

# **Be Careful What You Wish For – Security and Stability on the Korean Peninsula<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This article argues that the primary objective of international relations<sup>2</sup> on the Korean peninsula is the enhancement of regional and therefore global political stability rather than de-nuclearization of the peninsula or the re-unification of the Republic of Korea (ROK) with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as is frequently argued. While some may contend that de-nuclearization and re-unification will result in greater regional stability, this article argues that depending upon the timing and methods used, either of these events or both in concert could in fact decrease the stability of the region and even precipitate open conflict amongst the various stakeholders.

The best approach to achieving the goal of stability in the region is a process of relatively slow and gradual change that will originate from within the DPRK resulting in the disintegration of the regime rather than its collapse, a process that ideally will be contained by the other states in the region in cooperation with each other. Factors that will contribute to this process include the changing dynamics of regional international relations, the specific interests of regional stakeholders, evolutions in modern communications technology, and the shifting forces of domestic economics and politics within the DPRK itself. Those who continue to advocate immediate de-nuclearization and re-unification as a means of enhancing security and stability on the Korean peninsula should be careful of what they wish for.

**Keywords:** China, De-nuclearization, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Nuclear, Re-unification, Republic of Korea, Russia, Security, Stability, United States

## **Introduction**

The most recent chapter in the ongoing crisis involving stability, or lack thereof, on the Korean peninsula began in December of 2011 when

the second of the post-war rulers of the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong Il died of natural causes.<sup>3</sup> In an outwardly well-orchestrated transition, his son Kim Jong-un assumed power and immediately began to consolidate his hold on the state, its citizens, and the institutions that control them.<sup>4</sup>

This process of consolidation resulted in a number of changes that continue to unfold in the upper echelons of the Kim family regime and in the orchestration of a series of developments and provocations on the peninsula.<sup>5</sup> These actions were intended to prove to the people of the DPRK that their country is under constant threat from external aggressors and in turn, demonstrate the strength and determination of the regime's leader to protect his people from disaster and foreign domination.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the new leader appeared to lack the carefully developed and practiced skillsets of brinkmanship that his forbears possessed added just the right amount of uncertainty to the pseudo-crises to keep much of the world on edge for a considerable period of time.<sup>7</sup>

The central issue of this and previous crises regarding the security of the Korean peninsula since the 1990s was that of nuclear proliferation. The Pyongyang regime has had the development of a nuclear weapon capability as a strategic goal for several decades. Fearing the loss of control over their erstwhile client, both the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and China repeatedly refused to support the DPRK regime's development of a nuclear weapon capability. It was only in the 1980s that the USSR, as the regime's main sponsor, relented and began actively assisting the regime in weapons development. Following the collapse of its main sponsor, the Pyongyang regime renewed its efforts in the development of a nuclear weapons capability as the most reliable guarantee of the regime's security and longevity in an increasingly unsympathetic region.<sup>8</sup> The development of such a capability was seen as the ideal tool with which to shape relationships with friends and adversaries (real or imagined) alike.<sup>9</sup>

Since that time and through a succession of potential conflicts and controversies, the diplomatic efforts of the major global and regional powers have focused upon the issue of how to convince the regime to cease development of a nuclear weapons capability and the cost to the West should they agree to do so. Success in this endeavor has been proclaimed on numerous occasions but these announcements have invariably been followed by a breakdown in the agreed upon process as one or both sides issued accusations of negotiating in bad faith or

outright violations on the part of the other regarding the of the terms of the agreement.<sup>10</sup> Much has been made of these “failures” to achieve what is widely considered an essential step in the generation of increased security and stability on the Korean peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

The stakes in this dangerous process of brinkmanship are not only the security and stability of the region, but potentially that of the entire world as the DPRK’s nuclear weapons capability, even if small and rudimentary, poses a threat far beyond the Korean peninsula and perhaps beyond the region itself. Moreover, the regime is considered one of the foremost proliferators of nuclear and missile technology to some of the least stable regimes on the planet. Nonetheless the goal of denuclearizing the DPRK regime may not be the panacea it is believed by many to be. Indeed, it may well turn out to be the exact opposite depending upon the circumstances in which it comes to pass.

A related and sometimes conflated issue of peninsular security is that of re-unification of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the DPRK. Separated into two distinct states in the aftermath of World War II, the agreed upon process of democratic elections and re-unification intended for the immediate post-World War II timeframe never took place. After a three-year inconclusive war that resulted in massive destruction throughout the peninsula and more than 3 million casualties that was followed by more than half a century of tension and periodic conflict, the Korean peninsula has often been characterized as the only place on earth still dominated by Cold War rivalries.<sup>12</sup> The collective Western position on the establishment of peace (the Korean War has yet to be formally concluded and perhaps more importantly, the issues that shaped it have never been resolved) and unity on the Korean peninsula is that the war should be formally ended and the two Koreas re-unified as a means of establishing lasting stability and security in the region as well as on the peninsula.<sup>13</sup> Publicly, the rectitude and benefits of efforts to re-unify the peninsula appear to be a foregone conclusion in the minds of many.

While it is difficult to argue with this premise in general, the specifics of re-unification may be subject to some discussion. Paradoxically, the best interests of the primary regional security stakeholders who purportedly support re-unification as a means of stabilizing the peninsula may actually not be well served by the realization of that goal in either the short or longer term.<sup>14</sup> And perhaps curiously, support for re-unification among the citizens of the ROK is not as universal or even as widespread as many assume, especially when the

costs and sacrifices they would have to accept are considered.<sup>15</sup>

Careful consideration of both the de-nuclearization and the re-unification issue indicates that both of these developments, their probity and desirability taken as almost self-evident in terms of increasing security and stability on the Korean peninsula, could in fact generate the opposite effect. In addition to the effects of these two events themselves should they occur, a related concern is the relative speed with which re-unification or de-nuclearization should be pursued, if they are to be pursued at all. This may be a situation where it would be wise for the well-known Western impatience and penchant for speedy solutions with immediate results to be tempered with the historic Asian preference for subtlety and the long view.

The thesis of this article is that rather than the active pursuit of the twin strategies of nuclear disarmament and re-unification of the Korean peninsula at the earliest possible moment, the interests of the individual stakeholders, as well as the security and stability of the region as a whole would be better served by other policies and actions undertaken in a different timeframe. Specifically, that the best course of action to maximize individual and collective security and stability on the peninsula may be support of the nuclear status quo and a level of patience sufficient to allow the DPRK regime to continue down the path of its own demise.

