



# Northeast Asia Analysis STRATEGIC WARGAMING SERIES

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**UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE**  
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The findings contained in this report are based on the results of an academic wargame conducted at the United States Army War College 6-7 March 2013. Except where expressly indicated, the ideas presented are derived directly from the comments of wargame participants. The views contained in this report are intended to inform senior Army leaders including, but not confined to, members of the Army Staff, Geographic Combatant Commands and Army Service Component Commands. This report does not express the policies or official views of the United States Government, the Department of Defense or the United States Army.

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# United States Army War College Strategic Wargaming Series Wargame 3-13 Northeast Asia

## Executive Summary

On 6-7 March 2013, the Center for Strategic Leadership and Development, U. S. Army War College, conducted the Northeast Asia Wargame to examine the strategic context and potential requirements derived from Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threats to regional security and U.S. interests following damage to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) WMD facilities and a breakdown of political control in the DPRK caused by a natural disaster. The participants, 25 regional and subject matter experts examined WMD threats to regional security and U.S. interests, identified actions the United States might take in response to the events portrayed and identified possible consequences and implications of those U.S. actions or of U.S. inaction. The game was co-sponsored by the United States Army War College and the Army G-3/5/7.

Each of three groups was presented with a distinct scenario as the setting to address wargame objectives. The scenarios were chronological, preceded by a "base" scenario, with each scenario using the chronologically previous scenario(s) as background. Each scenario depicted a distinct environment, referred to as either Ambiguous, Contested or Reactive. Each group received two or three updates to the situation spaced over time to advance the scenario and to stimulate discussion.

## Key Findings

- In addition to threats to U.S. interests in Northeast Asia, the threat of WMD proliferation to malign actors such as Iran or terrorist groups is a major concern.
- North Korean instability could lead to confrontation among stakeholders (China, North Korean internal factions, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and the United States).
- None of the major stakeholders in Northeast Asia can afford to ignore the interests of the other major stakeholders and none of them are likely to forego their own interests.
- There are areas where converging stakeholders' national interests provide opportunities for cooperation:
  - Preventing loss of control or restoring control of North Korean WMD and preventing proliferation of WMD from the DPRK to malign actors;
    - Identification and management of North Korean intellectual capital (human and data) requires a concerted multilateral counter-proliferation effort, and is as important as physical control of WMD.
  - Preventing or mitigating CBRN hazards from North Korean WMD;
  - Providing Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) to the DPRK; and
  - Reducing the potential for refugee flows from the DPRK into neighboring states (China, Russia, and the ROK).
- There are areas where the national interests of the major stakeholders diverge that provide potential for misunderstanding and conflict escalation:
  - China prefers survival of the DPRK whereas the United States and some regional allies prefer reunification of the Peninsula;

