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Commemorating An Unfinished War

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Commemorating An Unfinished War

William B. Brown ⁽¹⁾

We can be forgiven for wanting to put to bed the endless round of 50th anniversaries that have commemorated World War II and its aftermath. If CIA and People's Republic's of China birthday parties were not enough, surely the millennium celebrations have used up all of our fireworks.

But we now come to one last anniversary that we can't forget. We can't forget this one because it isn't over yet. At 4:00 AM, on June 25, 1950, a Sunday just like today, between 75,000 and 90,000 North Korean soldiers and their Soviet built T34 tanks poured over the 38th parallel, crushing the defenses of the young and poorly prepared Republic of Korea.⁽²⁾ The war that Joseph Stalin and his protégé, Kim Il Sung, launched that morning marks what may have been the watershed, the turning point, in the century long contest between democracy and totalitarianism. Twelve years ago, as the Soviet Union finally collapsed under the weight of its communist system, President Reagan proudly proclaimed the end of the Cold War; and he was almost right. But in the tortured "Peoples Democratic Republic" of northern Korea, where our own heroic fight with communism really began, the remnants of the evil empire continue to impose their misery. Kim Chong Il may be smiling after his successful hosting of President Kim Dae Jung last week but millions of children woke up hungry this morning for no other reason than their system, like all communist systems, can't tolerate markets. Foreign aid providers tell us of seeing children all over the country, even in Pyongyang, whose black hair has turned blond for lack of nutrition. Even by Asian standards, 50 years is a long time. Lets step up now and finish the task that our heroes of June 25, 1950 began.

With clear purpose we, together with others in the region, can do this by July 28th, 2003 the 50th anniversary of the truce that paused but did not end that war. Our aim should be no less than the final destruction of Stalinism and its replacement in Pyongyang with a reformed state, much like Jiang's China, a state that can evolve quickly toward democratic reunion with South Korea. A unified, market-oriented Korea would follow, a Korea that easily would be strong enough to defend itself add to the stability and prosperity of East Asia. If desired by the Korean people, the United States might maintain a limited naval or air presence on the peninsula but our standing army could be brought home. In time, we might expect Korea to play a role something like Belgium does in Europe, linking its three big neighbors, China, Russia and Japan in a prosperous common market.

What do we need to do to achieve this end? Lets be clear about one thing. We have been talking with North Korea for fifty years with absolutely no success. Our talks have done nothing but buttress that despicable regime. We can have high hopes that Kim Dae Jung will succeed where we have failed and certainly it is useful for South Korea to continue to try. But for

the American side, the opposite is now needed. A relentless press--economic, political, diplomatic, even military if necessary--is needed to force the regime to reform itself or to let it collapse from within. If we can get China to help in this process--with the promise that our ground forces will be out of the peninsula once democratic reunification is achieved--so much the better. If not, China needs to know that after 50 years, it still remains on the wrong and loosing side of history.

June 25, 1950

The Korean's refer to it simply as "6 2 5" or "yuk-i-oh". Looking back at that Sunday 50 years ago, it is useful to reflect upon how closely that attack followed the communist victory in China and the devastating setbacks for the west in central Europe a few months before that. Only last October we watched the Chinese celebrating the 50th birthday of their "People's Republic". Even as Kim Il Sung was moving south in 1950, Mao was planning his campaign to eliminate several million Chinese landlords, claiming their land for the people but ultimately for the state. Following in Stalin's footsteps, China would soon be facing one of its worst famines, ever. And only a few months earlier, the Soviet Union, already a nuclear power, had moved into central Europe. In this extraordinary series of reversals for decent people everywhere, the entire central landmass of Asia and much of Europe had succumbed to a nuclear-armed "evil empire" as powerful and as cruel as any the world had seen. And as we knew then but have forgotten now, that empire was on the move.