Nuclear disarmament as a means of increasing stability on the Korean peninsula and addressing the individual interests of the parties involved is doomed to fail and worse, could result in even further destabilization of the peninsula. The calculus for peninsular security and stability changed once the regime in Pyongyang made the acquisition of such a capability a central part of their national narrative. The key to stability is now the maintenance of the new status quo – the genie cannot be put back into the bottle once it has escaped. The West must accept the imminent reality of a nuclear capability in the hands of the DPRK regime. At the same time that this reality is acknowledged there should be an emphasis on shaping a strategy that will minimize the negative effects of this development on regional security and stability while allowing the greatest enemy of the regime – time – to bring about the collapse of the Kim family dynasty.

Similarly, the active or aggressive pursuit of re-unification as a stated goal should be avoided for the basic reason that to do so would run counter to the interests of all of the stakeholders in the short term and

many of them in the long term. The best strategy for the enhancement of stability on the Korean peninsula is the pursuit of a policy of non-interference with the DPRK regime. Explicit efforts, plans, or strategies to remove the DPRK regime using factors of forces external to North Korea will only further reduce what security and stability remains and work against the interests of the other states involved in the region. The only way of increasing security and stability on the peninsula, or preserving what remains, is through a consistent policy of non-interference and allowing regime control to slowly crumble and eventually disintegrate in what will hopefully be a less traumatic fashion than would result from regime decapitation or collapse resulting from outside forces or influence.

### **De-Nuclearization**

A major feature of past and contemporary efforts to bring stability to the Korean peninsula has been the fact that success in this endeavor has been tied to and defined as the nuclear disarmament of the DPRK regime.<sup>16</sup> The parties involved in this effort are the ROK, the DPRK, The People's Republic of China, Japan, Russia and the United States. There is an argument to be made however that there is a seventh party involved – the people of the DPRK. The logic behind this contention lies in the fact that the policies and positions of the DPRK regime do not represent the best interests of the people over which they have absolute control. Rather, they represent only the interests of the regime itself and therefore truly serve only a relatively small number of people at the very top of the regime political infrastructure. As such in order to fully understand developments on the peninsula and how they influence its stability, it becomes necessary to consider the interests of the people of the DPRK separately from those of the regime that controls them.

The next step in developing the argument that nuclear disarmament is not an appropriate objective is acquiring an understanding of exactly why the DPRK regime elected to develop a nuclear capability in the first place. The reality is that the regime developed this capability to protect it from its “friends” as well as its “enemies” and to provide a degree of independence internationally that it would not otherwise have. The development of a nuclear “shield”, ostensibly for the protection of the citizens of the DPRK, would also serve as a rallying point for the generation of domestic support for the regime.

Until the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s, Moscow had been the main sponsor of the DPRK regime, ensuring that it had the necessary resources and political, military and economic support to remain in power.<sup>17</sup> The Soviets did not appear to harbour any historical or contemporary interest in occupying or absorbing the peninsula into their empire and were content to provide the regime with sufficient support such that they remained a very painful thorn in the side of American regional policy and interests.<sup>18</sup>

With the collapse of the USSR and the loss of the critical economic support that it provided, the economy of the DPRK quickly collapsed.<sup>19</sup> The regime was left with a limited number of alternatives. One was to undertake a rapprochement and engagement with the West. The difficulty with this option for the regime was that such a course of action would likely lead to an eventual loss of control over the people as the economy, political system and culture became increasingly integrated with the broader liberal-democratic capitalist world. This would have almost inevitably have led to the exposure of the falsehoods of the decades-old national narrative that had become the foundation of the regime's hold on power and its absolute control over the people.<sup>20</sup> If the regime elites were to remain in power and continue to enjoy the benefits of that power, rapprochement with the West was not a viable option.

Another option for the regime was the development of a closer relationship with the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The difficulty with this option is rooted in centuries of history. Notwithstanding the intervention of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the Korean War of 1950-1953 that literally saved the DPRK regime from extinction, the historical relationship between the Chinese and Korean empires is marked by suspicion, perceptions of threat, and a general lack of trust on both sides.<sup>21</sup> In short, notwithstanding their contemporary common cause in generally opposing Western objectives and interests in the region, the DPRK regime could not be sure that acceptance of the CCP as a sponsor would not also result in the gradual domination of the regime and the state it controlled by its new best friend and sponsor.

The only remaining option therefore was accelerating the development of a nuclear capability such that while accepting aid and support from like-minded regimes with similar interests, the regime in Pyongyang would not have to run the risk of undermining its hold on the people or being dominated or held hostage by that foreign regime for its

own interests and purposes. The solution decided upon to satisfy this objective was the development of a nuclear weapons capability that could be used to both threaten its enemies and thwart the ulterior motives of its friends. The regime then put to use this alternative and the logic supporting it to generate a narrative for the citizens of the DPRK that supported the continued rule of the Kim family dynasty.

This narrative warned the people that foreigners posed the greatest threat to Koreans and their culture. The regime claimed that the current conditions of poverty and deprivation in the DPRK were nothing compared to the corruption and depravity of the West and that the central objective of the Western peoples was to destroy Korean society and culture as optimized by the DPRK. Further, the suffering, the privations and the hardships to which they were exposed was a necessary sacrifice required of the people in the development of a nuclear weapons capability that would secure the state from its enemies and return the Korean culture to its former glory under the guidance of first “The Great Leader” (Kim Il-sung), and then the “Dear Leader” (Kim Jong-Il) and now the “Great Successor” (Kim Jong-un).<sup>22</sup>

Seen in this light and with these motivations for development of a nuclear capability, the Pyongyang regime cannot ever agree to disarmament without weakening, probably fatally, its grip on power in the DPRK. Surrendering the nuclear program would admit the lie of its development to the people and significantly de-stabilize the state domestically. Internationally, it would leave the DPRK regime open to manipulation and domination by its friends in the CCP and/or its enemies in the West. Either way, an agreement to cease development of a nuclear strike capability (weapons and delivery vehicles) would likely be the death knell of the regime and its collapse would surely follow with what would quite probably be catastrophic consequences.

### **Re-Unification**

What about the other parties to regional security and stability? Although often taken for granted, which if any of them would actually benefit from the collapse of the Kim family regime? While a detailed examination of the histories and geopolitical advantages and disadvantages of various developments in peninsular security are beyond the scope of this article, a brief examination of some of the more salient consequences of a precipitous collapse of the regime in Pyongyang can be undertaken to generally illustrate the point.

