

North Korean Crisis a Product of Failed Pre-Trump Leadership

by Conrad Black



The incompetence, gullibility and lassitude of three successive administrations have dumped the horrible problem of North Korea into the lap of President Donald Trump. The shilly-shallying and pretend-resolutions that marked the old way of dealing with Pyongyang have come to a dead end.

The crisis exposes the infirmity of the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama administrations in their North Korea policies. But it goes back even earlier. It is now clear that, while his insubordination was unacceptable, General Douglas MacArthur was correct in advocating disposing of North Korea when we could have done so. The resulting loss of life would likely have been less than was caused by continuing to skirmish on the 38th Parallel for the next three years.

We would, at the same time, have chastened the People's Republic of China, which subsequently whetted its appetite with the fiasco of the French in North Vietnam. We might have normalized contact with China, and triangulated the Great Powers relationship, ten years earlier than we did.

MacArthur foresaw what a pestilential nuisance the Kimist lunatic asylum in North Korea would become, and there were many astute foreign policy analysts, including then Sen. Richard Nixon and soon-to-be Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who agreed with him.

We now learn that the North Koreans have reduced the size of a nuclear warhead to the point at which it can be placed on an intercontinental ballistic missile, which the North Koreans are regularly test-firing. The last step that remains before that mad regime is able to threaten the United States itself is to develop the capacity to reintroduce the missile into the earth's atmosphere without burning it up. This is scientifically less challenging than much of the progress the North Koreans have made already.

Finally, it is time for the United States to put up or shut up. The Chinese have been equally pusillanimous, though their policy has been informed by cynicism rather than cowardice or naïveté – as they have amused themselves by feeding the mad North Korean state as it tormented the West and baited South Korea. China was so pleased to have semi-plausible deniability of responsibility for the deranged Kim regime, and to ensure that the Koreas did not unite and become another powerhouse on its borders like Japan, that it allowed Kim's nuclear toymaking to come almost to term.

The United States made a significant but very late forward step with the unanimous United Nations Security Council support of sanctions. It is a beginning, but the step has to quicken rapidly to real deterrence, not endurable and merely inconvenient punishment. (The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, has been a star in that moribund and corrupt forum and has transformed her position into a podium of some importance and utility.)

But more is needed. China must approve a radically escalated American-led quarantine of North Korea, including mining its

harbors and blockading it by sea and air against anything but humanitarian assistance or legitimate civilian air travel – other than on the short and remote border of North Korea and Russia. Intense cyberwar should also be conducted, if it isn't already.

If China does not use its influence to cool down the Kim regime, the United States should ramp up the pressure. It should make it clear through direct diplomatic contact that it will take draconian measures to eliminate the gluttonous Chinese trade surplus with the U.S., relax its opposition to the reunification of Korea, encourage and arm Taiwan's desire to be a permanently independent country, not renew the visas of the more than 300,000 Chinese students at American universities, and arm Japan and South Korea to the teeth.

If China does not cooperate, and Kim does not suspend his nuclear program – encouraged by face-saving and compensating American and allied guaranties that there will be no attempt to reunify the Korean Peninsula or overthrow the Kimist regime – a full conventional military preemptive strike will have to be made on all the nuclear-relevant and other offensive military sites.

This would include launchers, stockpiles, research centers and all the conventional military sites that can threaten South Korea or Japan, including all military airfields and the much-publicized and very dangerous massed artillery within range of the immense city of Seoul, and of the U.S Army units deployed in South Korea.

We must show the will to do all this. But the most extreme measures may still be avoidable. There must be, somewhere in this menu of serious policy actions, the formula to recruit China to assist in pulling North Korea and the far Pacific and potentially the whole world back from the brink, where Chinese irresponsibility and American strategic incompetence have allowed this mountebank dynasty of insane warmongers to take

them.

We can at least be thankful that Barack Obama and John Kerry aren't called upon to deal with this nightmare, which their weakness helped to create.

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