My hope in this lesson is that students will heighten their appreciation of and tolerance for differing points of view by reading and discussing contrasting views of key nations involved in efforts to resolve the conflicts in northeast Asia. To further this end, it is important to encourage students to form no premature opinions as to who is to blame, who is virtuous, etc. It may be well to clarify for students that the essential question on threats will be answered differently for each country, and, in the case of the U.S. containment perspective and NK, for example, may be diametrically opposed. Both the nature and degree of threats will vary.

The readings on North Korea and Japan are excerpted from Gavan McCormack’s article in *Japan Today*, which teachers might benefit from reading in its entirety. McCormack is critical of what he calls nuclear hypocrisy on the part of the major nuclear powers and those countries that benefit from nuclear protection. His article offers a great deal of useful history and factual detail regarding NK, its neighbors, and the U.S. I have also included a timeline of Korean events for the benefit of teachers and, if you choose, students.

The article on South Korea gives too little attention to conservatives in South Korea who prefer a close alliance with the U.S. and have opposed the “Sunshine Policy” attempted by two South Korean presidents in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This policy may also need some explanation. Its name refers to an Aesop’s fable, *The North Wind and the Sun*, in which the sun and wind compete to encourage a man to remove his jacket. The cold wind fails to blow the garment off and the sun succeeds when the man removes the jacket to enjoy the warm weather, the idea being that relations with NK might improve more quickly if SK employed a friendlier and more encouraging approach to it. This policy included limited repatriation, tourism in the North, a business zone for South Korean enterprises in the North, and talks between leaders. It began in 1998 and was pursued by Kim Dae Jung and Roo Moo-hyun from 1998 to 2008. Kim won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts. See the timeline.

The article on China portrays that nation wrestling with a very complex set of considerations that students may have difficulty characterizing. The metaphor of an estranged couple seems partially contradicted by the author’s later observation that “tension and conflict” have been the norm and warm relations an exception. But it offers insight into why China tolerates and even defends NK, and presents itself as on friendlier terms than it actually is.

The Ron Paul piece contains, by my count, seven reasons to avoid an aggressive response to NK; I have provided space for five. The nature of the U.S. presence in SK mentioned in #3 refers to troops, currently over 20,000, intelligence installations and operations, support to SK’s military, and so on.

**Timeline: Korea**

1871: The U.S. Navy enters Korean waters and opened the country to the West

1882: The U.S. and Korea [sign a treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean%E2%80%93American_Treaty_of_Amity_and_Commerce#Treaty_provisions) that some Korean historians claim was a treaty of mutual defense.

1905: The U.S., in the Taft-Katsura Agreement preceding the Portsmouth Treaty brokered by the U.S., enters into a quid pro quo with Japan, in which it assented to Japanese colonization of Korea in return for Japan’s commitment to leave the Philippines to U.S. control [this was according to some historians an informal verbal agreement between then Secretary of War William Howard Taft and Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro—however, the only record of it is a memorandum which can be accessed [here](http://people.usd.edu/~sbucklin/primary/taftkatsura.htm).)

1910: Japanese begin occupation of the Korean peninsula

1945: U.S.-Soviet agreement to divide Korea temporarily at the 38th parallel

1945-49: Establishment of pro-U.S. and pro-Communist regimes in South and North, the first under Syngman Rhee, a conservative and repressive Korean nationalist, the second under Kim Il Sung, a Communist leader who had fought with the Chinese Communists against the Japanese occupation of China, and who nationalized the Northern economy and established a repressive regime there.

1950-53: Korean War. Invasion by North Korea following a year of escalating hostility from both sides. The U.S. enters, under U.N. auspices, on the side of the South immediately, and China sends in troops when U.S./U.N. forces approached the Yalu River in the fall of 1950. Devastation and loss of life severe on both sides. An armistice was signed in July 1953, but no treaty was ever agreed to, and South and North Korea remain technically at war. The U.S. leaves over 50,000 troops stationed in South Korea, and includes South Korea in its nuclear umbrella.

1960: Popular protests against Rhee led to South Korea’s first democratically elected government, which was quickly overthrown by Park Chong-hui. Park’s dictatorship ruled with U.S. backing until 1979.

1987: Democratic elections held in South Korea

1991: Collapse of the USSR signaled start of crisis for North Korea, as aid from the Soviet Union ended. Fearing for its security in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, North Korea commenced an effort to develop nuclear capacity.

1994: Death of Kim Il-sung, who was replaced by his son, Kim Jong-il. A crisis erupted between the U.S. and North Korea over nuclear technology, resolved by the “Agreed Framework” (see readings for details).