The CCP would certainly not benefit from the traumatic removal of the DPRK regime. Although Chinese reactions to the Pyongyang regime's provocations reflect increasing displeasure, one major benefit of the status quo for China is that the actions of the DPRK regime consume significant amounts of American diplomatic and security resources.<sup>23</sup> If the threats and crises originating in the northern half of the peninsula were to go away these resources would then be available for application to other regional issues and events in a way that might run counter to the Party's best interests. Another consequence that speaks directly to Chinese national security is that the collapse of the DPRK regime would in all probability result in the re-unification of the Korean peoples and the loss of a geographic buffer between China and the perceived American strategy of containment.

Yet another security concern resulting from re-unification of the peninsula speaks to the historical relations between China and Korea – a united Korea may develop into a regional power in its own right that threatens Chinese interests in the region. The Korean peninsula could become a source of outright threat to China rather than one of sometimes nebulous security as it is now.

Notwithstanding its ongoing efforts to convince, coerce, or force the regime in Pyongyang to de-nuclearize, there is evidence to suggest that American interests would not be well served by the collapse of the regime that would likely follow such a development.<sup>24</sup> If peace and stability were to break out the length and breadth of the peninsula, the maintenance of a substantial military capability in the region would be far more difficult to justify at home or abroad. Similarly, domestic support for American forces to be stationed on their soil would certainly be expected to decline amongst regional partners and allies such as Japan. It may even result in a Korea far less willing to align itself with American interests and policies in the region and becoming more prone to charting its own way through the troubled waters of regional politics for quintessentially Korean interests. The precipitous disappearance of the DPRK regime thus may be matched not only by a loss of American influence and strategic advantage in the region as well but also by the loss of the stabilizing effect that an American presence in the region has had among states with long histories of conflict with each other.

Russia, for its part, is in the process of forging stronger economic and political linkages with the states of the region and like China, the behavior of the regime in Pyongyang is providing fewer benefits and less

support for its regional interests than ever before.<sup>25</sup> However Russia would gain little or nothing from the collapse of the DPRK regime and like China, it still benefits from the use of the regime as a distraction for American diplomatic and security resources. The continuing existence of the Kim regime in power in the DPRK also provides opportunities for Russian geopolitical theatrics on the world stage through the Six Party Talks and enjoyment of the obstruction of American interests in the region at little cost to itself.

While re-unification on the Korean peninsula might appear to represent a development that would be enthusiastically welcomed by all Koreans this may not necessarily be the case. After working hard over several decades and sacrificing consumption and affluence in the present for greater economic security in the future, there may be a number of Koreans in the ROK who would not be overly enthusiastic about several more decades of sacrifice to re-build what was left of the economy in the northern part of the peninsula and bring it to a standard that would allow it to fully integrate with the south and with the global economy.

The situation and domestic sentiments surrounding the re-unification of Korea may well be similar to those surrounding the re-unification of East and West Germany. The costs of German re-unification are still being felt and although the long term benefits to the German state as a whole are becoming evident, a significant portion of the population of the former West Germany were not and are not convinced that the cost of helping their brothers from the East rebuild an economy that they themselves enthusiastically ran into the ground is worth the sacrifice. For their part, the citizens of the former East Germany do not appear satisfied with the results of re-unification either as they believe that greater progress in regional inequalities should have been made and many contend that they would have been better off without re-unification at all.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, after six decades of separation the social and cultural ties between Koreans in the northern and southern parts of the peninsula are not what they were and convincing at least one whole generation of affluent Koreans in the ROK that they must sacrifice their lifestyles and the hard work and sacrifice of their parents to satisfy a vague political objective that they cannot identify with may be an insurmountable task. The re-unification of Germany occurred more than two decades ago and the reconstruction and re-integration of the peoples is still not complete.<sup>27</sup> Social and economic conditions in the DPRK have been spiraling

downward for most of that time and the process of social, political, and economic re-building and integration of the north with the south is likely to take several more decades than the German process and could even span two or more generations. The cost is also likely to exceed that of the German case as well (\$1.9 trillion euros as of the twentieth anniversary) and studies show that it may be beyond the capabilities of the ROK. As regional security is intertwined with economic stability, the costs of re-unifying the Korean peninsula may have to be internationalized when they become necessary.<sup>28</sup>

If re-unification as a result of the collapse of the regime in Pyongyang were to occur, it would likely involve a social, political and above all an economic sacrifice on the part of the south over such a period of time and of a magnitude that would give even the staunchest advocate of the process pause for thought and could even result in the outright rejection of the idea by many others.

Similar to the other stakeholders in the region, the positive consequences or benefits accruing to Japan as a result of the collapse of the Kim regime are not all that clear cut or self-evident. Certainly the threat of attack using a fully developed DPRK nuclear capability would be reduced but that threat is small and in any event can be countered by the anti-ballistic missile capabilities resident in both the American and Japanese militaries. Besides, the threat posed by the regime in Pyongyang has been politically useful to the Japanese domestically and internationally.<sup>29</sup> Domestically, the threat posed by the regime to Japanese interests and security has validated an increasingly outward-looking defense policy supported by some political parties that has resulted in the generation of significant and noteworthy military capabilities.<sup>30</sup> Regionally, these capabilities and the importance of Japan in the overall American regional mosaic of power and influence have allowed it to take an increasingly active and even “muscular” role in some of its addressing of historic issues of territorial ownership and sovereignty as well as to feed the increasingly nationalist sentiments of a growing segment of the Japanese public.<sup>31</sup>

Yet another factor for Japan that could militate against its support for de-nuclearization and the subsequent collapse of the DPRK regime lies in history. If Korea were to become united, the result could be the development of a powerful regional competitor with an enduring memory of past wrongs that could limit Japanese aspirations and goals in the region and may become an obstacle to the exercise of Japanese power

in pursuit of its national interests.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Japan could be opposed to a re-unification of the peninsula because of the possibility of a growth in Chinese power and influence in the region as a consequence. If re-unification were to take place, it might be that a consequence of that process would be a weakening of American power in the region that could even involve their eventual departure from the peninsula with China assuming the role of strategic partner if not the outright security guarantor of a united Korea. Another Japanese concern could be related to the final disposition of the DPRK's nuclear capability. Would the ROK take it over, dismantle it, or even begin development of an independent capability? Absent the counter-weight of a strong American presence on the peninsula or the region in general, Japanese interests are bound to suffer a setback.

