

TERRORISM AND ASYMMETRIC WAR: IS NORTH KOREA A THREAT?

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I. Introduction

The year 2001 will be remembered as the year in which the worst international terrorist attack ever occurred in the United States. On 11 September, nineteen hijackers belonging to the Al-Qaida terrorist network crashed passenger airplanes into New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing more than two thousand innocent people. This event more than any other has shown that terrorism—asymmetric warfare, to speak more broadly—will be a top security concern of many countries in the foreseeable future.

Since the terrorist incident, the international security environment has changed so drastically that many people call the present era “the post post-Cold War era.”¹ The 11 September incident has created an opportunity for a fundamental change in relationships between Washington and Moscow and Beijing. It also has provided Tokyo with an excuse to take a major step toward becoming a normal nation and a more equal security partner. The attacks, in short, have made terrorist attacks and the means to stop them a central issue in international politics. As the world's security

concerns focus on the global coalition against terrorism, the issue of asymmetry in world politics increases significantly in importance.

In the light of such changes since 11 September, this paper seeks to analyze North Korean asymmetric threats and evaluate their implications for security on the Korean Peninsula and in the East Asian region. For this purpose, the paper consists of three parts. First, the new meaning of asymmetry after the 11 September incident will be examined and the features of asymmetric threats and the global response to those threats discussed. Second, the current status of North Korean asymmetric threats will be reviewed, including its latest confession of a secret uranium enrichment program. U.S. and Korean perspectives on North Korean threats will be examined as well. Third, the overall implications of the nexus between the global war against terrorism and asymmetric threats will be discussed in relation to the security environment on the Korean Peninsula and in the East Asian region.

II. 11 September and a New Meaning of Asymmetry

International Security After 11 September

One of the fundamental issues that the post-11 September world must deal with is a new meaning of security loaded with asymmetric threats. Security implies freedom from threats to core values—e.g., protection of sovereignty and national territory—for both individuals and groups, but there is a major disagreement about whether the main focus of security should be on the individual, state, or international level. In the traditional sense of the term, security has meant national security and has been defined largely in military terms. As a result, the main area of interest for both academics and statesmen tended to be on the military capabilities that states should possess to defeat the threats that faced them.

In the historical debate about how best to achieve national security, the majority of international relations theorists tended to paint a rather pessimistic picture. The so-called realist perspective depicted the international system as a rather brutal arena in which states would seek to achieve their own security at the expense of others. In this view, interstate relations were seen as a struggle for power as states constantly attempted to prey on weaker states. The post-Cold War era, however, presents a slightly

different image of the world. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, we are entering a brave new world marked by many changes to the modern state system that has existed since the Treaty of Westphalia.

In particular, sweeping globalization and the information revolution have changed the international security environment fundamentally. With the end of the Cold War and in the wake of the collapse of communist regimes all over the world, liberal democracy and a market economy have spread globally. The new wave of globalization has weakened the importance of territorial boundaries of nation states, and the ongoing information revolution and progress in science and technology have resulted in substantial changes to human life.

One of the most far-reaching security effects of globalization is the complication in the basic concept of threat in international relations, both in terms of agency and scope.² As a result of globalization, states as well as non-state groups or individuals can be agents of threat. One clear implication of this change is that the state is relatively less important in the new security agenda than in the old. Globalization widens the scope of security, with the meaning of security in the post-Cold War era expanding beyond military security into the non-physical sphere as well. Traditional definitions of security in terms of protection of territory and sovereignty are being replaced by a new concept of security that comprises the protection of information, knowledge, and technology assets. The widening scope of security engendered by globalization means that the definition of security and the struggle to protect it will occur not only on the battlefield, but also in unconventional places against non-traditional security threats.

Another key aspect of future security considerations is the impact of technology on security concerns. The 1991 Gulf War inspired a popular perception that information superiority and technological advantage can be immensely important in modern warfare. The notion that conflict reflects the nature of society is not new, but the Gulf War vividly demonstrated that Information Society warfare might be quite different from that of an Industrial Society.³ Although the actual terminology may differ, many people claim that we are now going through a major societal transformation of at least the same order of magnitude as the two industrial revolutions initiated by the invention of steam engines and railways, electricity and the automobile.⁴ In a Network Society, or Information Society as it is more commonly known, key objectives are centered on knowledge and

information assets, whether the aim is to protect or destroy them. Addressing this point, for example, Nye and Owens, refer to “information power” as increasingly defining the distribution of power in international relations in the 21st century.⁵

In terms of global security, the combined effect of globalization and information revolution has direct relevance for the issue of asymmetric threats. The concept of asymmetric warfare, as developed by theorists of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), is a form of conflict in which a potential opponent—a state, a transnational group, or various other types of non-state actors—seeks to counter the superior technology or firepower of a superpower with unconventional, asymmetric means.

A classic definition of asymmetry may be found in a work of the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the U.S. National Defense University.⁶ According to this definition, asymmetric threats or techniques are a version of not “fighting fair,” which can include the use of surprise in its operational and strategic dimensions and the use of weapons in ways unplanned by most states. Typical forms of asymmetric warfare include guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and even information warfare cyber attacks.

