



North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges

February 2, 2016

By Phillip C. Saunders, James J. Przystup, and David F. Helvey

Executive Summary: National Defense University (NDU), the National Intelligence Council (NIC), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) held a symposium in November 2015 that brought leading experts together to explore four alternative futures for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, also known as North Korea). The futures were: 1) A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia; 2) Korea Reunified; 3) A Reforming DPRK; and 4) The DPRK Must Be Stopped! This report summarizes key findings from this non-attribution symposium, which focused on the interests and potential actions of external powers rather than DPRK internal dynamics.

Key Findings:

- All the external powers are risk-averse, constrained by domestic politics, and reluctant to use force even when confronted with egregious North Korean behavior.
- North Korea has become skilled at playing external powers against each other and at using provocations to exploit this risk-aversion.
- China’s role is critical: it has the ability to topple the DPRK by cutting off economic assistance, but no interest in doing so since regime collapse would remove a buffer, create refugee flows into China, and reduce Beijing’s ability to shape Korea’s future. China ultimately prioritizes stability over nonproliferation.
- The “status quo” is not static—it involves a trajectory with increasing North Korean nuclear weapons capability and longer-range delivery systems.
- There is a sense of dissatisfaction with current U.S. policy, which is permitting North Korea to enhance its nuclear weapons capabilities and extend the range of its delivery systems. However, alternatives have significant risks, high domestic political costs, and/or limited prospects for success.
- North Korea is pursuing both expanded nuclear weapons capabilities and economic reforms under its *byungjin* policy. The logic of the Six Party Talks is to make Pyongyang choose one or the other, but external powers are unwilling to confront the DPRK and force a choice.
- Korean unification would have dramatic effects on the Asia-Pacific strategic landscape. How Korean unification happens will have a big impact on end-states and on the ability of outside powers to cooperate afterwards.
- U.S.-China competition, coupled with different preferences for end-states on the peninsula, makes discussion of contingencies difficult even though advance understanding and effective communications would be critical in a crisis.
- Despite concerns about a perceived decline in U.S. relative power and possible erosion of the credibility of extended deterrence, limited independent options and China’s unwillingness to offer security guarantees will keep South Korea and Japan allied with the United States.
- Although some ongoing internal changes are undermining the DPRK regime’s stability, it has proven to be remarkably resilient and we should not assume it will go away on its own.

Detailed Discussions:

National Defense University (NDU), the National Intelligence Council (NIC), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) held a two day symposium “North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges” on November 3-4, 2015. [See attached agenda.] The meeting brought together leading experts from the United States, South Korea, and Japan to explore four alternative futures for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The four futures examined were: 1) A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia; 2) Korea Reunified; 3) A Reforming DPRK; and 4) The DPRK Must Be Stopped! In the absence of Chinese participants, U.S. China specialists offered their assessments of Chinese viewpoints.¹

This event report summarizes the discussions from this non-attribution symposium. The first section discusses general findings and those that apply to individual countries across the range of future scenarios; the second section describes the scenario-specific discussions. The symposium took place prior to North Korea’s fourth nuclear test on January 6, 2016, but most participants anticipated continued DPRK efforts to enhance its nuclear weapons and missile capabilities, so the test does not significantly alter the conclusions.

General Findings

All experts acknowledged that there are no easy policy choices in dealing with North Korea.

A retired senior U.S. diplomat offered some reflections on North Korea through the prism of his fifty years of experience dealing with Asia.

¹ A good source for Chinese perspectives is Carla P. Freeman, ed., *China and North Korea: Strategic and Policy Perspectives from a Changing China* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

He noted that many people have predicted major changes on the Korean peninsula, but the Kim family dynasty and the DPRK have survived. The regime’s sources of longevity include:

- the Kim family governance model, which has been tactically clever but strategically disastrous for Korean society and the Korean people
- a political culture that venerates leaders and emphasizes the superiority of the Korean race and is hostile and suspicious of external influence
- the “Democratic People’s Republic of Fantasy and Fear,” which brainwashes the public to believe in a fantasy world that the Kim family has created
- using external threats to reinforce regime control and make people cautious and unwilling to challenge the regime.

This dynamic has been remarkably effective, and there is no reason to think it cannot be sustained indefinitely.

He highlighted the “exquisite job” North Korea has done in managing the threat it poses to the outside world to deter external threats and extract benefits, but noted that the regime is sensitive to embarrassing things like human rights enquiries, movies, and South Korean propaganda. The retired diplomat warned against conflating the current Kim family regime and the people of North Korea—Kim Jong Un has not been welcomed as a successor and internal political dynamics in North Korea are the most likely source of fundamental change. At the end of the day, he is skeptical that North Korea can open up without undermining the regime’s legitimacy and sustainability.

United States:

Several experts noted that U.S. allies have increasing concerns about a perceived decline in U.S. power and the credibility of extended

deterrence. However, alliance with the United States remains the default security policy option, partly because neither Japan nor South Korea is willing or able to assume responsibility for dealing with North Korea on their own.

Korea specialists lamented that North Korea is not a U.S. policy priority. Frustration over the failure of past engagement efforts and high domestic political costs of compromise leave little desire in Washington to engage in serious negotiations with Pyongyang.

A recent senior administration official stated that understanding North Korea's worldview, strategic objectives, tactics, and policy process is a precondition for good policy. It is much easier to understand North Korea's worldview and strategic objectives than to anticipate its short-term tactics, which depend on the element of surprise. He argued that Pyongyang is committed to strengthening its nuclear weapons capability, which it views as a key source of regime legitimacy and means of survival.