The reality of a precipitous collapse of the regime in Pyongyang is that it would be tremendously de-stabilizing for Japanese interest in the region, and for a number of domestic factions who rely upon the existing threat situation for justification of their political positions and policies at home and abroad.

With all of the state-level stakeholders in the region liable to suffer setbacks to their interests as a result of the collapse of the Kim regime and re-unification of the peninsula, the only faction or group that might benefit from that sequence of events are the people actually being controlled and dominated by the regime. Unfortunately this group has the least power and influence of all of the stakeholders involved with which to pursue their interests. While an immediate removal of the regime would result in an almost equally immediate flood of aid to re-build, re-educate, re-unite and reform the population of the northern half of the peninsula, the power to make this happen resides with others whose interests may differ from those of the people of the DPRK. As such their interests must take their place in the queue behind those of these more powerful entities.

Thus, notwithstanding the rhetoric at the national and international levels supporting a policy of pressuring the DPRK regime to surrender its nuclear capabilities and aspirations, the consequences do not appear to be in the best interests of at least six of the seven parties involved for the regime to do so. The reason for this is that political and security instability on the peninsula would in fact be exacerbated, not remedied and said instability would likely result in the collapse of the Kim family regime, an event that is demonstrably not in the best interests of the most

powerful regional stakeholders.

### **The Consequences**

Observers of events on the Korean peninsula understand that the economic, social, and even political conditions in the DPRK are steadily worsening for all but the top echelons of the regime.<sup>33</sup> The historic regime strategy of crises stimulation supported by their great power sponsor (the USSR, and later China) is no longer effective in generating the economic, political or security support necessary to maintain the Kim family regime in power.<sup>34</sup> There are several reasons for this development. The first is that Kim Jong Un does not possess the well-developed skill sets of his forbears with respect to the fomenting and manipulation of crises on the peninsula and depending upon the speed of future developments on the peninsula may not get the opportunity to do so.<sup>35</sup> He must also contend with the historic legacy of economic mismanagement, corruption and deterioration that has plagued the family regime almost from its outset. After more than 60 years of abuse, the collapse of one security guarantor (the USSR) and the increasing alienation of a second (China), the economy is unable to feed the people of the DPRK and the regime must rely upon foreign aid, the black market, and the limited use of free-market mechanisms to stave off complete economic collapse.<sup>36</sup>

As mentioned before, there are also external factors that undermine and weaken the regime and its historic strategies for survival. The first of these is a shift in global politics with the rise of China and its continuing harmonization with global and regional political and economic systems. Whereas the antics of the Pyongyang regime used to serve Chinese interests well in the disruption and confounding of Western political and economic efforts to stabilize the region, that is no longer the case. With Xi Jinping's assumption of power and the continuation of a regional and global policy of political, economic, and security engagement began by Deng Xiaoping, China no longer derives the same benefit it used to from erratic and disruptive crises-mongering on the Korean peninsula. Indeed, China may already have begun to encounter situations where its interests are impeded by regime strategies to de-stabilize the peninsula.<sup>37</sup> With this decline in the utility of DPRK trouble-making on and off the peninsula has come a parallel decline in China's willingness to underwrite the Kim family regime economically, politically, and possibly even in terms of security guarantees.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, the effects of the regime's brinksmanship and crises-mongering in the region appear to be weakening as America, the ROK, and Japan become less and less willing to accommodate the demands of a visibly faltering regime that has proven unreliable in keeping its promises in the past and in any case offers a threat that can already be addressed by existing defensive systems and technology.<sup>39</sup>

Domestically, the people of the DPRK are increasingly less willing to take the regime narrative as an accurate depiction of reality.<sup>40</sup> The collapse of the national economy and subsequent period of starvation that resulted from the traumatic withdrawal of nearly all forms of support by the USSR as a result of its disintegration in the early 1990s opened the door to a black market that forms an increasingly large segment of the total economic activity (or grey market) of the state.<sup>41</sup> A disastrous currency reform in late 2009 amounted to nothing more than a confiscation of wealth and further weakened both the economy and the willingness of the people to support the status quo.<sup>42</sup> Special economic zones sponsored by both the ROK and China that employ workers from the northern and southern border regions of the DPRK provide proof of economic prosperity outside of the country and contrast starkly with the decay and incapacity within.<sup>43</sup> While these realities are being absorbed, the wonders of modern technology in the form of computers, Wi-Fi, DVDs and cell phones provide the people of the DPRK with increasing exposure to economic, social and political realities outside of their state that are at odds with the narrative propagated by the regime.<sup>44</sup>

With the loss of support and influence abroad and a domestic public that is increasingly aware of its shortcomings, the abandonment of a nuclear capability by the regime may well be the last step in the disintegration its legitimacy and of the narrative that has until now held the people of the north in its thrall and facilitated their ongoing control and exploitation by the Kim family regime. While the number of possible consequences of these factors and developments is limitless, one likely outcome is a relatively rapid and precipitous collapse of the regime in Pyongyang along lines similar to those that occurred with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its network of satellite states. Literally no one had anticipated such an event but when it occurred after decades of decline the only thing that prevented a major geopolitical catastrophe was the absence of any factions with the desire or capability to sweep in and fill the power vacuum left by the disintegrating Soviet structure.<sup>45</sup>

The situation in the northern part of the Korean peninsula has some similarities to the situation of the USSR before its collapse but in other ways is quite different. Like the USSR, if and when the regime finally collapses it is unlikely to be a result of the work of a well-organized opposition that is capable of stepping into the power vacuum and establishing order out of the chaos that would exist. One scenario for the demise of the regime could be a relatively innocuous one where there is a relatively rapid decline and implosion of the regime as domestic issues worsen and reach a point where the key leaders decide that they can no longer maintain control and opt to abandon the country and its people with whatever wealth and assets they have been able to accumulate “offshore.” Another possibility is the longer term but no less traumatic and possibly even more dangerous possibility of regime collapse resulting from internal strife among the senior leadership figures. In this scenario, a struggle for power within the regime could reveal its flaws and weaknesses to the general public, resulting in widespread domestic instability and possibly even civil war.<sup>46</sup> Regardless of the exact nature of the eventual collapse of the regime, it is likely to be more rapid than would be desired and result in a significant “spike” in violence and instability on the peninsula. The gravity of this development would only be exacerbated by the regional and global security implications surrounding the loss of formal state control over nuclear weapon and advanced missile technology/capabilities.<sup>47</sup>

Where this scenario differs from that of the USSR is that into this chaotic power vacuum would likely rush the forces of some or all of the other regional stakeholders in an attempt to secure their own individual interests on the peninsula as well as to re-establish state-level control over the DPRK’s advanced weapon technologies to prevent them from falling under the control of non-state groups or of other states whose interest differ from their own.<sup>48</sup> The catastrophe that would likely result from the meeting of the forces of two or more of the regional stakeholders in a scramble to secure nuclear and missile technology in the middle of a 30 million strong humanitarian disaster quite literally beggars the imagination. Given the potentially disastrous security and humanitarian consequences of these developments, how could they best be avoided or at least mitigated if they occur?