Though not yet born, I have a personal stake in this history, as do many, perhaps most, of America's baby boom generation. In September 1949, my paternal grandparents fled from their home in central China's Jiangsu province, where they had lived and worked as Presbyterian missionaries for 40 years. Their town of Xuzhou had been captured a few months earlier by the Red Army in a battle that cost the lives of 1 million nationalist and communist soldiers. A few hundred miles away, my maternal grandparents, also missionaries, had resettled in their home in the southern Korean city of Mokpo, following the liberation of Korea from Japan a few years earlier. But on June 25, the joy of living in a Korea finally freed of Japanese imperialism was shattered by a radio message from the US Embassy in Seoul ordering all US citizens to evacuate. North Korean troops had broken through the Republic's northern defenses and within hours would be in Seoul. My grandparents fled to Pusan and on to America. Their Korean colleagues were not as lucky. Thousands were murdered as North Korean troops entered their city a few weeks later.

Amidst this pall of gloom from Berlin to Shanghai, Korea became a very special place for America. It may have seemed late but finally, here was a place America could fight back. China had been too big; our allies there too corrupt. And Soviet forces in Eastern Europe had been too strong, the military risks too great. Not that many in America would have believed that we could or even should try to stop the North Koreans. Kim had done his

homework, achieving complete surprise against a poorly organized South Korean force. And millions of battle tested Chinese and Russian troops were within a couple of day's march of Korea. US forces had withdrawn from Korea in 1948. Our closest troops were in Japan, and they were in the midst of a massive post-war demobilization, incredibly poorly prepared for a fight.

We can cite many heroes in this our first real battle with communism. At the top of our list must be the South Korean troops who stood in the way and slowed Kim's armor before it reached the Han River in Seoul. No less than the students who stood in front of later generations of communist T-type tanks in Prague and Tienanmen, these soldiers risked and lost their lives in the defense of freedom. They didn't die in vain. Their resistance gave a glimmer of hope to President Truman. Here were people who were willing to put up a fight and die for freedom.

Truman also was a hero that hectic day. With little deliberation he committed the United States to a risky venture that easily might have failed, with enormous political and military consequences. But it didn't fail and the battle that was joined June 25th marks a clear turning point in the tide against communism.

But the larger-than-life heroes in this battle must have been the lightly armed US army troops, suddenly flown from Japan into a desperate rear guard action. In recent months we have heard much about apparent mistakes by a few of these troops as civilian refugees fleeing from North Korea overwhelmed them. Lets be careful to keep this in perspective. Task Force Smith was able to slow the North Korean advance south of Seoul by just enough to give our and South Korean forces time to prepare a fixed defense for the southeastern cities of Taegu and Pusan, and to launch a counteract.

Both Douglas McArthur and Joseph Stalin proved their quirky kind of brilliance in this war. McArthur's risky landing at Inchon on September 15th, routing the entire North Korean army, worked because he understood that if you have to fight a war, fight it at a time and place of your choosing and with everything you have. We forgot these lessons in Vietnam but remembered them in time for the Gulf War. The North Korean defenses at Inchon were submitted to the heaviest naval bombardment ever seen, before or since, and our offensive was a spectacular success. Within days our 8th Army was in Seoul and within a month it had taken Pyongyang and was on its way to the Chinese border. And South Korean forces swarmed up the east side of North Korea close to the Soviet border. But with McArthur's success, Stalin performed even greater diplomatic magic, duping China's Mao Tse Tung into a catastrophic war with the United States, thus assuring decades of animosity between the Soviet Union's most powerful rivals.

But both of these men ultimately failed in Korea. McArthur underestimated

the Chinese "volunteer" army and didn't prepare for their willingness to die in human waves--even including Mao's own son. Stalin's mistake was more lasting. By drawing American blood in Korea, he put our nation on course to beat back communism wherever it sprung up. After June 25, 1950, and even with our later defeats in Cuba and Vietnam, the ultimate outcome of this hot and cold war against communism never really seemed in doubt. That is perhaps the greatest legacy of the "police action" that we commemorate today.

Mao and Communist China may have been the biggest loser in this war, aside from the Koreans themselves, and Taiwan and Japan the biggest winners. One of General McArthur's first moves was to send jet fighters and ships from US occupied Japan to Taiwan, stopping what probably would have been a final communist assault on the Kuomintang's then poorly defended island. More painful to the Chinese people, by fighting US and UN forces in Korea, its government isolated itself from the developed world for nearly three dark decades. So in a real way we also commemorate today the birth of a divided China, another division that haunts the stability of Asia 50 years later.