The former official argued that "strategic patience" is not a good label because U.S. policy has three active lines of effort: diplomacy (including willingness to talk with North Korea and try to bring Pyongyang to the negotiating table), pressure (including sanctions designed to limit DPRK nuclear and missile programs), and deterrence (against both North Korean provocations and use of WMD). While imperfect, these efforts are slowing the progress of DPRK WMD programs, obstructing major technology transfers, and imposing some costs by constraining North Korea's economic opportunities. Given domestic and international constraints, he argued that this approach offered the best chance of success.

An independent analyst argued that U.S. policy was based on a number of incorrect assumptions, including the hope that China will take active measures to achieve denuclearization and that it is possible to force North Korea to choose between

economic viability and nuclear weapons. In reality, outside actors have conflicting interests and are too risk-averse to apply sufficient coordinated pressure on North Korea to achieve denuclearization.

The analyst labeled strategic patience a "failure" and argued that current U.S. policy is not preventing North Korea from enhancing its nuclear weapons capability and improving its delivery systems. The analyst noted that sanctions have a "miserable" track record of effectiveness. Given this fact, the analyst argued that the United States needs a clearer understanding of its risk tolerance, where its red lines lie, and a better sense of the point at which the DPRK will have a sufficiently strong nuclear and missile force to deter U.S. action. Given the limited prospects for rollback, the United States needs to work bilaterally and trilaterally with Japan and South Korea to find ways to enhance deterrence.

China:

Chinese officials portray the North Korean nuclear issue as primarily a U.S.-DPRK problem and regularly call on the United States to take the lead in resolving it through dialogue. China sees its role as a facilitator and remains unwilling to step up and take on responsibility for solving the issue or guaranteeing the security of other parties. Nevertheless, if circumstances change significantly, China could take on a more active or opportunistic role, especially in a unification scenario.

Experts agreed that China is risk-averse, suspicious of the United States, and ultimately prioritizes stability over nonproliferation (even though its stated policy makes nonproliferation a higher priority).

Although South Korea is a much more valuable partner for China than the North, Beijing continues to try to maintain a balance in its policies toward Pyongyang and Seoul.

A policy debate is underway between Chinese traditionalists who view North Korea as a strategic

asset and favor policies that encourage Pyongyang to adopt market reforms and revisionists who emphasize the strategic costs and risks that North Korea's provocative behavior is inflicting upon China and are more willing to pressure Pyongyang. Although the revisionists garner more media attention, the traditionalists have had the upper hand in shaping policy.

The potential costs, risks, and uncertainties of pressuring Pyongyang or destabilizing the regime have kept a risk-averse China from using its full economic leverage against the DPRK.

Experts agreed that China would be much more comfortable with a gradual, negotiated unification process that allows Beijing to shape acceptable outcomes than a DPRK collapse with unpredictable results.

Most experts expect continuity in Chinese policy toward North Korea, but several noted that Xi Jinping appears to listen to a limited set of trusted advisors, and to have a negative attitude toward Kim Jong-un and the North Korean regime. Xi's attitude toward North Korea could be a wild card in Chinese policy. China will probably be under new leadership by 2025, which could produce a shift in policy priorities.

A veteran China watcher described China's perspective as "first do no harm to Chinese interests." These include trade (with North Korea, South Korea, and a future unified Korea), mining concessions and port access in the DPRK, and wanting a friendly Korea with a clearly established border. China seeks to avoid refugee flows into Northeast China (which is not self-sufficient in food) and the potential use of WMD (especially since prevailing winds means that a radioactive plume in North Korea would blow into China about half the time).

Japan:

Japanese experts observed that Japan has a big stake in what happens in Korea, but only a marginal ability to influence the course of events on the peninsula due to Korean sensitivities about Japan's colonial role, its limited ability to act militarily, and the way the abductee issue constrains Japan's policy flexibility toward North Korea. Specialists suggested that although the Japanese cabinet's reinterpretation of the constitution provides more flexibility in using the military, in practice Japan will be constrained in using force by domestic politics. They also noted that Japanese strategic attention has shifted away from North Korea toward China over the last several years.

Japan tends to expect the United States to take the policy initiative and worries that Washington does not adequately consult with Tokyo or address Japanese concerns in its policies. However, Japan is not in a position to act independently in response to developments on the peninsula: its other options (independent defense capabilities and strategy; developing an alternative balancing mechanism; accommodating China) are all unattractive.

Some Japanese policymakers worry that a North Korean ability to strike the United States with nuclear weapons might lead to decoupling of U.S. and Japanese interests. This creates a strong Japanese appetite for strategic reassurance that has been difficult for U.S. policymakers to satisfy.

The one area where Japan has been able to take initiatives is in direct bilateral negotiations with North Korea, but these efforts have been stymied by the inability to resolve or work around the abductee issue. Experts believe that some Japanese abductees may still be alive inside North Korea, but their physical and mental state may be such that producing them would inflame tensions rather than resolve the issue.

South Korea:

Experts described South Korea as stuck in an intractable conflict with the North and divided about how it should respond to the situation.

Seoul wants to take the lead in efforts to engage the North and to be in control if unification becomes possible. However, U.S. Korea specialists differed as to whether South Korea is capable of playing a leadership role. One expert argued that the United States should support South Korean leadership in dealing with the North, while another argued that Seoul would be divided and paralyzed in a crisis and that the United States is the only actor that can effectively lead a unification process.

South Korean political parties all feel the need to articulate a policy approach toward North Korea in order to appeal to voters. Conservatives generally want a tougher approach to negotiations, but North Korea has been unwilling to engage on their terms. Progressives generally want a more activist and conciliatory approach toward the North, but Pyongyang has proven unwilling to deliver on its promises.

