Korean People's Army soldiers watch Panmunjom Joint Security Area

MILITARY CONFRONTATION

By KONGDAN OH *and* RALPH HASSIG

The two Koreas have had a long history of military confrontation, and there is little reason to expect that relations will improve in the near future. Over the last few years, both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have strengthened their armed forces, and as a result of the 2010 North Korean attacks in the West Sea, this military buildup is likely to continue and may even accelerate. Acknowledging this reality, the best that can be hoped for is to limit the violence that often springs from confrontation, and to continue to seek ways to resolve confrontation before the point of violence is reached.

States in Confrontation

Confrontation may be defined as two states opposing each other politically, socially, economically, or militarily in an explicit manner. Outbreaks of military confrontation make news headlines, but the core issue on the Korean Peninsula is political confrontation, reinforced by social and economic differences. This means that military confrontation will continue until the two Koreas have found a way to eliminate the oppositional aspects of their political systems; even if that should happen, relations will remain rocky as long as their social and economic systems are incompatible.

Confrontation is not without its benefits. When two individuals, groups, or countries confront each other, they become aware of different opinions, values, and ways of doing things. The danger is that confrontation will lead to violence or to a defensive hardening of positions rather than to an

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ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

U.S. Air Force (James Mossman)

openness to accommodation. In the case of the two Koreas, North Korea is the more defensive and hostile.

That said, it is difficult to argue with the proposition that there is room for only one government on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean people are a homogeneous race and culture. Many families remain separated by the political border established at the end of World War II. In the long term, any talk of establishing a federation of two separate but equal Koreas makes little sense, especially if people are not free to move from one part of Korea to the other. Given the dismal history of North Korea's socialism, South Korea is going to be the more economically successful, and given the universal desire for individual freedoms, it is also going to be the kind of society where most Koreans would prefer to live.

The essence of *political* confrontation is that both Korean governments claim jurisdiction over the entire peninsula. The South Korean government recognizes all people who live in North Korea as citizens, and the North Korean government considers the government in Seoul to be an illegitimate American puppet regime, routinely referring to the "persons in authority" of that government as traitors to the Korean nation.

Economic confrontation has its roots in the incompatibility of centrally managed socialism in the North and loosely managed capitalism in the South. Not only are the two economic systems different, but also the economic conditions are widely divergent and growing more so all the time. In 1990, South Korea's per capita gross national product was 5 times larger than North Korea's ($5,569 vs. $1,031); in 2000, the South's per capita gross national income was 12 times larger ($9,628 vs. $757); and in 2009, it was 18 times larger ($17,175 vs. $960).[1] Moreover, the economic resources of the two Koreas are different, although complementary, with the North being the logical place for heavy industry and resource extraction and the South being more suitable for farming and trade.

Underlying *social* confrontation are dramatic differences in individual freedoms. In the North, the Korean Workers' Party shapes the community and is above the law; party

guidance takes precedence over the rights of individuals. It was Kim Il-sung who said, "Our judicial organs are a weapon for carrying out the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat"[2]—by which he meant "dictatorship of the leader and the party." In the South, the individual must often defer to the community but still retains many rights, and no group or organization is above the law. The kind of economic and social life South Koreans lead would be completely unacceptable to the leaders of the North. As more North Koreans try to survive by going into business for themselves, they often find themselves guilty of a host of economic offenses—such as "Crimes of Undermining the Economic Management Order," including "individual commercial activities" (Article 110 of the criminal code) and "pocketing money or objects by doing illegal work or transport" (Article 120)—that are punishable with prison sentences.[3]

Military confrontation is most visible in the face-off of forces along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), with the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom being the closest point of contact between the two forces. A more active form of confrontation occasionally occurs along the Northern Limit Line (NLL) that defines the sea border, which is less visible than the well-marked and mined land border and is also a matter of some dispute.