1998: Election of Kim Dae Jung as president of South Korea; inaugurates “Sunshine Policy”

2002: President George W. Bush includes North Korea in his “Axis of Evil,” along with Iraq and Iran. Later that year, the “Framework” breaks down amid mutual accusations and conflicting accounts. Roh Moo-hyun elected president of South Korea; continues Sunshine Policy

2003: China hosts “Six-Party Talks” aimed at resolving growing U.S.-North Korea hostilities. Talks include China, the U.S., North Korea, South Korea, Japan, and Russia. U.S. invades Iraq, partly justifying its aggression by Iraq’s alleged but non-existent weapons of mass destruction, creating “blowback” in Northeast Asia.

2004: China and South Korea rejected U.S. claims of North Korea bad faith.

2005: The U.S., increasingly isolated in Six-Party Talks, softens its approach to North Korea; agreement (“vague and incomplete”—McCormack) reached in September. It breaks down almost immediately over the provision of a light water nuclear reactor (the waste of which cannot produce weapons-grade material) to North Korea

2006: Nuclear and missile tests in North Korea

2008: Election of Lee Myung-bak in South Korea; end of Sunshine Policy

2009: Another nuclear test in North Korea

2011: Death of Kim Jong-il, succession of Kim Jong-un

**North Korea’s Perspective**

While it is common in the Western (U.S.-centered) world to think of the “North Korea Problem” in terms of a threatening, nuclear-obsessed, tiny and irrational country with a political system based on “great” and “dear” leaders that refuses to follow common sense, from North Korea the world looks very different. The “problem” is the United States, and the half century of hostile, violent and always intimidating confrontation from the intervention that divided the country in 1945 and the devastating war of 1950 to 1953 to the hostility that continues to this day.

Washington is outraged over the program it believes North Korea has been following over the past decade and a half to produce nuclear weapons. Pyongyang, on the other hand, looks back over more than half century of nuclear intimidation by the [United States]. During the Korean War, military commanders MacArthur and Ridgway, Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, all at one time or other favored nuclear attack on North Korea and were restrained only by the fear of possible Soviet retaliation. Then, for almost the entire period of the Cold War, American nuclear weapons were stored in South Korea—in violation of the Armistice Agreement of 1953—ready for instant deployment and use, and even after their withdrawal, at South Korean insistence, much of North Korea continues to be targeted by U.S. sea- and air-based nuclear war-fighting systems.

Set in its historical context, the North Korean decision to “go nuclear,” however reprehensible [open to criticism], is neither illogical nor incomprehensible. After experiencing explicit nuclear intimidation for decades, it seems to have decided that its security, like that of the super-powers, could only be accomplished by either turning itself into a nuclear power and achieving the impregnability that is assumed to go with that status, or by using a supposed or real nuclear weapons program as a negotiating ploy to achieve security from nuclear and non-nuclear threat. Whether or not it actually possesses any such weapons, the lesson it (and indeed any other country feeling insecure) would reasonably draw from the invasion of Iraq, and the acceptance into the nuclear club of India and Pakistan, would be the need to persuade its enemies that it did. In the twisted logic of nuclear politics, that which renders all humanity insecure becomes that without which no country can consider itself secure.

In 1994, the confrontation between the U.S. and North Korea degenerated to the brink of war, staved off only at the last minute by an accommodation known as the Geneva “Agreed Framework.” Under it, North Korea froze its graphite reactors and accepted international inspection of its plutonium wastes, while the U.S. promised to construct two alternative, light water reactors, supply heavy oil for energy generation till the reactors came on stream, and to move towards political and economic normalization. During the eight years that the Framework functioned, relations between the two countries were stabilized and late in the Clinton administration there were dramatic portents of reconciliation. In the end, however, all that North Korea actually got was the supply of heavy oil, which was then cut off in the middle of the winter of 2002-3. The reactors, supposed to be generating power from 2003, never progressed much beyond some large holes in the ground. Rather than steps towards normalization, the George W. Bush administration came to power in 2001 denouncing North Korea, referring to it in January 2002 as part of the “Axis of Evil.”

The Framework broke down in particular over the U.S. insistence that Pyongyang had been pursuing a two-track nuclear weapons program: the one that was subject of the 1994 Agreement, using the wastes from the Yongbyon reactors to process plutonium for “Nagasaki-type” nuclear devices, and the other, a covert program using uranium enrichment to produce “Hiroshima-type” devices. According to Undersecretary of State James Kelly, officials in Pyongyang confessed such a program to him during his October 2002 Pyongyang visit. This confession (denied by North Korea, which insisted that Kelly had misunderstood its statement of the right to such a program as a statement of its possession) led the U.S. to suspend its commitments under the Framework. This in turn prompted North Korea in the following January to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and resume its weapons program.

Source: Excerpted from Gavan McCormack,“’The North Korea Problem’, Japan and the US: The Politics of Hypocrisy,” posted on *Japan Focus*, 8 May 2006 (<http://japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/1909>)

North Korea’s Perspective: Reading Guide

Respond to the following questions, using your own words.