In practice, South Korean governments must decide how invested they are in pursuing their approach to the North and whether they are willing to compromise to reach agreements. Seoul's policies toward the North sometimes are more focused on their appeal to domestic audiences rather than their chances of success.

Scenario Specific Findings

The symposium was structured around discussion of four alternative futures for North Korea: 1) A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia; 2) Korea Reunified; 3) A Reforming DPRK; 4) The DPRK Must Be Stopped! [See attached Appendix for detail of the alternative futures and the questions posed to panelists.] The alternative futures were crafted to focus on different sources of change and to highlight potential policy dilemmas. The value of

this type of futures analysis is not in picking which alternative future is most likely or most desirable, but in thinking about the potential dynamics of each future and how to recognize if trends might be headed in that direction.

The discussion of alternative futures focused primarily on the interests of external powers and on the interactions between DPRK behavior and Chinese, Japanese, South Korean and U.S. responses. (There was some discussion of Russia, but this was not a major focus.) Internal political developments in North Korea (not the focus of the symposium) are another potential source of change; some analysts suggested that they are the most likely source of fundamental change on the peninsula.

A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia

In this future, the DPRK continues its provocative behavior and pursuit of nuclear and missile capabilities, but at a level calibrated to stay below the threshold of a risk-averse South Korea and other major powers. Inter-Korean relations are marked with tension and periodic hostility, as Pyongyang tries to insulate its population from hostile political forces. China, and perhaps Russia, continue to keep the regime on life support because the costs of regime collapse and the unpredictable outcomes of unification are judged to be unacceptable. South Korea concludes that Beijing is playing a double game by supporting unification in principle and obstructing it in practice. Given that the status quo continues in the North and on the peninsula, the main dynamics of change are in shifts in relative power and in the relations between North Korea and the other major powers.

The “status quo” is not static—it involves a trajectory with increasing North Korean nuclear weapons capability and longer-range delivery systems. Experts agreed that we are on a path

toward a North Korea with deliverable nuclear weapons..

This scenario meets most of China's negative policy objectives (no war, no collapse, limited DPRK nuclear capabilities) and would not force China to make fundamental policy changes.

This future's "status quo" assumption of continued DPRK provocations and expanding nuclear and missile capabilities nevertheless has significant downsides for China in the form of damage to China's prestige, increasing tensions with Seoul and Tokyo, growing South Korean and Japanese ballistic missile defense capabilities, and greater cohesion in U.S. alliances in the face of DPRK threats.

More competitive U.S.-China relations would increase the value Beijing places on North Korea as a potential strategic asset and protective buffer. However, China's efforts to maintain balanced relations with both North and South Korea would be a source of tension with Seoul and limit Beijing's ability to draw South Korea away from the United States.

Japan would be frustrated at its limited influence, but the alternative policy options are all unattractive.

Increasing North Korean nuclear and missile capabilities that pose an existential threat to the United States or call U.S. extended deterrence commitments into question would be the most likely path out of this "status quo" future. However, some experts asked if North Korean capabilities might reach a point where the United States and other actors are deterred from taking action and suggested that this state of affairs could persist indefinitely absent changes inside North Korea.

Korea Reunified

In this future, South Korea has led a successful unification process; Seoul and the region are now

dealing with the aftermath. Although the proximate trigger and process of unification will certainly shape outcomes, the discussion will focus on the internal needs of a unified Korea (e.g., economic reconstruction of the North; integration of the now-unified population; destruction of WMD stockpiles; and shift to a post-unification military posture), the impact of unification on Chinese, Japanese, and U.S. strategic interests, and on how outside powers are reconfiguring their relationships with a unified Korea.

Panelists agreed that Korean unification would have dramatic effects on the Asia-Pacific strategic landscape, while how unification happens would have a big impact on what the peninsula and the region looked like afterward. China would be supportive of a peaceful and gradual unification process that it can shape, but very sensitive to U.S. intervention in the event of the North's collapse.²

China would see significant economic opportunities for its Northeastern provinces in a unified Korea and press Seoul to honor existing contracts, support transportation infrastructure development, and grant commercial access to ports in the former North Korean territory.

One expert argued that China would likely use unification as an opportunity to edge the United States out of Asia, arguing that U.S. troops and the U.S.-ROK alliance were no longer necessary. Beijing's desired end-state would be a WMD-free Korea friendly to China that did not host any permanently based U.S. forces. The expert suggested that if Seoul insists on maintaining a reconfigured U.S.-ROK alliance after unification, Beijing might find this acceptable if U.S. forces are withdrawn or significantly reduced and if it receives assurances that the alliance will not engage in activities detrimental to Chinese interests.

² See Bonnie S. Glaser, and Yun Sun, "Chinese Attitudes toward Korean Unification," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2015): 71-98.

A unified Korea would be much more inward looking as the government focused on economic reconstruction and integrating 24 million new citizens and several new provinces. The political character of the government in Seoul would have a large influence on how quickly South Korea moves to secure or rescue the North, its attitude toward former regime elements or holdouts, and the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance and ties with China after unification.

South Korea will look for external assistance to help pay the enormous costs of reconstructing the North and building economic and transportation infrastructure. China is best positioned to provide such assistance; historical animosities may limit the Japanese role and Washington is not likely to provide as much economic assistance as Korean leaders expect.

Japan would be concerned about the negative impact of an inwardly focused Korea on the Japanese economy and the possibility that a unified Korea might renew calls for war reparations. Japanese companies could make important contributions to reconstruction of the North, but this would require a positive attitude from the government of a unified Korea.