June 25, 2000

But enough of history. This war is not yet history for those who have suffered the most and the longest, the people of northern Korea. If 50 years under the Kim and son political system were not enough, these 21 million people are now enslaved by an economic system so cruel that it does not allow its starving coal miners to swap coal for food from its freezing farmers. So coal miners, neglecting their mines, spend all their time pulling the bark off trees to feed their families. And farmers, neglecting their fields, pull off the bark to heat their homes. A forested land is now being denuded and millions suffer from lack of food. This is the tragic end result of Kim Il Sung's famed 'juche' or 'self reliance' system.

But there is a certain logic to this system that we have to understand if we are to defeat it peacefully. Pyongyang's administrators know that if trade between farmers and coal miners is allowed, markets will spring up that ultimately will bring down this worst of all socialist systems. And they are right about this. Markets, once freed, will crush this system and its political and military leaders with it. Kim Chong Il need only remind his ever more isolated elite of the execution of Rumania's Nicholas Ceauescu, a long-time friend and fellow traveler of Kim Il-song.

Bereft of Soviet aid since 1989, hundreds of thousands of North Koreans have suffered premature deaths, and millions of children suffer from acute malnutrition, likely never to achieve full adult competencies. Diseases, such as TB that were thought to have been eliminated, are once again epidemic. Once vibrant heavy industry--built during the colonial era by Japan to take advantage of valuable zinc, lead, iron, and coal resources, and to escape US bombing in World War II--has been shut down, cannibalized

and parts sold as scrap to China. The country's once extensive electric power system is in shambles. In 1949 North Korea was able to throw a switch and turn off almost all of the South's electric supply. Fifty years later, there is talk about the South running some power lines up to the North to try to relieve some of that country's desperate economy.

More critically, a rising tide of refugees is moving north and across the Yalu River to China. They face a double barrier there. North Korean border guards simply shoot them. Chinese border guards often send them back to face long years and likely death in concentration camps. Some, a few, risk the heavily mined and guarded DMZ to the south in their run for freedom. Even some senior officials defect--likely a factor behind Pyongyang's tardiness in opening a long-sought liaison office here in Washington.

The United States to the Rescue of a Stalinist System

Remarkably, with the collapse of North Korea's economy in 1994, the Clinton administration has come to the regime's rescue, providing millions of tons of grain to the state-run distribution system and a half-million tons of fuel oil each year. The free grain and oil ruins the incentives of would-be private producers in North Korea, condemning the economy to socialism. Even more astonishing, a Republican majority in Congress provides the funds for this aid. Except for China--on whom Pyongyang depends for all its crude oil and for a million tons of grain each year--the US Congress is the biggest foreign supporter of the North Korean regime. And in a stunning case of extortion, the United States, Japan, and South Korea are building a \$5 billion nuclear power complex in North Korea in a bid to keep Pyongyang from restarting a nuclear weapons program. Just the interest costs on this project would be enough to keep the North Korean population alive. Pyongyang had promised the Soviets--who provided a small research reactor in the 1970s--and the International Atomic Energy Agency of which they were a member, that it would not make nuclear weapons but is widely believed to have produced enough plutonium to make several bombs.

This extraordinary situation stems from a US and South Korean policy that we must prevent Pyongyang's political collapse for fear of what would happen in the ensuing chaos. In fact, the absence of a North Korean "hard landing" is said to be one of the Clinton administration's greatest foreign policy achievements.⁽³⁾(Imagine had Ronald Reagan or George Bush had a similar policy toward East Germany and the Soviet Union.) But conservatives may be equally to blame. By emphasizing North Korea's once impressive military power, they have given Pyongyang the only card it can and does use--the threat of war against Seoul. Never mind that the North's army has been starved of food and equipment for a decade and, on the face of it, looks like a decrepit version of Iraq's army of 1990.

This may be the crux of the problem; a highly exaggerated view of the North Korean threat. The scenario is always the same. A repeat of 6 2 5.

