

CHAPTER 5

CHINA'S GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Eric A. McVadon

Author's Note: Before the notable spring 2000 summits in Beijing and Pyongyang,¹ China's policies and practices for the Korean Peninsula had slipped into the background. American attention and media reporting China's regional goals and strategies had been justifiably dominated by the tensions across the Taiwan Strait and their implications for the United States. The "Taiwan problem" is, as Chinese and American leaders have repeatedly stated, the likely cause for hostile military actions between China and the United States. The divided Korean Peninsula, jutting southward from China's northeast coast and blocking (with the Russian Far East) China's access to the Sea of Japan, has fortunately lost the status of a prime problem likely to kindle hostilities. Encouraging initial views of the summit meeting between the North and South Korean leaders has, for many Koreans and others, replaced fears of war with euphoria—whether warranted or not. This development, at least with respect to the Korean Peninsula, should not, however, diminish interest in China's intentions and actions concerning its two important Korean neighbors and the implications of China's policies and strategies for the United States. Indeed, it now seems all the more likely that changes on the Korean Peninsula will be the catalyst for revision of the architecture of Northeast Asian security.

This chapter will examine the People's Republic of China's (PRC) aspirations and actions with respect to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Primary sources for this section are Chinese officials, military officers, specialists from

strategic studies institutes, scholars, and practitioners who have diverse knowledge and experience in China's security concerns in Korea. These sources are not secretive or guarded; they readily discuss China and Korea. Chinese positions, goals, and strategies will be analyzed; the implications for Beijing, Washington, Seoul, and others will be explored. Chinese motives, as they apply to a changed Korea and to the United States, will be examined. Prospects for reconciling divergent American and Chinese regional security philosophies, focused through the lenses of the existing regional security situation and likely change on the Korean Peninsula, will be explored. Taiwan and its reunification or other outcome deserve the attention they are currently receiving, but Taiwan will probably be only a sideshow in the bigger arena of Northeast Asian security in the coming years. Korea is likely to be the center ring for the main performance that will help shape security relations among the major regional players.

HOW CHINA VIEWS ITS RELATIONS WITH THE KOREAS

China justifiably prides itself on its nicely balanced relations with both North Korea and South Korea, arguably (and convincingly so) a better balance by far of comprehensive relations with the two Koreas than that of any other nation.² For much of the last decade, Beijing was perhaps the only capital to have normal working relations with both Koreas,³ a situation that only now appears to be changing as other important nations move to improve their relations. Russia, for example, has very recently begun to mend its frayed ties with the North; Australia and Italy have established formal diplomatic relations; and Canada has recognized Pyongyang. Talks to that end with Japan continue. Yet China recently demonstrated its preeminent position with North Korea when the latter's President Kim Jong Il chose Beijing as his first foreign destination, conducting the stunning, secretive visit just 2 weeks before he was to hold the historic June 2000 initial meeting with

his South Korean counterpart.⁴ China's uniquely balanced links with the two Koreas are especially noteworthy in light of the vast differences between the North and South and between the two relationships.⁵ Additionally, China's positions and policies for the Korean Peninsula are not well understood or may be widely misperceived, offering the prospect of discovering a number of surprises, large and small.

China and the DPRK.

"We wish that the North Korean people . . . will continue to achieve victories in the process of building socialism with Korean characteristics and in seeking peaceful reunification," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said at a press briefing in September 1998. In referring to the then recent confirmation of Kim Jong Il as the North Korean leader, he was quite reserved, even taciturn, saying only: "Chinese and North Korean leaders in the past had a tradition of exchanging visits and we hope this tradition will continue."⁶

This somewhat cool official statement was made less than 2 years ago after North Korea's parliament, unexpectedly meeting for the first time in 4 years, named Kim Jong Il as head of state. At that time, Kim was also reelected (first elected in 1993) chairman of the powerful National Defense Commission, with parliament terming that position the "highest post of the state." These events were transpiring in the wake of North Korea's surprising launch several days before of the solid-fuel, three-stage rocket that flew over Japan on August 31, 1998. They illustrate the difficulties and uncertainties that plague the PRC government as it determines how best to treat the DPRK. Now, as we have seen, Kim Jong Il has visited China for the first time in 17 years, his first visit there as North Korea's leader, and his first visit in that capacity to any foreign country.⁷ There was in Beijing a hospitable reception, but there were still indications of Chinese uncertainty about Kim and his policies and about North Korea and where it is headed. Those issues are an

appropriate place to start an examination of China's view of the Korean Peninsula—and the PRC's outlook and attitudes, as suggested, are not lacking in surprises.

The Concept of North Korea as a Buffer State. Among the unexpected discoveries is the diversity of Chinese views on the matter of North Korea as a buffer state. The idea that North Korea is a valued socialist and authoritarian buffer between China to the north, and the military forces of the United States and the ROK and the capitalist and pluralistic influences of South Korean society to the south, is much more readily and widely accepted in Western academic and military circles than among Chinese academics and strategists. Some Chinese thinkers call the concept of a strategic buffer anachronistic, yet another bit of debris left over from the Cold War. Others deny that attention is given to the buffer concept in Chinese thinking about the Korean Peninsula. Still others describe the buffer idea as a concept that has little validity at present, even if it was a more vital factor in earlier years.

There are stronger views: The buffer concept is abhorrent to some Chinese because it implies both that South Korea is at least a potentially hostile power, something Beijing does not wish to dwell upon (or even contemplate), and that Beijing might somehow be obligated to Pyongyang for mendicant North Korea's service as a strategic buffer against hostile intrusions of various sorts. Further, the buffer idea runs counter to the precept of nonalignment, a notion Beijing wishes to foster concerning its relations with the two Koreas. One active and well-informed Chinese official said that in several years of talks between China and South Korea, in which he had participated, the buffer concept was never discussed, including in private and preparatory discussions among the Chinese delegations.⁸

Another view is that emphasis on the buffer concept has, for good reason, waned during the last decade. The establishment first of strong trade relations and then

diplomatic relations between China and the Republic of Korea was a strong factor in diminished emphasis on the concept; this was reinforced recently by other favorable actions by Seoul—as perceived by Beijing. Notable among these were President Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy toward Pyongyang and the South Korean Ministry of Defense decision not to participate with the United States in the development and ultimate deployment of theater missile defense (TMD) systems, both occurring in early 1999. Now there is the apparent easing of North-South animosity during the summit meeting of the Kims. Chinese thinkers, who give weight to these particular developments, see the ROK in a new light: as simply a bilateral alliance partner with the United States and not so much as part of a de facto collective security network comprising Japan, the United States, and the ROK—a concept deeply troubling to Beijing. For some, this brings a measure of contentment that makes it seem ludicrous that a buffer state would be of value in this changed political geography.

Capping all this is a sense of assuredness among the Chinese that nothing is about to happen to take away the buffer—whether they acknowledge its value (or feel it necessary) or not. Any form of reconciliation or reunification on the Korean Peninsula is viewed by most Chinese specialists as many years away, maybe a decade or more, so imminent demise of the buffer (acknowledged or not) is not a fear. In this vein, there is a conviction on the part of most moderate Chinese thinkers that the United States would be highly unlikely to move its military forces north of the 38th parallel even after the demilitarized zone (DMZ) is dissolved, and that, as we shall see, it is not necessarily a great Chinese concern if U.S. forces were to remain on the peninsula.

Laying out these various Chinese views is not meant to imply a sweeping consensus that the concept of North Korea as a valuable friendly buffer state is a dead idea. It does imply that the concept is at least no longer central to general Chinese thinking about the future of the Korean Peninsula.

At a minimum, Beijing has, as revealed in the various views described, conditioned itself at least to the eventual demise of this buffer between its highly industrialized Northeast and objectionable influences or forces emanating from the southern half of the peninsula. And even now the view among important Chinese thinkers has moved very far from general acceptance of the need for such a buffer or its central applicability to Chinese strategic thought concerning the two Koreas, as was clearly the case in earlier years. The concept of a Korean buffer does, however, survive in another form: The Korean Peninsula, taken as a whole, is viewed by Beijing as a buffer between China and an increasingly dangerous and active Japan.⁹ It is significant that the current buffer of import to Beijing is not one between it and the combination of South Korea and the U.S.-ROK alliance but rather between China and the combination of Japan and the U.S.-Japan alliance.

DPRK Receptivity to Economic Reform: A Parable of the State of the Relationship. Pyongyang has a reputation for refusing to accept advice on how it might reform its dismal economy, even disregarding advice given in a gentle, Asian way by Beijing. The Chinese have tried to demonstrate by example, rather than finger-waving and lecturing, that North Korea has much to learn from China. Put another way, Beijing has created opportunities for Pyongyang to become familiar with Chinese economic reforms and other domestic changes.¹⁰ It has often seemed that this effort was largely futile.

This popular conception, that Pyongyang just stubbornly ignores good Chinese advice and examples, is not, however, the whole story. China, indeed, continues delicately promoting economic reform for North Korea, and North Korea truly is often quite unreceptive, if not wholly intransigent. Among the reasons is that North Koreans believe that China has become largely capitalist and pro-American. The Chinese model, as a consequence, does not seem to Pyongyang generally applicable to staunchly communist North Korea.

Two years ago, nonetheless, noteworthy, if not sweeping, change began. There is now decreasing resistance in Pyongyang to China's gentle hints about the advantages to be gained by reform in North Korea. Pyongyang has recognized that all successful countries have opened to the outside. More specifically, in 1999, North Korea obliquely acknowledged the success of China's economic reform—an important step away from stubborn resistance. Pyongyang now permits farmers to have the combination of small plots of land and small farmers' markets where the products of these plots may be sold. This is tacit acceptance of the advice China has sensitively proffered, advice offered in the form of recounting Chinese experiences, not in the form of demands or threats to cease support. During President Kim Jong Il's recent visit to Beijing, he reportedly stated that China has scored great achievements in its reform and opening to the outside world and that its comprehensive national power is being improved and its international status is rising as well. All that, Kim said, demonstrated that the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, which was initiated by Deng Xiaoping, is correct, and that the Korean party and government support the policy.¹¹ These were striking words that received little outside attention; however, these strong statements, implying at least that Chinese reforms might be employed in North Korea, were not repeated in the North Korean press reports of Kim Jong Il's visit to Beijing.

To be specific, it should be noted that China had not previously been altogether ignored by North Korea as a source of advice and example in confronting economic issues. Pyongyang had, for example, accepted in earlier decades essentially the verbatim version of China's statute governing the operation of special economic zones and the use of foreign direct investment. More broadly, Pyongyang has learned to some degree how to do economic reform, some of it learned from China, and yet maintain internal political stability. North Korea, nonetheless, has, at least until now, considered it essential in its careful, gradual reform process

not to follow the path of ideological doom down which China has strode—as Pyongyang sees it.

That is the greater lesson reflected herein. The former closeness between the PRC and the DPRK, “as close to lips as teeth,” has been replaced by a pragmatic, even critical and quite selective, approach toward each other. Beijing seems purposefully to have sought the visit by Kim Jong II both to make it clear to all that its influence in Korea was second to none and to influence the outcome of the imminent North-South summit. Although some closure seems to be occurring now, there remains the earlier tangible evidence of a gap between Beijing and Pyongyang: Beijing chose in 1996 in the United Nations Security Council to back condemnation of the North Korean submarine intrusion incident in South Korea. Pyongyang initially objected to Chinese participation in the Four Party Talks. Rumors were rampant that Chinese officials simply did not like Kim Jong II personally, despite their close relations with his father.

As the president of a prestigious Chinese think tank said in March 2000, China no longer treats North Korea as a disadvantaged comrade but rather as a brother. This means that the “costs of the evening” are shared, that China picks up the tab less and expects a relationship with Pyongyang more on the basis of relations between normal states. However, China provides help when needed in an understanding way.¹² (In another vein, a Chinese specialist on North Korea noted that Beijing has little choice now but to accept and work with Kim Jong II; it is apparent that he has consolidated power and is running North Korea.) This dancing together—but not too closely—has derived not just from the obvious national differences in size, population, wealth, and geopolitical circumstances, but also from the most salient difference, namely, that China’s leaders have elected to make fundamental changes in the precepts underlying communism for China and the Chinese Communist Party. Those changes remained anathema to North Korea’s leaders. It is not yet clear whether the

May-June 2000 Kim visit to Beijing has removed this barrier.

Pyongyang: Both an Irritant Rubbing Against China's Northeastern Underbelly and a Thorn under Tokyo's and Washington's Saddles. There is no doubt that one of the most prominent characteristics of North Korean leadership and its approach to international relations is what might be termed "the three o's"—obstinacy, obduratness, and obstreperousness. It is occasionally overlooked in the West that Beijing must also put up with its share of these obnoxious North Korean qualities, to add yet another o-word.

Although Beijing did not share during the early years of the last decade the deep pessimism about the DPRK's future prevalent in many Western capitals, North Korea was increasingly acknowledged by Beijing as a potential economic, political, and social disaster. And this profoundly troubled country borders on an important, already economically troubled, region of China. What is sorely needed by China there, across the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, is a stable and prosperous neighbor. Furthermore, Pyongyang, as has been described, has not been receptive to Chinese advice on reform or, for that matter, to Chinese advice, example, or urgings in most other areas. As has been revealed by many Chinese who have dealt with North Koreans, Beijing finds it very difficult to communicate with Pyongyang, and when it does try to communicate, the outcome is often misunderstanding or either intentional or inadvertent misinterpretation. So Pyongyang and all of North Korea are more than an irritant to China; North Korea is one of China's most difficult and unpleasant problems to manage. Putting it in the nicest way he could, a Chinese official said, "The Chinese goal is to keep North Korea reasonable and to keep it from being a troublemaker."¹³

One of the most troublesome specific problems is the matter of North Koreans fleeing the poverty and famine, or

near-famine, pervasive in many areas near China. Estimates of the numbers of those who have fled across the border into China and settled there, those who make brief forays for food or to earn a bit of money, and those who are turned back, vary greatly with the source. The numbers are likely much higher than the estimates of tens of thousands offered by Chinese authorities. In any case, China is managing these aspects of the immigrant and refugee problems and may even have increased the forcible repatriation of refugees in preparation for Kim's arrival in Beijing.¹⁴

Most Chinese who study or deal with these problems have not believed and do not now believe that North Korea is on the brink of collapse or even that there is an impending lesser calamity that will send hordes fleeing northward. They, instead, tend to see North Koreans as even more resilient than were the Chinese during their very trying periods of the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, Chinese observers believe the North Koreans are accustomed to making do with very little and tolerating a very abusive and ineffectual central government—that the North Koreans are and will continue to be survivors. So far, over half a decade of very great North Korean misery, they have been right.

Nevertheless, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its adjunct, the People's Armed Police (PAP), are said by responsible sources to have made contingency plans to block a refugee flood into China and to manage the problem to the extent feasible. The need to plan for this contingency is troublesome to Beijing for two reasons that might not be obvious. First, it is a factor in considering how to dispose its armed forces and, specifically, a constraint on the freedom to redeploy forces, something that could become a pressing concern if China wants to move forces southward to bring heightened pressure to bear on Taiwan or to cope with internal or external threats posed in China's far northwest or southwest. Even under present circumstances, China's

top military authority, the Central Military Commission (CMC), may well be keeping group armies and other units in Northeast China, in proximity to the border with North Korea, that it would prefer to have moved to the east coast facing Taiwan. Second, if there arises a crisis of significant proportions in North Korea, a CMC decision to move blocking forces into position to stop refugee flows may, to avoid the appearance of a precursor to an invasion, have to be distinguished for an international audience from a move into North Korea, as discussed more fully later in this paper.

Beyond these problems, there is, of course, the fundamental issue of whether and how China could and should cope with the practical and humanitarian problems likely in a North Korean calamity—problems that may dwarf the experiences the world witnessed in the exodus from Kosovo, for example. The PLA and PAP are used regularly in China to aid in dealing with natural disasters, especially the devastating floods and earthquakes that plague China. However, neither of these forces is trained in managing thousands or hundreds of thousands of non-Chinese with whom they, for the most part, do not have a common language and whose needs will be very difficult to meet.