A Japanese expert noted that unification would challenge the current political justification for the U.S.-Japan alliance (promoting regional stability) and would require efforts to redefine the alliance's political foundations. If reunification led to the end of the U.S.-ROK alliance or the U.S. military presence on the peninsula, Japan would find itself in the uncomfortable position of being in the front line of U.S. forces in Asia.

Unification would likely create domestic pressures in the United States to reduce or end the U.S. military presence on the peninsula and perhaps the alliance itself.

A Reforming DPRK

In this future, the DPRK embarks upon economic reforms following the China model, supported by advice and assistance from Beijing and other international actors. The reforms have some success in producing growth and raising living standards, but the regime retains tight political controls and clamps down on any signs of dissent. Pyongyang retains its nuclear and missile capabilities as a hedge against attack by the United States or South Korea, but moderates its provocative external behavior. Although tensions ease on the peninsula, Pyongyang remains unwilling to accept unification on South Korean terms. The emergence of a more successful North Korean state outside the nonproliferation regime forces outside powers to reconsider their policies and priorities.

U.S. policy aims to force North Korea to choose between continuing its nuclear weapons program and greater economic engagement with the outside world. The North's *byungjin* policy seeks to maintain its nuclear weapons and simultaneously reform the economy.

A number of experts expressed concerns that with restrained external behavior, many countries—including China—might be willing to tolerate a de facto DPRK nuclear capability and engage it economically.

Experts expressed some doubts about North Korea's ability to open up the economy enough to produce significant growth without destabilizing the regime. However, others argued that China's current efforts at censorship and control of information may point the way to new models of economic openness that offer more control of unwanted political side effects.

In some ways this future poses the toughest problems for U.S. and Japanese policy, since it exacerbates tensions between the competing priorities of denuclearization and stability.

Restrained North Korean external behavior would make it difficult to maintain sanctions and to portray the DPRK as a threat to regional stability.

Several experts suggested that we may be headed toward this future, given North Korea's continued nuclear weapons development and simultaneous pursuit of economic reforms.

The DPRK Must Be Stopped!

In this future, DPRK actions are driven by unstable domestic political dynamics and the need for an external enemy to unify the population. Political repression and economic stagnation continue, with the regime allowing a steady flow of refugees across the Chinese border and in small boats and rafts to South Korea and Japan as a release valve for discontented citizens. DPRK military provocations continue, with the regime also engaging in an expanded range of illegal activity to keep itself afloat, including counterfeiting the currencies of neighboring states, cyber-crime, and efforts to sell fissile material, nuclear weapons designs, and missile and CBW technology to state and non-state buyers. The discussion focuses on what types of DPRK actions might motivate outside powers to intervene, where the thresholds for intervention might lie, and what form intervention might take (including possible efforts to assure other countries of limited objectives and/or to intervene jointly).

The key finding is that all the actors are risk-averse and would be reluctant to use force even when confronted with egregious North Korean behavior that is causing serious harm to their national interests. No one has been able to set clear red lines and make them credible.

Experts noted that the DPRK is skillful at using provocations without stepping over the line and generally very careful to avoid escalation. This future also raises the possibility of provocative actions with uncertain state attribution, which

would further complicate efforts to build consensus and respond effectively.

Several experts suggested that the United States would respond to military attacks on its allies, but that harmful DPRK actions short of the overt use of force might not produce military responses or intervention. Some thought that even nuclear proliferation to third countries might not be sufficient to motivate U.S. military strikes or intervention into the North.

A China expert suggested that China would support taking some action in response to flagrant North Korean provocations, but "would do anything it could to discourage direct intervention." China would be very hesitant to use its own military forces under any circumstances. Even if North Korea launched a terrorist attack, China would likely characterize it as a rogue action that did not justify a military response.

That said, the PLA has contingency plans for responding to a flood of North Korean refugees into China and might be tasked to evacuate PRC citizens from North Korea in the event of a collapse or breakdown of order. The PLA has also been thinking about what would be required to secure North Korean WMD in the event of a collapse, especially since many DPRK WMD sites are located in northern areas near the border with China.

A Korea specialist suggested that South Korea would be unlikely to use military force unless DPRK actions produced a significant number of civilian casualties—small scale attacks on soldiers might not be enough.

The discussion suggested that Japan and South Korea would look to the United States to lead responses to major DPRK provocations, but that if Washington appears to be preparing to use force that Seoul and Tokyo would become focused on how to forestall U.S. action.

Conclusion

The symposium highlighted a sense of dissatisfaction with current U.S. policy, which is permitting North Korea to enhance its nuclear weapons capabilities and extend the range of its delivery systems. At the same time, viable alternative policy options have significant risks, high domestic political costs, and/or limited prospects for success.

Some analysts suggested these futures are not mutually exclusive. It is also possible to imagine a future that evolves from the current status quo, to a more restrained North Korea that continues to develop nuclear weapons, and potentially to either regime collapse or increasingly provocative DPRK external behavior.

Experts agreed that Chinese economic support is critical for the DPRK's survival. Despite evident tensions in the China-DPRK relationship, Beijing's risk-aversion makes China likely to continue to support the regime and oppose any external efforts at military intervention or regime change.

U.S.-China regional competition, coupled with different preferences for what Korean unification should look like, makes bilateral discussion of contingency plans and prospects for joint action problematic. However, advance understandings and effective communication channels would be critical in the event of a crisis.

The discussion throughout highlighted the importance of consultations between the United States and its allies, South Korea and Japan. Despite periodic tensions in the alliances and concerns about the implications of declining U.S. power, U.S. allies are unlikely to take independent action without Washington.