## **The Alternative**

The first issue or factor to be considered in avoiding such a catastrophe is the influence of the rate or speed of change on international relations. Generally speaking the greater or faster the rate of change in geopolitics, the greater the degree of instability that results and the greater the possibility for disaster resulting from uncontrolled and misunderstood reactions between the various states involved. A relatively slow rate of change in regional circumstances over time allows for consultation, negotiation, understanding and coordination of national policies and courses of action addressing individual national interests on a given issue.

Conversely, rapidly changing circumstances requiring an immediate response in order to preserve national security or maintain the national interest often results in much less inter-state consultation and communication with a consequent increase in the potential for misunderstanding, misinterpretation and conflict. This effect is especially likely in situations where the lines or channels of communication between the stakeholders are poor or non-existent as has been the case for much of the last 60 years with respect to the Korean peninsula. The key to security and stability in international relations and on the Korean peninsula is a relatively slow rate of change accompanied by comprehensive and effective communication of interests between the regional stakeholders. The absence of one or both of these characteristics could result in disaster and will result in instability.

Therefore the pace of regime change or disintegration in the DPRK must be slow as a sudden collapse or removal/decapitation will destabilize the region and likely create more and bigger problems than it solves. There must be change on the peninsula if its long-term security and stability is to be enhanced, but it must be slow and likely come from within the state itself with the other states of the region containing and managing the external consequences of that change.<sup>49</sup> This position on regime change in the DPRK begs the question - will the regime ever change or fall on its own without outside interference? If it does what will the most likely means of removal or transition be?

One theory is that the fall of the regime is inevitable as a result of a combination of domestic economic and global technological developments. As mentioned earlier, the seeds of the domestic economic catalyst of regime collapse were sown in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the critical economic support of the Soviet Union was

precipitously withdrawn immediately before the collapse of the USSR itself. This very quickly resulted in loss of the regime's control over the national economy and the breakdown of basic economic systems for food distribution that resulted in widespread famine and starvation within the country.<sup>50</sup>

Complete domestic destabilization, national chaos and possibly the fall of the regime were only averted when the ruling elites allowed the beginnings of an unofficial free market system operated by local entrepreneurs to facilitate food creation and distribution.<sup>51</sup> The growth of the "grey economy" (black market + state mechanisms) since then with the regime's tacit approval and participation (profit-taking) has resulted in the slow but steady growth of a middle class within North Korean society.<sup>52</sup> As the middle class continues to grow it will become the greatest ongoing threat to the survival of the regime. The very mechanism that is ensuring the survival of the regime and even enriching its members in the short term holds the seeds of its demise in the longer term.

As noted earlier, advances in communication technology have loosened, perhaps fatally for the regime, the absolute control that it has exercised over the flow of information to the people it has controlled for more than six decades. The development of cell phone technology and the internet have provided growing access for the people of the DPRK to information that is at odds with much if not all of the narrative that has sustained support for a repressive regime that continues to dominate one of the poorest populations in the world. As the middle class develops and grows, it will have greater access to this enabling technology and to the information, knowledge, and power that accompanies it. The result will be that, over time, the people of the DPRK will become less accepting of the regime's narrative regarding their country and its place in the world at the same time that they acquire more domestic power and influence to change that narrative.<sup>53</sup>

If the regime moves to eliminate the grey economy and the black market in an attempt to destroy the middle class they can only attempt to replace it with a system of food supply and distribution that they have already proven incapable of providing basic sustenance to the people of the DPRK. The expected outcome of this process would be another famine that could generate external intervention by the other states in the region in the interests of limiting the spread of instability to their territory. Another outcome could be an equally de-stabilizing domestic revolution

or civil war.

Conversely, if the regime does nothing and continues to benefit from the grey economy, the free market aspects of that economy will continue to grow and with it the power and influence of the middle class on events within the DPRK.

If the regime eliminates the grey economy the country will collapse in the short term, if they allow it to continue and grow it will collapse in the long term. It is therefore theoretically in the best interests of all parties (except possibly the people of the DPRK) that the state-level regional stakeholders wait for the power of the regime to be slowly eroded by developments in the economy and communications technology. The anticipated and preferred outcome of this process would be a slow disintegration of the regime and an implosion resulting from domestic pressures as the middle class grows in power and influence.

The role of the state-level regional stakeholders in this process would be to network and establish closer understandings and relationships through a number of processes that are already underway in the region. Chief among these is communication and confidence building. Fora such as the Six Party Talks, while outwardly unsuccessful in resolving the security issues they were formed to address and in some situations being described as nothing more than “talking shops” nonetheless represent points of contact and communication that can be used to reduce tension and ambiguity during a rapidly-developing crisis.<sup>54</sup>

Other measures and channels of communication include the development of military to military relationships among the regional powers involving “Confidence Building Measures” (CBMs) such as search and rescue exercises, counter-piracy drills and responses to humanitarian disasters<sup>55</sup> or the creation of new and direct lines of communication between the respective militaries such as recently occurred between China and the ROK.<sup>56</sup> These measures and any other that could result in the generation of a “web” of bilateral relationships at the political, diplomatic and military levels that focus on an increased understanding of both the individual and collective interests involved in the security and stability of the region should be encouraged. The success of this process would be enhanced by the continued development of regional economic relationships that have and would continue to result in the integration or at least the harmonization of trade and growth in the respective standards of living within the states of the region. Generally speaking, any measure that emphasizes a commonality of interests and

fosters a sense of community and common purpose in the region should be pursued in order to establish a groundwork or basis of trust and cooperation that will be sorely tested in any crisis involving the collapse of the regime in Pyongyang.<sup>57</sup>

There are signs that this process is already well advanced. The evolving “China-US-South Korea Strategic dialogue”, intended to address emergencies in the DPRK is an ideal example of the type of mechanism that would facilitate coordination of regional responses to a collapse of the Kim regime.<sup>58</sup> China is coming closer to the US in its ideas about the future of the Korean peninsula, as the joint statement from the US-China summit on 6-7 June 2013 made clear.<sup>59</sup> China now acknowledges the DPRK as a source of instability in Northeast Asia, chastising Pyongyang for their nuclear blackmail and their conventional threats against the ROK.<sup>60</sup>

For its part, the ROK under President Park Geun-hye is forging a new role as a central figure in diplomatic and political efforts to bring the stakeholders of the region closer together in the realization of their mutual interests.<sup>61</sup> If their success in this regard continues, the ROK may become the political and diplomatic lynchpin for security and stability in the region, serving both to further isolate the regime in Pyongyang, but also to prepare regionally for its demise.