- The ROK seeks the unification of Korea as a long-term goal whereas China prefers the continued existence of the DPRK as a buffer state; and
- Under most circumstances, China would oppose the entry of any ROK or U.S. forces into North Korean territory, and the ROK and the United States would oppose any movement of Chinese forces across the Yalu River. The type of scenario presented in this wargame may be one of the few exceptions.
- No single actor has sufficient Combating Weapons of Mass Destructions (CWMD) capacity to respond effectively to the simultaneous threats and hazards portrayed in this scenario.
  - China, the ROK and the United States will each need contributions of capability and capacity from the others to deal effectively with the situation;
  - Although Japan has significant CWMD capacity, the legacy of Japanese occupation of Korea in the 20th century precludes employment of Japanese forces in the DPRK; and
  - Each party might be convinced temporary introduction of the others' forces into the DPRK is a 'necessary evil' but would require upfront guarantees of withdrawal following completion of the HA/DR or CWMD mission.
- Without effective reassurance, China and most elements within the DPRK will probably assume hostile intent on the part of the United States and the ROK.
- Without effective reassurance, the United States, Japan and the ROK will likely assume hostile intent on the part of the DPRK and China.
- Clear communication of intent prior to taking any actions will be essential for establishing cooperative measures to achieve commonly shared interests and to avoid misinterpretation leading to conflict escalation.
- The nature of North Korean regime - reclusiveness, opacity, self-reliance ('juche'), militarization of society, and ingrained hostility towards the United States - poses significant challenges and likely precludes entry of U.S. forces under permissive conditions even for a limited mission such as HA/DR, or CWMD operations.
  - Thus, planning for any such operation would have to assume a non-permissive environment with requirements for forces to secure not only the WMD sites but also ingress and egress corridors. The number of sites and their geographical dispersion could make the security force requirements unworkable by the United States alone; and
  - Even if the security forces required to execute this mission were affordable, the decision to undertake operations to secure, contain or eliminate WMD is a critical decision for the United States. WMD elimination implies a long-term and very expensive commitment, if required to neutralize CW and BW in addition to nuclear weapons.
    - Once the United States takes control of North Korean WMD, it may be unable to find an acceptable party to take over the long-term mission of destruction of WMD materials; and
    - Neutralization on site could take decades, tying down U.S. forces.
- U.S. inaction is not an option. U.S. inaction, or indecision, has severe and potentially dangerous consequences. U.S. inaction, or the failure to achieve a coordinated regional response, may compel regional states to respond unilaterally, significantly increase the risk of other stakeholders misinterpreting other actors' intent, leading to escalating confrontation.

# Report on Northeast Asia Wargame

## Overview

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) poses a significant threat to U.S. national interests and its regional friends and allies in East Asia because of its possession of nuclear weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and its aggressive pursuit of long-range delivery means to reach the U.S. mainland. This wargame, however, did not focus on a military conflict consciously brought about by the DPRK or as a result of possible U.S. responses to DPRK's pursuit of additional WMD capabilities. Instead, it was designed to examine the strategic context and potential requirements derived from WMD threats to regional security and U.S. interests following a natural disaster that both damages North Korean WMD facilities and causes a breakdown of political control in the DPRK. Participants examined the resulting WMD threats to regional security and U.S. interests, identified actions the United States might take in response to the events portrayed and identified possible consequences and implications of those U.S. actions or of U.S. inaction. The specific events portrayed in this scenario were developed intentionally to stimulate the thinking of the participants by forcing consideration of circumstances that some experts might consider unlikely.

Participants, divided into three groups, considered three scenarios, each depicting a distinct environment, referred to as Ambiguous, Contested or Reactive. Participants then evaluated the changing security situation through updates spaced over time to advance the scenario and stimulate discussion. The base scenario covered the pre-crisis time period, from late March into April 2016. Despite famine in the DPRK, that nation continued to build WMD and improve its ballistic missile capability. In the Republic of Korea (ROK), South Korea assumed Operational Control of forces in December 2015, with U.S. Korea Command in a supporting role; otherwise the U.S. force structure was assumed to remain the same as it currently organized. On Crisis Day (CD) a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck just north of Pyongyang. Initial reports cited "tens of thousands" dead; possible damage to chemical weapon storage complexes, biological research and development sites, and missile facilities in the area; the death of several North Korean officials; and Kim Jong Un (KJU) being "missing."

Scenario 1: Ambiguous Environment (CD+1 through CD+27) This scenario focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) as well as the containment of WMD. As the United States and others evaluate options and prepare to respond, conflicting invitations and warnings from North Korean elements claiming to be the government generate uncertainty whether the requests for help are genuine and if elements entering the DPRK will be welcomed or resisted. Meanwhile, Chinese elements have crossed the Yalu River, apparently to distribute aid but without firm knowledge of their mission or how far they will advance. The humanitarian situation deteriorates, more evidence of damage to WMD sites and the breakdown of control emerges and ROK responders are increasingly restricted. Events culminated in a threat from an unknown North Korean faction claiming to represent KJU to attack the ROK with missiles unless ROK and U.S. forces leave the DPRK.