1. How do “U.S.-centered” views differ from North Korea’s? How have North Korea’s experiences during the Cold War shaped its views? Give specific examples.

2. How does the author explain North Korea’s decision to “go nuclear?”

3. What were the terms of the Geneva “Agreed Framework?” Did both parties live up to these terms?

4. Explain when and how the “Agreed Framework” broke down.

5. What do you think is the author’s assessment of who is to blame? Do you agree? Why or why not?

6. How would you summarize the threat(s) perceived by North Korea?

**South Korea’s Perspective**

Anti-Americanism became a powerful force in the Republic of Korea (ROK) [South Korea] during the 1980s. It has reached new levels of intensity since the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. A major catalyst was President George W. Bush's State of the Union address four months later when he named North Korea a member of an “Axis of Evil” that included Iran and Iraq. His inflammatory remarks infuriated many South Koreans because Bush's public statement of hostility toward North Korea contradicted President Kim Dae-jung's “Sunshine Policy” of seeking engagement with the DPRK [North Korea—Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea].

In October 2002, the Bush administration intentionally reignited the nuclear crisis with North Korea. [Note: The group studying North Korea’s perspective will explain this; if it doesn’t, ask it.] The revival of anti-Americanism that followed provided the latest example of the destructive consequences of an historic pattern in U.S. policy of subordinating Korea 's interests in pursuit of American goals elsewhere in the world. Ironically, in 1882, the United States was the first Western nation to sign a treaty with Korea pledging that in the event “other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either government, the other will exert their good offices . . . to bring about an amicable arrangement.” Thereafter, U.S. leaders never made much of an effort to learn about Korean history or culture, resulting in actions that have injured the Korean people.

In 1905, Washington did nothing when Japan annexed Korea. That same year, President Theodore Roosevelt, in the Taft-Katsura Agreement, approved Japanese hegemony in Korea, in return for Japan 's acceptance of American domination over the Philippines. President Woodrow Wilson's unwillingness at the Versailles Conference after World War I to insist on restoration of Korea's sovereignty only confirmed and deepened the feeling of bitterness and betrayal among the Korean people. When the United States declared war on Japan in 1941, Koreans welcomed President Franklin D. Roosevelt's declaration of Korea's independence as a war aim.

Unfortunately, Japan's defeat would bring not Korea 's liberation, but military occupation and artificial division. A few key U.S. policy decisions after World War II have infuriated even moderate Koreans for more than five decades. Roosevelt's support for a postwar trusteeship in Korea heads the list. Also, Koreans have never forgiven the United States for dividing their country in 1945 and indeed blame the Truman administration for Korea 's partition. Many South Koreans view U.S. military withdrawal from Korea in June 1949 as an act of abandonment that invited the North Korean invasion one year later. Though grateful for U.S. intervention, anger and disappointment have lingered because Washington refused to fight for reunification.

Washington's apparent support for military dictatorship in the ROK has been a second reason for South Korean anti-Americanism. Some believe that the Central Intelligence Agency was complicit in General Pak Chong-hui's overthrow of the ROK's first democratically elected government in May 1961. Thereafter, $12.5 billion in U.S. military and economic aid helped to keep Pak in power. The Carter administration applied pressure for democratic reform after Pak's assassination in 1979, but Ronald Reagan's election as president in 1980 ended this brief shift in policy. Persistent U.S. indifference about democracy set the stage for the most incendiary event fueling South Korean anti-Americanism. In May 1980, ROK forces suppressed anti-government protests at Kwangju, killing about two hundred people. Pointing to U.S. operational control over ROK troops, dissenters charged that Washington “master-minded” the “Kwangju Incident.”

Progress toward democracy after 1987 shifted the focus of animosity toward the United States in South Korea to protesting the presence of U.S. forces, which constitutes the third reason for anti-Americanism. A 1988 poll of university students found that nearly half thought that the presence of U.S. forces made “the division of Korea permanent.” After German reunification in 1990, South Koreans increasingly blamed Korea 's continued division on the U.S. presence in the ROK. Making matters worse were treaty terms that denied the ROK criminal jurisdiction over U.S. servicemen and their dependents in South Korea. This issue reemerged as an intense source of anti-Americanism on June 13, 2002 when a U.S. soldier driving a 50-ton armored vehicle during a training exercise north of Seoul struck and killed two young schoolgirls.

Perceptions of American racist attitudes are a fourth reason for anti-Americanism in the ROK. Many South Koreans think that U.S. officials have treated Korea as a dependent state and engaged in behavior reflecting attitudes of racial arrogance, superiority, and contempt. Hostility toward the United States because of racism was intense during the Seoul Olympics in 1988. Not only did American Olympians behave badly, but South Koreans thought that television coverage either ridiculed or ignored the performance of their athletes. They found particularly humiliating non-sports coverage of sweatshops, prostitution, and foreign adoption of Korean children.