Given U.S. supremacy in conventional forces, few rational opponents would deliberately seek a direct military confrontation with the United States. Instead, future adversaries who resort to military force against a far stronger nation will probably employ asymmetric, David-and-Goliath strategies involving innovative yet affordable weapons and tactics designed to weaken the stronger party’s resolve and its ability to use its superior conventional military capabilities effectively.⁷

On 12 October 2000, the U.S.S. Cole, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer equipped with an Aegis battle management system, was severely damaged by two men in a small rubber boat loaded with explosives in Aden, Yemen, killing seventeen U.S. sailors and wounding thirty-nine. This incident clearly proved the RMA theorists’ warning that the greater the overwhelming technological superiority of the U.S. over conventional military forces of virtually any conceivable adversary, the more vulnerable it is to certain types of unconventional response, such as terrorist attacks, weapons of mass destruction, or unpredictable actions in unpredictable places.⁸

The 11 September terrorist attacks are an indication that future warfare may be very different from the conventional warfare that has existed

since the Treaty of Westphalia. That is, major security challenges in the twenty-first century are likely to be of non-state origins, using unconventional means for unconventional goals.

The warning of asymmetric threats to the U.S. national security is not new. *Joint Vision 2020*, for instance, predicted that asymmetric threats will be normal rather than abnormal conditions of warfare in the future.⁹ Insofar as adversaries will have access to the global commercial and industrial base and much of the same technology as the U.S. military, the U.S. should not expect its opponents to fight with strictly industrial-age tools. At the same time, although the U.S. has superior conventional fighting capabilities and effective nuclear deterrence today, this favorable military balance is not static.

In the face of such strong capabilities, the appeal of asymmetric approaches and the focus on the development of niche capabilities will increase. The potential for such asymmetric approaches is perhaps the most serious danger the United States faces in the immediate future. This danger includes long-range ballistic missiles and other direct threats to U.S. population and territory. The asymmetric methods and objectives of an adversary are often far more important than the relative technological imbalance, and the psychological impact of an attack might far outweigh the actual physical damage.¹⁰

The Bush Administration's New National Security Strategy and the Prospects for International Politics

The national security strategy report of the U.S. government was mandated by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, legislated to remedy what was considered a major shortcoming of Cold War era executive branches: the inability to formulate and communicate concrete mid- and long-term national security strategies. Not until the Nixon administration did official national security strategy statements become routine. Although required by law, the quality of the national security strategy depends upon the willingness of the current president's administration to be frank and forthcoming. Furthermore, questions have arisen over the relevance of these reports. For instance, former President George H.W. Bush's 1993 report turned out to be little more than a self-congratulatory tract trumpeting the administration's foreign policy achievements.¹¹

The warnings of increasing asymmetric threats and their destructiveness were validated by the 11 September terrorist attacks. To cope with these new threats, the George W. Bush administration released its first national security strategy document on 20 September 2002.¹² Released twenty months into the administration's first term and a year after the attacks on 11 September, the strategy is a long-overdue codification of the principles underlying President Bush's foreign policy approach.

The report stipulates eight goals for national strategy. First, champion aspirations for human dignity. Second, strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against the U.S. and its friends. Third, work with others to defuse regional conflicts. Fourth, prevent enemies from threatening the U.S., its allies, and friends with weapons of mass destruction. Fifth, ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade. Sixth, expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy. Seventh, develop an agenda for cooperative action with the other major centers of global power. And eighth, transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

The contents of the report can be grouped according to three themes: promoting human dignity through political and economic freedom; providing security against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; and pursuing a policy of engagement in conflict areas and with allies. Of these themes, a new emphasis on preemptive attacks against adversaries is receiving the most news coverage around the world. This particular strategy proposes expanding the relatively uncontroversial concept of true preemption—striking first against an imminent, specific, near-certain attack—to the far broader concept of striking first to prevent the possibility of a longer-term threat from developing, which might better be called preventive war.¹³

The new strategy departs significantly from the last one published by President Bill Clinton at the end of 1999.¹⁴ The Clinton administration's national security strategy dealt at length with tactics to prevent the kind of financial meltdown that threatened economies in Asia and Russia. The Bush strategy urges other nations to adopt President Bush's own economic philosophy, starting with low marginal tax rates. While Clinton's strategy relied heavily on enforcing or amending a series of international treaties, from the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty to the Comprehensive

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to the Kyoto protocols on the environment, the Bush administration's strategy dismisses most of those efforts.¹⁵ Put more precisely, the Bush strategy sets three goals: to defend peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants; to preserve peace by building good relations with other great powers; and to extend peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent. These goals can be compared with the three goals the Clinton administration put forth in its final strategy report released in 1999: to enhance America's security; to bolster America's economic prosperity; and to promote democracy and human rights abroad.

The Bush objectives speak of defending, preserving, and extending peace, while the Clinton statement seems simply to assume peace. For the Clinton administration, enemies required great armies and great industrial capabilities—resources only states could provide—to threaten U.S. interests. But now, “shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank.” Perhaps the most important conclusion of the Bush national security strategy is a finding that the strategies that won the Cold War—containment and deterrence—won't work against such dangers. Throughout the Cold War, it was sufficient to contain without seeking to reform authoritarian regimes. The intersection of radicalism and technology, however, means that the persistence of authoritarian regimes anywhere can breed resentments leading to terrorism that can do grievous harm to all humanity. Therefore, such regimes must be replaced to make the world better and safer. Although there is no guarantee of success, the Bush national security strategy report could be the most important reformulation of U.S. grand strategy in over half a century.¹⁶