U.S. Air Force (Jack Braden)

ROK and Korean People's Army soldiers stand guard next to line that separates North from South

Although military confrontation is not active most of the time, the atmosphere is heated by a war of words. The North Korean media insist that South Korea (as well as the United States and Japan, for that matter) is in the final stages of preparing an attack, and U.S.–ROK military exercises are routinely characterized as preparations for war, as in this statement from 2011:

In the past, the United States and South Korea have ceaselessly revised and supplemented the plans for a war of northward aggression and perfected the "Key Resolve" and "Foal Eagle" joint military exercises reflecting them as a completed operation of northward aggression. . . . Recently, North-South relations have come to face an extreme catastrophe and this has led to the creation of an acute confrontational phase on the Korean peninsula.[4]

In one bizarre example of North Korean propaganda, the press even depicts Kim Jong-il as being involved in some kind of wartime conflict:

During the fatherland liberation war [the Korean War], *Chol Ridge served as an important military place. . . . Whenever Marshal Kim Jong Il, another brilliant commander produced by Korea in the 20th century and son of guerrillas, passes the ridge, the idea and grit of the Korean People's Army has been further hardened. . . . Not escorted by tanks or armored cars, he has passed the ridge and crossed rivers for forefronts without eating or sleeping. By doing so, he has devotedly tided over the crisis of the country and the revolution, winning one victory after another in the war without gun-report.*[5]

For its part, the ROK government's references to North Korea are much less incendiary, even though it designates the DPRK government and military as an "enemy" (and formerly as the "main enemy").

When states confront each other, they are not necessarily fighting. In fact, most of the time, confrontation is passive. It could even be argued that as long as two armies openly face each other, a kind of balance exists in that the respective forces are deployed in such a way that any attack is likely to be met by a successful counterattack. A classic case is the balance of power between the United States and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War era. Those two forces were carefully calibrated, with adjustments on one side countered by adjustments on the other. Neither side believed it could prevail in an all-out war, and neither side had strong motivation to change the status quo.

Military forces standing at the ready can provide a state with certain advantages apart from serving as a deterrent against attack. Even when a large standing army drains the civilian economy, certain sectors of the economy do benefit from it. Moreover, political leaders who are strong on defense almost always gain in popularity. And in a controlled society like North Korea's, the public belief that the country is on the brink of war (as the North Koreans have been told for decades) helps rally the people to their government and distracts them from their difficult lives. North Korea even uses its confrontation with South Korea to get attention from other countries that are concerned about peace and stability in the region.

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If the ultimate goal of military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula were total victory over the other side while keeping one's own losses to a minimum, war would be unthinkable. Unfortunately, even if a full-scale attack would be prohibitively costly, it is always possible that a small military skirmish could escalate into the unthinkable war that neither side wants.

When Military Forces Are Not Balanced

Another danger of military confrontation is that a lack of balance or symmetry in forces may lead one state to believe that it holds some military advantage that could be exploited by an attack. A comparison of the two Koreas reveals numerous asymmetries, some seeming to benefit the North, others the South. What is important is not where the benefit lies but where each country *believes* it lies.

The North now has a few small *nuclear weapons* that it repeatedly threatens to

U.S. Air Force (Jason Colbert)

South Korean F–15Ks with U.S. F–16 over Kunsan Air Base during Buddy Wing program

employ in an all-out war. The South does not have nuclear weapons but does shelter under the U.S. nuclear umbrella of more than 5,000 weapons.[6] One would expect that North Korea would view the nuclear balance as decidedly in South Korea's favor. But that is not the whole story, for the North can decide when and if it wants to use nuclear weapons, whereas the South cannot. Moreover, the leaders of North Korea, especially top military officers, are probably less concerned about the consequences of using nuclear weapons than are the Americans.

Conventional forces are unbalanced in terms of type, quantity, and quality. U.S. forces available to assist South Korean forces further complicate any calculations of balance. The following are estimates.[7]

South Korea has fewer active-duty soldiers than does North Korea (687,000 vs. 1.1 million), and fewer tanks (2,700 vs. 3,500), artillery pieces (5,000 vs. 10,000+), and combat aircraft (555 vs. 590). South Korea also has fewer submarines (12 vs. 63) and fewer ships (130 vs. 350), but it has more large ships (44 vs. 8). In terms of quality and training, South Korea holds a decided advantage in all weapons systems (except small coastal combat boats).

How the two forces would fare in various battle scenarios is difficult to say, but in a sustained conflict, especially with the support of U.S. forces, most observers outside of North Korea believe the South would ultimately destroy the North's forces, starting with its air force (if it chose to fight). What is important to consider when estimating the likelihood of a North Korean attack is whether the North's leaders actually see things this way and whether their outcome calculations are based on events in a major conflict or a limited conflict scenario.