Although analysts agreed that purges, executions and ongoing internal changes are signs of increasing potential for instability in the North, most expect the regime to survive through 2025 and that the

North Korean regime and its nuclear weapons program will not go away on its own.

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Symposium -- North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges.

3-4 November 2015

National Defense University's Marshall Hall at Fort McNair, Washington, DC.

Introduction and Agenda

On behalf of the National Defense University (NDU), National Intelligence Council (NIC) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), we are pleased to welcome you to a *Symposium -- North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges*.

This two-day symposium, hosted by NDU's Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) in conjunction with the National Intelligence Council, the Defense Intelligence Officers for East Asia and the Academy for Defense Intelligence's Regional Expertise and Culture program, will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, 3 - 4 November 2015 at the National Defense University's Marshall Hall at Fort McNair, Washington, DC.

The symposium will explore four possible futures for the Korean peninsula in 2025, and the associated policy challenges. The goal will be to bring U.S. Asia specialists and experts from the region together to explore what each future might look like, to consider the strategic implications of that future, and to identify leading indicators of each future. The symposium will provide opportunities for collaboration among academia, foreign partners, and other invited guests.

Symposium presentations and panel discussions will focus on the following futures:

- **A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia** -- In this future, the DPRK continues its provocative behavior and pursuit of nuclear and missile capabilities, but at a level calibrated to stay below the threshold of a risk-averse South Korea and other major powers.
- **Korea Reunified** -- In this future, South Korea has led a successful unification process; Seoul and the region are now dealing with the aftermath.
- **A Reforming DPRK** -- In this future, the DPRK embarks upon economic reforms following the China model, supported by advice and assistance from Beijing and other international actors.
- **The DPRK Must Be Stopped!** -- In this future, DPRK actions are driven by unstable domestic political dynamics and the need for an external enemy to unify the population.

Please note that this symposium is being held under "Chatham House" non-attribution rules and is limited to invited participants only.

Day One – 3 November 2015

North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges

0730 - 0830	REGISTRATION/COFFEE/TEA/PASTRIES	
0830 - 0845	Welcome & Introduction Administration	Lay out Symposium Agenda & Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phillip Saunders, <i>NDU-INSS</i> • Jason Bauer, <i>Deputy DIO East Asia</i>
0845 – 0900	NDU Leadership Welcome	Speaker: Amb. Wanda Nesbitt, <i>NDU</i> Introduced by: James Przystup, <i>NDU-INSS</i>
0900 – 0930	DIA Leadership Welcome	Speaker: Lieutenant General Vincent Stewart, <i>USMC</i> Introduced by: Frank Miller, <i>DIO East Asia</i>
0930 – 1030 (with Q&A)	Keynote Address	Speaker: Richard H. Solomon, <i>RAND Corporation</i> Introduced by: Phillip Saunders, <i>NDU-INSS</i>
1030 - 1045	Morning Break	COFFEE/TEA/PASTRIES
1045 – 1215	Panel 1: A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia -- In this future, the DPRK continues its provocative behavior and pursuit of nuclear and missile capabilities, but at a level calibrated to stay below the threshold of a risk-averse South Korea and other major powers.	Moderator: Victor Cha, <i>Georgetown University</i>
		~ CH Perspective: Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, <i>RAND</i>
		~ JPN Perspective: Yoichi Kato, <i>Asahi Shimbun</i>
		~ ROK Perspective: John Merrill, <i>SAIS</i>
1215-1330	LUNCH	
1330-1500	Panel 2: Korea Reunified -- In this future, South Korea has led a successful unification process; Seoul and the region are now dealing with the aftermath.	Moderator: Jonathan Pollack, <i>Brookings Institution</i>
		~ CH Perspective: Bonnie Glaser, <i>CSIS</i>
		~ JPN Perspective: Yoichi Kato, <i>Asahi Shimbun</i>
		~ ROK Perspective: John Merrill, <i>SAIS</i>
1500-1530	Admin – Next Day Agenda	Jason Bauer, <i>Deputy DIO East Asia</i>
1530-TBD	RECEPTION	

Day Two – 4 November 2015
North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges

0730 - 0830	REGISTRATION/COFFEE/TEA/PASTRIES	
0830-0845	Introduction to Day Two	Jason Bauer, <i>Deputy DIO East Asia</i>
0845-0900	NIC Leadership Welcome	Speaker: Markus Garlauskas, <i>National Intelligence Officer for North Korea</i>
0900 – 1000 (with Q&A)	Keynote Address	Speaker: Sydney Seiler, <i>Senior Advisor to the Director of National Intelligence</i> Introduced by: James Przystup, <i>NDU-INSS</i>
1000 – 1130	Panel 3: A Reforming DPRK -- In this future, the DPRK embarks upon economic reforms following the China model, supported by advice and assistance from Beijing and other international actors	Moderator: Mark Tokola, <i>Korea Economic Institute of America</i>
		~ CH Perspective: Phillip Saunders, <i>NDU-INSS</i>
		~ JPN Perspective: Yuki Tatsumi, <i>Stimson Center</i>
		~ ROK Perspective: Jae Ku, <i>SAIS U.S.-Korea Institute</i>
1130-1230	LUNCH	
1230-1400	Panel 4: The DPRK must be Stopped! -- In this future, DPRK actions are driven by unstable domestic political dynamics and the need for an external enemy to unify the population.	Moderator: Kurt Taylor, <i>Former Secretary of the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission</i>
		~ CH Perspective: Carla Freeman, <i>SAIS</i>
		~ JPN Perspective: Yuki Tatsumi, <i>Stimson Center</i>
		~ ROK Perspective: Jae Ku, <i>SAIS</i>
1400-1500	Panel 5: Expert Commentaries	Moderator: James J. Przystup, <i>NDU-INSS</i>
		Jonathan Pollack, <i>Brookings Institution</i>
		David Maxwell, <i>Georgetown University</i>
		Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt
		William R. McKinney, <i>U.S. Pacific Command</i>
1500-1515	Afternoon Break	COFFEE/TEA/PASTRIES
1515-1545	DATT Comments and Q&A	Defense Attachés from Korea and Japan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JPN: Col Yasuhiro Ogawa, Air Attaché • ROK: Col Kim Chang Hoon, Air Attaché
1545-1630	Closing Remarks – Symposium Wrap Up	Markus Garlauskas, <i>National Intelligence Officer for North Korea</i>



Symposium -- North Korea 2025: Alternate Futures and Policy Challenges.