But the circumstances today are far different. For North Korea to launch a surprise attack, with billions of dollars of US spy satellites watching their every move, they must do it with no preparation. One has to question whether or not their tank engines would even turn over given their antiquated conditions, or whether their sparsely exercised artillery would fire. We, and they, have seen enough of aging MIGs to be sure they would have no chance against the US and South Korean air forces. The North has no defense against cruise missiles and stealth bombers. And Pyongyang would launch its attack against a huge and well dug-in South Korean army that, I hope, is anxious to use the slightest excuse to take the battle back to the Yalu. The Pentagon in the 1970s used to talk about a narrow window in the 1980s in which Pyongyang might have a chance. The Pentagon was right and the window for a surprise attack slammed shut in 1989 and 1990 with the success of U.S. technology in the Gulf War and the collapse of Pyongyang's big Soviet ally.

Of course there are other war scenarios. Most likely a war would start by mistake or by chaos in North Korea. Or, our side might take the initiative when threatened, one time too many, by North Korean blackmail. The South might even decide on its own to liberate its starving brethren if Pyongyang backtracks once again from its recent initiative. The important thing for us to remember is that in any of these cases, the balance shifts even more decisively against Pyongyang. Lacking the element of surprise, a new Korean war would look much more like the Gulf War or the Kosovo war than it would 625. And unlike either of those last two wars, our ally, South Korea has double the population and 20 or more times the GDP of North Korea and itself could destroy the North Korea army. Combined with US naval and air power, and small but very powerful US ground forces stationed near the DMZ; Pyongyang does not stand a chance.

Cynics might argue one other reason for our economic defense of Pyongyang. As the recent theater missile defense debate suggests, our military, intelligence, and foreign policy establishments may need the threat from North Korea to justify large portions of their own budgets.

But What About South Korea?

The dramatic visit of Kim Dae Jung to Pyongyang last week clearly offers a chance for engagement that leads to a reformed North Korea. But so far this is just potential and many such "breakthroughs" have collapsed in years past. Interestingly, 50 years before the Kim-Kim summit--barely a few days before Kim Chong Il's father launched the Korean War--Pyongyang announced a major peace initiative inviting South Korean delegates to Pyongyang to discuss unification. The rouge confused the South Korean political situation making the attack all that more effective. Pyongyang survival instincts are first rate--after all it has survived total defeat in 1950, breaks with China and breaks with the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s, the reform of China in the 1970s, a massive debt default against Europe and Japan in the 1970s, and famine in the 1990s. All this even as it

has continually carried out provocative terrorists actions and threats against an enormously successful South Korea and against its "main" enemy, the United States. And it even has outlived its creator, the Soviet Union, by more than a decade. No one has ever accused Pyongyang as not being smart in its survival.

But this window that Pyongyang has opened is a very useful one and we should encourage South Korea to jump through it and unlock the door. So far it is a one-way window allowing the outside world to get a better look inside North Korea. But it does little as yet to allow North Koreans see anything differently. The government propaganda machine--as effective as any the world has known--even uses such foreign visits as proof of the esteem with which the rest of the world sees the "Democratic Peoples Republic" and the "workers paradise". So Seoul will have to use its best minds to continually press against it, forcing change in North Korea. I think Kim Dae Jung is up to the challenge. After his first meeting with the then opposition leader in 1987, I remember our Ambassador, James Lilley, telling me "this guy is the smartest Korean I have ever met". The invitation for Kim Chong Il to visit Seoul reflects the right kind of offensive minded thinking that is Kim Dae Jung's strongest suit.

Offensive thinking is what we need now in Korea. The Korean War itself was extended at least a year by the South Korean President Sygman Rhee's insistence that we finish what had been started and win back the north from the Chinese army. In retrospect, he was probably right, given the cost to generations of people who have lived their lives in the disaster that is North Korea, and the hundreds of billions of dollars that South Korea and the United States have spent on defending the DMZ. But ever since Hiroshima we have found it easier to get involved in foreign wars than we have in ending them decisively, extending misery in places like Iraq, and probably Yugoslavia, for years to come.