North Korea's *special forces* are believed to number about 200,000 compared to less than 20,000 South Korean special forces. The role of DPRK forces would be to open a front inside South Korea, bypassing the conventional defense lines. Taking these forces into consideration, it becomes even more difficult to predict the short-term outcome of battle, although in the long term, South Korean-U.S. forces would almost surely prevail because special forces can disrupt but not defeat the South Korean forces. Even if they expect that their forces will be bested by South Korean forces, the North Korean generals may believe they hold a short-term advantage if they use their special forces to strike quickly and then negotiate for a cease-fire before being hit by the superior South Korean-U.S. conventional forces.

North Korean forces are dug in, many of them in mountainous terrain. Except for the *mobility* of the forward-based forces that would try to penetrate South Korean defenses, the North Koreans would have to rely on fighting in place in a defensive posture. South Korean forces are more mobile, especially considering that they would enjoy air superiority, but in the initial phases of combat, South Korea's frontline forces would be relatively vulnerable to North Korea's artillery, and all ROK forces might be vulnerable to DPRK special forces.

North Korea is a country seemingly always on the brink of war. Its leaders may truly believe they are in danger of being attacked. Given the likelihood that they would lose a lengthy war, their *military policy* is offensive in nature, stressing the need to attack a potential aggressor before coming under attack themselves. This preference for preemption adds an important destabilizing element to the balance of forces on the peninsula. The North Korean media have also boasted that their army and people will fight to the death, lending a dangerous suicidal note to North Korean threats.

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South Korea is filled with high-value *targets*, the best case being Seoul, which is within range of North Korean artillery. In this sense, the superiority of South Korea's economy counts as a wartime military disadvantage because the South Koreans would lose much greater value in the early days of fighting—hence, the repeated North Korean threats to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire." North Korean cities are smaller, and both military and civilian facilities are sadly in need of repair anyway. A good example would be North Korea's largest building—the

unfinished Ryugyong Hotel—the destruction of which would be an absolute boon to the North Koreans by saving them the cost of tearing it down.

The *value of individual lives* is discounted in a dictatorship like North Korea's. Decisions about war and peace, like everything else, are made by the leaders as they consider what will benefit them personally. Witness how well Kim Il-sung survived his disastrous decision to launch the Korean War and how Kim Jong-il made it through the Arduous March period of the 1990s. The Kim regime might again be willing to lose millions of its people in a war if it felt it could improve its own security. In South Korea, a government decision that proved costly to the people would be immediately followed by a repudiation of the government and quite possibly punishment of its leaders.

The two Koreas have very different *military alliances.* The ROK–U.S. alliance is solid, and U.S. forces would likely play an important role from the beginning of any large-scale conflict. The relationship that the DPRK has with China is not a military alliance, and the North Koreans probably would not expect the Chinese to come in on their side as they did during the Korean War. This lack of support dramatically influences their wartime options, forcing them to launch a strong first strike and then hunker down and hope that the Chinese can convince the Americans and South Koreans to abandon their counterattack.

The two Koreas have different approaches to *military decisionmaking.* In the South, the civilian leadership would make the final decisions about warfighting (in conjunction with decisions by American civilian and military authorities). In North Korea, the top members of the Kim regime would make the initial decisions without being held accountable to anyone. However, after the first days of the war, by which time the North's communications links might be cut, combat would probably be directed by low-level military officers, who would be unlikely to take a strategic view of war or be concerned about North Korea's international reputation.

South Koreans are doing well under the *status quo* and want only to live in peace and continue to pursue prosperity. North Korea is by nature a revolutionary country: neither the leaders nor the masses can be satisfied with the status quo. The regime has frequently told its people that reunification must be accomplished to fulfill the behest of Kim Il-sung, and soldiers have been told that "a war is the inevitable way to accomplish a historic reunification," although perhaps such slogans are simply meant to boost morale.[8] In any case, most military provocations come from the North rather than the South, and North Korea is probably the state that will decide if and when future confrontations take place.