More recently, anti-Americanism flared with renewed intensity in September 1999 when the Associated Press reported that during the first month of the Korean War, U.S. soldiers killed hundreds of innocent civilians at No Gun Ri. President Bill Clinton worked hard to pacify South Koreans who saw racism in the U.S. government's refusal to compensate survivors and families of the victims. For most South Koreans, No Gun Ri has become “Korea 's My Lai.”

Whatever progress the Clinton administration had made in reducing anti-Americanism in South Korea through showing respect for Korean interests ended abruptly when George W. Bush became president. His determination to force the ROK to adopt a policy of confrontation toward North Korea connected with every reason for anti-Americanism. The most dramatic display of resentment came in December 2002 when South Korean voters elected No Mu-hyun as president because he refused to “kowtow” to Washington and advocated cooperation with North Korea .

It is no surprise that so many South Koreans have defended North Korea 's resistance to American dictation since the nuclear crisis renewed in October 2002. The Bush administration seems unconcerned that more than 25 million of the total South Korean population of 47 million reside within seventy miles of the demilitarized zone. During 2003, the United States pressed for international sanctions against North Korea, while the ROK government negotiated cooperative ventures with Pyongyang . Meanwhile, South Koreans watched a series of movies projecting a positive image of North Korea, while depicting the United States as an evil force in the world.

Incredibly, the Bush administration continues to inflame anti-Americanism in the ROK. In November 2003, Washington affirmed plans to move U.S. troops from the demilitarized zone to south of Seoul, prompting charges that the United States was planning a preemptive attack on North Korean nuclear facilities. Then came a new outburst of angry anti-Americanism when the Bush administration pressed Seoul to deploy ROK combat troops in Iraq. Young South Koreans believe the arrogant behavior of the United States reflects its desire to achieve global hegemony. Countless people in other nations would agree, explaining why so many direct their anger not at extremist groups who commit acts of violence against the innocent, but against the United States and its “War on Terrorism.” South Korean anti-Americanism demonstrates that this apparent disconnect results from the worldwide perception that the United States is a global bully.

Source: James I. Matray, “Why South Koreans Think of the United States as a Global Bully,” History News Network, 1 March 2004 (<http://hnn.us/articles/3740.html>)

South Korea’s Perspective: Reading Guide

1. Why did George Bush include North Korea in his “axis of evil?” What do the three countries allegedly have in common?

2. What resentments did Koreans harbor against the US between 1882 and 1941? Be specific.

3. What US decisions after WW2 angered Koreans, especially South Koreans? Be specific.

4. How, specifically, did US policies toward the ROK (South Korea) provoke South Korean anger?

5. How has the continuing division of the Korean peninsula encouraged anger toward the US? What about racism? Give specific examples of each.

6. Why might South Koreans fear a US military attack on North Korea?

(over for last question)

7. How do South Korea and the US differ with regard to their perception of threats to their nations? How do you explain these differences? Be sure you understand “global hegemony.”

 **Japan’s Perspective**

Japan is well known as a nuclear victim country which maintains “Three Non-Nuclear Principles” (non-production, non-possession, and non-introduction into Japan) and has a “peace constitution.” Yet the core of Japan’s defense policy is nuclear weapons. [4] True, the weapons in question are not Japanese but American. Japan clings to the assurance that any enemy attacking or threatening it with nuclear weapons would be devastated by American nuclear counter-attack. Its non-nuclear “principles” therefore amount to no more than the pretence, while its actual policy is unswerving commitment to (American) nuclear weapons. So supportive has Japan been of American nuclear militarism that in 1969 it entered secret clauses into its agreement with the United States so that the “principles” could be bypassed and a Japanese “blind eye” turned towards American vessels carrying nuclear weapons docking in or transiting Japan, an arrangement that lasted until 1992. [5]

The Japan of “non-nuclear principles” is also in process of becoming itself a nuclear superpower, the sole “non-nuclear” state that is committed to possessing both enrichment and reprocessing facilities, as well as to developing a fast-breeder reactor. Its stocks of plutonium amount to over 40 tons, the equivalent of 5,000 Nagasaki-type weapons. Its determined pursuit of a nuclear cycle, giving it the wherewithal to be able to go quickly nuclear itself should that Rubicon ever be reached, is in defiance of the February 2005 appeal from the Director-General of the IAEA for a five-year freeze on all enrichment and reprocessing works. [6] Japan’s forty tons of plutonium may be compared with the 10 to 15 kilograms of fissile material that North Korea was accused of illicit diversion in the 1994 crisis, or the 0.7 grams that South Korea produced in the early 1980s and for which it was severely rebuked by the IAEA. [7] When Japan’s Rokkasho facility – probably the world’s most expensive facility in modern history, expected to cost around 19 trillion yen over the term of its use - commences operation in July 2007 it will be capable of reprocessing eight hundred tons of spent fuel per annum, yielding each year about eight more tons (or 1,000 warheads-worth) of plutonium. The best estimates are that a one-percentage loss of materials in such a vast system would be impossible to detect. Japan also regularly ships highly toxic wastes across vast stretches of rough and dangerous ocean, each shipment equivalent to about 17 atomic bombs-worth, in defiance of countries en route and despite risks of piracy or terrorist hijacking.