If China is busy enhancing PLA capability along these lines, it has been silent, even secretive, about the endeavor. The odds are very high that the methods employed by the PLA and PAP to handle very large numbers of refugees, should such a situation develop, will be rudimentary and even cruel if measured against the norms of worldwide agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to such efforts. Beijing is highly unlikely either to admit to the world the scope of the problem and its inability to cope or to permit prompt intervention by others experienced in handling refugee migrations. It is also not likely that many Chinese officials are deeply concerned about that potential problem, not because they are heartless but rather because China is constrained by limited resources, is short-sightedly sympathetic with Pyongyang's

current demands simply to return those who flee (so as to deter further flight), and is focused on Taiwan and perceived internal dissidence. Beijing is content to relegate the collapse of North Korea to the category of problems with a low probability of occurrence. Few, if any, in China see that a grotesque mishandling and mismanagement of refugee hordes from North Korea could be, for China's international repute, the Tiananmen debacle redux.

Pyongyang: Useful Device to Keep Washington and Tokyo Off Balance? There is, however, another aspect of North Korea's penchant for being obnoxious. Some Western observers wonder if Beijing, although having, itself, to contend with North Korea's bad conduct and unreliability, does not to some extent relish the fact that Pyongyang keeps Washington and Tokyo reeling as well—and that American and Japanese leaders are far more preoccupied over this "rogue state" than Chinese leaders. This, however, is another of those views more widely held in the West than among Chinese specialists. As one astute Chinese official associated with a body under China's State Council put it: "One hears talk of using Pyongyang's obstreperous behavior to keep Washington off balance, but in fact the concept has no utility and has not been used in practice. Putting a different slant on the issue, he said that there is some validity instead to the concept that Washington needs Beijing to deal better with Pyongyang and other (unspecified) troublemakers."¹⁵

Other Chinese who have to deal with North Korea are too concerned with the essential effort to keep Pyongyang from acting up to think that encouraging mischief or worse by Pyongyang could be useful in this overly clever way to best Washington. They also are concerned that such tactics might backfire with resultant undue hazard to China's direct interests or regional stability. One Chinese official said first that it does not seem necessary for China to use North Korea as a burr; North Korea surely does not need encouragement in this regard from any country. In his view, North Korea already creates too many troubles. Moreover,

he concluded, there are, as things stand, enough problems between the United States and China; why produce more through uncontrolled methods involving a somewhat erratic North Korea?¹⁶

With respect to Sino-American relations, Pyongyang's current utility to Beijing lies, for the most part then, in playing on the American conviction that Washington can be aided in dealing with Pyongyang if China is pulling in the same direction or at least not tugging the other way. But the United States and Japan are opening up to North Korea, and Pyongyang is at least sporadically receptive, even reaching out in recent months. As Tokyo and Washington's connections to Pyongyang become more frequent and numerous and grow stronger, Beijing will be left largely with just the negative side of bad North Korean behavior—worrying about how to keep Pyongyang under control. This aspect to PRC-DPRK relations was certainly a central component of Beijing's calculus in having Kim visit prior to the North-South summit.

To put a finer point on all this, Beijing sees specific aspects of Pyongyang's behavior as counterproductive rather than as useful in keeping Tokyo and Washington off balance. For example, in the eyes of most Chinese specialists, North Korea is seen as an excuse (and a weak excuse by Chinese reasoning) for the United States and Japan to cooperate on the development of TMD systems that are primarily intended to contain China. Similarly, North Korea is among the countries that give great impetus to the American effort to persuade or coerce Moscow to modify the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Thus Washington can, because of North Korea's ballistic missile program, make a rational case for national missile defense (NMD) efforts that Beijing sees as curbing China's crucial nuclear deterrent.

Pyongyang is often trying to Beijing even when trying to be helpful. Russian President Vladimir Putin's surprising announcement, after his unprecedented visit to Pyongyang

in July 2000, that North Korea would abandon its ballistic missile program if it received assistance from other countries in "peaceful space research"¹⁷ might have seemed helpful to China's crusade against NMD. However, a Chinese official spokesman was forced to say shortly thereafter that China knew nothing of the remarkable, yet enigmatic, proposal Putin had apparently extracted from the Kim on this, the first visit to Pyongyang ever by a Soviet or Russian leader! Chinese leaders, apparently nonplussed by both the announcement and its circumstances, have been silent on its likely validity or utility in China's campaign (in concert with Moscow) against U.S. NMD. President Putin called President Jiang Zemin only after he had completed his trips to Pyongyang and then to the G-8 meeting in Okinawa to belatedly tell him of the assurance he had received from Kim Jong Il that North Korea would cease its missile program if it received outside help in space exploration.¹⁸ To make matters more trying, the Russians announced on the day of the Putin-to-Jiang call that Kim Jong Il would soon make another trip abroad, an extended visit to Russia by train, thus seeming to upstage the brief trip by Kim to Beijing a few weeks earlier.¹⁹

PRC-DPRK Military Relations and Arms Sales. North Korea's armed forces, the Korean People's Army (KPA), at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century lost its longstanding primary source of support, the Soviet Union. China was a significant source of military equipment, especially ballistic missiles and related technology in earlier decades, when it was trying to woo Pyongyang away from Moscow.²⁰ There was also a later interlude of intimacy between Pyongyang and Beijing right after the events at Tiananmen in 1989. North Korea, almost alone in the world, was supportive of Chinese actions to suppress the notorious, televised uprising in the heart of China. Then in the 1990s, North Korea's isolation became greater than ever, when rationally it would seem North Korea was more needy of Chinese aid and support. Instead, other factors came to the fore. The development by Beijing of close ties to Seoul,

starting with economic ties and culminating in diplomatic relations in August of 1992, and China's tendency to substitute its practical interests for ideological considerations were among the factors that came into play. Related to these, Beijing wanted to have its cake and eat it too: to maintain appropriate relations with the KPA while cautiously establishing ties with the ROK armed forces. Put another way, the PLA has felt that it must maintain relations with the KPA to balance or offset the Chinese military's improving relations with the South Korean military—specifically to preclude paranoid Pyongyang's overreacting to these improving PRC-ROK links. This has not been an easy thing to carry off.

Nevertheless, this development was less disturbing to Pyongyang (or at least they made less of it) than might have been the case. This is, in significant measure, because of the unavoidable need for North Korean leaders to focus on their country's severe economic plight, the desperate requirements for other-than-military aid, and, indeed, on the very survival of North Korea as a nation and society. Beijing was pleased to operate in this way; it enhanced China's ability to claim the moral high ground, to point out that it provided very little in the form of military aid to Pyongyang while Washington supplied Seoul with large amounts of weapons and military equipment and stationed tens of thousands of troops on South Korean soil. So both capitals, Pyongyang and Beijing, were sufficiently satisfied (or at least distracted or content) not to press unduly for a more robust PLA-KPA military relationship.

This is not to suggest that there were no arms and technology transfers, and that North Korea has not made significant requests from time to time during the last decade. According to a senior PLA Navy officer, deceased (1995) Marshal O Chin-u, then North Korea's leading military figure,²¹ at one time requested more of what were then China's top warships (termed Luda-class destroyers in the West) and submarines than the PLA Navy had in its three fleets combined. Other exaggerated requests led

Chinese military officials to conclude (and sometimes weakly joke) that North Korea was asking for a great deal in the hope of getting even a little—possibly an indication of the distance between the two militaries rather than evidence of close cooperation.

A noted South Korean expert on China's military relations with the Koreas suggested a general conviction among informed observers that China

refrained from providing weapons to North Korea in the 1990s—even if the possibility that a small amount of weapons parts and military technology made its way to North Korea cannot be ruled out.²²

Reflecting at least ambivalence among the DPRK's leaders toward China's potential to supply military aid, this South Korean specialist quotes the very high-ranking 1997 defector from Pyongyang, Hwang Jang Yop:

Since Kim Jong Il [the current DPRK leader] does not rate China's military capability highly, North Korea has not introduced weapons or the technologies for developing weapons from China.²³

It is impossible at present to say if such statements were made (or convictions held, if that was the case) because they were altogether true or, instead, as a consequence of Pyongyang's pique at Beijing for the snub of recognizing Seoul, even if relations with Pyongyang were not interrupted.

It can be said that visits at the very highest levels ceased.²⁴ Nevertheless, other senior government officials from the DPRK and PRC, including the foreign ministers of each country, exchanged visits *after* formal recognition of the DPRK's declared foe, the ROK, in August of 1992 and before the death of Kim Il Sung, North Korea's long-ruling "Great Leader" in July 1994. These visits also included delegations of very senior military and naval officers. Indeed, it is striking (and seemingly significant) that a

much higher degree of military aid from the PLA to the KPA did not stem from this series of visits, ranging from senior officials and officers down to working-level military exchanges. The personal relationship with Kim Il Sung may have been an important factor, for after his death 6 years ago, the pattern of visits changed markedly, with a notable decrease in frequency and the rank and stature of the officers and officials, plus the presence of a tone of symbolism and ceremony rather than one of serious working exchanges.²⁵

PLA officers privately reported in the late 1990s that the KPA has grown more reclusive, secretive, and seemingly independent. For example, PLA Navy officers have not been welcome to go on board North Korean navy ships provided to Pyongyang by Beijing in earlier years. This suggests not only a distance between the services of the two countries but also a desire by the KPA forces not to be embarrassed by the poor materiel condition and degraded operational status of the transferred ships and equipment. PLA officers say that the exchanges between the two militaries have become largely mundane or perfunctory. Because of the DPRK's limited financial resources (despite the apparent outright purchase in 1999 of formerly Russian MiG-21 fighter aircraft from Kazakhstan in 1999), Chinese officials have said, Beijing has resorted to a policy of making only minor transfers of equipment and provision of training free of charge. This has included, for example, spare parts, ammunition, and the training of naval engineers.²⁶

Interestingly, PLA officers go to some lengths to portray these transfers as innocuous, emphasizing, for example, that training is provided to "technical branch" officers and not combat units. A 1996 PLAN ship visit to North Korea was carefully described as nothing more than a minimal celebration of the 35th anniversary of the nearly defunct PRC-DPRK friendship agreement.²⁷ Chinese officers and officials portray the military relationship as stagnant and of little consequence, noting that communications by phone and other routine means are not conducted. When pressed,

one senior PLA officer did say that the full details of the relationship were known only by the most senior Chinese military officers, that neither side wished to publicize the relationship or draw attention to it.²⁸

All this interesting and revealing, if incomplete, evidence suggests that China is likely supplying minimal or moderate (at most) military aid and doing it in ways and forms tailored to serve Beijing's national interests, with apparent limited concern about DPRK needs.²⁹ Beijing is pleased to keep the nature of the relationship and the specifics of transfers opaque, at least in part because it does not want to put up with the "supervision" of the international community, especially Washington's predictable views, concerning what China does for North Korea's armed forces. Concealment of the interesting details is also of value in preserving a good tone in relations with the ROK; the fewer specifics Seoul has to digest the better.

However, before waxing ecstatic about the lowly state of PLA support for the KPA, it should be recognized in the West that this level of cooperation and supply is probably sustainable essentially indefinitely and conceivably could facilitate concealment from international notice the scope or types of equipment. China is not, in this military relationship, prone to suffer from "donor fatigue" or constantly in danger of incurring international sanctions. China does not see support of the KPA as a short-term endeavor, reflecting Beijing's longstanding view of the probable long-term persistence of the current North Korean regime and its armed forces.

China and the ROK.

Over the last 2 decades, Beijing's policy toward the Koreas has evolved from one of viewing the Korean Peninsula as a single country suffering under illegitimate division, through a period of accepting as a practical matter the existence of the two countries, and now to the current

recognition that, both in practice and with respect to international law, there are two Koreas. The Cold War era's sharp focus by China on ideological considerations has all but dissolved, and in its place there are the clear outlines of rational economic policy: acceptance by the Chinese leaders of South Korea's amazing success and North Korea's abysmal failure—and trying to make the most out of the former and cope with the latter.

Furthermore, there is substantial evidence that many influential figures in Beijing have realized the overriding value of China's economic progress and prowess and concluded that China's regional security and comprehensive national power are served much better thereby than with the erratic modernization of the PLA. This evolution in Beijing's policy toward the two Koreas has, of course, favored China's relationship with the more solid and prosperous Seoul rather than strengthening its links to a needy and perverse Pyongyang.³⁰ It is interesting (if not precisely pertinent) to note, in this regard, that Beijing's economic and diplomatic ties to Seoul are far more solid, numerous, and important than Washington's recently improved but still tenuous links to Pyongyang—a development in these international relationships that not many experts would have forecast 20 years ago.

In the eyes of most observers, Beijing, with the establishment of diplomatic relations with the ROK in 1992, made clear its choice between Pyongyang and Seoul. Doubtlessly, the concept of nicely balanced relations between the two Koreas is important to China both at a practical level and as a source of pride in Beijing's diplomatic prowess. Nevertheless, Seoul has won out and is Beijing's preferred Korean associate. Beijing, of course, does not make public proclamations stating this in so many words, but the combination of pragmatic economic considerations and the prevailing Chinese forecast of the long-term outcome on the Korean Peninsula have made the choice of Seoul over Pyongyang a practical imperative.

China is striving (successfully) to position itself to (1) gain the maximum economic benefit for the time being, (2) ensure the best possible relations with the particular Korea that is virtually certain to come out on top in the long term, and (3) sustain brotherly relations and a measure of influence with the other Korea virtually certain to remain on the bottom. Put another way, Seoul, from Beijing's perspective, fully deserves careful cultivation as an economic partner. Beijing enthusiastically courts Seoul because of a very strong desire, even need, to pursue the great advantages, economic and diplomatic, to be gained from that burgeoning relationship. Pyongyang is undeserving but must not be ignored. The North Korean government's proclivity toward the role of troublemaker and the potential of the country, intentionally or inadvertently, to be a source of serious problems for China means that Beijing ignores or shuns the antics of the North Korean leadership at its peril. All these factors seem reflected in China's role in getting Kim Jong Il to visit Beijing before the North-South summit and then basking in the euphoric post-summit glow and in its implicit role as a facilitator of radical improvement in inter-Korean relations.

Beijing insightfully envisioned good economic relations with South Korea very early; significant indirect trade existed between China and South Korea by 1979. Beijing's early hope or vision for the relationship has, indeed, come to pass and, significantly, has weathered the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. Annual two-way trade between the ROK and PRC approaches \$25 billion,³¹ and total South Korean direct investment in China is also very substantial, already having exceeded \$2.6 billion by 1996.³² In recent years, the ROK became China's fourth most important trading partner; China was the ROK's third most important trading partner. Comparable ranks are forecast for the current year.³³

Beyond these impressive statistics there is the additional factor that South Korea has tended to invest heavily in China's Northeast, a rust-belt region where

investment is particularly needed. South Korea has also made well-directed and welcome investments in the Bohai Gulf region including Shandong Province and the Tianjin area. In addition to the value to China of ROK trade and investment, South Korea has, from the outset, needed these investment opportunities in China, thus leading both countries to ensure that economic factors take priority in their relationship. Moreover, this almost single-minded emphasis by Beijing on China's economic development has reinforced a desire for the sort of stability on the Korean Peninsula that is essential to China's national economic progress.

However, economics and who comes out the winner between the two Koreas are not the whole picture in Beijing's view of South Korea. The other important Chinese foreign policy consideration is that of precluding the development of close relations between South Korea and Japan. Beijing is concerned, for example, about recent moves by Seoul toward closer ties with Tokyo, most notably recently warming military relations between ROK forces and the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF), including prospects for basic military exercises. In September 1998 the Director General of the Japanese Defense Agency and the ROK Minister of Defense agreed to regular meetings between senior officers of their naval forces and the conduct of annual joint exercises. Although the exercise conducted, lasting less than a week in August 1999, involved rescue operations at sea and not combat operations, this first-ever exercise between Japanese and South Korean naval forces aroused concern in Beijing.

Interestingly, advance arrangements were made for this same month, August 1999, to have the ROK minister of defense make a first-ever visit to Beijing, and the PRC minister of defense agreed during the visit to a first-ever visit to Seoul to take place in 2000. It has not been possible to discern if this flurry of "first-ever" events involving the defense ministers of the ROK and PRC was an effort to ameliorate concerns in Beijing about ROK military contacts

with Japan (as seemed to be the case) or whether there was a measure of coincidence. In any case, the ministers of the two 1950-53 Korean War adversaries, China and South Korea, established regular military relations including high-level visits on a 2-year cycle.³⁴ Moreover, they reportedly talked in January 2000 about the prospects for periodic meetings at their level and exchanges of visits by senior military officers as well as reciprocal port visits by the two navies and unspecified joint military exercises. Unquestionably, something has kindled an enhanced PRC-ROK military relationship.