ROK soldier at turret gun of K221A1 smoke generating vehicle during exercise Key Resolve 2011

U.S. Army (Derec Pierson)

The History of Military Confrontation

Although it has been almost 60 years since the Korean War ended, the Korean Peninsula has witnessed hundreds of smaller military actions, the majority of them initiated by the North (see table 1). Almost without exception, these acts of violence have been unpredictable. North Korea routinely issues threats against the South, so much so that they do not serve as a signal that something is about to happen. The North Korean military actions have absolutely no chance of leading to victory over South Korea, so they must serve other purposes, such as probing military defenses, increasing political tension, blackmailing for rewards, sending a political message, or simply keeping the South Korean government and military off balance. It is also possible that some of these military actions are the direct result of frustration felt by Kim Jong-il, for when a dictator becomes angry, he can vent his anger without fear of personal consequences.

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For the most part, the impact of these actions has been short-lived, serving more to solidify the cohesiveness of the South Korean people and gain the assistance of South Korea's allies than to weaken the government. At the same time, the actions have hurt the reputation of North Korea in the international community, although its reputation is already so poor that the ability to inflict further damage on it is minimal.

Given the hierarchical nature of North Korean governance, it must be assumed that virtually all of the military actions (except kidnappings) have been planned or authorized at the highest levels of government, and in that sense they can be considered state-sponsored provocations (and in most cases terrorism, because they are not intended to defeat the South Koreans but only to scare them). To the extent that the actions are meant to send a political message to South Korea, that message is so general in nature that it is little more than a political statement:

"We don't like you." The attacks in the West Sea (in 1999, 2002, 2009, and 2010) send a more specific message: namely, that North Korea claims jurisdiction over that area. However, if the North Koreans think this is the way to get South Korea to negotiate a new border agreement, they are sadly mistaken.

Prospects of Future Military Provocations

Political confrontation on the Korean Peninsula continues, and North Korea's fortunes continue to decline. It is not realistic to expect that the North Korean regime will meekly accept its dismal destiny and wither away. Instead, it will maintain efforts to reverse its political and economic fortunes while keeping a dictatorial hold on its people. The use of its military forces for domestic social control and as a way to get the attention of the international community is a natural way for the self-styled "military-first" regime to pursue its goals. The historical pattern of alternating provocations with requests for talks will surely continue. Talks will in turn be used to solicit

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ROK soldier stands in ready fighting position at Panmunjom Joint Security Area

U.S. Army (Dwight Chaney)

Table 1. Post–Korean War Military Actions on the Peninsula in Descending Order of Seriousness

Event	Details and Years
Open attacks	by North Korean airplanes against Republic of Korea (ROK) or U.S. airplanes or ships (1965, 1968, 1969, 1999, 2002, 2003); torpedoing of the *Cheonan* (2010), artillery attack on Yeonpyeong (2010)
Commando raids	against the Blue House (1968); on the east and west coasts (1968, 1969, 1975, 1980, 1981, 1985)
Submarine incursions	1996, 1998
Military infiltration across demilitarized zone (DMZ)	1969, 1970, 1976, 1979, 1980, 1992, 1995
North Korean intrusions across military demarcation line	1996, 1997
Assassination missions against ROK authorities	1974, 1983
Tunneling under DMZ	discovered in 1974, 1975, 1978, 1990
Airplane hijackings	1958, 1969, attempted in 1971; Korean Air Lines bombing in 1987
Kidnappings and boat hijackings	too frequent to list; according to the ROK government, 3,835 South Koreans have been abducted since the end of the Korean War, with 517 still held in North Korea

Sources: Various, including Dick K. Nanto, *North Korea: Chronology of Provocations, 1950–2003*, Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Updated March 18, 2003); estimates of South Korean abductees from South Korea's Ministry of Unification, cited by Yonhap News Agency, October 4, 2010.

aid and political support for the regime. An obvious alternative behavior would be for North Korea to steadfastly pursue a peaceful, nonthreatening international policy, but while such a policy would elicit far more aid and support than a provocational one, it would risk losing the regime's control over its people, and in North Korea as everywhere else, domestic politics trumps international politics.

Past evidence suggests that Kim Jong-il, like his father, is a rational decisionmaker, although the younger Kim is sometimes moved by his emotions. Little is known about the designated successor Kim Jong-un. His youth and inexperience, and the already prominent role given to the top generals, suggest that the military may exert more influence on decisionmaking in the future even while remaining under the control of the party. While the military has outside interests in the form of foreign trading companies, it is probably less in touch with and less concerned about international relations than are the government and party, and may therefore be less likely to take into account long-term consequences of conflict.