In the United Nations, Japan declines to associate itself with the “New Agenda Coalition” (NAC) that came into existence following the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 to try to exert more urgent pressure for disarmament and non-proliferation. For Japan, the NAC was too “confrontational,” in other words, too directly challenging the nuclear privilege of the US and the other nuclear privileged powers. For Japan to join NAC, against US wishes, might also have been to weaken the US-provided “umbrella.” While Japan therefore stresses non-proliferation, insisting on North Korean obligation, it is passive on disarmament, i.e., specifically downplaying the obligations of the US and other superpowers. Its defense policy rests on the attachment to, perhaps even the implicit longing for, nuclear weapons. It is therefore cool to the idea of a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

Source: Excerpted from Gavan McCormack, “’The North Korea Problem’, Japan and the US: The Politics of Hypocrisy,” posted on Japan Focus, 8 May 2006 (<http://japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/1909>)Japan’s Perspective: Reading Guide

1. Why does the author think that Japan’s non-nuclear principles are more pretended than real? Give specific examples.

2. In the author’s view, why does Japan maintain large stock of plutonium?

3. How does Japan’s relationship with the US influence its stance regarding North Korea?

4. What is the nature of the threats Japan perceives to its national interests?**China’s Perspective**

An estranged couple in the middle of a divorce who smile and hold hands to keep up appearances for the cameras was how pundits used to describe the alliance between the United States and South Korea during the George W Bush and Roh Moo-hyun administrations and their opposing approaches to North Korea

A similar description serves well to characterize ties between China and North Korea, which just celebrated the 50th anniversary of their "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance".

Amid frequent high-level visits and new economic projects, the two Cold War allies, who fought together during the Korean War in the 1950s, appear to have the right vibe to be intimate buddies, and China's deepening influence over North Korea is the subject of some media infatuation. Yet analysts point out that . . . the couple have their share of differences that continue to impact regional security.

Last May, as the two nations embarked on a new joint economic venture, North Korea's state television made a lavish display of comradeship with the country's most important ally.

According to North Korea's official Korea Central News Agency . . . North Korea's top leadership [says] that relations between the two countries "have stood all tests of history" and made "a great contribution" to ensuring peace in Northeast Asia and other parts of the world.

The North Korean soft focus is belied [contradicted], however, by zooming in on details that present a sharper picture of the relationship and subtle differences that have not been noticed by an outside audience.

"If you look at it closely, China actually sent a downgraded delegation. . . . It didn't send a heavyweight figure from the Standing Committee of the Politburo," said Choi Myeong-hae, a Sino-North Korean relations expert. "So, although it had the looks, but that was rather lacking substance. It is North Korea that hypes up the occasion."

. . . . The Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, which was signed on July 11, 1961, is special. China has signed only two such official alliance pacts, with the Soviet Union being the other. The treaty with North Korea was extended twice, in 1981 and 2001, and current treaty runs through 2021.

Pundits [media observers] have debated whether the Sino-North Korean treaty, which included "mutual assistance" clause, can be considered a defense treaty in today's context. The treaty itself was not ambiguous. It said the two parties committed each other to immediately render military and other assistance against any outside attack. But recently there has been less emphasis on the military aspect among Chinese scholars.

"The treaty was created during the time of the Cold War. Friendship and mutual assistance is the key. It is the most important, not the military aspect," said Lu Chao, director of the Korean Research Center at Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences in China's northeastern region, near the North Korean border.

"China's emphasis is not on the military commitment. Today, China treats it more of a symbol of comradeship. But North Korea treats it as a 100% military alliance," said Shi at Renmin University.

Indeed, analysts debate on how to interpret the treaty in today's context. . . . For example, if there were full-scale military conflict between the two Koreas, how would China respond? If that ever happened, the US military would be involved under the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty with South Korea.

Lu emphasized that the Sino-North Korean treaty is "clearly at work now".

Shi said, "China will not support anyone's aggression on the Korean Peninsula, whether it's from North Korea or a counter-attack from the US-South Korea against North Korea's aggression." Shi stopped short of elaborating on what China would do in that scenario, beyond saying that "North Korea's survival is so vital to China's interest."