## **Conclusion**

Given the potentially adverse regional and global consequences of an abrupt process of de-nuclearization and re-unification for stability and security on the Korean peninsula, the political, diplomatic, military and economic efforts of the state-level stakeholders in the region should be focused on maintaining the status quo. This will allow for the domestic and international factors that are even now steadily weakening the Kim family regime’s hold on the people of the DPRK to continue working and bring about the disintegration of the regime and of its hold on power.

The domestic factors at work include economic and technological developments that will continue to undermine the regime’s control over information and the essentials of life and commerce for any society. The international factors include the steadily deteriorating relationship the regime has with China as its current security guarantor, the equally steady harmonization of Chinese interests with those of the West, and the growing role played by the ROK in regional diplomacy and international relations.

The adoption of policies designed to steadily, but not precipitously, encourage the eventual disintegration of the DPRK regime combined with others intended to foster closer economic, political, and diplomatic ties between the other stakeholders appears to be the best way ahead in terms of overall stability and security in the region. An emphasis on common security interests promises the least tumultuous results from a choice of options that all in some way threaten the security and stability of the region. Those who continue to advocate the de-nuclearization of the DPRK regime and to lobby for the re-unification of the Korean peninsula as the best path to future security and stability should be careful what they wish for.

### Notes:

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of this article the term “international relations” is intended to include the strategic, political, social, cultural and economic inter-action between state actors.

<sup>3</sup> Song Sang-ho, “North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il dead,” *The Korea Herald*, December 19, 2011. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20111219000413>.

<sup>4</sup> “North Korean Intrigue: The Execution of Power,” *The Economist*. December 21, 2013, p. 64 and Bruce E. Bechtol, “The North Korean Military Under Kim Jong-un Evolved or Still Following a Kim Jong-Il Script?” *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, p. 94-108.

<sup>5</sup> Sue Mi Terry, “North Korea’s Strategic Goals and Policy Towards the United States and South Korea,” *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, p. 64-86 and “Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?” *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> This narrative is deeply entwined with the concept of “Juche”, a philosophy of self-reliance. Grace Lee, “The political philosophy of Juche.” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2003): 105, and C. Kenneth Jones, “Juche’s Role in North Korea’s Foreign Policy”(paper presented at the International

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Symposium on Communism in Asia, Tokyo, Japan June 7, 2008): 4. See also Bechtol, "The North Korean Military Under Kim Jong-un Evolved or Still Following a Kim Jong-Il Script?" p. 94-108.

<sup>7</sup> Hong Nack Kim, "China-North Korea Relations after Kim Jong-Il," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, p. 43 and Robert Collins, "Political Dimensions of North Korea's Third Generation Succession and the Potential for Crisis," *International Journal for Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, p.75-76.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Bennett, "The Sixty Years of the Korea-US Security Alliance: Past Present and Future," *International Journal of Korean Studies*. Vol. XVII, No. 2, p. 6, 9-12 and "Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?" *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 6. See also Baya Harrison, "Through the Eyes of the Hermit: The Origins of North Korea's Quest for the Bomb," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Winter 2007, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> Historically, the Korean peninsula has been subjected to foreign invasion and this has generally resulted in a strive for autarky notwithstanding the alliances of the moment. Sven Horak. Regime Stability and Leadership Transition," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Summer 2012, p. 3-4 and James I. Matray. "The Failure of the Bush Administration's North Korea Policy: A Critical Analysis," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, p.141-145.

<sup>10</sup> Both sides argue that the other side's rhetoric (*tatemaie*) differs from their intention (*honne*) and as such represents a double-strategy that is both Machiavellian and perhaps not surprisingly, unsuccessful in reaching their stated objectives. Seongwhun Cheon, "Negotiating with South Korea and the U.S.: North Korea's Strategy and Objectives," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, Spring 2012, p. 145-147, Richard Weitz, "US and Japan: New Policies for the New Korean Situations," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Fall 2013, p. 46-53 and "Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?" *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 6. See also Bennett, "The Sixty Years of the Korea-US Security Alliance: Past Present and Future," p. 6, 9-12.

<sup>11</sup> Terry, "North Korea's Strategic Goals and Policy Towards the United States and South Korea," p. 64-86.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel S. Kim, "Reactions of the Sino-Soviet Bloc to the US-ROK Alliance," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 1, Spring 2011, p. 18-21.

<sup>13</sup> United States. *Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea*. The White House. Washington D.C. June 2009 and David S. Maxwell, "A Strategy for Dealing with North Korea's Provocations," in the *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, 2013, p. 90-91.

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<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this article, the primary state stakeholders are considered to be; the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Russia and the United States

<sup>15</sup> Matray, "The Failure of the Bush Administration's North Korea Policy: A Critical Analysis," p.142 and "Parallel Worlds," *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> United States. *Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea* and Maxwell, "A Strategy for Dealing with North Korea's Provocations," p. 90-91.

<sup>17</sup> The USSR was the primary supporter and security guarantor of the regime from the end of World War II until its disintegration in the early 1990s. At the time of its collapse, imports from the Soviet Union went from 40% to 10% in a very short time with the decrease including most if not all of the DPRK's steel, subsidized oil, gas, and coal requirements. Yun-Jo Cho. "The Sources of Regime Stability in North Korea: Insights from Democratization Theory," in the *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 2005, p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> The Korean peninsula served as part of the security buffer for the Soviet eastern flank following World War II and its occupation prevented Japan from using it as a springboard for invasion (as it had in the past) or from more contemporary threats such as the US. Samuel S. Kim, "Reactions of the Sino-Soviet Bloc to the US-ROK Alliance," p. 18-21.