In the next few years, several factors are likely to prompt Pyongyang to engage in further provocations. For one, it is likely that Kim Jong-il's decisionmaking powers are declining along with his health, leading to more risky behavior. Common symptoms of cognitive decline include stereotyped thinking, impairment of judgment, greater reliance on earlier personality traits, and difficulty in checking impulses. In a dictatorship like North Korea's, a complicating factor is that the people around Kim hesitate to correct or restrain him for fear of being reprimanded or punished for their interference. Also, it can be difficult for them to know whether or not to intervene because a leader in declining health may have some good days and some bad days, even though he is not clearly incapacitated.[9]

Another factor that may make the North Korean leadership more dangerous in the years ahead is the likelihood that contending factions in the power structure, jockeying for a favorable position with Kim Jong-un, may attempt to prove their loyalty by initiating aggressive actions. Moreover, the regime's longstanding promise to make the year 2012 a materially lucrative celebration of the founder's birth may force it to risk more provocations in order to blackmail the international community into granting foreign aid.

And then there is the undeniable fact that weapons continue to become more lethal. Any nuclear weapons that the North Koreans may possess should be considered usable. North Korea's continued progress with missile development makes it possible to deliver nuclear weapons over a longer distance. As for the special forces, transportation and weaponry (for example, torpedoes on small submarines) will continue to be developed, making these forces more lethal as well.

In sum, the motivation for North Korea to engage in active confrontation continues and may even increase, and the resources that could be employed in those confrontations are becoming more deadly. Without the Cold War constraints that China and the former Soviet Union indirectly placed on North Korea, the regime could indeed engage in "rogue" behavior. The years ahead may be the most dangerous time for the two Koreas since the Korean War.

Dealing Quickly with Provocations and Conflict

In the short term, Seoul's goal must be to limit Pyongyang's propensity for resorting to military force. The basic principles for discouraging bad behavior are well known. According to the "law of effect," desirable responses (by a person or a state) followed by rewards will tend to occur again under similar circumstances; undesirable responses that are ignored will eventually disappear (because they are not worth the trouble of making); and undesirable responses that are followed by punishment will quickly disappear.

Provocations (undesirable responses) should be followed immediately by a punishment that is appropriate in strength and

Table 2. Fates of Socialist Dictators

Leader	Country	Fate
János Kádáar	Hungary	Deposed 1988; died 1989
Erich Honecker	East Germany	Deposed 1989; arrested for corruption and manslaughter
Gustáv Husák	Czechoslovakia	Deposed 1989; expelled from party 1990; died 1991
Todor Zhivkov	Bulgaria	Deposed 1989; expelled from party; arrested for embezzlement
Wojciech Jaruzelski	Poland	Deposed 1990; charged with crimes committed while defense minister
Nicolae Ceauşescu	Romania	Deposed 1989; executed

character to the nature of the bad behavior ("punishment to fit the crime"). The punishment should be strong enough to materially reduce the chances that a similar provocation will be launched in the future. How strong the punishment needs to be is always a matter of guesswork, but past experience can provide guidelines. It is known, for example, that condemnation from the United Nations has no effect on North Korea and thus does not count as punishment; sanctions resolutions are likewise largely ineffective. Threats of future punishment are absolutely useless.

The usual recommendation is to supplement punishment for bad behavior with rewards for good behavior (sticks and carrots). Unfortunately, in North Korea's case, history suggests that the kind of rewards the international community offers—food, money, medicine—will be siphoned off by the North Korean elites, thereby strengthening the regime without changing its nature or helping the North Korean people. If this is the case, such rewards may temporarily reduce the likelihood of provocations but will have the opposite long-term effect. At the very least, proffered rewards should be subject to withdrawal so that if the regime resumes its bad behavior, it will no longer enjoy the benefits it received for good behavior. For example, food aid can be easily ended if the regime is using it for its own benefit, but money received from the South Korean businesses in Kaesong cannot be stopped without putting an end to the Kaesong project. Not surprisingly, work at the Kaesong Industrial Complex was not suspended even while North Korea was attacking South Korea in the West Sea.