China sees North Korea as its "backyard" in its strategy to balance the US troops in South Korea. Analysts also take the view that China does not want a war on its "doorstep" or a swarm of North Korean refugees pouring in across its border.

Given that North Korea is well aware it is the subject of China's strategic interest, some analysts say that Pyongyang also uses that as leverage to pursue adventurism - manifested recently as the sinking of the Cheonan or the shelling of the South's Yeonpyeong Island - knowing that China would shield it from international criticism, wary of the nation's stability as the ailing Kim Jong-il prepares for the shift of power to his son and heir apparent Kim Jong-eun.

"China fears that if it joins the international sanctions and pushes North Korea too hard, that may cause a destabilizing impact on North Korea, which is going through a volatile leadership transition period," said Chang Dal-joong, a politics professor at Seoul National University. But Chang disagrees with the notion that North Korea enjoys unbridled freedom of provocative behaviors under China's protection.

"I don't think that's the case. For China, in the aftermath of the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, the stability of the Korean Peninsula is more important, even more important than the North's nuke issue. By deepening its alliance with North Korea, China wants to keep a brake on North Korea's belligerence."

That projects a delicate picture of Sino-North Korea relationship. China does not welcome North Korea's provocations. It doesn't endorse the North's nuclear adventurism either. But China's strategic interest forbids it from condemning North Korea harshly or breaking away from the alliance relationship. North Korea knows it and uses it for its own strategy too. In the meantime, both smile in the front of international audience, as do the few remaining countries from the former socialist bloc.

Many of the audience see the appearance and believe it. They blame China for "looking the other way" whenever North Korea commits provocations and not living up to being its claim to be a responsible country. China secretly hopes that some members of the international audience catch on that its relationship with North Korea is difficult and that it doesn't necessarily endorse the North's belligerence. However, except for a few occasions, China swallows its pride and smiles....

China has only once stepped off its normal path in order to harshly criticize North Korea. That was to describe Pyongyang's conduct over its first nuclear test in 2006 as "han ran" (wanton) [or reckless]. North Korea reacted by becoming less and less responsive to China's calls. It even carried out the second nuclear testing only 80 kilometers from China's border, prompting some Chinese schools to evacuate, fearing an earthquake. China was alarmed. It realized that North Korea, if not managed, could become a threat to China itself.

It was a good lesson for China. To manage North Korea's adventurism, China learned that it needed to keep engaging North Korea. "And the Sino-North Korean friendship pact is still useful in that sense," says Choi.

Choi argues that one of the greatest puzzles of Sino-North Korean ties is that though they are "allies with blood ties", in a historical perspective the duo's relationship has been more one of tension and conflict, with moments of close ties an exception.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of North Korea's nuclear bidding, China's leverage over North Korea has been highlighted among security experts. The US and South Korea have repeatedly urged China to exert its influence to contain on North Korea's belligerence.

"Yes, but China, up to now, has not resorted to using the leverage. So, even though China has been touted as 'the key to the North Korean belligerence', time again and again, China has proven to be not the key to the North Korean problem. Frankly, China doesn't want to use the leverage," says Shi Yinhong at Renmin University in Beijing.

Source: Sunny Lee, “China, North Korea: Unlikely Friends,” *Asia Times*, 21 July 2011(edited for brevity) (<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/MG21Dg02.html>)

China’s Perspective: Reading Guide

1. The author suggests that looking more closely at relations between China and North Korea reveal a more complex dynamic than most observers recognize. Give some specific examples of how this is so.

2. How do the Chinese and North Korean interpretations of the Sino-NorthKorean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance differ? How can you explain these differences?

3. Why is North Korea important to China? How does this importance affect China’s policy toward North Korea? What does North Korea’s importance say about how China’s perceives threats to its interests?

4. Western observers often conclude that China chooses not to exert its power over North Korea. What does the author think about this? If the author is correct, how does his view of relations between the two countries complicate US objectives?

**Perspective: United States “Containment” Strategy**

Barring a diplomatic miracle, the missile and nuclear tests carried out by North Korea in April and May [of 2009] have driven a stake into the heart of the denuclearization talks carried out for the last six years.

North Korea trumpets these tests to claim the status of a nuclear power, on a par with the other nuclear-armed nations of the world. This is a status we can never accord the Pyongyang regime. To do so would only reward its defiance of world opinion. It would undermine our alliances with South Korea and Japan, causing them to question the value of the American security umbrella. And it would give further encouragement to those — Iran first and foremost — who are on a similar path and already receive help from North Korea.

The Obama administration has responded to the serial provocations of the Kim Jong Il regime with an appropriate combination of condemnation and caution. It's coordinated closely with our allies in South Korea and Japan and encouraged China and Russia, our other partners in the aborted six-party talks, to oppose illegal activity. The administration, however, is also careful not to rise to the bait of those in Pyongyang who hope to escalate tensions to justify their acts.

