the White House was not prone to follow Christ's advice, and look for motes in its own eyes.

All parties concerned with Korea would gain by affirming their mutual vulnerability and seeking to create joint values--not trying to seize them in a one-sided manner. The recommendations made to the White House on U.S. policy to North Korea by the team headed by former Defense Secretary William J. Perry in 1999 remain valid. Fully in harmony with Osgood's principles, the Perry report advised that Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo pursue two paths. On the first path, "the United States and its allies would, in a step-by-step and reciprocal fashion, move to reduce pressures on the DPRK that it perceives as threatening. The reduction of perceived threat would in turn give the DPRK regime the confidence that it could coexist peacefully with us and its neighbors and pursue its own economic and social development. If the DPRK moved to eliminate its nuclear and long-range missile threats, the United States would normalize relations with the DPRK, relax sanctions that have long constrained trade with the DPRK, and take other positive steps that would provide opportunities for the DPRK." If North Korea did not reciprocate, the Perry team recommended a second path: "firm but measured steps to persuade the DPRK that it should return to the first path and avoid destabilizing the security situation in the region."⁴⁴

The simplest way for the U.S. to deal with North Korea would be to resume bilateral negotiations. Unlike Washington and Beijing when Kissinger and Zhou began to negotiate, U.S. and DPRK representatives have been talking in a variety of fora for many years. It would cost little or nothing for the U.S. to meet Pyongyang's demand for a renewal of direct talks that could eventuate in greater normalization of economic and political relations. The interests of other parties could be represented initially by the U.S. delegation and then by a widened forum.

Striving to break from the apparent impasse on negotiating fora, in May 2003, the United States Institute of Peace proposed that a four-party conference meet under the auspices of the UN Security Council to craft a political settlement of the Korean conflict, conditioned on a return for the verified dismantling of the DPRK's nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁵ This kind of arrangement could lead to a denuclearized Korea, with the North better integrated in the world economy.⁴⁶ If the U.S. proposed such a conference and Pyongyang turned it down,

⁴³ Educators in the ROK might ask whether they need to teach not only math and science but also more history and civics. What kind of upbringing could make young South Koreans sympathetic to a regime that starves its own people - also Koreans -- and responds to food aid with saboteurs? And highly antagonistic toward an ally whose maneuvers occasionally cause accidents, but whose status of forces agreement is much less protective than similar accords protecting ROK troops based in other countries? And who seem blasé about the collusion between bridge builders in Seoul and ROK governments when those bridges collapse and kill people after just a few years. Do they ever compare those casualties with those caused by U.S. troops?

⁴⁴ "The Perry Report" chaired by Dr. William J. Perry, October 12, 1999, text in Albright and O'Neill, *Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle*, Appendix 6. One of Perry's closest partners, Ashton Carter, wrote me that he had never read anything about Osgood or GRIT.

⁴⁵ United States Institute of Peace, "A Comprehensive Resolution of the Korean War," Special Report 106, May 2003.

⁴⁶ The road to a North-South confederation, however, would still be rocky. For a more optimistic appraisal, see Selig S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

Washington would be in a stronger position to demand sanctions against the North. Six-power talks were held in Beijing in August 2003, with U.S. and DPRK representatives sometimes talking on the side.

Perhaps negotiations would be better conducted under the umbrella of the UN Security Council. Japan as well as Russia should also take part -- generating a kind of "4 + 2" negotiation similar to that which facilitated German reunification. This forum would give greater legitimacy and staying power to whatever arrangements emerged.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Pritchard and other experts have argued that a deal will require prolonged two-party talks between DPRK and U.S. representatives—precisely the negotiating forum that the Bush team resisted. The Bush administration was happy to go it alone almost everywhere except when it came to North Korea.

Is it impossible to turn back the clock and resurrect the agreed framework? There are precedents for voluntary nuclear disarmament. Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan gave up nuclear arms in return for gains in other domains; South Africa did so without any external reward. Other countries such as Brazil and Taiwan terminated their nuclear weapons programs before they produced a bomb. To make the deal acceptable, the U.S. and its partners would have to intensify and broaden their commitment to satisfy North Korea's energy needs and to help with other dimensions of economic development. Whatever the bill, it would be miniscule next to the costs and dangers of nuclear arms competition in East Asia. If North Korea wants diplomatic recognition and security assurances, these would be a small price for the U.S. to pay for a denuclearized Korea. There might well be practical benefits for both sides. Washington did not like the German Democratic Republic but found it useful to have diplomatic relations with it--if only to understand, penetrate, and weaken it.

Who should take the first step to break from diplomatic deadlock? True GRIT answers: the stronger party--*if* it wants to. Even when U.S. negotiators in August and September 2003 talked of sequencing North Korean denuclearization with Western concessions, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher still insisted that the first moves were up to North Korea.⁴⁸ If U.S. officials read this essay and really wanted a deal, they would tone down their rhetoric and upgrade their quotient of flexibility. How pathetic can the other side be when its people, in September 2003, had to rejoice that the Supreme People's Assembly had reelected the "Dear Leader" chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission by a unanimous vote—687 to zero?

University Press, 2002).

⁴⁷For the big picture, see Nicholas Eberstadt and Richard J. Ellings, eds., *Korea's Future and the Great Powers* (Seattle, Wash.: National Bureau of Asian Research and University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁴⁸See lead story by David E. Sanger, "U.S. Said to Shift Approach in Talks with North Korea," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2003, pp. 1, 8 and subsequent backtracking clarifications by Washington officials.