When the Bush national security strategy report was released, other great powers expressed their concerns for the report's tough unilateralist stance. For instance, a Russian commentator indicated that the most outstanding part of the new strategy are the numerous references to preemption scattered throughout most of the sections of the report. According to this analysis, all references to international cooperation are, in fact, a polite U.S. attempt to wrap up unilateralism in a more internationally accepted form. That is, the United States intends to behave globally and cooperatively, but reserves the right to take preemptive, i.e., unilateral, action. In Moscow, the report has been taken as a strong declaration by Washington of U.S. world leadership. Nevertheless, the overall view in

Moscow is that the strategy's language is positive for U.S.-Russian relations.¹⁷

Likewise, a Chinese perspective claims that the idea of preemption, and of possible forthcoming preemptive action by the United States, would open up Pandora's Box to encourage a hasty initiation of armed conflicts. A key problem here is that U.S. leaders appear to believe that the United States alone has the right to decide whether it needs to take preemptive action to protect its own security. Perhaps what is more worrisome for Beijing is that the Bush strategy further declares a U.S. commitment to the self-defense of Taiwan that could encourage separatist sentiments in Taiwan, thus increasing the likelihood of military confrontation in the Taiwan Straits.¹⁸

This doctrine of preemption is particularly ominous for future security on the Korean peninsula. While the possibility of the U.S. attacking Iraq was being debated in the U.S. and around the world, North Korea's program of weapons of mass destruction was on a collision course with U.S. global strategy, particularly since North Korea's admission of its secret nuclear program. The Bush administration seems resolute in directly confronting rather than tolerating the roots of global problems. In the light of the Bush administration's stance, how dangerous are North Korean asymmetric threats?

III. North Korea's Asymmetric Threats: How Dangerous Are They?

North Korea's Strategy of Asymmetry Toward the South

Since the division of the Korean Peninsula, the North never has been content with the military and political standoff on the peninsula. Indeed, the signing of the 1953 armistice agreement did little to dissuade Pyongyang from attempting to achieve its ultimate goal of unification of the Korean peninsula under the control of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea). Since the division, North Korea has attempted to topple the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) with the assistance of indigenous communist activist groups in the South prior to the Korean conflict in 1950. In its drive to destabilize the South, the DPRK continued to employ both special operations forces and pro-Pyongyang sympathizers. Military confrontation between the two Koreas

Table 1
The Military Balance on the Korean Peninsula

	USFK	ROK (South Korea)	DPRK (North Korea)
Total armed forces			
Active	35,654	686,000	1,082,000
Reserve	-	4,500,000	4,700,000
Army	27,200	560,000	950,000
Main battle tank	116	1,000 Type 88, 80 T80U, 400 M-47, 850 M-48	3,500 (T-34, T-54/55, T-62, Type-59)
Light tank	-	-	560 (PT-76, M-1985)
Armored	111	2,480	2,500
Personnel Carrier			
Total artillery	45 (including mortar)	6,474 (excluding mortar)	10,400 (excluding mortar)
Mortar	-	6,000	7,500
Surface-to-surface missile	-	12 NHK-I/II	24 Frog-3/-5/-7; some 30 Scud-C; 10 No Dong
Surface-to-air missile	1 Patriot battalion	1,090	10,000+
Helicopter	263	117 attack, 24 transport, 266 utility	-
Navy	300	63,000	46,000
Submarine	-	20	26
Principal surface combatants	-	39	3
Patrol and coastal combatants	-	84	310
Mine warfare	-	15	23
Amphibious	-	12	10
Air Force	8,300	63,000	86,000
	4 fighter squadrons, 1 rescue squadron, 1 squadron of special operations, 1 recon squadron	7 tactical fighter wings, 1 combat capable trainer wings, 1 forward air control wing, 1 recon group, training: 25 F-5B, 50 T-37, 30 T-38, 25 T-41B, 18 Hawk Mk-67	3 bomber and fighter divisions, 2 support aircraft divisions, 1 training division

Source: CSIS Working Group, *Conventional Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2002), 45-46; All information drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance, 2002-2003* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002).

still continues today. As shown in the next table, the current military situation on the Korean Peninsula strongly indicates that the Korean peninsula is one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world.

In comparison, North Korea enjoys a quantitative edge militarily over the South, whereas the South, combined with the U.S. Forces in Korea, has a qualitatively superior weapons system. Additionally, North Korea's current military strategy toward the South is based on a surprise attack aimed at taking the initiative in the early stage of a war. It depends primarily on mechanized and self-propelled units producing rapid results for a successful blitzkrieg. At the same time, the North Korean military would deploy combined forces of regular army and guerrilla forces simultaneously so that the entire peninsula could be occupied before the arrival of U.S. reinforcements. In short, Pyongyang's plan for attack on Seoul is based on the now-famous, short-term blitzkrieg strategy.¹⁹ North Korea's strategy, moreover, depends to a great extent on asymmetric warfare components.

As a part of such a strategy, the DPRK has resorted to terrorism on numerous occasions in efforts to overthrow the ROK government. In 1968, DPRK commandos infiltrated the South to attack the Blue House, South Korea's presidential residence. Four years later, special agents attempted to assassinate President Park Chung Hee. In 1983, Pyongyang blew up members of the cabinet of President Chun Doo Hwan in Rangoon during a state visit to Burma. Roughly four years after this attack, a North Korean agent successfully downed a Korean Airlines passenger jet, killing all aboard. In Table 2, thirty-one specific North Korean terrorist activities are summarized since the end of the Korean War. In addition, there are still reports that Pyongyang's agents have long sought to whip up popular discontent among elements in the South Korean population, particularly laborers and student activists. South Korean authorities even suspect that the DPRK has played a role in the South's numerous student uprisings.