The broader area of South Korean public attitudes toward China is also pertinent. While acknowledging the anecdotal nature of his observation, a leading scholar on China-Korea issues at a prestigious Chinese official think tank remarked that in his experience retired South Korean generals do not hate China—as they well might, given the adversarial period of the 1950s and the aftermath thereof. South Koreans in general do not have hard feelings toward the Chinese, he asserted. Indeed, in South Korean polls, China comes out often as the favorite foreign country, he proudly reported, noting pointedly that this is certainly not so for Japan, a country not liked by the Koreans.³⁵

These anecdotal remarks are substantiated by surveys of South Korean citizens taken in the mid-to-late 1990s that illustrate Beijing's success in obtaining popular support in the ROK for China's position as an Asian good neighbor. In two popular surveys, two and three times as many South Koreans, respectively, considered Japan the country most threatening to ROK security as considered China to be the greatest threat. In three surveys, China, by a margin of about 10 percentage points over Japan in each poll, was consistently seen by South Koreans to be more important in promoting ROK interests. (The United States was judged more important than China, but by surprisingly meager margins of less than 10 percent. For example, in the 1997 survey, 41.1 percent judged the United States the most important for promoting ROK interests, 33.8 percent chose

China, 21.0 percent chose Japan, and 14.6 percent chose Russia.) In 1997, twice as many South Koreans wanted to strengthen relations with China as wanted to do so with Japan (55.6 percent to 25.3 percent).³⁶ So, in response to a variety of questions over a period of several years, South Koreans say they view China more favorably than Japan—just as the Chinese rather proudly assert to be the case. Moreover, South Korean affection for the United States is waning while China's status in these polls improves. This is all the more significant both because younger South Koreans tend to have a more favorable view of China than their elders, and, as years pass, the overall trend toward favoring China over Japan and the U.S. has increased.³⁷

China and the DPRK's Missiles, Proliferation, and Nuclear Weapons.

Beijing strives to be on the side of the angels with respect to Pyongyang's development of ballistic missiles, nuclear warheads, and transfers of missile technology to other countries. There is a tendency for Chinese interlocutors on these subjects to describe quite fully what China, they assert, *is not doing* and to say very few words about what China *is doing*. As one mid-level think tank research professor phrased it, "There is not support, but there is understanding."³⁸ This researcher and other Chinese specialists unhesitatingly point out that, in their view, North Korea feels understandably imperiled and has chosen this way to improve its security. Pyongyang feels threatened by powerful Asian neighbors and especially the Americans, present by the tens of thousands just across its southern border and exceedingly well equipped with the most modern arms, at a time when North Korea is in undeniably dire economic straits. North Korea is proud, and tries to make its people feel the government is effectively protecting them, the researcher went to great pains to explain. Simply put, as he explained with disarming candor, missiles are cheaper than airplanes; also, missile programs

have the proven effect of giving Pyongyang negotiating leverage in a dramatic way that nothing else could have done.

A more senior think tanker expressed a similar view from a different slant: "North Korea does have a different diplomatic style. It needs the air of crisis and occurrence of incidents to draw American attention."³⁹ This same senior specialist went on to say that North Korea's development of missiles is understandable to the Chinese; it resembles, he said, Mao's development of nuclear weapons for China. An isolated and weak country naturally seeks quick and easy solutions for its security. Missiles, he argued, are indeed easier to come by than complex combat aircraft and require less technology to maintain, support, and operate. South Korea and the United States are powerful enemies; Pyongyang has had to do something, he concluded.

The Chinese specialists, whose views are described here, and others who claim knowledge of the matter, dispute Western claims of recent Chinese support for North Korean missile programs. In short, their assertions are that China is at least no longer providing support for North Korea's missile programs and has not done so since the end of the Cold War. One Chinese specialist insisted that China now helps North Korea's missile program with neither components nor technology; he did, however, confess there had been exchanges of views.⁴⁰ He claimed ignorance of previous instances of the transfer of missile technology or components to North Korea.⁴¹ The associate research professor was somewhat more candid, saying that the relationship has a long history and that in the early days the situation was very different from now.

Contrary to the views of several Western observers (who assert that Beijing still supports Pyongyang's ballistic missile program), these interlocutors all agree that China is particularly unhappy now with North Korea's development of missiles because it gives Japan and the United States an excuse to develop TMD. A senior member of a think tank in

Beijing went beyond that, saying that the Indian, Pakistani, and North Korean missile programs are all bad for China's interests. However, he and a well-connected foreign service officer who has specialized in these matters argued that it is hard for Chinese to talk to sovereign North Korea about missile development proliferation issues. Beijing, they say, cannot publicly criticize Pyongyang on this count given the overall nature of the relationship.⁴²

When pressed on why Beijing "allowed" Pyongyang to transfer, over a period of years beginning in the late 1980s, technology and missiles for Pakistan's *Ghauri* and *Ghauri 2* missile programs, Chinese specialists deny or dissemble. They do go so far as to argue that subtle means in private meetings are the way Beijing feels it must handle proliferation issues, as the senior think tanker explained previously. The Chinese Foreign Service officer mentioned above elaborated, saying that Beijing avoids "instructing" North Korea in order to be more effective in its influence across the board. He went on to say that China is not confident in its knowledge of what Pyongyang has done as far as the transfer of missiles and missile-related technologies. Consequently, Pyongyang can simply deny the allegations because China does not have proof.

Although China's interests indeed lie in a permanent cessation of North Korean missile tests, specifically because Japan will want TMD more strongly in the face of further tests, China, these specialists argue, finds it difficult to oppose a sovereign government's testing of missiles for its defense (regardless of how provocative to Tokyo and Beijing). Similarly, Beijing feels it cannot object to the transfer by North Korea of missiles or missile technology if these transfers are within the limits of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)—which the Chinese, somewhat smugly, suggest is the appropriate standard by which Beijing and others should evaluate such conduct.⁴³

Chinese specialists on this matter make two additional points. First, The Russian connection is important in North

Korean ballistic missile development. *Taepo-dong* technology they assert is basically Russian technology.⁴⁴ China was not informed in advance of the notorious August 31, 1998, missile launch.⁴⁵ Second, North Korea, as the Chinese see it, is not a threat, and clearly not a threat to the territory of the United States. To label North Korea a threat, they argue, is to ignore its desperate economic and social plight and its meager resources that preclude its building a significant missile arsenal. And contrary to some Western convictions, the Chinese argue, North Korean leaders are rational and know it would be suicidal to conduct a “pre-emptive strike” with its missiles against Japan or the United States.

Chinese positions on these issues are different but not diametrically opposed to those of the United States. Nevertheless, these arguments by knowledgeable Chinese specialists make it clear that Beijing is, as a general matter, considerably more sanguine than Washington and Tokyo about the current situation and prospects for North Korea with respect to the development of ballistic missiles and the proliferation of missiles and missile technology to embrace countries Washington considers rogue states (as of June 2000, termed “states of concern” by the U.S Secretary of State). Chinese arguments take into account Washington’s positions and attempt somewhat subtly in most cases to undermine or weaken the American argument, all the while avoiding direct confrontation or the danger of having Beijing labeled by the international community as either unconcerned with the dangers or blatantly abetting North Korea’s objectionable conduct. This is another nice Chinese balancing act, facilitated by the ability of an authoritarian government to orchestrate its publicly stated positions and not have them attacked by knowledgeable domestic critics.

Although one cannot be sure of the motives of China’s top leaders, those who address the issues in public and privately with Western interlocutors seem convinced of the merits of China’s “principled positions” and the failure (or refusal) of Washington to view these matters in the proper

light. There is a glimmer of hope that Chinese concerns about the prospective development and deployment of TMD in East Asia might prompt Beijing to pressure Pyongyang to curb its *Taepo-dong* tests and overall ballistic missile program. As was seen in the July 2000 suggestion that North Korea may give up its missile program, Russian President Putin seems to have exercised some of the clout many think Beijing should apply with Pyongyang—and for the same reason that applies to Beijing: trying to eliminate North Korean missiles as an incentive to Washington not to proceed with development of missile defenses. At least there is now the reasonable hope that measures to bring about this result may somehow be applied by Moscow, Beijing, Washington, Seoul, and/or Tokyo.⁴⁶ In trying to make such an argument effective with Beijing, it must be taken into account that Beijing is already poised to respond that North Korea is not by any reasonable measure a real threat and that TMD must be seen in its real light: ultimately an attempt to neutralize the most effective component of China's armed forces, its arsenal of short-range and medium-range ballistic missiles; in other words, a means to contain China.

Moreover, Beijing does not wish to find itself (even very remotely) a part of Washington's efforts to influence Pyongyang—and especially not to be associated with agreement verification activities. China sees great peril in such a path. When Beijing sees Pyongyang subjecting itself to intrusive inspections, such as that of the suspected underground nuclear facility at Kumchangni, and the inspections related to its compliance with the Agreed Framework (explained further below), it grows wary that inspection regimes of that sort might be urged or even forced on China. The secretive Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party consider such inspections anathema and a blatant violation of China's sovereignty intended to expose Chinese secrets and weaknesses and take unfair advantage of backward and developing China.

The Nuclear Weapons Issue. Always ready with a “principled position” as a retort (or diversion), Chinese specialists, when asked about how seriously they oppose a nuclear DPRK, somewhat surprisingly assert that Beijing is more concerned about the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan than is Washington. As one interlocutor put it, the United States is unduly concerned in East Asia about North Korean missile tests and a “low-level nuclear weapon development effort” and not appropriately concerned about the big threats in South Asia of India and Pakistan, where nuclear testing is not just an American fear but something that has actually occurred—many times.⁴⁷

Chinese analysts of recent Asian nuclear developments argue that the United States is far harsher in its attitude toward, and treatment of, North Korea than it is with respect to India, a real nuclear threat, as they put it—failing, understandably, to include their nuclear ally, Pakistan, in the indictment. The Chinese senior think tank member interviewed in Beijing put it in somewhat more clinical terms. He pointed out that, contrary to the South Asian example, North Korea has not tested a nuclear weapon, although it might well have done so as early as 1994, the year the United States became so concerned about this prospect and consequently negotiated with Pyongyang the Agreed Framework. (This document, controversial in the eyes of many, was designed to halt North Korea’s nuclear program and was completed in Geneva in October 1994. Its detractors, primarily in the United States, remain adamant that it is unworkable and doomed to failure—a failure they forecast is destined inevitably to produce disastrous results, including a nuclear-armed DPRK.)

China and KEDO. China does not make contributions to the funding for Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).⁴⁸ China’s arguments for failing or refusing to contribute come in layers. The superficial reason is that China is both poor and does not want to interfere in North Korean affairs, with more emphasis on the point that China allegedly has no money to contribute to the

program—an argument hard to swallow given the growth of the Chinese economy over the last 2 decades and the size of China's foreign currency reserves. The next level of the expressed Chinese rationale for nonparticipation is that China wants to help North Korea in its own way, not through KEDO. China and the United States, it is argued by the Chinese, have some common interests in North Korea but also some differences. Beijing does not want to be lumped together with Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington in the way aid and support are provided to Pyongyang. China wants to be different. The Chinese say they understand North Korean psychology well (implying that others do so less well). Beijing knows how, in Asian style, to deal with Pyongyang and show respect as needed to bring good results.⁴⁹

What appears to be the last layer of the Chinese rationale for not contributing to KEDO puts a finer point on the argument: As one very authoritative source put it, China provides very significant food aid to North Korea, sometimes on concessionary terms. More important, China meets important energy needs of North Korea through the provision of coal and oil; oil is by far the most important. China prefers to provide for these energy needs independent of KEDO not just because it does not want to be lumped in with other countries but importantly because North Korea does not want China to switch to the KEDO conduit. North Korea does not want Chinese aid linked to KEDO, apparently implying a fear by Pyongyang of complications, uncertainty, political machinations, etc.; and, moreover, North Korean leaders often ask for (and obtain) concessions and other special treatment.⁵⁰

So Beijing's position with respect to nuclear weapons development in North Korea, is, as has been seen in other areas, superficially similar but hardly identical to that of Washington. As with missiles and proliferation, China does not *support* nuclear weapon development by Pyongyang. However, Beijing does not find its interest in precise coincidence with the international effort under KEDO

designed to prevent North Korean nuclear weapon development—and it makes its case for nonparticipation on the basis of “principled” reasoning. Many in Washington see Beijing’s positions in a sinister light; Beijing sees Washington’s positions as simply unenlightened.

The Potential for North Korean Chaos and Collapse.

Professor Chu Shulong, recognized as a preeminent scholar on Sino-Korean relations and policies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR, a think tank closely linked to components of the PRC government), prepared two lengthy papers in English, one in mid-1999 and the other late in that year. Both extensively described and analyzed Chinese policy and attitudes concerning the Korean Peninsula. Significantly, neither paper alludes to the prospects for North Korean collapse and chaos.⁵¹ As another Chinese specialist explained in early 2000, Chinese who concentrate on North Korean issues have never thought that North Korea would collapse and now think it highly unlikely, if not impossible, that a collapse would occur under its current leader, Kim Jong II.⁵²

Collapse Called an Unlikely Scenario. Chinese, the specialist said, are firmly convinced that North Korea will not collapse, and he provided his list of reasons.

1. Chinese who study the issue believe the 1993 assertion of the South Korean Ministry for Reunification that North Koreans were absolutely loyal to Kim Il Sung and believe now that North Koreans accept Kim Jong II as the “idealistic” successor leader (meaning that the son is the philosophical and conceptual successor to his father).

2. Kim Jong II has strong control over the secret police and the military. There is no strong force to organize the people to subvert the current regime.

3. South Korea does not want, and therefore does not promote, rapid collapse of the North. Among the many

reasons for this is that South Korea is not as wealthy as West Germany, and North Korea is poorer than was East Germany. Consequently, the German model is considered inapplicable to Korea.

4. North Koreans have a very simple life. They can withstand hardships that might bring about the downfall of other regimes elsewhere around the world.

5. Americans do not want the rapid collapse of North Korea and, just as with South Korea, do not attempt to facilitate collapse. Both countries even take steps to avoid that outcome. According to the analysis of this Chinese specialist, were North Korea to collapse, the U.S. Congress would then ask why U.S. forces should stay in Korea. Then the Japanese, and especially the Okinawans, would raise the issue of why they alone in Asia had to endure U.S. troops on their soil.⁵³

In the mid-1990s, a representative of a prominent Chinese think tank contended those in Seoul and Washington who forecast doom for North Korea are engaged in wishful thinking. He asserted that Beijing has counseled Seoul that a collapse scenario is something that should not be seriously contemplated and, further, let it be known that Beijing would be highly displeased with efforts by Seoul to promote a collapse—urging instead that Seoul direct its efforts to reducing tensions and improving relations. The Chinese who offered this advice to Seoul are, no doubt, elated with the conciliatory policies toward North Korea under the current South Korean president, who was elected in December 1997, and with the apparently successful June 2000 North-South summit.

When Professor Chu of CICIR, the author of the two papers cited above, was subsequently pressed in a spring 2000 interview with the author in Beijing, he said he does not believe any communist country will collapse as a direct result of economic troubles. China endured great hardship and did not collapse. East European countries did not collapse because of a failed economy, he asserted, although

economic difficulties did push to the fore political problems that led to collapse. The survivability of communist countries is very high under economic stress, Chu argued. Nonetheless, if North Korea's economic problems increase greatly, China will go all out to prevent chaos.

North Koreans Seen as Resilient and Tough. Other Chinese have been more "personal" in their reasoning. They say simply that the North Korean people, as mentioned earlier, have proven themselves to be at least as tough and resilient as the Chinese who suffered the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, both resulting in large numbers of needless deaths and other extreme stresses on Chinese society; yet the government did not fall, and the country did not collapse. Starvation and other deprivation in North Korea, unlike in other countries of the world whose people have much higher expectations from the government and for their own lives, are not likely catalysts for North Korean collapse or even chaos.

Chinese analysts of Korea have been making this point for many years and feel the passage of time has validated their analysis; they simply do not think the subject currently warrants significant continuing discussion. They largely consider, a bit smugly, that two points have been made: North Korea is not on the brink of collapse, and Americans and others who made the dire forecasts in the mid-to-late 1990s have been proven wrong. Chinese scholars and diplomats who discuss North Korea with Americans recognize that among American specialists on East Asia the talk of collapse long ago faded away, and that Americans are looking to other outcomes for which they are seeking appropriate descriptions and rationale, such as reconciliation.