Scenario 2: Contested Environment (CD+30 through CD+45) This scenario focused on issues related to the United States and other stakeholders entering DPRK with military forces, the emergence of multiple actors claiming to represent the DPRK government and/or control of WMD, the proposal of a buffer zone by the Chinese, a possible WMD threat to the U.S. homeland, the use of WMD by the DPRK and the escalation to war. U.S. and allied HA/DR and Combating Weapons of Mass Destructions (CWMD) elements face increasing hostility and declining cooperation from North Korean elements, China appears to be attempting to establish

a 100km buffer zone south of the Yalu River, and evidence of movement of nuclear weapons and materials from the DPRK emerges.

Scenario 3: Reactive Environment (CD+46 through CD+58) In the Reactive scenario North Korean actor(s) with command and control of weapons carry out its threat of retaliation against the “invading” forces. Scud missiles are launched at Osan Airbase, ROK and Nodong missiles are launched at Misawa Airbase, Japan. North Korean submarines, believed to carry a nuclear warhead, are reported underway. At least three plutonium devices remain unaccounted. Against the backdrop of escalating regional and U.S. media pressure, China’s patience with the DPRK crisis on its border seems near the breaking point. Threats from KJU loyalists escalate to “direct retaliation against America.”

## Results

This section addresses salient features of the strategic environment on the Korean Peninsula that framed participant discussions and then summarizes the outcome of those discussions regarding the wargame objectives: Threats, Actions and Consequences.

For this scenario, the strategic environment itself provided constraints and restraints that limited U.S. response options and, if ignored, entailed major risks. Thus, exercise participants expressed thoughts about the strategic environment throughout all sessions. While some features of the strategic environment were described in general terms in the scenario materials, the assembled experts elaborated on and refined the core features of the environment. The United States, China, Russia, the ROK, Japan, and factions within the DPRK were identified by wargame designers as the major stakeholders in Northeast Asia; game participants confirmed these designations. Among the major stakeholders, Russia has the least at stake in the fate of the DPRK.

The most salient feature of the strategic environment for this wargame was the presence of overlapping and competing national interests of the major stakeholders. This creates opportunities for cooperation among the stakeholders, even those that are traditional rivals, where there are shared interests, but simultaneously also bounds the realm of possible solutions and provides fuel for conflict among the stakeholders where their interests collide or are mutually exclusive. This feature, when coupled with the potential consequences of the use or loss of control of WMD, makes it imperative for the United States and the other major stakeholders to clearly state their own interests and intentions and clearly understand the interests and intentions of every other major stakeholder. Thus every threat and every contemplated action has to be carefully evaluated against a complex set of interests. A third layer of complexity was added by the uncertainty of not knowing who, if anybody, is in control inside the DPRK, and by the secretive natures of both the Chinese and North Korean decision-making processes. Finally, the unpredictability and opacity of various states and players raise the likelihood that small missteps could have major and longstanding, perhaps disastrous, implications.

Areas where national interests converge and that provide opportunities for cooperation among the major stakeholders include: Preventing loss of control or restoring control of North Korean WMD; Preventing proliferation of WMD from the DPRK to malign actors; Preventing or mitigating CBRN hazards from North Korean WMD; Providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HA/DR) to the DPRK; and Reducing the potential for refugee flows from the DPRK into neighboring states (China, Russia, and the ROK).

Preventing proliferation is not just a matter of controlling the movement of WMD or the materials to make them. Identification and management of North Korean intellectual capital (human and data) is as important as physical control of WMD. That requires a concerted multilateral counter-proliferation effort.

Areas where the national interests of the major stakeholders diverge that provide potential for misunderstanding and conflict escalation include: (1) China prefers survival of the DPRK and the Kim regime whereas the United States and some regional allies prefer to see the end of both; (2) the ROK seeks the ultimate unification of Korea whereas China prefers the continued existence of the DPRK as a buffer state; and (3) under most circumstances, China would object to the entry of any ROK or U.S. forces into North Korean territory and conversely, the ROK and the United States would object to any movement of Chinese forces across the Yalu River. The scenario posited for this wargame may be one of the few exceptions.