Although both the DPRK and the ROK pledged in 1999 to refrain from all acts aimed at destroying and overthrowing each other, it is clear that the DPRK continues to rely on unconventional conflict as part of its strategy to achieve hegemony over the entire Korean peninsula. Pyongyang possesses a wide range of military equipment—including low-flying AN-2 transport aircraft, speedboats, and small submarines—whose sole purpose appears to be the infiltration of commando units into the South.²⁰

Table 2

North Korea's Major Terrorist Activities Toward the South, 1953-1990

Date	Terrorist Activities
February 16, 1958	Hijacking of a KNA airliner with 34 passengers
December 6, 1958	Kidnapping of 7 fishing boats including 42 crewmen
July 22, 1960	Firing at a vessel heading to Inchon, killing one crewman
December 15, 1960	Attempted kidnapping of the passenger vessel <i>Kyongju</i>
March 20, 1964	Kidnapping of 2 fishing boats including 26 crewmen
October 29, 1965	Kidnapping of 109 fishermen who were picking clams
November 19, 1966	Kidnapping of a fishing boat
November 3, 1967	Kidnapping of 10 fishing boats including 81 crew
December 25, 1967	Kidnapping of 4 fishing boats including 34 crew
January 6, 1968	Kidnapping of 3 fishing boats including 31 crew
June 17, 1968	Kidnapping of 5 fishing boats
January 21, 1968	Armed raid almost reaching the ROK presidential residence
October 30, 1968	Armed guerilla killing of civilians in Ulchin and Samchok
December 9, 1968	Killing of student Lee Seung-Bok and his family
December 11, 1969	Hijacking of a South Korean airliner with 51 passengers
June 22, 1970	Assassination attempt on ROK president, National Cemetery
January 23, 1971	Attempted hijacking of a Korean Airliner
February 4, 1972	Kidnapping of 5 fishing boats after wrecking one
August 15, 1974	Attempted assassination of ROK president, killing the first lady
August 30, 1976	Kidnapping of the fishing boat <i>Shinchin III</i>
January 22, 1980	Kidnapping of two fishing boats
September 8, 1980	Kidnapping of the fishing boat <i>Kochin II</i>
December 2, 1980	Kidnapping of the fishing boat <i>Taechang</i>
1981	Assassination attempt on a visiting ROK president in Canada
October 9, 1983	Assassination attempt on ROK president in Rangoon, killing several cabinet members
September 24, 1984	Killing of a woman at a restaurant in Taegu
October 14, 1986	Bombing at Kimpo International Airport
November 29, 1987	Bombing of Korean Air Flight 858
January 28, 1989	Kidnapping of 2 fishing boats including 21 crew
May 4, 1989	Attempted kidnapping of 1 fishing boat
May 7, 1989	Kidnapping of 1 fishing boat including 4 crew

Source: Yongho Kim, "North Korea's Use of Terror and Coercive Diplomacy," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, XIV, no. 1 (Spring 2002), 49-50.

North Korea also has a long history of international terrorist activities. North Korea has continued to provide a safe haven to the Japanese Communist League-Red Army Faction members who participated in hijacking a Japanese Airlines flight to North Korea in 1970. Pyongyang allowed members of the Japanese Diet to visit some of the hijackers that year. In 1999, North Korea also attempted to kidnap in Thailand a North Korean diplomat who had defected the day before. The attempt led the North Korean Embassy to hold the former diplomat's son hostage for two weeks. Some evidence also suggests that in 1999 North Korea may have sold weapons directly or indirectly to terrorist groups.²¹

In a surprise Japan-North Korean summit meeting in Pyongyang recently, Kim Jong Il admitted to and apologized for kidnapping several Japanese citizens during the past decades. South Koreans were enraged because Kim did not admit anything about the hundreds of South Koreans kidnapped by North Korea since the Korean War. According to an estimate, North Korea has kidnapped 3,790 South Koreans since the armistice agreement, and still holds 486 in custody somewhere in North Korea.²²

After 11 September, the United States expressed its disappointment in North Korea's response to international efforts to combat terrorism. In a statement released after the 11 September attacks, North Korea reiterated its position of opposing terrorism and any support for international terrorism. It also signed the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, acceded to the Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, and indicated its willingness to sign five other agreements. In contrast to worldwide efforts to defeat international terrorism, however, North Korea did not take substantial steps to cooperate in efforts to combat terrorism. North Korea did not report any efforts to search for and block financial assets as required by UN Security Council Resolution 1373. Similarly, the North did not respond positively to South Korea's call to resume dialogue in which counter-terrorism is an agenda item, nor to the United States' in its desire to open a dialogue on improved implementation of the Agreed Framework.

In light of President Bush's call to recognize the dangerous nexus between weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, the failure of North Korea to respond to the U.S. request for talks on the Agreed Framework was especially troublesome. In addition, Pyongyang's provision of safe

haven to the four remaining Japanese Communist League-Red Army Faction members who participated in the hijacking of a Japanese flight to North Korea in 1970 remains problematic. Moreover, evidence has surfaced that suggests that North Korea may have sold limited quantities of small arms to terrorist groups up until very recently.²³ Therefore, if North Korea continues to fail to show substantial progress in its efforts to disengage itself from terrorist collusion, North Korea is very much likely to find itself at the center of the United States' second stage of its anti-terrorism campaign.