North Korean Economic Collapse. But what of a purely economic collapse or meltdown, somehow lacking a "political" component? Although China is many times larger, more prosperous, and more populous than North Korea, the Chinese argue that they could not at this

juncture in their economic development reasonably meet the full North Korean requirements for assistance were the country completely to collapse economically. This is a significant departure from the quite confident Chinese attitude in 1996, despite China's rather paltry level of support at the time, that Beijing simply had to make the decision to go all out and salvage the North Korean economy if collapse appeared imminent.

As discussed in the section on Chinese views of North Korea, China is promoting economic reform for North Korea, but North Korea is stubborn. A Chinese specialist who had dealt with these issues in the 1990s argued recently that North Korea should change its policies; it should not continue indefinitely to depend on foreign aid. Instead it should provide an environment conducive to foreign investment; it should reduce restrictions on foreign investment. He pointed out that North Korea said initially it would accept investment only from large South Korean firms, but these are few. Indicating that some positive movement may be occurring, he said that, since 1999, North Korea has allowed investment by a few small companies.⁵⁴

Chinese exasperation with Pyongyang's reluctance, or even refusal, to reform earlier may have waned a bit, but the signs that might indicate real, fundamental reform in the North are not compelling. Another Chinese specialist, working temporarily in Washington, affirmed that China, concerned about its own economic prospects, now has diminished capability and greatly reduced will to supply North Korea with all it needs or wants. China now does only what it can; not what North Korea wants.

Given Japanese and American reluctance and constraints, South Korea is the only big supporter of North Korea and seems to have largely recovered from the Asian financial crisis that struck in late 1997. In any event, Chinese leaders do not want to see Pyongyang left without recourse and tempted to try anything with nothing to lose. They almost certainly view the visit to Beijing by Kim Jong

II, the June 2000 North-South summit, and the promise of possibly rapidly improving ties between North Korea and South Korea as highly desirable steps down a path that will both prevent North Korean economic collapse and also preserve South Korea as a valued, strong economic partner for China.⁵⁵

Reunification? Reconciliation? Integration?
Perpetual Partition?

China objects to being lumped together with those nations said to favor the indefinite division of Korea. The views of Chinese specialists are nuanced, and not identically so. For example, among those with optimistic outlooks the argument is that Beijing simply does not oppose Korean reunification. China, in this formulation, wants peaceful reunification, with South Korea helping to bring about North Korean reform. The role of China and the United States should be circumscribed; neither should interfere but both should provide aid.⁵⁶

The view generally attributed to the Chinese government is a bit less optimistic, particularly about the time frame for possible reunification. The official position is that maintaining stability and achieving a peaceful resolution are a higher priority than any early reunification; or, put a slightly different way, Beijing supports only “peaceful” and “reasonable” means of Korean reunification.⁵⁷ That said, Beijing does not ignore the (ultimately good) example of Vietnam: Reunification there caused some problems for China but was generally advantageous for the Chinese economy—and that was what counted. There are two goals: (1) for the short term, permanent peace in place of a temporary armistice arrangement, and (2) reunification (or possibly “integration,” as a well-informed official termed China’s reunification hopes for the two Koreas) for the longer term. China’s perceived role is to push and encourage these. After reunification or “complete integration,” China’s role would

be to maintain a balance of power in the region, a balance that should include China, Japan, the United States, and possibly Russia.⁵⁸

A Beijing think-tanker offered what might be the most candid appraisal of China's position on reunification.⁵⁹ Beijing's first priority with respect to the Korean Peninsula is stability so as to foster China's continued economic progress. He pointed out that his home is in Northeast China, so he also thinks of this in personal terms. Among his concerns is that instability would equal refugees (as examined earlier in this paper), likely a very disruptive factor both economically and socially. China, he argued, has a carefully balanced policy for the two Koreas that is specifically designed to promote stability; it is not just a policy of diplomatic nicety. The second priority is reunification. Indeed, a reunified Korea may be good for China, and, indeed, it is appropriate to support and encourage reunification as an example for a proper outcome of the China-Taiwan situation. Furthermore, a united Korea would be a good friend of China as well as an important economic partner. In further candor, this senior researcher injected that he does not know what process might lead to reunification.

There are additional perspectives that warrant mention: Other Chinese specialists have been equally candid, if more pessimistic, for the short term, suggesting that reunification may take decades, maybe 20, 30, or 50 years. Unlike Taiwan, they feel, there is no hurry. From China's perspective, nothing is going so badly awry for China's interests in either Korea that reunification is an early imperative. Those Chinese who are familiar with the use of the term reconciliation by some senior Americans (with respect to resolution of the division of the Koreas) do not recoil at its use. They seem to equate it roughly with the Chinese preference for the term integration—possibly an early stage of a process leading to “complete integration.” For whatever reason, these Chinese do not acknowledge the proposition, suggested by many outside of China, that their

government favors prolonged division of Korea as something that is in China's interest.⁶⁰ They object to what they term a Western notion that a weak and divided Korea is preferred by Beijing because a strong and unified Korea will be a military threat. They look to a strong and prosperous unified Korea as the best outcome for China—especially for China's economy. Although the analogy is flawed, the reasoning smacks of logic similar to the American assertion that a prosperous, stable, strong, and unified China is preferred by Washington over a country weak, fragmented, unstable, and needy. Just as many Chinese doubt the sincerity of the American argument about the characteristics of a preferred China, many Americans will, naturally, doubt the Chinese expressed preference for a unified, strong, and stable Korean Peninsula—eventually.

The Future for American Military Forces on the Korean Peninsula.

A Historical Glance. Before peering into the probable future Chinese attitude toward U.S. forces in Korea, a glance at the past provides valuable perspective and context. The decades of the 1950s and 1960s and into the beginning of the 1970s were a period of staunch Chinese opposition to U.S. forces in Korea. This opposition originated as far back as the U.S. support of the Chinese National Party (the Kuomintang [KMT] that fled to Taiwan in defeat) against the Chinese Communist Party in the 1945-49 civil war. It was mightily reinforced when Chinese and American forces fought against each other in the Korean War of the early 1950s and again when the United States, with its South Korean ally, pursued a policy toward the PRC of isolation and containment. The remainder of the 1970s and 1980s saw a change of the Chinese position as the United States and the PRC together faced the Soviet threat. Chinese leaders were content during this latter period with the presence of U.S. forces in Korea, despite official support of North Korean demands for their removal. After the Cold

War ended, Beijing became ambivalent, no longer pleased by the American presence but recognizing that some advantages accrued to China from that presence, not the least of which was the singular contribution of these forces to stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the region. This stability facilitated unprecedented Chinese economic growth, although many Chinese observers are reluctant to acknowledge that benefit of the American military presence.⁶¹

A Note of Realism in China's Chorus of "Principled Positions." It is also useful to understand China's fundamental position now, at the beginning of the first decade of this century, on U.S. forces in Asia. (This means, of course, in South Korea and Japan, the only remaining locations for U.S. forces that were in earlier decades spread much more widely and, in some cases, densely in the region.) As a Chinese specialist described the position, China opposes in principle the presence of foreign forces in the region, but Chinese leaders are realistic. They see that the countries of Southeast Asia want the U.S. forces in the region. The Japanese and South Korean governments want U.S. military forces and bases in Japan and Korea. The Japanese and South Korean people are uncertain, with anti-American protests swelling in South Korea. The political right wing in Japan does not want the U.S. military on Japanese soil. This right wing movement, however, advocates making Japan an "ordinary"⁶² state, with the final goal of having the United States out of Japan so as to achieve "full Japanese independence." Japanese right-wingers and nationalists together make a formidable faction.

In light of this, several Chinese analysts, who are objective and willing to be candid, describe the U.S. military presence in Japan as having dual tracks: (1) preventing China from causing a problem; and (2) keeping Japan under control, preventing a new kind of militarism in Japan, and keeping Japan developing on a peaceful road. Beijing, they argue, wants the United States to recognize China's

interests in the region and recognize Chinese sovereignty and territory—including Taiwan. American forces should not, of course, be employed in ways that contravene these precepts. Contrary to allegations by others, they assert very adamantly, China does not want to compete with the United States for a dominant role in the region.⁶³

Other Chinese interlocutors over the past 4 years have helped flesh out the details of the Chinese position. Because of China's "principled opposition" to the presence of military forces on foreign soil, government spokesmen when pressed will consistently and persistently state the obligatory opposition to troops on foreign soil. However, Chinese specialists frequently assert that China does not object to the presence of U.S. forces if their presence is consistent with the wishes of the people and governments of Korea and Japan. Some elaborate to the extent of pointing out that this would mean all the peoples of Korea were the North and South reunified, but they do not try to explain how such wishes would be determined or confirmed.⁶⁴ The point is sometimes made that Beijing's more relaxed attitude toward American military power in Asia is evidenced by the fact that the issue of U.S. forces in Korea is at the bottom of China's agenda of regional concerns, but, in contrast, the matter is always at the top of Pyongyang's list. Cited as further indirect evidence is that, although the Soviet Union is no longer a threat, Beijing has nevertheless not pressed for ejecting the United States from the ROK and Japan. (The likely futility of making such a request, in blatant disregard for the concerns of Seoul and Tokyo, is ignored by those who gratuitously make this point.)

What Purpose would U.S. Forces Serve? China Wonders. There is, nevertheless, an interesting nuance that has crept into some discussions by Chinese officials actually working these matters—practitioners, not scholars or think tankers. These officials press the point that the *purpose* of U.S. forces in Korea would weigh heavily in Beijing's calculus about how to react to their continued presence after reunification. If there is no alternative but to conclude that U.S. forces, by

the nature and composition of the force or the character of American pronouncements about that forward-deployed force, are there to contain or act against China (especially in a Taiwan matter), then it will be difficult for Beijing to do anything but strongly oppose the U.S. presence. This somewhat contorted position might be rephrased as follows: Beijing would need to be able to conclude that U.S. forces in Korea were not there to contain China or aid Taiwan; Washington might take the view that Beijing understands the United States has no intention of using force against China—with the unspoken implication that such action would not be taken unless egregious Chinese behavior demanded it.⁶⁵ In other words, both sides might need to apply their own interpretations and agree tacitly not to look for contradictions or complications that both sides would recognize could be found by digging too vigorously—and imprudently.

One of these Chinese officials recently elaborated this position in a way that may appeal to Americans, saying that the Korean Peninsula is “sandwiched” between China and Japan and also between China and the United States. Beijing, he said, expects U.S. forces to remain on the Korean Peninsula to maintain this balance of power, even if other factors have caused the United States to remove its forces from Japan.⁶⁶ It is not so much that these positions expressed by Chinese interlocutors can or should be taken at face value. The important thing is that Chinese officials are openly and candidly discussing with American interlocutors the circumstances under which U.S. forces might remain in a unified Korea and not draw the wrath of Beijing. Certainly, Beijing has no veto on U.S. force deployment decisions, but there is much to say for avoiding contentious issues in Sino-U.S. relations, especially as they apply to American military forces in the region.

China Institute of Contemporary International Relations division director Chu Shulong wrote last year, “In the relationship between American alliances, American military forces in Asia, and Taiwan, the Chinese position

has been clear and consistent and will remain unchanged in the future, no matter the state of the relationship between China and the United States.”⁶⁷ Chu also wrote in the same paper, “Certainly it will be the Koreans’ decision whether to let American troops continue to stay in a united Korea and whether to keep the U.S.-Korea alliance. Since there are no indications that China-Korea relations will be troubled in the future, U.S. troops in a united Korea are unlikely to play any function against China.”⁶⁸ In March 2000, a noted Chinese specialist on security issues concerning Korea said that Beijing’s attitude toward U.S. forces in Korea depends on the status of U.S.-China relations. Only Taiwan can produce a really hostile relationship; there is no other reason for hostility. China generally does not criticize the U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula—just offering occasional criticism of some specific exercises, he concluded.⁶⁹

Evidence of a Dramatic, Ongoing Change in Chinese Attitudes toward U.S. Forces in Asia. The attitudes of at least some influential figures in China concerning U.S. forces in Korea have changed significantly in the recent past as a consequence of the view that the United States has a new proclivity for abusing its status as the world’s sole superpower, displaying hegemonism, and acting as an irresponsible interventionist (all Chinese descriptions of recent American military undertakings, of course, with the Kosovo-Yugoslavia air campaign most prominent).⁷⁰ As a Chinese security scholar⁷¹ who has observed the phenomenon and was willing to discuss it said,

The Kosovo War [his term] caused a shift in Chinese thinking on the matter of tolerance for U.S. forces in Asia. China now feels surrounded by the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances.

He went on to explain that this is not a consequence of Marxist logic (apparently as some Americans conclude) but rather is “based on Chinese observation of U.S. words and actions.”

He explained further that, as others had told the author, Chinese see U.S. characterization of North Korea as an enemy as nothing more than an excuse for such actions as the development of the Revised Defense Guidelines (for the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty) and the development and eventual regional deployment of TMD. This Chinese security scholar said North Korea is very weak and surely cannot project power. In China, the U.S. portrayal of the North Korean threat is considered a joke. Other Chinese analysts see improving relations between Washington and Pyongyang and the plight of the DPRK economy as factors lessening the potential threat from North Korean ballistic missiles. The fact that several years will pass before TMD could become an effective deployed force causes others to speculate that North Korea may no longer exist by that time.⁷² These Chinese specialists are determined both in their conviction that there is no real North Korean threat and in persuading Americans of that assertion.

Additionally, the reintroduction of U.S. forces into the Philippines and the introduction of a U.S. military presence in Singapore are considered by the Chinese as revealing indicators of sinister, or at least hegemonic, American intentions in Asia. All this, together with such things as the proposed TSEA, the extremely controversial Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, originated by the very pro-Taiwan Senator Jesse Helms, under consideration in the U.S. Congress,⁷³ concern China. The Chinese see in this ominous combination the makings of future containment, despite American protests to the contrary. When Washington talks of a "strategic pause" for the United States between now and 2010 or 2015, the concept of preventive diplomacy takes on the appearance of preventive defense—preventing China from achieving its rightful place and full potential, as the Chinese see it.

The Chinese security scholar, interviewed in Washington in late April 2000, went on to explain that this viewpoint is very popular among the military in China. Chinese are especially troubled by the U.S. inclination to

place human rights concerns over the honoring of national sovereignty and fear that the United States will use its “tools” as means to intervene in Asia. The tools, he explained, are its forces and arrangements in Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, etc. He regretted that this attitude had developed, pointing out that, although China publicly opposes foreign forces in any country, privately China had accepted the status quo of U.S. alliances in Asia. Among the reasons for the acceptance is the practical one that there has been no way for China to change that situation. China wants, of course, to ensure that Taiwan is not encompassed in these arrangements, he emphasized. But China, even as a rising power, has not previously sought to change the status quo. It was apparent that this rather young scholar was representing a hope among his peers that the allegedly rising opposition to U.S. forces in Asia he described, particularly among PLA officers, would not serve to reverse the longstanding tolerance or even acceptance in China of the U.S. forces in Korea (and Japan)—even after there is significant change on the Korean Peninsula.

So far, this chapter has reviewed and attempted to provide insights into the Chinese views of its enduring multifaceted relations with troublesome North Korea; its newer yet firm and still growing affection for richer and more stable South Korea; its support of better North-South relations; its involvement in, and reactions to, North Korea’s nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and proliferation activities; its disagreement with collapse and chaos scenarios; its conservative and patient approach to, but not rejection of, reunification and reconciliation concepts; and its possibly surprising tolerance of, or at least ambivalence about, the issue of U.S forces in Korea now and in the future.

SCRUTINY AND ANALYSIS OF CHINESE POSITIONS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES; IMPLICATIONS FOR WASHINGTON AND OTHER CAPITALS

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to taking stock of matters reviewed earlier and the related issues that such an examination raises, as well as attempting to ascertain the implications for U.S. policy and that of other governments involved.

China's Ultimate Goals Concerning the Korean Peninsula.

One experienced Chinese specialist⁷⁴ distilled China's goals with respect to the Korean Peninsula to a few short sentences: Beijing does not want to see a Korea hostile to China or a Korea allied with another country so that the alliance is hostile to China. China does not want to see a chaotic Korea. Beijing does not want to see nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula, but it does not give nearly as high a priority to this issue as does Washington. In this synopsis, he did not specifically mention reunification. Only in response to a specific query did he describe the often-repeated position that stability on the peninsula is the clear top priority, stability that is essential to economic growth for China, Korea, and the region. Reunification, as we have seen, is a second priority, but, as is argued by virtually all Chinese specialists, China does "sincerely support" a reunified, reconciled, or integrated Korea, eventually—with the preferred time frame for ending the division of the peninsula dependent on the interlocutor but rarely less than two or three decades.