China is the most important stakeholder. Its concern for preserving its sphere of interest and perception of U.S. efforts to contain it were identified as major factors shaping Chinese policy decisions. Through this lens, any U.S. military presence in the ROK is a threat. The risk of conflict with China would be heightened by an increased U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula. Chinese perceptions of the United States and its regional partners are colored by suspicion; China is always suspicious of others. Its perception of the United States is critical. China will view South Korea as a U.S. puppet and will view any U.S. action in the DPRK as the United States having ulterior motives or hostile intent.

Understanding Chinese intentions is made difficult by the opacity of their policymaking. China is always ambiguous and its stance is always difficult to predict. China has varying factions competing to control its national security policies making them unpredictable and, at times, ineffectual. Consequently, China is often non-committal (“all talk, no decisions”).

South Korea considers reunification an ultimate objective that cannot be given up. Reunification of Korea is a mandate in their Constitution, Thus, especially whenever South Korea is involved in a response to North Korea’s crises or actions, the potential impact on reunification is always a major consideration for the ROK government. From the South Korean perspective, such crises may be viewed as an opportunity, and in some scenarios reunification would be viewed as more important than CWMD. A reunified Korea [under ROK or international control]<sup>1</sup> would correct the WMD issue and provide for long-term regional stability.

The ROK would likely accept an interim government in North Korea that is not a threat, but ultimately, the ROK’s objective is reunification. South Korea will look to the United States to support reunification. However, U.S. interests also dictate that it should not to be pulled into a conflict solely by South Korea’s desire for reunification.

China is more likely to accept reunification if it feels that the DPRK is no longer viable and the U.S. has provided assurances to redeploy forces back below the 38th parallel or leave the Peninsula entirely; a solution that keeps the United States away from its border. A reunified Korea with U.S. forces in the northern areas of the Korean Peninsula was viewed as totally unacceptable to China. Some participants expressed the opinion that the only reason China would accept a reunified Korea is if it saw it as a means of getting the U.S. forces off the peninsula entirely.

China may prefer a succession of power in the DPRK over reunification. Some participants thought that China would not be receptive to replacement of the Kim regime in the DPRK. A minority also thought China would never support reunification, because its interests were better served with the DPRK as a buffer country between itself and U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula.

The nature of North Korean regime - reclusiveness, opacity, self-reliance ('juche'), militarization of society, and ingrained hostility towards the United States - poses significant challenges and precludes entry of U.S. forces under permissive conditions even for a limited mission such as HA/DR, or CWMD operations.

In discussion of Scenario 1 (Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief) concern was raised about the need for an invitation from the government of the DPRK for U.S. or ROK forces, or even NGOs, to cross the DMZ to secure WMD sites or NGOs to respond to the natural disaster. Without assurance that the party issuing the invitation was speaking authoritatively for the government of the DPRK, participants, citing the long history of hostile, tense relations, doubted that anyone would cross the DMZ, fearing a hostile reaction from North Korean military forces<sup>2</sup>.

Treaty obligations entail policy constraints and restraints. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Chemical Weapons Convention<sup>3</sup> (CWC), Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention<sup>4</sup> (BWTC) and U.S. mutual defense treaties with Japan and the ROK will drive the actions of stakeholders. Similarly, the DPRK and China have a mutual defense treaty. The implication of this is that each stakeholder needs to understand the constraints and restraints imposed on all of the other stakeholders by their treaty obligations, especially the United States and China. Treaties may be used to hide ulterior motives, for example China may use WMD operations in North Korea to conceal its intentions to stay for a prolonged period.

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<sup>2</sup> This concern touches on the issue of sovereignty and on the UN legal regime regarding the use of armed force and prescriptions against intervention, where 'intervention by invitation' is a permissible exception.