North Korea's Weapons of Mass Destruction

In addition to its asymmetric strategy, North Korea's weapons of mass destruction pose a serious challenge to post-11 September global security. The U.S. intelligence community judged as early as in the mid-1990s that North Korea had produced one, possibly two, nuclear weapons, although the North had frozen plutonium production activities at Yongbyon in accordance with the Agreed Framework of 1994. North Korea also has chemical and biological weapons programs. The North is nearly self-sufficient in developing and producing missiles, and has demonstrated a willingness to sell complete systems and components that have enabled other states to acquire longer-range capabilities earlier than would otherwise have been possible, and to acquire the basis for domestic development efforts.²⁴

The latest North Korean confession that it has secretly operated a uranium enrichment program indeed has shocked the world and provided credence to many analysts' allegations that North Korea actually may possess nuclear weapons. Confronted by new American intelligence evidence, North Korea admitted that it has been conducting a major clandestine nuclear-weapons development program for the past several years. North Korea's surprise revelation came when U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly, a special envoy to the North, confronted his North Korean counterpart with American intelligence data suggesting a secret project was underway. At first the North Korean officials angrily denied the allegation, but acknowledged the existence of the nuclear program the next day.²⁵ It is not yet clear exactly what the North Koreans have done and how long this activity has been underway. It is certain, however, that

this is a serious violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework with the United States, the nuclear safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. North Korea's nuclear program is also inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which states that both Koreas "shall not possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities."²⁶

Besides the nuclear program, North Korean ballistic missiles are particularly threatening. North Korea has hundreds of Scuds and No Dong missiles and continues to develop the longer-range Taepo Dong-2 missile, which will enable the North to target parts of U.S. territory. The 1,300-km-range No Dong remains the longest-range ballistic missile that North Korea has deployed. In May 2001, Kim Jong Il unilaterally extended the North's voluntary flight-test moratorium, in effect since 1999, until 2003, provided negotiations with the United States proceeded on the right track.

North Korea's Taepo Dong-2 missile is of particular concern to many countries. U.S. intelligence sources estimate that the Taepo Dong-2 may be ready for flight-testing with a nuclear weapon-sized payload. The North also is probably working on improvements to its current design. The Taepo Dong-2, in a two-stage ballistic missile configuration, could deliver a several-hundred-kg payload up to 10,000 km—sufficient to strike Alaska, Hawaii, and parts of the continental United States. If North Korea uses a third stage similar to the one used on the Taepo Dong-1 in a 1998 test flight, then the Taepo Dong-2 could deliver a several-hundred-kg payload up to 15,000 km, which is sufficient to strike all of North America. A Taepo Dong-2 flight test probably would be conducted as an SLV (Space Launching Vehicle), with a third stage to place a small payload into the same orbit the North Koreans tried to achieve in the tests conducted in 1998.²⁷

In terms of weapons proliferation, North Korea has assumed the role of purveyor of missile and manufacturing technology to many countries. The North has been willing to sell complete systems and components to other countries that have sought to acquire longer-range capabilities, notably the No Dong MRBM to Pakistan. The North also has helped countries by serving as a source of technology for domestic development efforts, as with Iran's reverse-engineering of the No Dong in the Shahab-3 program.²⁸

Table 3
North Korean Missile Programs and Developments

Type	Names	Range (km)	Warhead (kg)	Stages	Service Status
SRBM	Hwasong 5, Scud B	302-340	1,000	1	Since 1985
SRBM	Hwasong 6, Scud C	500	700	1	Since 1989
MRBM	No Dong 1, Scud D	1,350	1,200	1	Since 1997
IRBM	Taepo Dong 1, No Dong 2, Scud X	1,500-2,200	700-1,000	2	1998?
SLV	Taepo Dong 1 Space Launch Vehicle	4,000	50-100	3	1998
ICBM	Taepo Dong 2, No Dong 3	4,000-6,000	700-1,000	2	2000+
ICBM	?	6,000+	100-500	3	?

Source: Anthony H. Cordesman, *Proliferation in the Axis of Evil: North Korea, Iran, and Iraq* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2002), 9. See also Arms Control Association Fact Sheets, "Worldwide Ballistic Missile Inventories," May 2002, <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/missiles.asp?print> searched 5 November 2002.

North Korea's chemical and biological warfare agents also pose a grave threat. North Korea established research facilities capable of producing chemical and biological warfare agents in the early 1960s. By the 1980s, it was capable of producing massive quantities of such weapons. It is likely that these arms have a special appeal for Pyongyang because they are relatively inexpensive, very effective, and difficult to detect. Although North Korea denies possession of biochemical weapons, the ROK Ministry of Defense announced that the North has stockpiled 5,000 tons of biochemical agents.²⁹

A recent report also confirms that North Korea may possess the smallpox pathogen. According to a *Washington Post* article, a Bush administration intelligence review has concluded that four nations—Iraq, North Korea, Russia, and France—possess covert stocks of the smallpox pathogen. Smallpox, which spreads by respiration and kills roughly one in three of those infected, was declared eradicated on 8 May 1980, and seed cultures now are held officially in only two heavily guarded laboratories, one in Atlanta and the other in Koltsovo, Siberia. The CIA now believes that these four nations have undeclared samples of the smallpox virus. The agency's Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation and Arms