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Reward and punishment principles were developed and refined in psychology laboratories. In the real world, it is not so easy to make immediate and appropriate responses to provocations, especially when those provocations can come at any time, in almost any form, and from almost any direction. It costs too much to be ready to respond immediately to all possible attacks, so delayed responses must be accepted as a practical alternative.

The principle of strong and immediate punishment encounters another obstacle in the form of the danger of military escalation. If the military response to a provocation is immediate counterattack, it will be difficult for North Korea in turn to quickly respond because military decisions will have to be made on the spot. That is, the North Koreans will encounter the same response problems as the South Koreans. In any case, the international community is likely to consider an immediate South Korean counterattack as a justifiable response to North Korean provocations. However, if the South Korean military response is delayed, it becomes retaliatory in nature and may not only draw international criticism but may also be treated by North Korea as a separate attack (that is, a provocation) to which a new response will have to be made.

If a delayed South Korean counterattack on North Korea seems likely to escalate violence, the South, the more exposed of the two to attacks, might end up receiving more punishment than it delivers. One way South Korea could sidestep this dilemma is to respond asymmetrically. This is in fact what South Korea did after the attacks on the ROK navy ship *Cheonan* and on forces stationed on Yeonpyeong Island, for which it was not prepared to make an immediate military response. Instead of delivering a strong counterattack, the government initiated economic sanctions and information warfare, although these responses were uncertain and uncoordinated.

North Korea is a military-oriented state primed for war. Launching a military attack on North Korea (apart from a defensive response) is playing to its strength. On the other hand, North Korea is perennially poor, and its leaders feel the need to keep their people ignorant and under control. South Korean responses in the form of economic punishment and information warfare may be more useful in discouraging North Korean attacks than bombing a few military installations, and these nonkinetic forms of response would be less likely to trigger further military action on the part of the North Koreans. In fact, such responses may confront the North Korean leaders with their own dilemma because the generals would be less concerned about South Korea's economic sanctions or information warfare responses than would the political leadership, so the North Korean decisionmakers might be divided in their recommendations for subsequent action.

Moral considerations should also guide decisions about how to respond to North Korean provocations. The use of counterforce results in military and civilian casualties, but the victims are not the people who ordered the initial attack. If the response is economic, North Korean leaders will be hurt less by economic sanctions than the people, but the resulting widespread economic hardship can also help alienate the people, thus weakening the leaders' hold on power. Better yet, bombarding North Koreans with information that could weaken the regime will not hurt anybody except those who are part of the leadership structure.

Discouraging Provocations in the Long Term

Military provocations are not made randomly. In North Korea, as in other states, military action is initiated, in the final analysis, in order to achieve political goals—in this case, survival as a dictatorial state, a goal that has not changed since before the Korean War. By this calculation, in order to eliminate military confrontation, it would be necessary for the nature of North Korean politics to fundamentally change. In the United States, the Obama administration has endorsed "behavior change" rather than "regime change." The South Korean Sunshine Policy under Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun was explicitly based on the idea that engagement with North Korean leaders would change their behavior in the direction of opening and reform.

It is doubtful if Kim Jong-il or his father has ever seriously considered instituting political reforms or dramatic economic reforms. The fate of former socialist dictators (see table 2) and their reforming successors provides the clear lesson that reforms sweep away whoever is in power. With these examples before him, Kim Jong-il has not heeded Mikhail Gorbachev's famous advice to Erich Honecker in 1989 that "life punishes those who delay." Gorbachev himself disappeared from political life, as did most of the first generation of reformers. Kim Jong-il has delayed, and he remains in power.

Rather than hoping that the Kim regime will commit political suicide, it seems more realistic to promote a change in regime, even though this policy is not politically popular in South Korea or the United States. In order to weaken the regime, any aid or engagement with the North Korean people that goes through the leadership and strengthens that

U.S. Marine Corps (Kentavist Brackin)

ROK marines fire K–9 Thunder 155mm self-propelled artillery systems during fire-support coordination drill at Yeonpyeong-Do

leadership should be viewed with skepticism. Likewise, any political or economic rewards offered to North Korea in return for nuclear disarmament carry the danger of strengthening the current regime. It could be argued that a North Korea without nuclear weapons is almost as dangerous to foreigners as a North Korea with nuclear weapons. The North Korean people would arguably be better off if their government gave up the weapons in return for the economic aid that would undoubtedly follow from such a decision, but it is doubtful if the government would want its people to become economically comfortable enough to turn their attention to politics. So it is highly unlikely that the Kim regime can be tamed. Kim and his supporters will take whatever is on offer while at the same time resisting political and economic change.