<sup>3</sup> Article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which the United States is a party, requires that :

- Each State Party undertakes to destroy chemical weapons it owns or possesses, or that are located in any place under its jurisdiction or control, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.
- Each State Party undertakes to destroy all chemical weapons it abandoned on the territory of another State Party, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.
- Each State Party undertakes to destroy any chemical weapons production facilities it owns or possesses, or that are located in any place under its jurisdiction or control, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.

<sup>4</sup> Article 2 of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention requires that, "Each State Party to this Convention undertakes to destroy, or to divert to peaceful purposes, as soon as possible but not later than nine months after entry into force of the Convention, all agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and means of delivery specified in article I of the Convention, which are in its possession or under its jurisdiction or control." In implementing the provisions of this article all necessary safety precautions shall be observed to protect populations and the environment"

## Threats to Regional Security and U.S. Interests

The following threats are discussed in the sequence in which they emerged in the scenarios; the sequence does not reflect a rank ordering of the gravity of the threats.

The fracturing of the DPRK affects all issues within its borders including, but not limited to, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) operations, WMD containment, control of the military, and the flow of refugees. If a refugee problem develops, the stakes for China and the ROK, and to a lesser extent Russia, grow significantly. Uncertainty over the authority of various parties claiming to speak for the government of the DPRK would be a major concern for all stakeholders. The DPRK's HA/DR crises cannot be adequately resolved without its internal struggle being resolved.

The breakup of the DPRK into regions controlled by different factions, especially with the ambiguity presented in these scenarios (where leadership and command authority is unknown) could trigger factional fighting that draws the stakeholders into armed confrontation and conflict. Instability in the DPRK could lead to confrontation among countries with a stake in its future. The United States, China and Russia all have strategic interests in Northeast Asia. The DPRK's natural disaster and resulting humanitarian crisis, damage to WMD facilities breaching containment and offensive posturing each present significant challenges to all stakeholders.

The instability or collapse of the DPRK could quickly lead to the proliferation of WMD weapons or materials. Third party opportunities to acquire WMD, including intellectual capital (scientists, engineers, technicians and data), would have significant impact on U.S. strategic interests at home and abroad. The transfer of WMD technology, raw material, or intellectual capital to any third-party actor would threaten to spread WMD to other parts of the region or worldwide. Based on the DPRK's pervasive history in the black market, proliferation in this sense is not an unrealistic outcome. Similarly, a flow of refugees could easily provide cover for scientists, engineers, or technicians to more easily cross North Korea's borders.

The possibility of overseas and CONUS WMD incidents would quickly over-extend the U.S. and allied CBRN capability. The United States, as an example, would be forced to implement Enhanced Protective Posture (EPP) measures, which could result in individual and economic disruptions and potential hardships.

Instability, uncertainty and the prospect of possible conflict in the region would disrupt the region's economies. The effect on the global economy could be severe. The effect of the events unfolding in the DPRK and the region would negatively affect the flow of goods through the region, as well as production and could lead to extended impacts on the global economy.

## Actions the United States May Take

### **Diplomatic Considerations**

Neither inaction nor unilateral action will be effective. An effective U.S. response should include dialogue, particularly between the United States and China. U.S. leadership within a multilateral framework that recognizes the interests of others, seeks to advance common interests, and avoids crossing any other party's red lines offers the greatest chance for success; however, the urgency of the situation portrayed in this scenario may not allow for a fully developed multilateral dialog among all major stakeholders. In that case, the United Nations may provide a forum for simultaneous bilateral or trilateral discussions with individual

stakeholders or pairs of stakeholders. The risk of sending mixed messages or being boxed into a suboptimal choice with this option is high.

Unilateralism by any of the major stakeholders, including the United States would be unacceptable to one or more of the other stakeholders. If the United States cedes control unilaterally to China, or any other state, the United States may be left with little leverage in the region. The United States must be seen as fulfilling its role as a superpower but must act within a multinational framework.