<sup>19</sup> A massive famine ensued throughout the DPRK in the early 1990s as the USSR withdrew its support and, unable to sustain itself on domestic production the regime's food management system collapsed. A botched attempt at currency reform in late 2009 made things worse. One of the consequences was a massive influx of people from the DPRK into China's border regions. Fearing the instability that might result from an acceptance of large numbers of refugees, the Chinese closed their border and instituted a visa system that remains in effect today. The DPRK's production of cereals has only recently reached the level it had previously been at in 1982. Dick K. Nanto. "The North Korean Economy After the 2009 Currency Reform: Problems and Prospects," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 2, p. 106-107, "Parallel Worlds," *The Economist*. October 26, 2013, p. 4 and Cara D. Cutler, "China's Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Winter 2006, p. 63-69.

<sup>20</sup> The regime's narrative of control embodied in the concept of *Juche* is the mainstay of its reason for being and is undermined only by economics and a gradual loss of control over the flow of information to the people. Sven Horak,

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Regime Stability and Leadership Transition,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Summer 2012, p. 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> “Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?” *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> In 2011, the DPRK announced that it was the second happiest country in the world after China and that the ROK and the US were at the bottom of the ranking. Nanto, “The North Korean Economy After the 2009 Currency Reform: Problems and Prospects,” p. 106-107; Doug Bandow, “North Korea: the King is Dead, Long Live the King,” *The National Interest*, December 23, 2011; and Horak, “Regime Stability and Leadership Transition,” p. 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> Nanto, “The North Korean Economy After the 2009 Currency Reform: Problems and Prospects,” p. 106-107 and “Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?” *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Suk-Hyun Lee, “From Multilateralism to Bilateralism: Negotiating the Second North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1 Winter 2009, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup> Jin W. Mok and Sung Gul Hong, “The Russo-Korean Cooperation for Natural Resources,” *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, Fall 2012, p. 153.

<sup>26</sup> The East has generally lost population and industry as the economy rationalizes resulting in what economists believed to be a short-term drop in economic activity in the region. The term “short” of course is relative, in this case meaning a span of generations. Erik Kirschbaum, “The dark side of German reunification,” *Reuters*, September 29, 2010, available at <http://blogs.reuters.com/global/2010/09/29/the-dark-side-of-german-reunification/>.

<sup>27</sup> Ulrich Blum, “Can Korea Learn from German Unification?” *Halle Institute for Economic Research*, Discussion Paper No. 3, February 2011, p. 33-35.

<sup>28</sup> “Parallel Worlds,” *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 4 and Blum, “Can Korea Learn from German Unification?” p. 33-35.

<sup>29</sup> Ke Wang, “Japan’s Defense Policy: Strengthening Conventional Offensive Capability,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter 2008, p. 87-97.

<sup>30</sup> A narrative of a society under siege and a continuing threat feeds nationalist sentiments. The controversy over the regime’s abduction of Japanese citizens does nothing to dispel or alleviate this. Bruce Bennett, “The Sixty Years of the Korea-US Security Alliance: Past Present and Future,” *International Journal of Korean Studies*. Vol. XVII, No. 2, p. 6, 9-12 and Mihoko Matsubara, “Who’s

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Missing? Who Cares: The Issue of Abduction by North Korea,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 11 No. 1 Summer 2011, p. 76-77. See also Ke Wang, “Japan’s Defense Policy: Strengthening Conventional Offensive Capability,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter 2008, p. 87-97.

<sup>31</sup> For more than a decade Japan has undertaken an increasingly defensive realist approach to international relations and is engaging in aggressive military, economic and diplomatic actions involving the projection of military power combined with alliances and treaties. Some of their actions are causing concern amongst regional neighbours who fear the combination of a resurgent nationalism, constitutional amendment and process of re-militarization. Jason Blazevic, “Japan and the East China Sea,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*. Vol. 10 No. 2 Summer 2010, p. 74-75 and Corey J. Wallace, “Back to the Land of the Setting Sun? Japan’s return to East Asia,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*. Vol. 10 No. 1 Winter 2010, p. 65-66. See also Wang, “Japan’s Defense Policy: Strengthening Conventional Offensive Capability,” p. 87-97; Jacob Brown, “Catalysts, Choices and Cooperation: Japanese Military Normalization and the US-Japan Alliance,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 5 No. 2 Summer 2005 p. 37-46 and Tai Wei Lim, “ASEAN’s Role and its Management of the Sino-Japanese Rivalry,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 5 No. 1 Winter 2005, p. 144-145.

<sup>32</sup> One example of a potential flashpoint is the long-standing dispute over the ownership of the Liancourt Rocks, otherwise known as Tokdo/Takeshima Island by the ROK and Japan respectively. Sean Fern, “Tokdo or Takeshima? The International Law of Territorial Acquisition in the Japan-Korea Island Dispute,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 5 No. 1 Winter 2005. p. 78-89.

<sup>33</sup> Un-Chul Yang. “Downfall of the North Korean State Economy: Losing Political Authority and Gaining Military Frailty,” *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, p. 213-228, “Parallel Worlds,” *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 3-4 and Cutler, “China’s Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans,” p. 63-69

<sup>34</sup> Terry, “North Korea’s Strategic Goals and Policy Towards the United States and South Korea,” p. 64-86

<sup>35</sup> Robert Collins. “Political Dimensions of North Korea’s Third Generation Succession and the Potential for Crisis,” *International Journal for Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, p.75-76.

<sup>36</sup> Since the 1990s, large numbers of people from the DPRK working in the border regions of China on temporary visas and in the special economic zones

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have supported an increasing proportion of the domestic economy. Cutler, "China's Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans," p. 63-69

<sup>37</sup> Suk-Hyun Lee, "From Multilateralism to Bilateralism: Negotiating the Second North Korean Nuclear Crisis," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1 Winter 2009, p. 70 and Ilpyong J. Kim, "Chinese Policy toward the Two Koreas," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, p. 1-17.

<sup>38</sup> China continues to tighten its refugee rules and system of work Visas implemented in the early 1990s to control the massive influx of people from the DPRK seeking to escape the grueling social, political, and economic conditions of that state. Cutler, "China's Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans," p. 63-69, "Tensions on the Korean Peninsula: Kim Blows Up Again," *The Economist*, March 9, 2013, p.50 and Hong Nack Kim, "China-North Korea Relations after Kim Jong-Il," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, p. 43.