3-4 November 2015

National Defense University's Marshall Hall at Fort McNair, Washington, DC.

Overview: The overall political situation on the Korean peninsula has been remarkably static since the end of the Cold War, despite repeated leadership transitions in both the North and South, South Korean economic growth and North Korean stagnation, and changes in relative power of the major countries in Northeast Asia. Nevertheless, the possibility for dramatic change exists, either driven by developments on the peninsula or changes in relations between the United States and other major powers in Northeast Asia.

This 3-4 November 2015 symposium, jointly sponsored by National Defense University (NDU), the National Intelligence Council (NIC), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), will explore four possible futures for the Korean peninsula in 2025. The goal will be to bring U.S. Asia specialists and experts from the region together to explore what each future might look like, to consider the strategic implications of that future, and to identify indicators that developments might be headed in this direction. We will also attempt to identify the most important strategic variables and their likely value if this future unfolds.

Future 1: A Status Quo Peninsula in a Changing Northeast Asia

In this future, the DPRK continues its provocative behavior and pursuit of nuclear and missile capabilities, but at a level calibrated to stay below the threshold of a risk-averse South Korea and other major powers. Inter-Korean relations are marked with tension and periodic hostility, as Pyongyang tries to insulate its population from hostile political forces. China, and perhaps Russia, continue to keep the regime on life support because the costs of regime collapse and the unpredictable outcomes of unification are judged to be unacceptable. South Korea concludes that Beijing is playing a double game by supporting unification in principle and obstructing it in practice. Given that the status quo continues in the North and on the peninsula, the main dynamics of change are in shifts in relative power and in the relations between North Korea and the other major powers.

Domestic Situation: Kim Jong-un remains in power, and is able to extract enough benefits from external actors to keep the regime reasonably stable. The center has more control and confidence than in Future 4 and is able to act more strategically in both its threats and efforts to play outside powers off against each other. Kim Jong-un is able to balance the competing forces of the KWP elites, the KPA, and new private sector actors, with much less violence and more stability than in Future 4. The Byungjin policy, coupled with selective repression of dissidents and a co-opted elite, works reasonably well in sustaining the regime. External actors conclude that the regime is likely to persist indefinitely.

International Situation: The key external dynamic is a shifting pattern of DPRK provocations and efforts at international cooperation, with provocative actions staying below the threshold that would provoke intervention. The DPRK seeks to provoke and exploit tensions among the other five parties in order to extract benefits and prevent a united front that might impose costs or sanctions against it. Under some circumstances, this might include the willingness to make a deal with the United States, China, or Japan that would cap specific WMD capabilities or

delivery systems, though the regime considers itself a nuclear weapons state and refuses to consider the possibility of giving up its weapons.

Key Questions:

For all countries: What are the key economic, political, diplomatic, and security challenges this future poses? Given an unsatisfactory, but relatively stable situation in the DPRK, how are each likely to interact with the others to advance interests and shape the future of a divided Peninsula in favorable directions? What circumstances might prompt a shift in how interests are defined or toward a more active role? If U.S.-China regional competition intensifies, how much would this affect the ability of each to cooperate with the others and present North Korea with collective responses to shape its choices? How important is the perceived success (or lack of success) of the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific in your calculations of the U.S. role? What if China's power increases significantly relative to the United States?

South Korea: How have ROK-China relations evolved in the areas of economics, politics, diplomacy, and strategic cooperation? What is the relative importance of China and the United States to the ROK? Does the ROK continue to see China as playing the key role in the process of unification, as senior ROK officials have recently stated? What are the prospects for cooperation with China in managing DPRK contingencies? What is the nature of the ROK-U.S. Alliance? Have Washington and Seoul engaged in discussions about the future of the Alliance following unification? Do limited DPRK provocations provide sufficient rationale for a breakthrough in Japan-ROK relations and increased trilateral security cooperation?

Japan: Do limited DPRK provocations provide sufficient rationale for a breakthrough in Japan-ROK relations and increased trilateral security cooperation? What are the prospects for greater Japanese independence from the United States in its policy toward the Korean peninsula and towards the region?

China: How have ROK-China relations evolved in the areas of economics, politics, diplomacy, and strategic cooperation? Relative to today, how important is it for China to cooperate with the United States at the bilateral, regional, extra-regional, and global levels? How are developments on the peninsula likely to affect U.S.-China cooperation?

United States: What is the relative importance of China and the United States to the ROK? What is the nature of the ROK-U.S. Alliance? Have Washington and Seoul engaged in discussions about the future of the Alliance following unification? Relative to today, how important is it for the United States to cooperate with China at the bilateral, regional, extra-regional, and global levels? How are developments on the peninsula likely to affect U.S.-China cooperation?