The United States must respond quickly and purposefully. Inaction or indecision by the United States would have severe and dangerous consequences. With proper agreements in place, both U.S.- and Chinese-led missions were viewed by all participants as acceptable, so long as other stakeholders' interests are protected. Were the ROK to perceive that its interests were not being properly protected, it might act unilaterally.

Early, routine, timely and frequent dialogue, particularly between the United States and China, is paramount for reducing the possibility of confrontation among major stakeholders. The United States must clearly articulate its intentions and must actively seek to identify and understand the intentions of other stakeholders. The United States must clearly and specifically communicate its intent, objectives and desired end states to all stakeholders, especially China, the ROK and Russia. The United States must also reassure the U.S. public and the international community of its limited intentions. Within the DPRK borders, Information Operations would be necessary to communicate the intent and limited objectives of U.S. and allied actions. At the same time, the United States must actively seek to understand the intent, objectives and desired end states of all other stakeholders.

A multilateral approach and response would be best to resolve the tensions and crises in the region; however, the urgency of the humanitarian crisis and damage to North Korean WMD facilities may preclude multilateral discussions. Assertive leadership by the United States within the framework of multinational engagement is crucial. U.S. leadership would be viewed as positive and reassuring by regional allies, specifically the ROK and Japan.

China may expect (or even accept) a U.S. response but U.S. actions must be clearly articulated before being taken. The United States should take the lead in diplomacy, messaging and the formulation of civil-military response options, where possible. The ROK and Japan would look first for United States to act and, perhaps, lead. China and Russia would probably accept U.S. action in a multilateral context, and even U.S. lead, if U.S. intentions are made clear in advance of actions. U.S. leadership is preferred by Japan and the ROK, but U.S. unilateralism is not. Any desirable solution must be discussed and agreed upon by minimally five parties: China, Japan, the ROK, Russia, and the United States. However, pre-hostilities, a series of bi- or trilateral discussions and arrangements may prove to be most effective. Each regional stakeholder must be engaged bilaterally; at times, a broader discussion (United States-ROK-Japan, United States-ROK-China) may be useful. A ROK face on any operations inside the DPRK would help to make actions less provocative to both China and the DPRK's leaders.

The key to any solution in the region is for regional powers to recognize the interests that all stakeholders have in the region. China must be recognized as a principal stakeholder in this crisis; consequently, the solution to any crisis dealing with the DPRK must account for China's interests. U.S. actions must consider China's need to protect its sphere of influence and its role as a regional power while China must recognize the U.S. role in regional stability, its treaty obligations within the region and its impact on the world economy. These dynamics between the

United States and China, and the relationships among other regional actors and organizations, such as ASEAN, bound the range of possible actions. At the same time, some interests are shared in common, such as limiting the consequences of WMD contamination and the flow of refugees. Finding common interests among all stakeholders, especially China, the ROK and the United States, is necessary in the resolution to any crisis in this region. Not all stakeholders need to be a party to every specific action, but all stakeholders need to be instrumental in the talks. A unique opportunity exists for regional powers to act together and build long-standing relationships.

The UN could be the best forum for diplomacy among stakeholders. It provides a forum for discussion of stakeholders' intentions and could facilitate the discussion of mutual interests, while providing a setting of transparency.

### **Military Considerations**

The most worrisome possibility is escalation due to miscalculation, especially with many militaries (United States, China, DPRK, ROK, Russia and Japan) operating in and around North Korea. Potential miscalculation or accidental escalation is heightened if coordination with all parties is not achieved.

The United States is seen in the protector role, especially with respect to ROK and Japan. The ROK should provide the face, and its leadership should be visible, on all military and HA/DR operations within the DPRK. The legacy of over 60 years of hostility between the United States and the DPRK will be difficult to overcome; even benign humanitarian actions will be viewed with suspicion and the assumption of ulterior motives by most North Koreans and Chinese.

The U.S. response to any crisis must be deliberate and measured. However, waiting too long to respond could be dangerous. HA/DR assistance is needed within the first 72 hours, a critical period for disaster relief. The longer WMD leakage continues, the greater the damage and the more difficult mitigation and remediation become.