Control Center (WINPAC) has a sliding scale of confidence in those assessments. According to the report, WINPAC placed Russia in the top category, meaning that contrary to diplomatic assurances, Russia retains covert stocks of the virus. Iraq and France are assessed to have smallpox with high, but not very high, confidence. The last country on WINPAC's list is North Korea. Although North Korea is known to have a long-standing and active biological weapons program, WINPAC said its evidence was of medium quality.³⁰

North Korea also is suspected of continuing to procure raw materials and components for its ballistic missile programs from various foreign sources, especially through North Korean firms based in China. According to U.S. intelligence sources, the North is capable of producing and

Table 4
North Korea's Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons Programs

Program	North Korea's Capabilities	Treaty Status
Nuclear Weapons	<p>Has several nuclear facilities with the potential to produce nuclear weapons. Most facilities are located at Yongbyon, 60 miles from the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. Key installations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An atomic reactor with a capacity of about 5 electrical megawatts, constructed between 1980 and 1987; - Two larger (estimated 50 electrical megawatts and 200 electrical megawatts) atomic reactors under construction since 1984; - A plutonium reprocessing plant about 600 feet long and several stories high; - A secret uranium enrichment program, recently revealed. 	<p>NPT: Signed in December 1985.</p> <p>Announced to withdraw from NPT in March 1993, but suspended the decision in June 1993.</p>
Biological Weapons	<p>Has developed and produced weaponized biological agents. May have biological weapons available for use.</p> <p>Potential means of delivery include short-range, anti-ship cruise missiles; bombers; rockets; mortars; sprayers; artillery; helicopters, and fighters.</p>	<p>Geneva Protocol: acceded 1/4/89.</p> <p>BWC: acceded 13/3/87.</p>
Chemical Weapons	<p>Believed to possess sizable stockpile of chemical weapons, including nerve, blister, choking, and blood agents.</p> <p>Delivery vehicles include ballistic missiles, artillery, and aircraft.</p>	<p>CWC: has not signed.</p>

Source: Arms Control Association Fact Sheet, "Chemical and Biological Weapons Proliferation at a Glance," September 2002 (<http://www.armscontrol.org/pdf/cbwprolif.pdf>, searched on 5 November 2002); Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," *CRS Issue Brief*, Updated 21 October 2002.

delivering via missile warheads and other munitions a wide variety of chemical agents and possibly some biological agents. In April 2001 Pyongyang signed a Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement with Russia, laying the groundwork for potential arms sales and transfers to North Korea. Actual sales and deliveries, however, will be dependent on Pyongyang's ability to pay.³¹

Finally, in August 2002, the Bush administration imposed sanctions against North Korea after concluding that it had sold Scud missile components to Yemen before President Bush took office. According to the report, American officials stated that the shipment of Scud components to Yemen occurred during the Clinton administration. It also stated that the United States has discussed its concerns with Yemen, which has indicated that it does not plan to buy any more missile technology from North Korea.³²

Overall, North Korea's asymmetric strategy and its weapons of mass destruction pose a serious challenge for the post-11 September world.

Evaluating North Korean Asymmetric Threats

North Korea's objective capabilities, then, are sufficient to threaten its neighboring states. The United States in particular has a strong case against North Korea's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction as related to its global strategy of anti-terrorism.

The United States considers North Korea extremely dangerous in terms of weapons proliferation. From the American perspective, North Korea indeed deserves the "axis of evil" title. John R. Bolton, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, reiterated in a visit to Seoul in 2002 that President Bush's use of the term to describe Iran, Iraq, and North Korea was factually correct. Noting that there is a hard connection between these regimes—an "axis"—along which flow dangerous weapons and dangerous technology, Bolton said the United States has had serious concerns about North Korea's nuclear weapons program for many years.³³

The controversial *Nuclear Posture Review* report, leaked to the press in March 2002, elaborated various nuclear contingencies that the United States must be prepared to deal with in the future. The report categorized contingencies as immediate, potential, or unexpected. Immediate contin-

gencies involve well-recognized current dangers such as an Iraqi attack on Israel or its neighbors, a North Korean attack on South Korea, or a military confrontation over the status of Taiwan. Potential contingencies are plausible but not immediate dangers. For instance, the emergence of a new, hostile military coalition against the United States or its allies in which one or more members of the coalition possess WMD and the means of delivery is a potential contingency that could have major consequences for U.S. defense planning, including plans for nuclear forces. Unexpected contingencies are sudden and unpredicted security challenges like the Cuban Missile Crisis.

North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya are among the countries that could be involved in immediate, potential, or unexpected contingencies. All have longstanding hostility toward the United States and its security partners. North Korea and Iraq in particular have been chronic military concerns. All sponsor or harbor terrorists, and all have active WMD and missile programs, the report claimed.³⁴

Despite the perception of political and humanitarian changes, many U.S. officials believe there is as yet no permanent peace dividend on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea still poses a major threat to stability and security in the region, and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future. Kim Jong Il stubbornly adheres to his military-first policy, pouring huge amounts of his budget resources into military buildup. As a result, his military forces are “bigger, better, closer, and deadlier” than in the past.³⁵

Even Donald H. Rumsfeld, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, has stated that North Korea actually possesses a nuclear bomb. In a recent news briefing, he mentioned that “I don’t know what’s going to happen in North Korea, except that we do know they are one of the world’s worst proliferators, particularly with ballistic missile technologies. We know they’re a country that has been aggressively developing nuclear weapons and *has nuclear weapons* [emphasis added].”³⁶