The door remains open, as it should be, to a diplomatic solution to denuclearization. It would be foolish, however, not to shape American policy based on the reality that North Korea has relentlessly pursued and demonstrated the capability to explode a primitive nuclear device and potentially to deliver it on the tip of a ballistic missile.

The Bush administration failed to block this program, a fact that was dramatically evident when North Korea carried out it first nuclear test in October 2006. The advent of a new administration in Washington apparently didn’t change North Korea’s strategic logic. For Pyongyang, a demonstrated nuclear capacity provides regime security, deters a possible U.S. military attack and compensates both militarily and politically for its weakness in the ongoing contest for leadership and legitimacy on the Korean peninsula.

The North Korean leadership sits atop a failing state. The economy survives thanks to food, energy and consumer goods from China, but this comes at a price to the regime's system of tight control over its populace. Along with goods come smuggled DVDs of South Korean movies and television shows that reveal how far behind their southern brothers the North has fallen.

The sudden illness of Kim Jong Il last summer triggered a succession crisis that shook the North Korean leadership. The leadership vacuum strengthened the hand of the military, which apparently believes that nuclear weapons are essential to the regime's survival.

If North Korea is determined to hang on to its nuclear weapons, then the United States has little alternative other than to adopt a long-term strategy of deterrence and containment, drawing upon the lessons of the Cold War. A deterrence policy must deal with three principle threats – rising tensions on the Korean peninsula; a regional nuclear arms race; and nuclear proliferation to other states, particularly Iran, or to non-state actors.

We need to strengthen our security guarantee to South Korea and Japan, including our commitment to massive retaliation for any use of nuclear weapons by North Korea. This should be done quietly, without bombast or threat. At the same time, we must expand our counter-proliferation efforts aimed at disrupting North Korean missile and nuclear cooperation with Iran. China's cooperation is essential to that effort.

Economic assistance to North Korea should be halted, with the exception of humanitarian aid. According to recent data, North Korean trade with the outside world leaped last year to a record $3.8 billion. But the vast majority of this – $2.8 billion – is with China, which enjoys a $1.25 billion trade surplus with North Korea. That surplus, given North Korea's inability to borrow money, is an effective Chinese subsidy of the North and its nuclear program.

China has yet to show any willingness to take these kinds of steps, but there's evidence the Chinese leadership is now seriously pondering whether it's time to put its broader role as a world power above its ties to the Pyongyang regime.

Containment, as its Cold War architects insisted, does not rule out diplomatic negotiation, nor should it limit other forms of engagement, from cultural exchanges to humanitarian aid. The on-the-ground presence of aid workers and even businessmen can accelerate change, prying open police state controls and encouraging, as it did in the Soviet Union, real reform.

Unfortunately, North Korea has far from exhausted its potential for escalation. It already has issued military threats against South Korea. Deterrence remains crucial, but we need to remember that time is not on the side of the North Korean regime. With patience, as the West demonstrated in the Cold War, the solution to this problem may come with the transformation of the regime itself.

Source: Daniel Sneider, “Commentary: How to Deal with North Korea,” McClatchy Newspapers, 30 May 2009 (<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2009/05/29/69011/commentary-how-to-deal-with-north.html>)

United States “Containment” Strategy: Reading Guide

1. According to the author, why should the US prevent North Korea from becoming a nuclear power?

2. According to the author, why does North Korea seek nuclear weapons? What do you think of its motives?

3. The author recommends that the US pursue a strategy of “deterrence and containment.” What are the specific threats he sees? What specific US actions does he have in mind?

4. What role do you think the author wants China to play?

5. Is the author optimistic about the containment strategy he advocates? Why? Do you agree?

**A U.S. Anti-containment, Anti-interventionist Perspective**

This weekend the big news was that the North Koreans shot off a rocket. They claimed they were making an attempt to put a satellite in orbit, which they have a right to do under international

law.

Space is supposed to be open to all those individuals who want to use it. Of course, the West, including our government – or especially our government – reacted almost in a hysterical fashion.

They called for an emergency UN meeting and this meeting of the UN met and they are trying to decide now what to do about the North Koreans.

Here it is: The North Koreans, they have a rocket, not an intercontinental ballistic missile. We don’t even know for sure if they have a bomb that they could launch, and we are now wondering, what are we going to do with this country?

I mean, they can’t even feed themselves. They do not have a Navy, what kind of an Air Force do they have, and yet it just seems like this is an excuse for the West, and in particular our military-industrial complex to have another excuse to have a massive buildup.

It just seems so unnecessary. Ironically, it seems like the Chinese had the most measured response as they [stated, in paraphrase], “why don’t you just sit back a minute and think about this?” And I think that is what we ought to do.

The Koreans are not going to attack us. If they even did have a bomb, even if they made an attempt to do it, I mean, they would be wiped off on the face of the Earth within minutes.