<sup>39</sup> Bennett, "The Sixty Years of the Korea-US Security Alliance: Past Present and Future," p. 6, 9-12.

<sup>40</sup> China has been considered a desirable destination for large numbers of people from the DPRK since the domestic economy collapsed in the early 1990s. Fearing the negative impacts of a massive influx of economic refugees on the regional economy and upon national security, the government has maintained a strict programme of border security and work visas to control the number of temporary workers. Cutler, "China's Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans," p. 63-69, Jesse Kline, "Signs of Hope in North Korea as people ditch their "voluntary servitude" for the free market," *The National Post*, April 25, 2014 and Kim, "The Kim Regime's Survival Strategy and Prospects for the Future of North Korea," p.102.

<sup>41</sup> Economic crisis is one of the strongest catalysts of regime change. The Kim family regime has based a large part of its legitimacy to govern upon economic performance and a key part of its national narrative is its unique ability to bring economic prosperity to the people. Thus an economic crisis is the equivalent to a loss of legitimacy. The famine of the early 1990s touched off attempts at a major exodus through China and the beginnings of a black market in the production and distribution of food as the regime system collapsed under the weight of inefficiency and corruption. The fact that regime change has yet to occur attests to the strength of its control in the other areas such as elite cooperation, military support, repression and ideology (*Juche*). Horak, "Regime Stability and Leadership Transition," p. 3-4 and Cutler, "China's Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans," p. 63-69. See also Yun-Jo Cho, "The Sources of Regime Stability in North Korea: Insights from Democratization Theory," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 2005, p. 91 and

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Nanto, "The North Korean Economy After the 2009 Currency Reform: Problems and Prospects," p. 106-107.

<sup>42</sup> Nanto, "The North Korean Economy After the 2009 Currency Reform: Problems and Prospects," p. 106-107.

<sup>43</sup> "Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?" *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Kim, "The Kim Regime's Survival Strategy and Prospects for the Future of North Korea," p.102 and "Parallel Worlds," *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 3-4.

<sup>45</sup> NATO expansion and that of the EU would come later in a series of developments that while still disturbing to Russia have occurred over a timeframe that has allowed them to address these issues with measured responses short of open conflict with the West.

<sup>46</sup> Either of these alternatives is a possible outcome when an authoritarian regime loses its legitimacy through economic crisis. Yun-Jo Cho. "The Sources of Regime Stability in North Korea: Insights from Democratization Theory," p.91.

<sup>47</sup> A collapse of the Kim family regime would likely produce an unprecedented shock to the peace and stability of both the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia. Yong-Sup Han, "The ROK-US Cooperation for Dealing with Political Crisis in North Korea," p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> One scenario involves an offensive into the DPRK to re-unify the Koreans in the event of a collapse of the Pyongyang regime. Force calculations bemoan the fact that American force reductions on the peninsula in combination with planned reductions in the ROK army for demographic reasons (among others) make the generation of such a force unlikely. Bennett, "The Sixty Years of the Korea-US Security Alliance: Past Present and Future," p. 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> Most scenarios involving the demise of the regime originate from inside the state itself. Those that involve invasion scenarios are neither well developed nor particularly credible. Yong-Sup Han, "The ROK-US Cooperation for Dealing with Political Crisis in North Korea," p. 57.

<sup>50</sup> Nanto, "The North Korean Economy After the 2009 Currency Reform: Problems and Prospects," p. 106-107, "Parallel Worlds," *The Economist*. October 26, 2013. p. 4 and Cutler, "China's Provision of Temporary Visas to North Koreans," p. 63-69.

<sup>51</sup> Un-Chul Yang, "Downfall of the North Korean State Economy: Losing Political Authority and Gaining Military Frailty," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, p. 213-228.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> The chances of the regime going along with the wishes of an increasingly powerful middle class appear to be small. Recent editorials sponsored by the regime mention the policy of building a “powerful and prosperous state” (*Kangsong Taeguk*) only five times while it they mention the legacy policy of “military first” a total of 14 times. Having the full support of the military has always been a priority for the Kim family regime and it may well trump long term economic health and development in the future as it has in the past. Greg Scarlatoiu, “Kangsong Taeduk and Political Succession: Problems and Prospects,” *International Journal for Korean Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, Spring 2012, p. 116-117.

<sup>54</sup> Terry, “North Korea’s Strategic Goals and Policy Towards the United States and South Korea,” p. 64-86 and Capt. (Ret.) Sukjoon Yoon, “Some New “Wicked Problems” of the Asia-Pacific Regional Maritime Security: Can Solutions Be Found?” *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, p. 117-146.

<sup>55</sup> One example is the annual joint drills conducted by the coast guards of China, Japan, the ROK, Canada, Russia, and the United States. “Japan starts coastguard training with Chinese Rivals,” *Zee*, August 5, 2014, available at [http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/japan-starts-coastguard-training-with-chinese-rivals\\_952622.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/japan-starts-coastguard-training-with-chinese-rivals_952622.html).

<sup>56</sup> Yoon, “Some New “Wicked Problems” of the Asia-Pacific Regional Maritime Security: Can Solutions Be Found?” p. 117-146.

<sup>57</sup> The collapse of the regime would produce an unprecedented shock to the security and stability of the Korean peninsula. Any forward planning, coordination or establishment of protocols or understandings would help dampen this shock. Han, “The ROK-US Cooperation for Dealing with Political Crisis in North Korea,” p. 71.

<sup>58</sup> Sukjoon Yoon, “Prospects for President Park’s Trustpolitik,” *Rajaratnam School of International Studies Commentaries* No. 112/2013 dated 19 June 2013.

<sup>59</sup> The assessment of the American National Security Advisor was that there was “quite a bit of alignment” between the positions of the two leaders with respect to the DPRK nuclear programme. Susan V. Lawrence, “U.S.-China Relations: An Overview of Policy Issues.” *Congressional Research Service*, August 1, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Editorials in the state run newspaper, “The Global Times” state unequivocally that the DPRK’s provocations are against the interests of China and their

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willingness to support the DPRK's actions is fading. "North Korea cannot justify its overreaction," *The Global Times*, April 9, 2013. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/773811.shtml>.

<sup>61</sup> Examples of President Park Geun-hye's efforts include her policy of "Trustpolitik" with the DPRK that blends well with her bilateral efforts at improving the relationship with China and establishing the ROK as a key element in contemporary regional diplomacy. "Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?" *The Economist*. October 26, 2013, p. 6 and Yoon, "Prospects for President Park's Trustpolitik."