In addition, in early 2002, a Congressional Research Service report indicated the possibility of North Korea using South Korean cash assistance for military purposes. The U.S. military command in Korea and the Central Intelligence Agency are said to believe that North Korea is using the large cash payments to developing its military. The Hyundai Corporation has given over \$400 million since 1998 to the North Korean govern-

ment for the right to operate a tourist project at Mount Kumkang in North Korea. According to informed sources, moreover, Hyundai was alleged to have made secret payments to North Korea that may bring the total payment closer to \$800 million.³⁷ Later, it turned out that the Hyundai Corporation actually made a secret payment of a large amount of cash to North Korea. South Korean government auditors confirmed that the Hyundai company borrowed \$186 million from a government-run bank shortly before the 2000 summit and used it for unclear purposes in the communist North.³⁸

All the evidence indicates a strong basis for U.S. suspicion of North Korean threats. What is troubling for many South Koreans, however, is a perception that the United States intentionally exaggerates North Korea's threat in order to facilitate the U.S. global strategy of consolidating its supremacy. Many South Koreans believe that although North Korea is still dangerous, denouncing North Korea as an axis of evil needs some caveats. North Korea is struggling to seek foreign economic assistance and capital to revive its already faltering economy. And because of the dire state of its economy, North Korea's military threat has diminished substantially. There is evidence to indicate that such claims are not completely groundless.

Recently, North Korea seems to have embarked on a series of radical experiments that may topple the regime from within. First, there was a report that North Korea is transforming its command economic policy to cope with chronic shortages, disease, and starvation. At the crux of the change is abolition of the rationing system under which North Koreans are told how much food and other vital necessities they will receive from the government. If rationing is eliminated, basic commodities would be available on the open market, wages would be increased to pay for them, and a free market for agricultural produce would eliminate black-market sales. In addition, factories would be required to operate at a profit.³⁹

Second, North Korea has taken a significant step toward reducing its isolation by starting talks aimed at reconciliation with Japan. A summit meeting between Kim Jong Il and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi took place in Pyongyang on 17 September 2002, in which a major obstacle for reconciliation was removed when Mr. Kim admitted that his country had kidnapped Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s. Kim's apology was very unusual in light of North Korea's past behavior.⁴⁰

Third, North Korea announced an ambitious plan to create an autonomous zone in Sinuiju and appointed Yang Bin, a Chinese-born tulip tycoon who holds Dutch citizenship, to administer the enclave officially. Sinuiju lies just across the Yalu River on the North Korean side from the Chinese city of Dandoong. Its proximity to China has made it more prosperous, or at least less impoverished, than other parts of North Korea. North Korea's leadership seemed to have taken an unprecedented step toward openness when it announced the formation of a seventy-square-mile autonomous region with its own economic, political, and legal systems. They promised Yang Bin unfettered administrative control of the area. North Korea apparently wants to attract foreign capital to spark its stagnant economy, the way China did in the early 1980s when it set up free economic zones. However, with the arrest of Yang by Chinese officials for tax fraud, the future of Sinuiju has suddenly become uncertain.⁴¹

Many South Koreans used to believe that the United States' evaluation of North Korean threats has been exaggerated. However, South Koreans have mixed feelings these days after seeing North Korea's uncompromisingly confrontational stance, particularly since its nuclear confession. Inter-Korean dialogues have shown a pattern of repeated on-again, off-again fluctuations. North Korea, while insisting on dialogue on the one hand, has frequently canceled scheduled meetings on short notice. Furthermore, sporadic military provocations by the North have led many South Koreans to be disillusioned with the "Sunshine Policy." The latest nuclear incident adds another item to a long list of such disappointments.

For instance, the shadow of the recent naval clash in the Yellow Sea still lingers over the progress of inter-Korean dialogue as well as over North Korea-U.S. relations. On 29 June 2002, two North Korean patrol boats crossed the Northern Limit Line (NLL), three miles west of Yonpyong Island off the South Korean coast near the end of the demilitarized zone, whose legitimacy has never been recognized by North Korea. The North Korean vessel opened fire after ignoring South Korean warnings to turn back, killing four South Korean marines who were manning positions on the deck of a South Korean vessel. The opposing vessels continued to exchange sporadic gunfire until the North Korean vessel turned back.

The incident followed a series of incursions into South Korean waters by North Korean vessels and was the most serious in the area since June 1999, when a military clash occurred after North Korean fishing boats crossed the northern limit line. After several days of tense maneuvering by North and South Korean naval ships, on 15 June 1999, South Korean navy vessels sank a North Korean torpedo boat with at least a dozen men on board and also damaged another vessel. The armed clash reflects North Korea's irritation with a boundary established by the United Nations almost a half century ago that prevents the North's ships from entering valuable fishing waters. The incident also shows the precariousness of inter-Korean relations without a permanent peace agreement.

In conclusion, the bottom line in evaluating North Korean threats is how to judge its intentions and capabilities in a sensible way. Unfortunately, so far North Korea has failed to show that it has abandoned its intention of threatening the world with the various asymmetric means at their disposal. North Korea's confession of its secret nuclear program may be a last blow to whatever remaining trust exists between the two Koreas. North Korea's asymmetric threats, moreover, will continue to increase if the actual gap in national capabilities between the two Koreas widens. At the same time, if no further political compromise between the two Koreas is achieved, the likelihood of asymmetric warfare by North Korea will increase as well.