And for most of this fifty years South Korea has been rightly obsessed with their own defense, preventing the nightmare of another attack by a North Korean army that was quickly rebuilt with Soviet, Chinese, and Eastern European aid. A few months ago I listened to a South Korean Embassy official who ended his "sunshine speech" with the mantra "at all costs we must prevent war". But "at all costs" is pretty expensive, especially when dealing with what amounts to a hostage situation. Even by threatening suicide, the Kim Chong-il regime can extort benefits that help it to stay in power.

The South also naturally worries about the costs of rebuilding a North Korean economy and, even more, the trauma of politically integrating North and South. But there are great economic complementarities between North and South that would advance the country's long-term prosperity. And, even if there are short-term costs, I wonder what their heroes of 1950 would think about such selfishness even as children die in North Korea.

Other neighbors of North Korea have similarly conservative views. China, in particular, no friend of the Kim family, worries about a military collapse in North Korea that ends with US and South Korean troops on its Yalu River border, so it also props up the North.

This may be the cruelest fate of the North Korean people. Much like the Chinese and Japanese empires of previous centuries that propped up incompetent kingships in Korea, North Korea's neighbors find it in their interests to protect an otherwise hapless regime. Only now Japan has been replaced by the United States. Japan, which probably understands the situation better than most, is now alone among the developed countries in driving a very hard bargain with North Korea. A few more North Korean missile shots over Japan might convince Tokyo to rethink its pacifist role in the region.

Needed, A Little Vision Here

With this anniversary lets commit ourselves to finishing the job that brave men and women began 50 years ago. I suggest that a useful target date might be the 50th anniversary of the Korean armistice, three years and 1 month from now. By finishing I don't mean signing a peace treaty with Pyongyang, a treaty that would only help to cement an unacceptable status quo. Nor do I mean recognizing a regime that protects itself by letting its children starve. No, lets put together a full press campaign to encourage the North Korean people to destroy this remnant of Stalinism, and to replace it with a reformed system capable of democratic union with the South.

Former Defense Secretary Perry, in his report for the Clinton administration outlining possible policy changes toward North Korea, argues that there is no reason to believe that North Korea will fail as a state so we might as well deal with it.⁽⁴⁾ But by almost any measure I can think of, North Korea already is a failed state. Its people are starving, its power plants and factories are silent. It can't deal with seasonal rains and it can't deal with seasonal winters. It can't prevent a resurgence in tuberculosis. It can't even pay the hotel bills of its diplomats nor rent for a liaison office in Washington. Kim Chong Il is propped up by an internal police loyal mostly to his dead father. But he doesn't govern; he issues edicts that are largely ignored by an administrative system that has broken down. Leverage comes from use of foreign, mostly American, food aid. The system has failed, propped up by American and Chinese aid. Lets remove the props and let it die a quick death. For suffering millions of people, the time cannot come to quickly.

Pulling Out the Props

Here are several ideas. We should have a national contest to come up with more. The key is to exercise them consistently and with a clear goal in mind. Time is important for anyone that is hungry. Pyongyang has a history of moving one step forward, two steps back. With the Kim's summit they

have taken an important step forward. But we should be clear that we have lost our patience with backward steps. We should have used up our patience with Pyongyang a long time ago.

1. End our vulnerability to blackmail

Our own propaganda has given North Korea its primary weapon. We, and our South Korean allies, are frozen by our outdated fear that Pyongyang can inflict serious damage on South Korea. In a worst case scenario, maybe North Korea could deal Seoul something like an earthquake that hits Beijing, Tokyo, or LA every 30 years or so. Bad, but not the end of the world. I for one would much prefer to be living in a Seoul encountering an artillery attack than in Beijing encountering a 7 or 8 level earthquake. And such an attack would be the end of North Korea as we and they know it. I give certain credit to Pyongyang that they are not interested in suicide. They never have; even the first Korean War was carefully prepared with a high probability of their success. Except we intervened.

For those who question North Korea's weakness, I recommend that a comprehensive, third party analysis of what really would happen if Pyongyang tried to attack the South. A private firm or British or Australian intelligence might be well up to such a task. I would avoid an American or South Korean analysis not for lack of information or skill but for a potential lack of objectivity.