The Complexities of the Chinese View of Reunification. Despite the expressed views, Chinese support for Korean reunification is doubted or denied by many observers outside China. Some Chinese argue that Westerners and Japanese are improperly applying their own logic processes and preferences to Beijing's thinking—engaging in

inappropriate “mirroring” and therefore arriving at an inaccurate result. Possibly it does not matter a great deal whether Beijing means what it says about reunification. If Beijing publicly supports reunification, maybe that is as much as one can hope to know with any certainty. Maybe it helps even when Chinese suggest that Korean unification would set a good example for the “Taiwan problem.”

The Chinese Communist Party does not seem to fear the spin-offs of reunification on which others speculate. The Chinese are not concerned about the probable eventual presence of a highly successful, unified, and democratic neighbor, reasoning, it appears, that if a successful ROK has had no substantive effect on the PRC, then an expansion of the example to all of Korea is also not to be feared. Chinese observers see no importance to the relative timing of possible resolutions of the problems of Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet with respect to Korean reunification because China simply views its own problems in these three areas as wholly internal affairs, while the Korean issue is now accepted by China as a matter between two sovereign states.

One Country, Two Systems—for Korea? Chinese specialists occasionally discuss the concept of one country, two systems (as applied to Hong Kong and Macao and offered by the PRC as the formula for Taiwan) as it might apply to the Koreas, but they do not do so seriously—generally seeing it as a concept or application generated by Westerners unfamiliar with the differences between the Korean situation of two states and that of China and its sovereignty issues. It seems more likely that Chinese interlocutors are chary about applying this concept, so dear to Chinese mainlanders, to the Korean situation. Maybe there is a measure of unspoken distaste among the Chinese for the prospect of Koreans using this “sacred” mantra, somehow tainting this concept that is so central to China’s determination to achieve reunification with Taiwan. Nevertheless, “one country, two systems” is an apt description of the direction in which the two Koreas

seemed headed, at least at the conclusion of the meetings of the Kims (North and South) in Pyongyang in June 2000.

Testing the Truth of Chinese Assertions of Support for Reunification. The Chinese want the West and the Koreans to accept that China favors eventual Korean unification, accomplished peacefully and while preserving stability. Nevertheless, Beijing persistently, if inadvertently, feeds the doubts of outsiders. For example, if the reunification issue is not attacked head-on, addressed very directly, in exchanges with Chinese specialists, the talk often takes a turn that seems incompatible with support for reunification, even as a secondary priority. In other words, when a related issue is raised, the assumption of reunification does not necessarily underlie the unwitting answer.⁷⁵ Three cases illustrate the point: (1) The recent increasing talk of China's treating North Korea as a "more normal state," and (2) Chinese specialists' complaints that Americans and South Koreans (often American-educated, it is said pointedly) have at best a superficial understanding of China's relations with North Korea, both suggest a mindset more supportive of preservation of the status quo than movement toward reunification. These two cases are often followed up by a third—by the Chinese complaint that the South Koreans and Americans have no experience with socialist societies like China and North Korea. Once again, this seems to display a latent or underlying view toward the two Koreas that prefers continued division to the prospect of integration. At least, China is not urgently preparing to cope with a unified Korea.

Of course, one cannot be sure how Chinese policymakers and those we assume represent their policies feel "in their hearts" about this issue. Furthermore, on an issue as complex and as important to China as Korean reunification, there are doubtless unresolved internal debates and a desire to retain flexibility, given the variety of stressful circumstances that might surround a reunification scenario.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, after several years of hearing and sifting through Chinese views on reunification, I find it hard

to accept that there is a solid line of misrepresentation by all, including many who are unexpectedly candid on other issues and who seem truly to value intellectual integrity. Consequently, it seems increasingly credible that Beijing means what its various spokesmen say: Stability on the Korean Peninsula, with its economic spin-off, far outweighs Chinese interest in reunification, but China supports eventual “complete integration” and does not in the long term either fear the specter of a unified Korea or so value a socialist brother state or buffer that it would work actively against reunification. Also, it is understandable that there is no hurry in China for reunification. One is reminded of the now largely defunct alarms predicting imminent North Korean collapse so commonly raised in the West just a few years ago and roundly jeered (then and now) by Chinese specialists. That recollection may well bolster the Chinese feeling that they, once more, have it right on North Korea. They may be quite confident, even cocky, in concluding that the reunification process could be destabilizing: that reunification will be exceedingly difficult and complex, prone to fail (even if there is much initial good will on both sides), and is a matter of little, if any, real urgency.

There are also good reasons to believe that Beijing, indeed, favors eventual reunification and that such talk is not just a smokescreen to hide a real preference for continued separation. It is easy to be cynical about Chinese leaders’ actions and apparent intransigence on this and other issues. (Many, but hardly all, of them are easy to dislike, disbelieve, and even despise.) But, trying to look past the cynicism, Beijing indeed seems to look to the prospect that Korea, unified at the right time in the right way, will serve China’s interests in a number of ways and solve some enduring problems for Beijing, such as the following:

- It seems reasonable to speculate that Beijing does not wish to continue indefinitely to supply North Korea with very large amounts of oil, often at bargain prices—a

commodity that, since 1993, China itself has to import in large and steadily increasing quantities.

- Beijing does not want to worry endlessly that the invaluable South Korean investment in China's Manchuria, Shandong Province, and the area around Tianjin will dry up as a result of South Korea's resources being redirected to rebuild and rejuvenate a North Korea whose economy and infrastructure are left indefinitely to worsen and ultimately collapse, when joining with South Korea would seem to preclude such a disaster.

- China's leaders do not want to tolerate forever the inescapable concern that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, or his successor, will bring to a sudden halt the regional stability that China has striven so long to preserve, with all that implies for China's economic and security situation.

- Beijing entertains the hope that a revitalized northern half of the Korean Peninsula will some day become an economic asset to the bordering areas of China, a prospect that many think laughable now, but a prospect that a patient and persevering China has elected not to forgo, even if it takes to mid century or beyond to come to pass. This is a form of very long-term relief for China's Northeast rust belt.

What of the Chinese Military? Put bluntly, the Central Military Commission and General Staff Department would like to concentrate on the challenge of coping with Taiwan and avoiding confrontation with the United States—not on Korean concerns and contingencies. To put a finer point on these concerns:

- The PLA, for the next 50 years, would like not to have to fret over (or maybe even actually plan for) every Korean contingency from blocking huge refugee flows northbound out of the DPRK to pouring PLA troops southward across the Yalu River once again.

- PLA leaders, even those who may not remember clearly the horrific casualty statistics of the 1950s war in Korea, must find daunting the prospects (even if unlikely) of

being forced to march south and face the world's most advanced military—and having to find out just how much support hated Japan will provide to ensure embarrassing defeat for the Chinese they disdain, the Chinese who constantly tell the world that Japan is the real next threat to Asian peace and a country ready to produce nuclear weapons.

Possibly the list of reasons compiled here by the author has been skewed by listening too long to too many Chinese specialists, but it does seem that the reasons for China to favor ultimate reunification, as it says it does, outweigh those for preserving the awkward and troublesome status quo indefinitely.

These somewhat optimistic tentative conclusions, based on attempts somehow to fathom the fundamental Chinese convictions on reunification, do not mean that Beijing's hopes for the future of the Koreas will make Washington happy and Americans content. It should be remembered that, although the Chinese expect Seoul to govern a reunified Korea, they also expect that this unified Korea will lean much more toward Beijing than is currently the case. Certainly an integrated Korea, as the Chinese envision it, would have better relations by far with China than with Japan. Possibly (eventually) the Sino-Korean ties, Beijing hopes, could evolve in such a way that Seoul is more comfortable with Beijing than with Washington: Asian issues to be managed by Asians, not by Americans.

Chinese Views of U.S. Forces in Korea and the U.S.-ROK Alliance. A somewhat similar perplexity applies to Chinese attitudes toward the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance and residual American forces when Korea is no longer divided. It is, indeed, difficult to accept at face value that Beijing has grown tolerant of the presence of American forces on the Korean Peninsula, as many Chinese specialists assert. Could it be true now, and might it remain the case, that Chinese leaders have broadly accepted the stabilizing value of American military forces in both Korea and Japan, and

especially in Korea in recent years? If so, will the current Chinese concerns about what they see as a newly interventionist and hegemonic Washington erode or permanently reverse the trend toward tolerance for the U.S. military posture in Asia? Put another way, are we in the process of losing something valuable, or was it ever the case that Beijing was, until recently, at least content with the presence of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula (and in Japan as well)? Given the doubts that exist among Westerners about the existence of some measure of tolerance in China for the U.S. alliances and American military presence in Asia, or even doubt that a debate on the issue is underway within China, it may be helpful to look closely at the fresh outlook and forthright but informed words on the subject of a young, yet widely respected and prestigious, Chinese specialist, Wu Xinbo:

China's perceptions of the targets, internal structures, and functions of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korean alliances have changed remarkably over time, from extreme hostility to high tolerance. These changes resulted from the interactions of such factors as China's assessment of the world balance of power, the well-being of its relationship with both indigenous and outside powers, and the priority of its national policy. The evolution of Chinese perceptions also illustrates that China need not view the two security alliances as inherently hostile to its interests. Under some circumstances they can be considered useful or at least harmless. Beijing's attitudes are often determined not by the two alliances per se but rather by its perception of the sources of threat to its security and whether these security alliances can alleviate or aggravate the threat. On the other hand, given the nature of China's foreign policy, Beijing does not have intrinsic love for these alliances. Since the 1980s, China has not particularly endorsed any bilateral or multilateral military alliance in the region. Normatively China is also uneasy with the reality of the American military presence in the region and tends to see it as a short-term arrangement rather than a long-term phenomenon. During the Cold War, the Chinese perceived the two security alliances as either against China or with China. In the post-Cold War period, they have yet to be convinced that the function of the two alliances could be neither.⁷⁷

The Chinese Hard-liner's Dream and the American Nightmare. It would appear then that, as with the reunification issue, an internal debate is in progress over the issue of American forces in Asia; the question might then be what is the nature and urgency of the debate and at what level is it being conducted. Beijing fully appreciates that there is certainly no reasonable prospect that Washington would withdraw its military forces under present circumstances. Most countries of the region continue to urge Washington to maintain its force levels, or at least capabilities, for the time being. Asian countries other than China are, indeed, often more supportive (or demanding) of Washington's sustaining its current troop numbers than some American military officers and officials would like. Beijing has largely come to accept that fact, if for no other reason than that it cannot see how to change it. However, major change on the Korean Peninsula (somehow eliminating the North Korean threat) is often seen as the catalyst for change in American forces in Asia, and certainly many in Beijing recognize that prospect. It is appropriate then, in this context, to try to comprehend the outlines and various sides of the Chinese internal debate.

The Simple Solution: Americans Out! Hard-liners in China, especially if the Taiwan problem remains unresolved, could optimistically (from their perspective) envision an "easy" solution. Absent a North Korea, or at least a North Korean threat, there would remain no rationale for American forces to remain in Korea. The Korean people, especially young Koreans already unfavorably disposed toward American forces there, would expect the Americans to leave or even agitate for an expeditious U.S. departure. The American people and the U.S. Congress would no longer desire to support and fund tens of thousands of troops and the large American military infrastructure in South Korea, especially if they were clearly unwanted by unappreciative Koreans. Beijing could, in this new situation, (without significant peril to the important bilateral relationship) effectively influence both

a Seoul that it has worked hard at winning over since at least the beginning of the 1990s and North Korean leaders (whatever role they may be playing) it has supported for decades, urging both to eject the United States. Any American arguments offered for a new form of American force structure in Korea tailored for responding to unpredictable (and admittedly hard to define) security contingencies likely to arise in the region would, in this negative environment, sound rather hollow.

As the Americans would then, of necessity, prepare to leave Korea, China quietly could aid in the movement almost certain to arise in Japan against U.S. forces and bases. This movement would be built on objections (and domestic political fears) concerning Japan's rather embarrassing role as the last country in Asia to provide bases and other support for U.S. military forces. Sooner or later, according to this hard-line Chinese scenario, Japan would cease being the sole host in Asia for American troops, aircraft, ships, bases, training areas, and huge quantities of military equipment and supplies. The JSDF, it would be noted especially in China, would cease to benefit directly from the complementary effects of American presence and cooperation; resurgent Japanese militarism would be curbed by severing it from American military support. Beijing's concerns would be eased about the arms and technology transfers that China objects to now and fears will lead to the continued inexorable buildup of a Japanese military to be feared in Asia.

China would, in the eyes of some, work to "Finlandize" this Japan, a Japan they hope would look around and see that accommodating a benevolent and prosperous, increasingly modern, and non-expansionist China would serve its purposes best. There is the hope or expectation that the unified Korea would be leaning even more toward China. For the Chinese who think in this way, or something that approximates this scenario of an essentially forced American withdrawal from Asia, there is icing on the cake: If the Taiwan situation remains unresolved to this time,

that would certainly not continue to be the case for long. Beijing would feel free to solve the Taiwan problem in the way it considers best with little fear of American interference in this Chinese internal affair; or at least that might be the view of Chinese hard-liners.

A More Sober Chinese View of the Future of U.S. Forces. The obverse of the internal Chinese argument, that we are not privy to hear directly, starts right off with serious questions about the outcome of an attempt at Korean unification. Might the enormous political and economic gaps between the two Koreas prove too great, with resultant widespread unrest or worse in a newly unified country? The strident and deeply divisive domestic regionalism that has been such a prominent feature of South Korean politics and elections would pale in comparison to the North-South differences that would divide a novel peninsula-wide polity striving to have democratic elections. For example, bloc voting by those in the former North Korea would almost certainly disrupt the pluralism so vital to South Korean democracy now. In this regard, then, might the next threat to regional security be a very unconventional one that we have not envisioned (possibly one reminiscent of the Balkans in the 1990s). Serious strife may arise as a consequence of a premature or misguided attempt to bring the two Koreas together. It is, after all, the Chinese, among others, who remind those from afar how difficult it might be to integrate North and South Korea.

Factions could arise in the former North Korea that would cause difficulties for Seoul on their own or by summoning help from abroad, both developments that would seem far less likely or troublesome with U.S. forces present. There is also the matter that is mentioned little but thought about a lot: the fear that Seoul may tend to act rashly or imprudently—something that an American presence may, even in today's world, have already controlled. Would not it be preferable for a large and calming U.S. presence to continue to moderate any hot-headed Korean tendencies to be rash or impatient in the

tense period as reunification tries to take root and grow? U.S. forces, and especially their senior leaders, even if not wholly desirable in Chinese eyes, are at least a known factor, and their steadfast presence might be an important element in giving Koreans confidence and adding to stability in a time of great uncertainty and extreme tension. Beijing may be happier to have Americans stuck with this rather sensitive and onerous task than a PLA wholly untrained in providing either peacemaking or peacekeeping assistance and not known or trusted by the economically and socially dominant majority of the population. So Chinese specialists might envision these demanding circumstances under which China's interests are well served by the enduring presence in significant numbers of U.S. military forces.

Of course, the crisis scenario might not be internal Korean unrest. Chinese security scholars who are favorably disposed to an American military presence, or at least think about it objectively, recognize that the contingency might be brought on by new problems in new places: in the very troubled Russian Far East, or involving a Philippine, Malaysian, or renewed Indonesian insurgency run amok and spilling into the sea lanes of the Philippine and South China Seas, or, simply put, the East Asian security contingency that we cannot now imagine but will wonder 20 years from now how we could have missed. And miss it we may (in a favorable sense), if U.S. forces in East Asia serve a preventive, stabilizing role based on their presence, without having to fire a shot or launch a missile. Yes, there are a few Chinese strategic thinkers who do understand that aspect of American presence in the region—as well as many who understand that argument but do not agree with the premises or conclusions.

An Even More Moderate View: No Reason to Object to U.S. Forces. Looking at the internal Chinese debate on a far less dramatic plane, Beijing's highest priority for the Korean Peninsula and the region, as we have seen, is stability—save for the Chinese obsession over Taiwan.