IV. Implications for East Asian Security

If anything was learned from the experience of 11 September, it is that the future of international security will be more complicated than before due to the existence of all kinds of asymmetric threats. The Korean peninsula is no exception. However, one important implication of 11 September for the security environment of the Korean peninsula is that North Korea may find it more difficult to practice brinkmanship. For decades, North Korea has used military provocations to advance its diplomatic goals. In some cases, North Korea's actions have involved violence, such as sending commandos into the South. In other cases, they have only consisted of displaying real (missiles) or potential(nuclear) weapons for the purpose of extracting economic gains or diplomatic concessions from its adversaries. In the post-11 September atmosphere in the United States

and many other nations, it is unlikely that the North Korean tactic of resorting to blackmail with weapons of mass destruction will result in any substantial gains for Pyongyang.⁴²

To better cope with North Korean asymmetric threats, Korea-U.S. policy coordination toward North Korea is essential. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking to the Asia Society in New York on 10 June 2002, reiterated Washington's position that it remains willing to meet North Korea any time, any place, and without preconditions. However, the U.S. position, notwithstanding Powell's speech, has clearly placed some very specific prerequisites for engaging in any dialogue with North Korea. Powell's speech seems to indicate that progress between the U.S. and North Korea will depend on Pyongyang's behavior on a number of key issues. More specifically, Powell stated that North Korea must get out of the proliferation business and eliminate long-range missiles that threaten others; make a much more serious effort to provide for its suffering citizens; move toward a less threatening conventional military posture; and come into full compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards as called for in the 1994 Agreed Framework.⁴³

From a long-term perspective, a strengthening of the Korea-U.S. alliance partnership is essential. Both countries will soon observe the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the mutual defense treaty. After a half-century-old relationship, a mature strategic partnership for the twenty-first century should be redefined based on the changed strategic, political, economic, and military situation between the two countries. With the election of libertarian Roh Moo-Hyun as South Korea's next president, Korea-U.S. relations are facing the beginning of a new era. The victory of Roh has been presented in the western media as a source of future tension in Korea-U.S. relations. Roh, a long-time liberal and human rights activist, does represent a more challenging partner for future Korea-U.S. relations. Roh's stated foreign policy goals include continuing the Sunshine Policy of engagement with North Korea, renegotiating the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) for the 37,000 American troops in Korea, and maintaining a more independent foreign policy stance in international and regional affairs. Overall, the situation of reduced threats from North Korea and U.S. unilateralism have combined in South Korea to create a situation that does not augur well for future Korea-U.S. relations.⁴⁴ If any discrepancies exist in the perceptions of the two countries vis-à-vis each other, they

should be addressed through the relevant policy channels of the two governments.⁴⁵

U.S. decision-makers should pay attention to the fact that America is increasingly being perceived negatively and support abroad for U.S. policies is plummeting. Consider, for instance, worldwide reactions to the U.S. threat to withdraw its peacekeepers from Bosnia unless American soldiers are exempt from the jurisdiction of the new International Criminal Court. Many people around the world are now convinced that the United States, despite its talk of democracy, really thinks only of its own narrow interests.

In Seoul, American hostility toward North Korea is seen to be severely undermining President Kim Dae-jung's efforts to engage the North. Several top South Korean leaders emphasized that Washington either doesn't understand or doesn't care that South Korea cannot afford to take over a collapsing North Korea. Similarly, in China, there is a widespread disappointment and resentment over the recent U.S. designation of China as a strategic competitor rather than as a strategic partner.⁴⁶

In light of such grievances vis-à-vis American unilateralism, a recent study by the Nautilus Institute may offer some useful lessons for handling North Korea. The report indicated that the future of North Korea is becoming increasingly important to the United States and other regional powers for several reasons. First, U.S. relations with North Korea are intimately tied to U.S. relations with China, which are critical for global security. Second, the U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework has global security and environmental implications throughout Asia and the rest of the world: its failure could promote a transfer of weapons of mass destruction to other nations or terrorist groups. Third, it is highly unlikely that there will be a peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula without dramatic intervention by global players.⁴⁷

The report envisioned four scenarios—Gridlock, Great Leader 3, Phoenix, and Mujige (rainbow)—and then applied these scenarios to three possible approaches in U.S. policy toward North Korea: rollback, militant containment, and cooperative engagement. According to the report, cooperative engagement played a positive role in terms of nonproliferation and stability, or at least mitigated the negative aspects of the various scenarios. Moreover, in none of the scenarios did cooperative engagement result in greater vulnerability for the United States. This conclusion

reflects a bit of reality that the worst scenario on the Korean Peninsula is an all-out war. Everybody strongly agrees that, at a minimum, a second Korean War should be avoided at any cost. Therefore, a sort of engagement vis-à-vis the North seems to be the only reasonable option for the South in the near future. North Korea should further be embedded into relationships of deeper dependence on the outside world, particularly South Korea, the United States, and Japan. Similar to the 1994 carrot-and-stick approach by South Korea and the United States that led to the Agreed Framework, a similar strategy must be employed today, but with greater multilateral coordination.⁴⁸

In conclusion, North Korean asymmetric threats cannot be stopped by either the United States or South Korea alone. On the one hand, the international community has to pay more attention to engage North Korea in a constructive way. On the other hand, the United States and Korea should seek a concerted solution to the policy coordination problem toward North Korea. Should the two countries fail to coordinate their policies toward North Korea, the future of Korea-U.S. alliance relations is very likely to face a rocky road in the next half century. This in turn would mean that East Asia as a whole will continue to be subject to North Korea's asymmetric threats.

Notes

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