The first part of North Korea's oft-stated two-part solution to conflict on the Korean Peninsula is for South Korea to reject all outside influences and settle Korean affairs "by our own efforts," which is to say, in a political contest between the North's one-party system and the South's multiparty system. The second part of the solution is for the United States to relinquish its hostile attitude and make a "bold switchover" in its relations with North Korea, including recognizing North Korea's sovereignty, pledging nonaggression, and not obstructing its economic development.[10] North Korea has made more specific demands—for example, that a peace treaty be signed officially ending the Korean War and that the NLL be redrawn—but it is difficult to believe that any agreements, large or small, would change the longstanding nature of the Kim regime. Rather, the regime would simply come up with new demands.

The incompatibility of the political, economic, and social systems of the two Koreas is a continuing threat to peace and stability on the peninsula. Military confrontation is an extension of political confrontation. Until the North Korean political system changes, South Korea's best hope for peace is to limit the North's employment of its forces in active engagements.

When North Korea attacks South Korea, punishment should be meted out quickly and in proportion to the attack. In making more delayed responses, South Korea should play to its strengths, which are economic, political, and social in nature. Thus, after making an immediate military response, South Korea should follow up with economic sanctions and "information attacks" that will have a potentially long-lasting, punitive impact on North Korea's leaders.

The Kim regime in Pyongyang lives by the sword and, since the Korean War, has thrived by the sword; it will die by the ballot box. South Korea should not simply respond to North Korean attacks but should work toward the day when the North Korean people are free to change the nature of their political system. This is a battle that South Korea should wage constantly, not simply waiting for North Korea's next military provocation.

Given the nature of politics in a democracy, leaders find it difficult to pursue long-term policies that have little chance of immediate success because the electorate wants quick results. The South Korean government has sometimes been pushed into announcing impending actions against North Korea that it might prefer not to take. Then after public attention has dissipated, these plans are cancelled. A good example is the government's reversal of plans to resume propaganda broadcasts beamed across the DMZ to North Korea. The public also expects to be completely protected from harm, but the hard reality is that North Korea will almost certainly continue to provoke South Korea militarily, and more lives will be lost. This is not the fault of the South Korean government; rather, it is the cost of living in a dangerous neighborhood. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] 1990 statistics from Eui-Gak Hwang, *The Korean Economies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 120; 2000 statistics from Yonhap News Agency, December 20, 2001, citing South Korea's National Statistical Office; 2009 statistics from Yonhap News Agency, January 5, 2011, citing Statistics Korea.

[2] Kim Il-sung, "For the Implementation of the Judicial Policy of Our Party," in *Kim Il-sung, Works* 12 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1983), 182.

[3] The full text of North Korea's criminal code was published by Yonhap News Agency, December 8, 2004. Some articles of the code have since been revised, but apparently not those cited here.

[4] Un Chong-chol, "Offensive Exercises for Northward Aggression under the Signboard of 'Defense Training' under the Rubric 'Extremely Dangerous Commotion of Provocation,' Which Brings Fiery Clouds of War to the Korean Peninsula," *Nodong Sinmun* (electronic edition), KPM Web site, March 1, 2011.

[5] "Moving Story Associated with Chol Ridge," KCNA, October 6, 1999.

[6] Donna Miles, "U.S. Declassifies Nuclear Stockpile Details to Promote Transparency," May 3, 2010, U.S. Department of Defense Web site, available at <www.defense.gov/npr/>.

[7] Estimates from various sources, including the International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2008* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008), 387–391.

[8] "The Mt. Paektu Gunstock Will Never Forgive It," *Chosun People's Army*, June 16, 2010.

[9] Jerrold M. Post and Robert S. Robins, "The Captive King and His Captive Court: The Psychopolitical Dynamics of the Disabled Leader and His Inner Circle," *Political Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1990), 331–351.

[10] For example, "U.S. Urged to Adopt Policy of Peaceful Co-existence with DPRK," KCNA, January 17, 2005; "DPRK FM Spokesman on U.S. Rumor about Dialogue," KCNA, January 15, 2003.