China has, according to many responsible sources, become quite pragmatic about the U.S. situation in Korea. U.S. forces in Korea are not directly threatening China. China has achieved a highly favorable position on the Korean Peninsula, including notably close and improving relations with the South, despite the large presence of American forces there; and the U.S.-ROK treaty is the centerpiece of security and stability in a place where China most values stability. To put it simply, American forces have been “part of the woodwork,” and some in Beijing have come to accept their presence as normal, nonthreatening, and, most important, stabilizing. Those who are pragmatic in Beijing, as opposed to anti-American hard-liners, are much more inclined to work with the existing security arrangements and be a responsible part of change—change accomplished in parallel with the new government of a unified Korea and with Washington, rather than acting obstreperously in trying to force prompt withdrawal of American forces.

In this argument, as in that of the hard-liners who argue for American withdrawal as well as for those who expect the United States to continue to play a strong role, there is the Japan factor. Put simply, there is a dark side to the all-too-plausible sequence whereby the departure of U.S. forces from Korea leads to ejection or unavoidable American withdrawal from Japan. Most of those who favor this softer line of argument are also likely to believe that it is far better to keep U.S. forces in Japan. These American forces are seen as a proven restraint; it is far better, from a Chinese perspective, to rely on that than to hope self-restraint and an unamended constitution (referring, of course, to Article 9, which precludes possession of war potential) will remain adequate bulwarks against resurgent Japanese militarism. This argument concludes that American forces should stay in Korea so that the matter of Japan’s politicians no longer finding the presence of U.S. forces tolerable has far lower probability of arising in the near future.⁷⁸

So how might the more favorable views in China in support of continued U.S. presence on the Korean Peninsula

be bolstered by American actions? Presently, in the year 2000, it is the PLA that most strongly argues that the United States should now be viewed differently, that the United States and its military forces are no longer to be trusted and are increasingly tending to tip the scales toward regional instability. There is an optimistic possibility: If, as time passes, the United States is seen as no longer prone to frequent intervention and, for example, Kosovo may have made the Americans more wary rather than more willing to use force in such instances,⁷⁹ the more moderate side in Beijing will be able to make a more compelling argument. It is the newly formed conviction by hard-liners about a new face of American interventionist power that has eroded the Chinese tolerance and acceptance of U.S. forces in Korea, a tolerance that had grown out of years of the demonstrated nonthreatening nature of American military presence on the Asian mainland less than 300 kilometers from the Chinese border. It may not be quite as hard to return to that situation of Chinese tolerance as present circumstances make it seem, but that is hardly a sure bet.

The kicker in this for the longer term, however, is Taiwan (assuming an unresolved cross-strait situation at the time of reunification) and how U.S. forces in Asia are seen then with respect to Taiwan. It will simply no longer be possible to make a substantive case in Beijing about tolerance for the American presence in a unified Korea if residual U.S. forces there are seen unequivocally as means to intervene in a Taiwan crisis. Any disposition toward moderation and pragmatism by Chinese elements instantly loses its weight when Taiwan gets placed on the other side of the scale.

The PRC's Treaty Obligations to the DPRK. A Chinese specialist on China's security relations with North Korea said bluntly, "The treaty with North Korea is not a serious alliance in any sense of requiring the use of military forces; it is not a mutual defense treaty."⁸⁰ The mutual cooperation treaty, once seen by many as a commitment by China to come to North Korea's aid with military force, is essentially

a moribund instrument. Publicly, Beijing began clarifying the absence of obligations under the treaty at least 5 years ago. In 1995 and repeatedly thereafter, Beijing began making it increasingly clear it would not use the PLA in support of hostile action against South Korea by the Korean People's Army (KPA). Initially, the formulation ruled out support if Pyongyang initiated the action. Then it became clear that Beijing reserved the right to interpret the obligation (if it could still be called that) in any way Chinese leaders chose.

Pyongyang, for reasons that yet remain unclear, did not react noticeably to this snub. North Korea's leaders did not vociferously object when Beijing went so far as to deny the possibility of PLA support even if the *South* initiated the attack—as long as Seoul was acting alone, meaning, of course, absent American complicity.⁸¹ Although this feature of the PRC-DPRK relationship has grown rather stale and apparently unworthy of notice by the public and news media, the *official public statements* made at the time should not be forgotten. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman announced in the latter part of 1995, "China does not believe the friendship treaty between Beijing and Pyongyang is a treaty requiring the dispatch of military forces."

In early 1997, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan (now the foreign minister), in South Korea on an official visit, said for public consumption that China was not willing automatically to intervene if North Korea were to start a war. Tang, continuing, said the PRC-DPRK treaty was a "dead document." In May 1997, Premier Li Peng in a public statement described North Korea as only a neighbor, not an ally. These stunning statements and the more stunning silence from Pyongyang in their wake might seem to signal a rupture in the relationship, especially since Beijing had previously set the relationship back significantly by establishing diplomatic relations with Seoul, still formally declared an enemy by Pyongyang, in 1992.

It is possible, of course, that Beijing would say one thing about its intent to use the PLA in Korea and mean another—or *do another* when the chips are down. However, as time has passed, it seems that Beijing may well have both meant what it said and also used those blunt statements specifically to deter bad behavior by Pyongyang. Those statements made it unequivocally clear that the chronically unpredictable and intransigent regime in Pyongyang would be committing suicide were it to undertake a military adventure. Of course, Beijing could be deterring Pyongyang, pleasing Seoul (and Washington, for those there who bothered to notice), and still ready to do what it wishes in a real crisis.

The Search for Status. These developments had the effect of bolstering the international reputation of a Chinese government that coveted status as a constructive member of the community of nations but had to overcome a well-earned international reputation for taking actions that have been very harmful to the country, its economy, and the Chinese people. Although the Chinese government is now once more, in 1999 and 2000, resorting to actions that most observers think imprudent (domestic crackdowns and very loud saber-rattling against Taiwan), Beijing has, nevertheless, continued to act soberly and maturely in its dealings with Pyongyang and Seoul. Beijing, not surprisingly, seems to have fully understood that North Korea's leaders would put regime survival above their flashes of anger and displays of frustration toward the South. Indeed, it is not hyperbole to suggest that Beijing has certainly made Pyongyang consider the unvarnished consequences of thinking that some desperate act might end up turning out well, with the PLA jumping in and helping greatly to produce the desired result. The Chinese decision openly to deny military support for Pyongyang may already have played a significant role in deterring a military adventure or other similar exploit by Pyongyang. In that regard, it must be remembered, North Korea's leaders have been more than testy on many occasions since China's stunning 1995

declarations (and subsequent repetitions) to the effect that reckless military actions would not bring the PLA's help or, put tersely, that Pyongyang had the ability to start a war but not to survive one.⁸²

There is the possibility that Beijing has one more, comparatively moderate, motivation for the seeming affront to Pyongyang. Beijing not only wants to avoid war on its doorstep, but also Chinese leaders want to claim the moral high ground. This could go so far that, after an outbreak of hostilities, one might find China touting its solid efforts to avoid war and pointing the finger at Washington for having provided Pyongyang with a much bigger dose of pressure and provocation than of understanding and accommodation. Beijing wants to be perceived as restrained and measured in dealing with Pyongyang while Washington is made to appear unforgiving, hegemonic, and disinclined to appreciate the correctness of China's decision to understand the DPRK and its legitimate concerns rather than to condemn it at every turn.

Pyongyang's diplomatic outreach (beginning with the new century and Washington's double-barreled support for ROK President Kim Dae Jung's policy of opening to the North and adoption of the Perry Report) has dimmed to some extent the credibility of portraying Beijing as the only national capital that has in recent years cared about poor Pyongyang. Seoul and Washington are now jostling Beijing in the contest to see which can get closest to Pyongyang—and send the most money in the direction of the DPRK. Despite these latest efforts, Beijing is probably still poised, if something goes seriously wrong (big or small, sooner or later) on the Korean Peninsula, to condemn Washington for its belligerent attitudes toward China and Russia, and for provoking Pyongyang. In short, Beijing has positioned itself to do some name-calling and paint Washington as the culprit for whatever bad may have happened concerning North Korea. It is one thing for Beijing to be right about North Korea, but it is quite another to combine that with a convincing pronouncement that

Washington was wrong. That is what Beijing has positioned itself to do in the eventual battle for the hearts and minds of a unified Korean people looking for friends—one of these days.

Chinese Intentions for Use of the PLA in a Korean Political or Economic Crisis. Most Chinese are also convinced that Beijing would not order military intervention even if North Korea collapsed either politically or economically. Chinese specialists, however, do not give the scenario much thought, since most do not, as we have seen, believe the collapse of North Korea is a realistic concern. When pressed, Chinese interlocutors recite the reasons why China would avoid using the PLA or other forces in an intervention role in North Korea. China asserts it is not inclined to send forces into North Korea because:

- South Korea would react badly. Beijing values very much its economic and diplomatic relations with Seoul and exchanges views with the South Koreans even now on such a situation to help prevent some future crisis.

- There would be a similarly unfavorable American reaction, and Beijing's relations with Washington are close if not good, including important economic relations.⁸³ China simply could not prudently act unilaterally in doing something like this, even if it were tempted or felt compelled to do so; the international repercussions would be significant. China increasingly cares about its reputation as a responsible member of the community of nations and its vital trade and investment ties.

- China does not want to be bogged down in North Korea; it would be very difficult to find a way to pull out. "China got out once; the United States is still in South Korea," as one Chinese specialist put it.⁸⁴

Recalling that China did send the PLA into Korea in the early 1950s, a very knowledgeable and well-connected researcher explained that the situation today is much different from the way it was 50 years ago. If trouble arose

between North and South, China would let the two Korean sides handle it, probably providing only food and medicine, he asserted. If the United States were to move across the DMZ (which he considers highly unlikely under any circumstances he can imagine), the reaction by Beijing and the PLA would be highly dependent on the status of U.S.-China relations. If the relationship were hostile and a threat to China appeared to be present, Beijing would have to act. If the relationship were as good as today (March 2000) or better, China would think hard before taking serious action, he asserted. He anticipates that Washington and Beijing would, under this circumstance, consult. The senior researcher added that he thinks it highly unlikely any faction or rump government in North Korea would ask the United States for help—adding to his conviction that an American crossing of the DMZ was not a plausible scenario for concern.⁸⁵

Use of the PLA or PAP (People's Armed Police, now much larger than in 1989 and under PLA command but still responsible directly for internal security matters)⁸⁶ in Korea as part of a United Nations UN intervention force has been suggested by some Chinese specialists as at least a plausible consideration. Chinese willing to discuss this issue (but not be identified) are of several minds. They remind that China has not participated in any large-scale UN peacekeeping operations and would initiate such an action in Korea with great trepidation. Others point out that this method, through the device of the UN, would avoid the serious implications of unilateral intervention and might make it easier for Beijing to believe that Chinese forces could be extracted—that an indefinite commitment could be avoided. Interestingly, among those interviewed, the most cautious Chinese official was a PLA general officer who described the possibility of PLA participation in a UN force as “very sensitive” and re-emphasized the unprecedented nature of this for the PLA and how likely it was that such action would be interpreted as essentially a unilateral

Chinese intervention in Korea—regardless of what the facts might be.⁸⁷

Coping with Refugees. There is the additional prospect, under increasingly dire conditions, of a persistent refugee flow in very large numbers northward into China. The same PLA general officer, who expressed such reticence about the PLA crossing the border and claimed to have been working on the issue, said unequivocally that the PLA and PAP were prepared to stop a refugee flow at or near the border with North Korea and to manage the refugees. He did not elaborate on how the refugees might be handled or seem to appreciate how large the numbers might be. It is pertinent that the PLA legitimately prides itself on being a *people's army* in the sense that it very frequently (many times a year) provides troops, often in very large numbers, to help cope with natural disasters in China such as widespread flooding, as mentioned earlier. PLA accomplishments in this area are undoubtedly presented in the best light in domestic (controlled) press reports, news photographs, and dramatic television coverage (sometimes a bit overdone for cynical Western eyes).

However, given the frequency and scope of PLA assistance of this sort, it is noteworthy that no instances of PLA inadequacy, bumbling, or mishandling of the humanitarian operations have come to light.⁸⁸ It can be said, at least, that the PLA is preparing to handle refugees and has both the experience and the resources to attack a moderate-scale problem successfully. The pertinent question is whether the problem would be so massive in a collapse of North Korea that any conceivable force would be overwhelmed.

The Economy, Stupid! Chinese scholars and practitioners who have analyzed the issue of Chinese reaction to chaos or political collapse emphasize what they see as China's real interests. They contend China will not foolishly deviate from the priority track of national economic progress; to accomplish that, a stable peripheral

environment is needed that surely does not include having the PLA in North Korea and having the South Koreans, Japanese, Americans, and others trying to find ways to punish China for the actions it took and applying all forms of pressure to force withdrawal of the PLA. Simultaneously, Beijing would likely be more worried about how to extract the PLA gracefully (or otherwise) rather than what advantages might be gained incident to an imprudent intervention. The head of a prestigious policy institute in Beijing added the somewhat emotional note that during the recent commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the war in Korea, it was evident by the nature of the event and the remarks made how reluctant Beijing would be to use the PLA in a Korean intervention yet again.⁸⁹

These are the Chinese arguments, repeatedly spoken in apparent sincerity—at least sincerity on the part of those speaking the words. Whether Beijing is believed or not on this count, it is significant that the great preponderance of Chinese discussion of this issue, privately and publicly, is about what China will not do with respect to intervention on the Korean Peninsula, rather than what it might do. This stands in remarkable contrast to Beijing's bluster about what it will do with respect to the use of force against Taiwan, illustrating that Chinese leaders are not reticent in using the threat of force as an instrument of policy—something it definitely is not doing in its policy for the Korean Peninsula. At a minimum, Beijing cannot reasonably be seen as poised to undertake bold intervention on the Korean Peninsula.

Another important message, generally unspoken but clearly implied in all these words by Chinese specialists, is that Beijing does not wish to see (or be a party to) an instance of foreign intervention in a sovereign country, especially a country neighboring China, because of the example it might give the world about what could come to pass in Taiwan, Tibet, or some other place China holds dear. The fear of renewed foreign intervention in China, and all that Beijing considers to be China, is deep and abiding.

Taiwan, especially of course, is rarely out of mind for the Chinese. As one Chinese interlocutor, praising prospects for the June 2000 Korean North-South summit, could not help but say, the success of this summit would imply that the Korean Peninsula is a less dangerous place from the American viewpoint. Consequently, Washington would be able to give more attention to the matter of the Taiwan Strait. That, he said ominously, increases the threat to China's security and well-being.⁹⁰

Policy Implications for Washington, Beijing and Other Capitals.

China's Role in a Stable Future for the Korean Peninsula and the Region. Major change of some sort is expected to come to the Korean Peninsula, although the timing and nature of the change remain quite uncertain. Few now would want to join the large club composed of those who have confidently made predictions about North Korea and been proven wrong. Nevertheless, it seems safe to suggest that the diminution or elimination of the threat posed by North Korea may be a major element of this impending and long-awaited change. The North Korean threat, by ground and missile forces especially, has at least since the end of the Cold War been proclaimed as the *raison d'être* of the U.S. alliances with the ROK and Japan and the reason for the intense interest in development and deployment of theater and national missile defenses (TMD and NMD). Consequently, this change on the Korean Peninsula is seen by many, including thoughtful Chinese strategists, as a catalyst for change in the security architecture of Northeast Asia, or possibly for all of East Asia.

Some might object to calling the existing loose collection of arrangements in the region a security architecture, but it is, in fact, a diverse structure of bilateral alliances, strategic partnerships (or prospects therefor), joint communiqués, national statutes, unique constitutional provisions, and the like. Nothing dictates that either the existing or an

envisioned security architecture have a rigorous or formal structure. Indeed, it has been argued often that, for this region, a formal structure resembling NATO is simply not suitable. Possibly the more interesting and more important questions are: (1) What can we say about the security environment in which this framework will function? (2) What do China and the United States expect or demand of a new or evolving security architecture?

In answer to the first question, it is simply too early to forecast what the security environment will be in the aftermath of some sort of change in Korea. New threats to peace and stability may take many forms, some that we understand now and some that we may have trouble imagining at present. It may be that curbing piracy or stopping drugs proves to be the major preoccupation, or it may be, as suggested earlier in this paper, that internal strife in a country like a unified Korea may require peacekeeping or peacemaking actions similar to those in the Balkans that gained such notoriety in recent years. More likely, the nature of the actual future threat or problem presently escapes our notice or exceeds our imaginations.