A renewed sense of confidence on our side will go a long way in helping us to deal rationally with the Pyongyang regime. They understand our strengths; let us better understand their weakness.

2. Prepare for Offense

Our and South Korea's forces are not arrayed to attack the regime's forces except in retaliation. Lets change the equation and give our side the choice of initiative. Remember, this is not a new war but the last battle in a very old one. In 1948, when we turned over defense responsibilities to the fledgling South Korean army, we held back any offensive capability for fear that they would be the ones to move north.⁽⁵⁾ A big mistake. We repeat that mistake now by adopting a defensive mentality. North Korea understands force and it has great respect and fear of the U.S. military. It denigrates South Korea's military to its own peril. We should encourage the South to develop a visible capability to leap the DMZ and directly take and hold government installations in the city of Pyongyang. Another submarine attack or assassination attempt might be enough provocation. And our allies should have a capability of infiltrating and dividing North Korea east and west if need be. In a country where it can take a week to cross 100 miles, intercepting a few bridges and mountain passes would do fine. Lets remind Pyongyang constantly, as they do to us now, that the war is not over, a treaty has not been signed, the country has not been reunited. Forced into defense, North Korea's security apparatus would have to concentrate on the

DMZ and the Pyongyang area, letting large parts of eastern and northern North Korea to go on their own.

For these reasons let's be careful in negotiating arms reductions. North Korea has thousands of broken down tanks and 1950s era jets that they could offer up and our side, for political reasons, would likely claim great successes. If they offer to cut down their fences around their labor camps maybe we can be more positive. But simple troop reductions might prolong this war even longer.

3. Match Their Threats with Our Actions.

This week they are being friendly but who know what Pyongyang will turn to next. The South's navy did a good job on North Korean patrol boats that interfered with South Korean fishing last year. Without starting a battle, our side can be very aggressive in fending off habitual North Korean provocations. If they again test their 1950s era rocketry, we can test our countermeasures. Let's work with our and Japan's Aegis cruisers to devise ways of shooting at these missiles just as they take flight toward Japan. And if we miss, and missiles have any chance of hitting Japanese territory or ships or airplanes in international waters, fire on the site that shoots the missile. When they say they will turn Seoul into a "sea of fire", we can use technical means to flood them with videos of the Gulf War. Let's aggressively search for their infiltrators and, when found, encourage South Korea to send its own infiltrators into the North.

4. Let South Korea Lead

We need to readjust our diplomacy and our thinking to the reality that there are not two legitimate Korean governments. For 52 years we have recognized the Republic of Korea as the sole legitimate authority in Korea and that is the way it should be. In recent years the Republic has become a strong democracy and one that, with difficulty, can accommodate the addition of the North Korean provinces into its political system. Germany did this in the 1980s. Korea can do it within 20 years or so. But it won't happen if we try to be evenhanded in our treatment of North and South. Pyongyang of course will object. But let it object and force it to deal with Seoul, just as it has for the Kim's summit.

5. Ignore the Kim Chong Il Regime; Be Friends to the Rest of North Korea

In fact I don't think it's possible to be friendly to both the regime and the people. Nothing is more shameless than the way we negotiate for the "privilege" of talks with North Korea's senior officials. Or our begging to have an "unnamed high official" visit Washington. Forget it. Pyongyang's officials thrive on the importance we give to our wanting to talk to them. If Pyongyang wants to talk, let it take the initiative and even then show them the way to Seoul. Like China treats Taiwan, treat Pyongyang as a wayward

province of the Republic. Fifty years of talking have only postponed the inevitable and at enormous cost to all sides, especially to the people of North Korea. Only second or third level U.S. diplomats should be allowed to go to North Korea and our ban on speaking with North Korean diplomats should be reinstated. If they want representation in Washington, maybe that can be accommodated but the quid pro quo should be a US consulate in Pyongyang, subordinate to our Embassy in Seoul. Lets think no more of "normalizing" relations with that regime then we would have Hitler's Germany.

But for the rest of the North Koreans we need to find ways to be friendly; to let them understand that our hatred of their system stems from our true concerns for the well being of their people. Our information agency, USIA, has recently been deconstructed as well it should given its inability to better represent American values around the world. But there are still places in the world where people live in a complete information blackout and North Korea is one. We need to be creative in finding new ways to spread information to such places. New technologies may be one key; working closely with refugees and defectors may be another.