Future 2: Korea Reunified

In this future, South Korea has led a successful unification process; Seoul and the region are now dealing with the aftermath. Although the proximate trigger and process of unification will certainly shape outcomes, the discussion will focus on the internal needs of a unified Korea (e.g., economic reconstruction of the North; integration of the now-unified population; destruction of WMD stockpiles; and shift to a post-unification military posture), the impact of unification on Chinese, Japanese, and U.S. strategic interests, and on how outside powers are reconfiguring their relationships with a unified Korea.

Domestic Situation: The Korean government would be heavily focused on the internal needs of the newly unified peninsula. Economically, this would involve a focus on reconstruction and integration, including disarming and demobilizing and/or integrating the KPA into a unified military structure. Key questions are how long will reconstruction take; what will it cost; and how will it be financed? In social and cultural terms, the government would be focused on the challenge of integrating the divergent populations of North and South Korea, likely with efforts to keep as many former North Koreans in the North as possible. The government will also face longer term challenges of bridging inherited cultural and educational differences. The result will be a government preoccupied with domestic challenges and looking for external assistance to reduce the burden on Korean taxpayers.

International Situation: A distracted Korean government will also have to reach decisions about its security and its relationships with the United States, China, and other regional powers. One question is how a unified Korea will provide for its internal and external security, and what this implies about the size and structure of the Korean military. The need for external economic assistance will provide strong incentives to improve relations with China, Japan, Russia, European Union countries, and the United States, but will also reduce the Korean government's leverage in dealing with external actors. A key decision will be whether the Korean government seeks to adopt a neutral position within the dynamics of U.S.-China regional competition or whether it seeks to reconfigure the alliance with the United States to adapt to the post-unification regional and global security landscape. The Korean government will also come under intense international pressure to eliminate DPRK nuclear weapons, long-range missiles, fissile material production capabilities, and chemical and biological weapons.

Key Questions:

South Korea: How much will the need for international economic assistance in reconstructing the North and integrating its people constrain a unified Korea's external choices? What regional and global roles would a unified Korea seek to play? Is neutrality or involvement in a Northeast Asia security structure an attractive (or necessary) option? Will Korea seek to maintain its alliance with the United States, and if so, how would the alliance be reoriented and reconfigured? Will the government remain committed to denuclearization, and if so, how should this be accomplished?

Japan: What are the main economic, political, diplomatic, and security challenges this future poses for Japan? How will Japan define its interests toward a unified Korea? Does Korea's need for economic assistance in reconstructing the North provide an opportunity to move beyond the history issue? How will Japan respond to Chinese, Russian, and U.S. efforts to shape the future of the peninsula? What areas of competition and cooperation are likely?

China: What are the main economic, political, diplomatic, and security challenges this future poses for China? How will China define its interests toward a unified Korea? Would some form of a reconfigured U.S. alliance with Korea be acceptable to Beijing and how would China seek to influence U.S.-Korea discussions about security relations? How much would the degree of perceived U.S.-China regional security competition shape Chinese choices?

United States: What are the main economic, political, diplomatic, and security challenges this future poses for the United States? How will the United States define its interests toward a unified Korea? Is continued alliance desirable, and if so, on what terms should it be defined and how should it be configured? How will the United States respond to Chinese, Russian, and Japanese efforts to shape the future of the peninsula? What areas of competition and cooperation are likely? How much would the degree of perceived U.S.-China regional security competition shape U.S. choices?

Future 3: A Reforming DPRK

In this future, the DPRK embarks upon economic reforms following the China model, supported by advice and assistance from Beijing and other international actors. The reforms have some success in producing growth and raising living standards, but the regime retains tight political controls and clamps down on any signs of dissent. Pyongyang retains its nuclear and missile capabilities as a hedge against attack by the United States or South Korea, but moderates its provocative external behavior. Although tensions ease on the peninsula, Pyongyang remains unwilling to accept unification on South Korean terms. The emergence of a more successful North Korean state outside the nonproliferation regime forces outside powers to reconsider their policies and priorities.

Domestic Situation: Kim Jong-un (or another reformist leader) seeks a limited opening that will support market-oriented economic reforms and raise living standards, while allowing the regime to maintain tight political control. Unlike Chinese reforms, the DPRK would seek continued control over the flow of people and information to prevent threats to the regime. The key political dynamic is to provide enough benefits to the political elite to keep

them on board with the regime, while also seeking to raise the living standards of the people. There may be some shift away from the military first policy as the regime emphasizes economic growth and relies more on nuclear weapons to maintain the DPRK's international security. Military leaders may have opportunities to benefit from new economic opportunities, either through a share in profits or by military involvement in the economy. There is some effort to reduce the size of the Korean People's Army (and its burden on the economy) through a combination of reduced conscription and demobilization of existing troops, with efforts to find jobs for demobilized troops in the civilian economy.

International Situation: With increased domestic legitimacy due to better economic performance, DPRK leaders would have less need to engage in external provocations. The DPRK would seek to diversify economic partners beyond China; Pyongyang would welcome Russian investment and may seek to resolve the abductee issue as part of efforts to normalize relations with Japan. Pyongyang may resume limited economic interactions with the ROK under tightly controlled conditions (e.g. Kaesong-like enclaves). China will remain the DPRK's most important economic partner and economic and political ties with Beijing will improve as DPRK provocative behavior declines and economic reforms begin to produce results. At a certain point, the DPRK would express confidence that it has a credible nuclear deterrent and call for other countries to accept the DPRK as a nuclear weapons state and emphasize Pyongyang's desire to create a stable strategic environment in the region. DPRK leaders would continue to urge the United States to abandon its "hostile policy," citing its less provocative international approach and improvements in its proliferation behavior as evidence that it is sincere in seeking to normalize relations with Washington.