In light of this high degree of uncertainty, it would seem to most strategists foolhardy to take precipitous action such as terminating the U.S. bilateral alliances and withdrawing or sharply reducing the capability of U.S. force levels in the region—although changes in the missions, numbers, composition, and disposition seem likely. Furthermore, it would seem imprudent unnecessarily to take significant actions that may become essentially irrevocable. For example, because of various American domestic factors as well as regional ones, the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Asia may be an action that would be almost impossible to reverse once taken. No responsible government wants to see a dangerous power vacuum in the region or a rush to fill such a void, should it occur. Even for the most adamant America bashers, the United States is the “devil they know” in the Northeast Asia security lash-up, and there are adequate constraints on American action to satisfy most

(but hardly all) of the concerns of those who do not trust Washington to act with restraint.

In answer to the question about what China wants of the framework, it is evident, of course, that Beijing's concept of a future security architecture would not include as prominent features U.S. security alliances, and may well favor their dissolution. Although Beijing has not been in a hurry for the American alliances to end, there is the long-term view held by many in China that Asian security problems should eventually be the exclusive domain of Asian countries—that the oft-stated Chinese preference for no troops on foreign soil is more than a self-serving slogan. The central issue, however, is that China wants its role as an emerging major regional nation fully recognized.

Beijing rails against what it calls American attempts at hegemony, and Washington does not want China to assume a dominant posture. Nonetheless, fear of hegemony, by any party, must not obscure the fact that China is the largest and most populous country of the region and that it has legitimate aspirations for a constructive role in the security affairs of the region. This conviction on the part of Beijing is an underlying element of the strategic partnership concept that China has announced with Russia and advocated as the way of the future. China does not want to see itself as the apparent, if unnamed, adversary of alliances in the region and understandably wants instead to be a part of the architecture.

As to American requirements for a security framework, Washington firmly holds that its traditional bilateral alliances should be central features of any new security architecture. New importance, however, has been attached by some American strategic thinkers to what has been called a "growing pattern of security pluralism." This, of course, includes multilateral security dialogues, the most prominent of which is the ARF (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum). Many consider the ARF a talkfest at best and arguably a failure. Whether

that opinion is shared or not, it is useful, nevertheless, to mention the ARF in a Northeast Asian context, not because that body is attempting to tackle problems outside its region (Southeast Asia) but rather because the ARF is, in fact, already providing a venue where nations of Northeast Asia somewhat surprisingly meet and discuss security matters—such issues as confidence building and transparency, which might seldom if ever arise naturally and without direct confrontation in other meetings. This may demonstrate the applicability of such methods to Northeast Asia and is most recently illustrated by North Korea's joining the ARF session at its July 2000 session in Bangkok, where the North Korean foreign minister met with his counterparts including U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

There are other multilateral examples: The ROK, Japan, and the United States have established an official forum for discussion and cooperation. One of the most significant—if now somnolent—multilateral forums is the Four Party Talks involving the DPRK, ROK, PRC, and United States, something hard to imagine a few years ago. As the U.S. Department of Defense's 1998 East Asia Strategy Report states: "Multilateralism in all its forms will become an important element of U.S. engagement in the region in coming years." Only a short time back, neither Washington nor Beijing thought well of the concept of multilateralism. Americans thought multilateralism threatened its important bilateral arrangements. The Chinese considered multilateralism as a way for others to gang up on China. Now, anew, multilateralism is being referred to by some with disdain, as a concept that was a flash in the pan but now shows no promise. That may turn out to be the case, but for now there is no conclusive evidence of that, and, moreover, there has not arisen a replacement concept that holds promise. Until that occurs, sticking with multilateral efforts may be the only promising recourse.

At the end of the last decade, the American vision of security in Northeast Asia was a network of overlapping

and interlocking institutions and relationships that “establish a diverse and flexible framework for promoting common security in the Asia-Pacific region into the next century,” to quote the U.S. Department of Defense’s *East Asia Security Report (EASR)* once more. Beijing might ascribe to much of this as well. This is an exceedingly encouraging vision. For that reason, if no other, it seems premature to give up hope on multilateralism in one form or another or a conglomerate of forms as a plausible component of an evolving security architecture for Northeast Asia.

Whatever the ultimate solution (or absence thereof), a central problem is that there are two largely contradictory (possibly even diametrically opposed) views of the role of bilateral alliances in the regional security architecture. The broad concept of security pluralism, whether defined as multilateralism or not, seems to hold at least some promise of finding a middle ground, even if only temporarily. Consequently, the real issue at hand is not to choose one view over the other but rather to find a way to accommodate both views of the role of alliances and to make the most of the emergence of the idea of pluralism.

Among the first steps along such a path might be fostering the realization that alliances need not have identified adversaries as their *raison d’être* and that no country need be a target of these alliances unless its conduct makes it so. Put a bit more bluntly, it may be that China could find the concept of bilateral alliances far less distasteful if it did not inevitably have to conclude that the alliances target China. Some in the United States seem to want to identify China more clearly as an adversary rather than attempting to avoid such an appellation. There is more by far to the issue than semantics. It serves no useful purpose to state how unhappy we are with many Chinese policies and actions, and vice versa with Chinese unhappiness toward the United States, if we are not working positively to avoid an exacerbation of hostile attitudes.

It may be useful to present this concept another way, to turn it on its head: No country which desires to be an integral part of the security architecture can be seen as a looming threat to regional security and stability. This will require a good measure of introspection by all the countries that aspire to be solid components of a new framework. In this regard, there are several important questions that we should ask of ourselves. How does Washington explain what it sees as its role in a new or modified framework in such a way that even the detractors, the America bashers in China and elsewhere, know that the United States does not aspire to be a regional hegemon and a force bent on containment of legitimate national aspirations? Does Washington need to make it even clearer that it sees U.S. interests best served by stable, open, and prosperous nations in East Asia, unquestionably including China? How does Japan more effectively convince its neighbors, including both China (invaded and brutally occupied by Japan) and a unified Korea (brutally colonized by Japan for decades), that its goal is not a militaristic future and domination of the region?

What does China have to do to earn a place in the architecture? How might China cut the Gordian knot of the Taiwan issue? How does it deal with the firm convictions by others that Taiwan is *not* wholly an internal issue and that a peaceful resolution of the problem is the only way that makes sense? Can the developing confrontation between Chinese short-range ballistic missiles threatening Taiwan and theater missile defense be avoided? What are the ingredients that will make a unified Korea a welcome part of the framework? What are the appropriate places for Mongolia and Russia in the new architecture? To the extent that all are unwilling to address these questions with candor and a desire to understand the views of other capitals, the future security framework after Korean unification will be less strong and less stable.

The future, after Korean unification or some other form of change on the Korean Peninsula, will bring a new and

different security architecture for the region. Conceivably, this may occur quite abruptly; we may have the luxury of a gradual, evolutionary change; more likely we may have the frustrations and uncertainty of a sporadic process of steps forward, sideways, and backwards. This prospect of development of a new security architecture, at whatever pace it may take, has great promise and should be approached with optimism and enthusiasm. However, it is also a sobering, daunting task, fraught with peril; so it is appropriate to conclude with a list of reminders of the various *formulas that would likely result in failure* to construct a stable and effective new security framework for Northeast Asia.

We must avoid these formulas for failure of a new or evolving security architecture:

- Seeking formality and rigidity in composition and organizational structure—the fallacy of attempting to form something like NATO in Northeast Asia.
- Failing to appreciate China’s appropriate place in the architecture and ignoring Beijing’s views in shaping the concept.
- Prejudging the outcome on the Korean peninsula; i.e., assuming we can forecast the precise form of the resolution of the Korean problem.
- Waiting until after change on the Korean Peninsula to lay the groundwork—to consider seriously what will foster a stable and enduring framework.
- Acting hastily in reconsidering and readjusting American alliances and forward presence in Asia.
- Failing to find a way to blend the bilateral, the multilateral, and the “minilateral” mechanisms that all have roles to play.
- Assuming we can understand and foresee the nature of future security contingencies that will threaten the region.

This is admittedly a daunting task, especially when one recognizes that no one is in charge and that no one can be in charge. This has to be an international collegial effort. That heightens the challenge, but it also, one can hope, heightens the prospects that the new framework will sufficiently and appropriately reflect the composition and character of the region so that it will not be subjected to assaults from a country that feels it has been shunned or ignored. Hidden in the Chinese goals and strategies for the Korean Peninsula, there is great promise for major change, but that promise must be better understood before it can be realized. There is good reason to fear that a new framework will be doomed to instability if it is constantly being shaken by outsiders who are either trying to break into the structure or trying to dismantle it. China would be doing just that if we cannot use our understanding and analysis of China's attitudes toward the Korean Peninsula as a good and sufficient lesson to understand the larger matter of the structure and participants that can become the diverse, yet essential, components of a stable new regional security architecture.

None of this is to suggest that making the new security framework inclusive of all who should be part of the architecture will be an easy task. However, despite the extent of the difficulty, it will be easier to resolve these problems now (and to be ready to apply them as changes occur on the Korean Peninsula) than to try later to cope with the inevitable assaults on the framework by those who have been left out in the cold. The most challenging aspect of developing a new architecture, one largely and unavoidably derived from traditional security perspectives, may be to apply this architecture to a new world of nontraditional security concerns. But that challenge surely goes far beyond this examination of China's goals and strategies for the Korean Peninsula and what they imply for U.S. policy.

CONCLUSION

China and the United States have entered the new century with a divided Korea composed of a crippled North and a newly economically recovered South. China anticipates, even relies on, the prospect that the Chinese economy will benefit significantly from trade and investment from South Korea. Washington expects that both China and South Korea will be its important economic partners. Neither Beijing nor Washington expects North Korea to move militarily against the South because both think North Korea's leaders have too much to lose and realize that such an action, absent the direct support of the PLA, would likely mean the devastation of North Korea and the fall of the Pyongyang regime. Beijing hopes that the magic of Korean unification or reconciliation may bring a new view, even in Washington, of a security framework for the region so that China will be able to become an integral component in the Northeast Asian security architecture, and that it will no longer, tacitly or expressly, be seen as a target of alliances.

Washington might hope that China, reflecting its positive role as a constructive member of the community of nations rather than its dark side as a bully ready to bludgeon Taiwan, would earn its position as a solid part of the regional security framework. If Washington and Beijing can reach such an accommodation, the now nettlesome issue of the continued presence of U.S. forces in the countries of Asia near China will not be a matter of consequence to China, or the forces will have been radically reconfigured or withdrawn because of other factors, domestic and international.

But no examination, in the year 2000, of China's interests in Korea should ignore the crazy Taiwan factor, as we have seen repeatedly. Taiwan is simply an integral part of China's regional security perspectives because Beijing has refused to rid itself of the obsession with Taiwan, or Taiwan has refused to accede to Beijing's generous but

unrelenting demands—whichever way one chooses to frame the matter. With the Taiwan issue unresolved, and, worse yet, volatile, China will not view U.S. forces and alliances in Asia as innocuous. Moreover, the threat the PLA poses to Taiwan will inevitably (and correctly) be considered by other countries as good and sufficient reason for the United States to maintain a strong, ready military capability in the region and for China to be the unspoken ultimate reason for the potent American presence.

If and when the cross-strait issue is resolved satisfactorily there will undoubtedly be other problems involving China and the United States. However, for the time being, the “Taiwan problem,” as Beijing calls it, is recognized clearly by all except the Chinese as the real obstacle to China’s aspiration to be viewed as a positive force in the region. Moreover, China, by its own actions, ensures that, in the current situation, the Taiwan issue remains a major complicating factor in devising a new security architecture for the region, even when the issue seemed to be China’s goals and strategies for the Korean Peninsula.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 5

1. North Korean leader Kim Jong Il made a surprise (kept secret until his return home) first foreign visit as his country’s leader to Beijing for 3 days in late May and early June 2000. South Korean President Kim Dae Jung made an announced, but unprecedented, visit to Pyongyang during the period of the conference for which this chapter was prepared. The North-South summit meeting, delayed a day for “technical reasons,” was actually held June 13-15, 2000, in the North Korean capital. It has left both sides with high expectations.

2. Eric A. McVadon, “Chinese Military Strategy for the Korean Peninsula,” chapter 9, in James R. Lilley and David Shambaugh, eds., *China’s Military Faces the Future*, Washington, DC: M.E. Sharpe and American Enterprise Institute, 1999, p. 273. In this earlier piece on a related subject, the author elaborated the balanced relationships between the PRC and the DPRK and ROK, including concerns by Beijing that Washington would disrupt the delicate balance the Chinese had worked so long and hard to attain.

3. Yu Bin, "Containment by Stealth: Chinese Views of and Policies toward America's Alliances with Japan and Korea after the Cold War," Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, Institute for Strategic Studies, <http://aparc.stanford.edu/>, September 1999, p. 11.

4. Kim Jong Il's last known trip abroad was to China in 1983, well before his father's July 1994 death. South Korean press reports state that Chinese President Jiang Zemin would make a reciprocal visit to Pyongyang in 2000, possibly in October.

5. China, in the months before Kim's trip to Beijing, significantly increased efforts to discover North Koreans illegally in China and return them, an action that would please Pyongyang but not Seoul.

6. Reuters news service report from Beijing on September 8, 1998.

7. Beijing Xinhua, June 1, 2000, report, "More on Kim Jong II Visits" in English.

8. February 11, 2000, interview by the author with an experienced PRC practitioner who until recently participated for 4 years in activities that support China's foreign policy development and implementation for the Koreans.

9. Yu Bin, p. 11.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Xinhua, June 1, 2000.

12. Dinner conversation on March 24, 2000, by the author in Beijing in mid-March with the president of one of China's most authoritative policy analysis organizations. Although citation by name is imprudent in situations like this, Chinese specialists on relations with the Koreans are quite receptive to discussing China's strategy and actions with respect to the Korean Peninsula, even enthusiastic at the opportunity to try to ensure that Beijing's positions and the facts, as they see them, are presented.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Ming Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios & Implications*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999, p. 15, including footnote 20. Pollack and Lee mention the crackdown by Chinese security forces, criminal activities by refugees, and that estimates of North Koreans living in northeastern China are as high as 100,000, with larger numbers during surges in search of food. Elizabeth

Rosenthal, in a May 31, 2000, article in the *New York Times*, "Beijing Steps Up Effort To Expel Illegal North Korean Immigrants," describes the pre-visit crackdown and also writes that the estimated numbers of illegal residents are 100,000 to 200,000.

15. Yang Xiyu, acting director of the Institute of World Development Research Center of the PRC State Council, interview by author, Beijing, March 19, 2000. The subject of PLA preparations for coping with a refugee flow is covered more extensively in Section 2 of this chapter. As noted there, the specific course of the information concerning PLA plans to block a refugee flow was an August 1997 interview by the author with a PLA general officer who had recently been involved with matters concerning planning for Korean contingencies in senior headquarters in Beijing.

16. February 11, 2000, interview cited above.

17. David Hoffman, "Russia Says N. Korea Offers to End Missile Program," *Washington Post*, July 20, 2000, p. A16.

18. "Russian and Chinese leaders talk by phone," *Reuters*, Moscow, July 26, 2000.

19. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov announced the visit on July 26, 2000, as reported by Elizabeth Piper in an article entitled "N. Korea's Kim to make mammoth Russian trip-Ivanov," *Reuters*, Moscow, July 26, 2000.

20. Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., *A History of Ballistic Missile Development in the DPRK*, Occasional Paper No. 2, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California, pp. 3, 8.

21. Marshal O was Minister of the People's Armed Forces and Vice Chairman of the National Defense Commission as described in Defense Intelligence Agency publication PC-1510-101-96, *North Korea: The Foundations for Military Strength—Update 1995*, Washington, DC: 1996, p. 3.

22. Kim Taeho, "Strategic Relations Between Beijing and Pyongyang: Growing Strains amid Lingering Ties," in James R. Lilley and David Shambaugh, eds., *China's Military Faces the Future*, Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1999, p. 305.

23. *Ibid.* Kim cites *Dong-A Ilbo* (Seoul), July 11, 1997, p. 6, as the original source for these quoted words.

24. Making Kim Jong Il's unannounced May-June 2000 visit to Beijing all the more noteworthy.

25. Kenneth W. Allen and Eric A. McVadon, *China's Foreign Military Relations*, Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, October 1999, p. 67. The patterns of visits and names and titles of visitors before and after Kim Il Sung's death are provided in this section on PLA-KPA relations in the Stimson Center report.

26. Conversation on August 4, 1997, by the author with a senior PLAN officer with knowledge of his navy's exchanges with other navies as well as general knowledge of those of the other services of the PLA.