It is just preposterous to think that the North Koreans are a threat. I think they are playing cat and mouse. I think they are laughing. I think they love to see us go nuts over this, but what they don’t understand is, they might not realize how much we might overreact, and this whole thing that some of our politicians are saying, “Well, we should have gone in there and bombed that site before the rocket even took off.”

But the technology there is so primitive and yet we are at this point of thinking that it is like Pearl Harbor again. Just think, we are concentrating on weapons and weapons are really important.

But what if we said for many years, “It is not the guns that kill, it is the people that kill.” And yet, we have politicians now claiming that we should practically go to war against North Korea at this moment.

Quite frankly, I think if we would not be in South Korea, which I have advocated for years, South Korea and North Korea probably would be unified and they would be westernized by now. But this whole idea that we are there and we persist with this confrontation…

Communism is a failure, and that is why the Soviet system collapsed. But when you play these games, just like we did with the communists in Cuba. Castro lasted a lot longer because we put sanctions on them, on Castro, and gave him cover, but that is going to come to an end eventually. After all these years, sanctions don’t work.

People are now crying for even more and more sanctions. So it just doesn’t make any sense whatsoever for us to pursue these policies of antagonism. You say these people are a bit nuts. Well, if they don’t want to talk to us, fine. But if they would talk to us, I would not give them any money. So often when we talk to the North Koreans, we think they are going to do something, we give them money.

Why don’t we try this third option? Instead of either attacking people or giving them money, just offer ou[r] friendship. If they want to trade with us, fine. But communism fails, it will fail, their system is failing. The Soviet system, we didn’t have to attack it. They had thousands and thousands of nuclear weapons, and we didn’t have to confront them.

And now, we are acting hysterically over this whole notion that we have to attack them. Sure, they might be working on a weapon, but just think in the age in which we live. People need to understand and study what fourth generation warfare is.

They need to understand that we were really brought down and chaos was caused by 19 individuals with box blades. That is what we have to think about, but we have to understand fourth generation warfare. You have to understand why people want to attack us. You have to understand why we do these things and how fruitless they are.

We have to realize that our foreign policy has blowback to it and that is the biggest threat to us. The best thing that we could do is to take the advice of the founding fathers and say, “Look, let’s trade with people. Let’s talk with people, try to be friends with people, and be more tolerant with people, and look to our own problems.”

When we make our own mistakes, if we have imperfections in protecting human rights and civil liberties here in this country, let’s take care of it before we preach and lecture to everybody else and expect them to respond to us.

If we do that, I think we could come up with a much better chance of having peace in this world and certainly a lot more prosperity. We don’t need to be spending these hundreds of billions of dollars on international warfareism.

And some people expected our new administration to actually cut it back. They are increasing this military budget, and if you would have just listened to the comments from our administration today, they were more provocative than anything I have heard in weeks, if not months about what we must do about this.

We ought to just sit back and take a breath and realize that North Korea is not a threat to the United States of America.

Source: Campaign for Liberty [Ron Paul], 5 April 2009 ([http://www.ronpaul.com/2009-04-06/ron-paul-north-korea-is-not-a-threat-to-the-us/](http://www.ronpaul.com/2009-04-06/ron-paul-north-korea-is-not-a-threat-to-the-us/%20) )

US Anti-containment, Anti-interventionist Perspective: Reading Guide

1. Ron Paul offers a number of reasons for the US to regard Korea’s development of nuclear weapon technology as a threat that must be resisted. Explain those reasons in the spaces below, and offer your thoughtful evaluation of them—valid? Invalid? Why?

Reason:

Evaluation:

Reason:

Evaluation:

Reason:

Evaluation:

Reason:

Evaluation:

Reason:

Evaluation:

2. What is the nature of the US presence in South Korea? (Not in reading) Why does Paul think the US should get out?

3. What specific “imperfections in protecting human rights and civil liberties here in this country” do you think Paul has in mind? Why might he think we should take care of them before preaching to the rest of the world?

Presentation Guide

Remember the essential questions:

*What is the nature of the threat or threats generated by the conflicts involving the United States and the nations in northeast Asia?*

*What policies flow from your answer?*

Organize your explanation of these threats for your country under the following headings:

Historical factors

Geographical factors

Economic factors

Political factors

Other factors

(over)

What is the order of importance of these factors? Why? Organize your presentation according to this order.

1. Most important factors (historical, geographic, etc.)
2. Secondary factors

What policy do you recommend for your country? Why? How can it succeed?

Note-Taking Guide

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  Main threat factors |  Secondary factors | Policies/reasons |
| North Korea |  |  |  |
| South Korea |  |  |  |
| Japan |  |  |  |
| China |  |  |  |
| US containment |  |  |  |
| US anti-containment |  |  |  |