Key Questions:

South Korea: What are the implications of a declining DPRK conventional threat for the missions, roles, and capabilities of the U.S.-ROK Alliance? How would South Korea respond to a mature DPRK nuclear weapons capability? Would a more economically successful, but politically hostile DPRK regime facilitate or obstruct reunification? What position would South Korea take on UN sanctions and economic interactions with the DPRK?

Japan: Is it possible to move past the abduction issue? Can Japan tolerate a North Korea capable of striking Japan with nuclear weapons if the relationship is less hostile? What position would Japan take on UN sanctions and opportunities for economic interactions with the DPRK?

China: Would China reprioritize its objectives of nonproliferation and regional stability in light of more restrained DPRK behavior? What position would China take on UN sanctions and opportunities for economic interactions with the DPRK? Are U.S. and Chinese perspectives on how to deal with North Korea likely to diverge significantly given restrained DPRK behavior? What impact would this have on the mix of U.S.-China cooperation and competition on the peninsula and in the region?

United States: How can the United States balance the U.S. interest in regional stability against its global non-proliferation goals? What position would the United States take on UN sanctions and opportunities for economic interactions with the DPRK? Can the United States maintain a united front with its U.S. allies in light of a more restrained North Korea? What are the implications of a declining DPRK conventional threat for the missions, roles, and capabilities of the U.S.-ROK alliance? What would the impact be on U.S. relations with China?

Future 4: The DPRK Must Be Stopped!

In this future, DPRK actions are driven by unstable domestic political dynamics and the need for an external enemy to unify the population. Political repression and economic stagnation continue, with the regime allowing a steady flow of refugees across the Chinese border and in small boats and rafts to South Korea and Japan as a release valve for discontented citizens. DPRK military provocations continue, with the regime also engaging in an expanded range of illegal activity to keep itself afloat, including counterfeiting the currencies of neighboring states, cyber-crime, and efforts to sell fissile material, nuclear weapons designs, and missile and CBW technology to state and non-state buyers. The discussion focuses on what types of DPRK actions might motivate outside powers to intervene, where the thresholds for intervention might lie, and what form intervention might take (including possible efforts to assure other countries of limited objectives and/or to intervene jointly).

Domestic Situation: The key dynamic in this future involves an increasingly desperate Kim Jong-un playing potential factions and power centers off against each other, requiring different groups with access to international resources to pay financial tribute and demonstrate their political obeisance to him. Kim uses the KWP's Organization and Guidance Bureau to regularly rotate and/or purge government and military officials to prevent them from building independent power bases. Market-oriented actors engage in a variety of licit (trade and investment) and illicit (counterfeiting, drug smuggling, prostitution, cyber-crime) activities, making payoffs at various levels for permission to operate. The need to produce revenue has led military and state actors involved in the nuclear, CBW, and missile programs to proliferate to various state and non-state actors. The extent of regime advance knowledge and/or authorization for these deals is unclear, but the Kim family and other regime actors are clearly benefitting from a cut of the profits. Some of these profits are used to support the military and ameliorate poor living conditions in rural areas, but there remains widespread poverty and periodic flows of refugees leaving the country by foot and boat. The DPRK regards the refugees as a release valve, but holds any remaining family members as hostages for the good behavior of higher-level defectors.

International Situation: The regime's internal propaganda depicts a hostile external environment that requires unity and military readiness to defend the country. This produces a continuing string of provocations and weapons tests aimed against South Korea, Japan, and the United States. There have been several "near-misses" in terms of DPRK sales of radiological material and chemical weapons precursors to terrorist groups, and one successful biological weapons attack that killed sixty Japanese citizens before it was contained. The DPRK has provided ballistic missile technology to a range of countries in the Middle East and there are unconfirmed reports that DPRK actors have offered fissile material to the highest bidder.

Key Questions:

For all countries: What specific DPRK actions or provocations would result in a military response to impose costs on the DPRK and deter further unacceptable behavior? How would escalation risks be managed? What specific actions or provocation could drive each to intervene in the DPRK to protect its national interests? What would be the goal in each case (HA/DR; counter-proliferation; regime stabilization; regime change; unification)? If instability produces regime collapse, how would each country define its national interests? What would be a minimally acceptable bottom line?

South Korea: What role should the U.S.-ROK alliance play? Have Seoul and Washington developed integrated plans to deal with these types of North Korean contingencies? Have they agreed on end states? If so, has this joint vision been shared with China? What is the value of trilateral, U.S.-ROK-Japan coordination in different contingencies? Under what circumstances would the allies mount coordinated responses? How would the ROK respond to Chinese intervention to control refugee flows or secure WMD stockpiles? What if China intervened to support the existing regime or to install a friendly successor regime? Can the DPRK exist without the Kim family?

Japan: What is the value of trilateral, U.S.-ROK-Japan coordination in different contingencies? Under what circumstances would the allies mount coordinated responses? Are there circumstances under which Japan would be compelled to act alone?

China: What steps would China take to stabilize the situation inside the DPRK and deal with cross-border refugee flows before intervention was necessary? To what extent would China seek to coordinate actions with Seoul, Tokyo and Washington? How confident is China that it can build a positive, cooperative relationship with a unified Korea? Would a continued, but reconfigured Korean alliance with the United States be an obstacle?

United States: What role should the U.S.-ROK alliance play? Have Seoul and Washington developed integrated plans to deal with these types of North Korean contingencies? Have they agreed on end states? If so, has this joint vision been shared with China? What is the value of trilateral, U.S.-ROK-Japan coordination in different contingencies? Under what circumstances would the allies mount coordinated responses?