27. PRC foreign service officer responsible for DPRK affairs, conversation by author, July 1996.

28. Conversation cited above by the author with a senior PLAN officer, August 4, 1997.

29. Many of the PLA's weapon systems and related items would be well suited to both the KPA's budget and operational requirements, yet they are not transferred. The KPA has to scrounge elsewhere.

30. Eric A. McVadon, "The Chinese Military and the Peripheral States in the 21st Century: A Security *Tour d'Horizon*," chapter 2, in Larry M. Wortzel, ed., *The Chinese Armed Forces in the 21st Century*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, December 1999, pp. 49-50. The Chinese-asserted view of the Koreans in economic rather than military terms is described in full.

31. Chung Jae Ho, in his February 1999 paper "The Korean-American Alliance and the 'Rise of China': A Preliminary Assessment of Perceptual Changes and Strategic Choices," Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, Institute for International Studies, <http://aparc.stanford.edu/>, p. 8, states:

Since Korean-Chinese economic changes began in the late 1970s, the size of the bilateral trade has increased 1,249 times in eighteen years from \$US19 million in 1979 to \$US23.7 billion in 1997. The pace at which the Korean-Chinese trade has expanded is extraordinary since it took 32 years (1955-87) for the Korean-United States trade to reach a comparable level. That much of the expansion had already occurred prior to the 1992 diplomatic normalization further highlights the special nature of the bilateral relationship. By 1997, Korea and China became the third largest partner for each other

after the United States and Japan. Additionally, Koreans seem to regard Korea's trade with China as much more fair than Korea's trade with the United States.

32. For comparison, according to The Heritage Foundation's U.S. and Asia Statistical Handbook, 1999-2000 Edition, U.S. foreign direct investment in China reached \$2.6 billion in 1994 and in 1996 totaled \$3.8 billion, suggesting that South Korean and U.S. FDI in China are of the same order of magnitude.

33. Chu Shulong, "How the Korean-U.S. Security Alliance Is Viewed by the Chinese," conference paper, 14th annual Joint International Conference of the Council on U.S. Korean Security Studies and The Korean Association of International Studies held in Arlington, Virginia, October 1999, p. 8; and an interview by the author with Professor Chu in Beijing in March 2000.

34. Kenneth W. Allen and Eric A. McVadon, p.66.

35. Professor Chu Shulong, director of the North American Division of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations in Beijing, interview by the author, March 2000.

36. These survey results are extracted from Chung Jae Ho, "The Korean-American Alliance and the 'Rise of China': A Preliminary Assessment of Perceptual Changes and Strategic Choices," February 1999, Tables 6, 7, and 8 on p. 13. See earlier citation for further information on accessing the paper.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

38. An associate research professor who deals with China's security relations with North Korea at a prestigious think tank closely linked to the PRC government, conversation by the author, Beijing, March 24, 2000.

39. Senior member of a prestigious think tank who has written extensively on Chinese security interests on the Korean Peninsula, interview by author, Beijing, March 2000.

40. Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., p. 29. Bermudez supports the Chinese specialist's point: "DPRK missile designers and engineers have continued to travel to the PRC for professional training and possible technology exchanges throughout the 1990s."

41. Visiting Chinese scholar-official who has excellent knowledge of and extensive experience with Beijing's relationship with Pyongyang, interview by author, Washington, DC, February 11, 2000.

42. If one takes seriously the statements about reluctance to address the missile issue with Pyongyang, it is intriguing that Chinese leaders feel quite free to criticize Washington and others; e.g., telling Taipei it cannot acquire TMD and rebuking an insufficiently repentant (about World War II) Tokyo to the effect that duplicitous Japan will probably use TMD to gain ballistic missile technology with which to threaten China or that it will use TMD as a shield behind which it will develop nuclear weapons and once again be the scourge of Asia. Nonetheless, it appears that these "insider" interlocutors firmly believe that Beijing is constrained in this way in its conversations with North Korean leaders.

43. As with Beijing's alleged constrained and cautious conversations with Pyongyang, it is intriguing to hear these well-connected interlocutors argue that huge China would insist on having proof or concrete evidence before it would feel comfortable confronting its troubled, comparatively tiny neighbor of North Korea when it can so readily confront or insult others on what often appear to be dubious grounds or contrived conclusions. The intrigue is compounded by the careful crafting of the Chinese positions to incorporate American sacred cows such as the MTCR and by the assertion that the disorderly U.S. arrays of positions are inconsistent or illogical as contrasted with Beijing's unified and unassailable "principled positions." There is more than intrigue to this, of course; Beijing's points on these matters are the result of developing a single, official view and honing it by repeated rehearsals. Free-lancing is not part of the process, even in Track II forums, and, consequently, getting through the formally forged Chinese boilerplate is often a truly formidable task for Western interlocutors.

44. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., pp. 10 and 29, supports the Chinese assertion. Bermudez establishes a link between early DPRK ballistic missiles and Soviet R-17E [Scud B] missiles obtained about 1980 by North Korea from Egypt and reverse-engineered, but with respect to the *Taepo-dong* 1 and 2 he writes:

There have been frequent reports suggesting a linkage between both systems—especially the *Taep'o-dong* 2—and PRC missiles (i.e., DF-3). These claims, however, remain to be confirmed.

45. The lack of advance notice by Pyongyang to Beijing of the August 1998 *Taepo-dong* launch was corroborated by reference to a statement

by Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao as reported by *Reuters* in Beijing on September 8, 1998. As mentioned previously, Beijing was also surprised recently by Pyongyang's alleged offer to Russian President Putin to abandon rocketry in return for foreign aid to its space exploration program, interpreted by some as North Korean use of international space launch services.

46. DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun at the July 2000 ASEAN Regional Forum session in Ban would not elaborate on Putin's report of a North Korean willingness to give up its ballistic missile program, leaving the issue quite unclear.

47. Chinese security specialist working in Washington, interview by author, April 21, 2000.

48. KEDO is responsible for procuring and delivering heavy fuel oil to North Korea to fuel electrical power plants that otherwise would be powered by the objectionable nuclear reactors prohibited by the provisions of the Agreed Framework. The agreed arrangement is that light water reactors, which are not ready sources of weapons-grade fissionable material, will eventually supply the electrical power that the now shutdown "dirty" reactors would have provided along with plutonium that could readily be used in weapons.

49. This is the carefully constructed, and representative, argument of a specialist on Sino-Korean relations at a prominent Beijing institution for the study of international relations. It will be of interest to see how Beijing reacts to the July 2000 mention by President Putin that Russia may become a contributor to KEDO funding.

50. A very senior and self-confident official of the international relations institution above offered this candid elaboration of the reasoning behind Beijing's decision not to contribute to KEDO funding. The remarkable Chinese theme of grave concern about Pyongyang's sensibilities appears again in this argument.

51. Chu Shulong, "China and the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea Alliances in a Changing Northeast Asia," Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, Institute for Strategic Studies, <http://aparc.stanford.edu/>, June 1999; and "China and the U.S.-Korean Alliance," conference paper, *14th Annual Conference of The Council on U.S. Korean Security Studies and The Korean Association of International Studies*, Arlington, VA, October 28-29, 1999. Because Professor Chu could not attend the conference in Arlington, the author, coincidentally, presented and discussed the latter paper and has

retained a copy, as did The Council, whose address is P.O. Box 3651, Arlington, VA 22203; fax, (703) 979-0909.

52. February 11, 2000, interview previously cited.

53. It was intriguing to hear this thoughtful official and scholar go through his chain of logic, which allowed him to argue that the American desire to retain troops in Asia (for reasons he did not describe) is so strong that it leads Washington to strive to have North Korea remain intact indefinitely.

54. Chinese security specialist working in Washington, interview by author, April 21, 2000. It might be more accurate to say that China would be unwilling and would find it domestically imprudent to pour money down the economic black hole that North Korea has become.

55. The spring 2000 visit by Kim Jong Il to Beijing was seen as an affirmation of relations between China and North Korea after the death of Kim Il Sung and is expected to make both sides more confident so that Pyongyang will not be so inclined to act in desperation, feeling there is no alternative. During Kim Il Sung's time, these exchanges were frequent. Professor Chu Shulong said that, despite rumors to the contrary, there are good solid relations with North Korea and Kim Jong Il's leadership is accepted by the Chinese. China must deal with Kim. He must be strong to have come out of that system and survived so far. Moreover, Kim Jong Il has been reasonable to deal with, Chu asserted, speaking with authority.

56. February 11, 2000, interview cited above.

57. Yu Bin, p. 10.

58. Dinner conversation by the author on March 19, 2000, in Beijing with an official who was very familiar with the government policies with respect to the Korean Peninsula and works under the State Council, the Chinese equivalent of the cabinet of the U.S. president.

59. March 20, 2000, interview cited previously.

60. It is somewhat annoying to Chinese specialists to be continually confronted by disbelief on the part of Americans, many of whom exude an air of confidentiality in saying that they understand the true positions of all the major countries on the matter of reunification. They go on to suggest quietly that Japan, the United States, and China, although it cannot be said publicly, know that continued division of the Korean Peninsula is the preference for those insiders who think carefully about a possible realistic solution.

61. Although this history is well known to those who lived through these years and played a role in the events described, for those interested, this summary was derived from a much longer description of the history of Chinese attitudes toward U.S. forces in Korea that appears at the beginning of Chu Shulong's paper "How the Korean-U.S. Security Alliance Is Viewed by the Chinese," conference paper, *14th annual Joint International Conference of the Council on U.S. Korean Security Studies and The Korean Association of International Studies*, Arlington, VA, October 1999, pp. 1-2. In an earlier citation of Chu's paper, methods to obtain a copy are suggested.

62. The term *normal*, spoken in English with something of a sneer, is used commonly by many Chinese specialists to reflect Chinese distaste for the possibility that Japan could be allowed to reacquire the status of a *normal state*.

63. February 11, 2000, interview cited above. There are many thoughtful Chinese who simply do not imagine the China they think they know involved in competition with the very advanced U.S. economy and similarly advanced U.S. military for the dominant role in the region. When reminded that some of their more militaristic (and possibly influential) countrymen do make such noises, they point out that among so many people there are bound to be outlying views—just as in the United States. They call to mind that prestigious Americans, some who are quite influential, essentially declare China an enemy, even now, over matters that virtually all Chinese consider absurd: Taiwan self-determination, the status of Tibet, China's sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, human rights they wish to define in Western terms, sales of weapons allowed by international practice (and hardly comparable in size and technology to American sales), and the spotty, halting modernization of one of the world's most backward large military organizations, the PLA. [It is interesting to hear moderate Chinese interlocutors essentially equate the immoderate views of vociferous advocates in the two countries.]

64. Chung Jae Ho, p. 14. Chung writes:

Despite the relatively declining popularity of the United States among Koreans, the public attitudes toward the necessity of the stationing of the U.S. forces have gradually become more positive. . . . While 74.5 percent of the respondents in the 1988 . . . survey preferred the withdrawal of the United States forces sooner or later, the comparable figure gradually but seemingly irreversibly dropped to 60.2 percent in 1990, 51.5 percent in 1995, and 37.4 percent in 1997. Whether the decline reflects the heightened security concerns generated by the North Korean

nuclear crisis in the first half of the 1990s remains uncertain. It may be speculated that the Korean attitudes toward the United States may have become more “pragmatic” in that the Koreans might have begun to differentiate perceptual dispositions from their practical needs.

Table 9 of Chung’s paper, immediately following the quoted text, provides a breakout of data from surveys taken in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1997 from which the figures cited above are derived.

65. For a more complete treatment of this subject, see Eric A. McVadon, “Chinese Military Strategy for the Korean Peninsula,” chapter 9, in James R. Lilley and David Shambaugh, eds., *China’s Military Faces the Future*, Washington, DC: M.E. Sharpe and American Enterprise Institute, 1999, pp. 289-291, and endnote 5 on p. 292.

66. March 19, 2000, interview with Yang Xiyu.

67. Chu Shulong, “China and the U.S.-Japan and U.S. Korea Alliances in a Changing Northeast Asia,” p.16.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

69. March 19, 2000, interview cited previously.

70. The author and others were “lectured” along these lines in the summer of 1999 by a distinguished PLA general officer at the National Defense University in Beijing. His theme was that the United States is wrongheaded to proceed down the road of even greater capability to conduct interventions into sovereign countries as was the case with the “U.S.-led attacks on Yugoslavia.”

71. April 21, 2000, interview cited previously.

72. James Clay Moltz, “Viewpoint: Missile Proliferation in East Asia: Arms Control vs. TMD Responses,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Spring-Summer 1997.

73. Chinese strategists see the TSEA (the passage of which is currently in considerable doubt) as the means to reestablish essentially a U.S.-Taiwan defense treaty, as existed before the United States recognized the PRC, and certainly as a way to develop coordination and cooperation between the armed forces of Taiwan and those of the United States on critical matters like early warning of missile attacks. These PRC defense specialists do not blink an eye in very righteously decrying

a system, the purpose of which would be to defend Taiwan against ballistic missiles launched from across the Taiwan Strait.

74. Senior member of a prestigious think tank who has written extensively on Chinese security interests on the Korean Peninsula, interview by author, Beijing, March 20, 2000.

75. The author has repeatedly over several years drawn knowledgeable Chinese interlocutors into such "traps" and has never been confronted by an answer that foresees North Korea's no longer existing as a separate state. In other words, for whatever reason, there seems to be no vision of, and certainly no preparation for, dealing with a unified Korea among those to whom the author has spoken.

76. Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Ming Lee, pp. 14-15. As Pollack and Lee state it,

Given that China's links to both Koreas (despite an increasing policy "tilt" in favor of the ROK) afford it substantial leverage in relation to future outcomes on the peninsula, there is still ample uncertainty and evident internal debate over its preferred strategy under more stressful circumstances.

77. Wang Jiangwei and Wu Xinbo, "Against Us or with Us? The Chinese Perspective of America's Alliances with Japan and Korea," Stanford University, Asia/Pacific Research Center, Institute for Strategic Studies, <http://aparc.stanford.edu/>, p. 5. Dr. Wu Xinbo is a prominent professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai; he is currently (summer of 2000) a visiting fellow at the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

78. Many Chinese, probably by far most of those who contemplate strategic issues, seem truly concerned about the Japanese threat. They are often torn between belief in the vociferous Chinese complaints on the one hand about the Revised Defense Guidelines and America's helping to make the JSDF imprudently stronger and on the other hand the proven value of the 47,000 American military personnel based in Japan.

79. Alternatively, Beijing may come to realize that Washington did not rush to intervene in Kosovo but rather did so when all else failed and something had to be done. However, even the most moderate and thoughtful Chinese security scholars are not currently prone to accept that interpretation, and those who might would likely get shouted down with reminders of the attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

Chinese diplomats, for example, guffaw at the suggestion by Europeans that the United States, if anything, was too slow in deciding to act in Kosovo and against Yugoslavia. They call the Europeans who say so American lackeys and seem to mean it.

80. Associate research professor who deals with China's security relations with North Korea at a prestigious think tank closely linked to the PRC government, conversation by author, March 20, 2000.

81. Admittedly, it is difficult to conceive of a reasonable scenario wherein South Korea would act alone (without American forces) and attack North Korea, so this statement, it can be argued, had reduced practical application. Not to be overlooked, however, is that Beijing, rather gratuitously, added this stipulation to the statement that PLA support would not be forthcoming if the North initiated an attack. In other words, Beijing went out of its way to make another dramatic public pronouncement denying PLA support to Pyongyang and thereby making it all the more clear to all that the PLA does not stand behind the KPA.

82. A Chinese diplomat in Washington used this expression, or something very similar, during a July 1997 private conversation with the author on China's attitude toward North Korea.

83. These Chinese expressions of concern about Washington's sensibilities on the matter were a bit unexpected!

84. Chinese security specialist working in Washington, interview by author, April 21, 2000.

85. March 20, 2000, interview by the author.

86. The PAP, after their dismal performance around Tiananmen in 1989 (as viewed from the perspective of China's leaders), were made a part of the PLA; the PAP units are responsible for diverse internal security matters throughout the country.

87. PLA general officer who had recently been involved in matters concerning Korean contingencies in a senior headquarters in Beijing, interview by author, August 1997.

88. It is possible that the government and the Communist Party press have protected the PLA from criticism of this sort, but such protection has certainly no longer in recent years been extended to many, including even senior PLA officers, accused (and generally found guilty) of somewhat similar misdeeds or malfeasance (graft, bribes,

scandal, misuse of funds, use of below-standard construction materials, etc.) that have harmed Chinese citizens.

89. March 24, 2000, dinner conversation.

90. April 21, 2000, interview.