6. Encourage Private Trade and Travel, but Halt Official Aid

What logic is behind our policy of disallowing commercial relations while giving North Korea aid? If someone in North Korea wants to buy something from us, sell it to him; just be careful of extending credit. And if an American wants to buy something from North Korea, or visit there, let it happen. Even encourage such transactions as long as they are not helping the North Korean state reestablish economic control. But tell such visitors they can't expect US aid if they get into trouble; and let our public know about how important it is for them to watch how their aid is used. If it goes to private entities and encourages market activity it is fine; if it goes to a government that uses it to fight markets it is counterproductive.

And lets stop any further official aid. And after five years of "disaster" relief, end the UN disaster program. Pyongyang and others convinced the world's aid givers that this was a natural disaster situation. But either they lied about the situation or our own government has misled itself and our public. North Korea is a man-made disaster if ever there was one. Natural disasters may have added to the famine several years ago but the North Korean Worker's Party's insistence on controlling the country's food supply is clearly the cause of the suffering. Any aid that we give North Korea is simply boosting the Party and the regime's coffers, adding to its coercive power.

And with a trade embargo down, make it clear that MFN for North Korea and membership in the WTO, IMF and World Bank get our vote only when market reforms are well underway.

7. Continue the Nuclear Framework--To the Letter

For better or worse our side committed to this project and we can't back away from it. But lets make the project work to encourage private enterprise in North Korea as much as possible. The South Korean contractors should be encouraged to reward private and local activities. The current strike situation--in which Pyongyang says it is not being paid enough for the labor of North Korean workers--is a good one to try to change the payment deal so that the workers themselves get paid for their work, not officials several hundred miles away. At least here we might be able to create a foothold for free market activity that can spread as Pyongyang's central authority weakens. And if Pyongyang reneges on any of its promises, or we find evidence they never stopped their nuclear weapons program, we stop the project and gear up again to stop their weapons program as we did in 1994. Only this time we don't stop before it's done. (See China below).

8. Buy Them Out

One advantage of a fifty-year war is that we don't have to demonize our opponents. Kim Chong Il is no more responsible for the war, or even for North Korea's Stalinist system, than you or I. But he is the leader of an impossibly cruel system and we need to have him leave the scene or have him remake himself most radically.

This opens a possibility, perhaps a slim one, of buying him out. In a normal hostage situation, giving too much advantage to the hostage holder creates a moral hazard, inviting him to try again. But in this case (for the regime is in effect holding 21 million people hostage to its own security needs) the current leadership is trapped in a situation not of its own making. Kim's statements during the summit and his limited travel itinerary indicate that even now Kim is very worried about his personal safety. Several hundred million dollars and a Chinese or Russian guarantee might be enough to convince an embattled Kim and his family to retire outside the country.

Some might consider a Nobel Peace Prize for Kim Dae Jung and Kim Chong Il an appropriate reward, even a bribe. If it got Kim Chong Il out of North Korea it might be worth it. But peace is not what we should be after here; at least not yet. Peace, and the end of this Korean and Cold War will come only when Stalinism ends in North Korea.

9. Engage China

I have saved the issue of China to the last but it is probably the most important. China's apparent help in making the Kims' summit happen may be the brightest sign that reform is possible in North Korea. Certainly the people of North Korea could use some help from China in getting rid of Stalinism. Up to now, however, Beijing has been more help in keeping it alive than in seeing to its timely death.

Beijing argues that it has no leverage in Pyongyang. This is disingenuous at best. Beijing provides all the country's crude oil and a large share of its food requirements. And who would believe that China's intelligence services don't have a strong presence in a country where they spent a million lives to protect, and which could turn violent at any time. If we are afraid of a Korean conflict, surely China worries much more. Hopefully, Kim Chong Il's visit to Beijing, and China's press coverage of potential Chinese style reforms in North Korea, is a sign of a changed Chinese attitude.

More humane treatment of North Koreans fleeing to China would be a good next step. If China needs or wants financial help in relocating such people, lets give it to them. Just don't let them send the poor people back to that gulag.

And a process that leads to a democratic reunion of Korea can only be seen as a positive sign for China's own divided country problem. If Germany and Korea can do it, why can't China and Taiwan? Once unified, Beijing also might take the redundant "people's" out of its name, restoring the simple "Republic of China" or even just "China" as its official name.

We can use China's help also, especially on nuclear issues, although we don't have to have such help. An atomic bomb in North Korea is a far larger threat to China's security than it is to ours. We should make it clear to China, and mean it, that if North Korea brandishes a nuclear weapon or a nuclear weapons program⁽⁶⁾, there is no way that we can continue to stop South Korea, Taiwan and Japan from going nuclear as well. If China doesn't stop the North Koreans, at least they should not keep us from doing it--with 5 to 50 cruise missiles, South Korean infiltrators, whatever it takes. North Korea does not even need to know where such missiles or bombers came from.

But beyond the nuclear issue, we need to convince Beijing that our vision of Korea is no threat to China. We want a unified Korea strong enough to defend itself from its three big neighbors but which offers no threat to them or excuse for intervention. We would then have no reason for ground troops or any other forces on the peninsula that could threaten China. Moreover, a prosperous, market oriented North Korea would be of great economic advantage to northeast China, especially as it integrates with South Korea and provides new trade routes to Japan and the Pacific.

Coupled with the risks to China of a weakening and vulnerable North Korea, and indeed of the very real possibility of South Korean and American intervention, China should clearly see it in its interests to join with us in pressing Pyongyang to radical and liberalizing reforms.

Our New Goal: A Unified Republic of Korea

With the end of a Stalinist North Korea in sight, our relations with South

Korea are bound to change as well. A suspicion that our army is there for reasons that are not necessarily good for Korea is bound to increase as North Korea looks weaker and China looks more benign. Just as with China, we need to make it clear to Seoul that once North Korea is on a true reform track and a democratic reunion is in the works, our standing army will come home. We can start this process now by ending permanent type construction in South Korea and by operating increasingly on a task force basis. Our base property is worth billions of dollars and can be given to Korean cities in great need of green space. If both countries' longer-term interests include US naval or air bases in Korea, lets negotiate these now, with 100-year leases, but lets prepare to pull our ground forces out as soon as this last battle is won.

And it's also the time for the US to step up to the plate as the principal proponent for a reunified, democratic, and market oriented Korea. Of all the powers in the region, we have the most to gain and least to loose from a unified Korea, as long as such a Korea is strong enough to fend off territorial advances by any of its big neighbors--a process that once again might threaten to bring us into the fray. And only a market and trade oriented Korea will have that kind of strength. We can be a positive example even for South Korea whose authorities fear sharing democratic power with North Koreans and whose business worry about the private business risks integration would bring.

Why is this our business? We can be proud that our army liberated Korea from Japan in 1945 and we saved it from communism in 1950. But with a stroke of a pen at Yalta, we also are responsible for cutting Korea in two. Now, as the final act of the Cold War, lets help put it back together.

1. Mr. Brown is an economist in the US Department of Commerce and in 1998 authored a National Intelligence Estimate on the prospects for North Korea's economy for the National Intelligence Council. He also is a fellow of the Institute for Corean-American Studies and an adjunct professor at George Mason University. The National Intelligence Council cleared this article but it does not reflect views other than those of the author. It was prepared outside the scope of his official duties.
2. See Scalapino and Lee, *Communism in Korea*, U. Of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1972, pp.390-402
3. See Stephen Walt, "Two Cheers for Clinton's Legacy", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2000, page 72.
4. Speech to Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., 2000.
5. Scalapino and Lee, op cit.
6. The logic of nuclear arms dictates that North Korea must brandish such a weapon or it have its usefulness sharply diminished. For Pyongyang could never actually fire a nuclear weapon without inviting its own

assured destruction. Its value is only in Pyongyang's ability to threaten to use it in a situation where the leadership was in major trouble, and for such a threat to be taken seriously, the weapon would have to have been observed to be in the leadership's possession.

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