HA/DR operations, which may include support to prison camps, should be conducted by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). Use of U.S. military forces for these missions could provoke a North Korean or Chinese response.

China, Japan, the ROK, Russia, and the United States would logically be involved, but each of them will be restrained by need to avoid actions that threaten the vital interests of any other major stakeholder. U.S. and Chinese involvement in the CWMD mission would be critical. Russia involvement would be acceptable.

Any North Korean use of WMD must be met with a U.S. response that is proportionate and sends a message to U.S. allies (especially South Korea and Japan) that the United States will protect them against the threat of WMD.

Simultaneous homeland and OCONUS WMD threats would force the United States to implement Enhanced Protective Posture (EPP) measures, which could result in individual and economic disruptions and potential hardships.

Any CWMD response implies a long-term and very expensive commitment, especially if required to neutralize CW and BW in addition to nuclear weapons. The decision to execute

CWMD missions (securing, containment or elimination) is a critical decision for United States because of the long-term and expensive commitment of resources.

Because of the number and dispersion of North Korean WMD sites, WMD elimination, including CW and BW, would require a level of effort that is probably well beyond the capacity of any single actor. In light of this, a significant multinational effort would probably be required. Chinese, ROK and Russian cooperation should be sought on WMD security, containment and elimination.

### Possible Consequences and Implications of U.S. Actions or Inaction (Risks)

#### **Use of WMD**

Residual hostile elements of the North Korean regime may feel they are put in a “use it or lose it” position with respect to any WMD they still control, especially if a counterforce strike is conducted by the United States or ROK. Thus, a measured U.S. or ROK response could still provoke residual hostile elements in the DPRK to rapidly escalate.

#### **U.S. Inaction**

U.S. inaction is not an option. U.S. inaction, or indecision, has severe and potentially dangerous consequences. U.S. inaction, or the failure to achieve a coordinated regional response, may compel regional states to respond unilaterally. Unilateral responses by multiple actors significantly increase the risk of other stakeholders misinterpreting other actors’ intent, leading to escalating confrontation.

Absent U.S. action, China may fill the power vacuum by exerting its military, and economic, power. Chinese forces may intervene in North Korea, perhaps claiming North Korean territory or unilaterally declaring a buffer zone. Russia may intervene in northeast North Korea to protect its interests or wield its influence. In either case, the ROK, which still claims sovereignty over all of Korea, may feel compelled to defend its interests and call on the United States for support. The ROK may decide to take unilateral action or take the opportunity to strike back if attacked. If it does act militarily, it may have the ultimate goal of reunification. If Chinese forces enter North Korea in great numbers or without an agreement, South Korea would likely react by entering North Korea.

Inaction may compromise achievement of the desired strategic end state. U.S. inaction will fail to set conditions for future operations. Unilateral or preemptive Chinese action may inhibit U.S. and allied strategic options. The balance of power in the region could be altered in favor of China. Future U.S. relationships with the ROK and Japan could be irreparably damaged. Inaction by the United States (especially if a WMD is employed) could result in nuclear proliferation by U.S. allies – the ROK in particular might feel compelled to acquire its own nuclear arsenal.

Either U.S. inaction or the unwillingness of the Chinese to assist in WMD containment or elimination activities would increase the likelihood of proliferation or a “loose WMD.”

A variety of events could serve to escalate hostilities in the region and against the U.S. homeland. The DPRK possesses the capability to unleash a devastating attack on the ROK, Japan and other U.S. interests in the region and is developing the capability to threaten the U.S. homeland. The likelihood of residual hostile elements in the DPRK lashing out if backed into a

corner, especially at the ROK or Japan, is significant. The United States will be pressured to respond with nuclear weapons, especially if a North Korean nuclear weapon is employed.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

U.S. Army War College analysts considered actions the United States might take in response to a potential WMD-related crisis in North Korea as well as actions the U.S. should specifically avoid. The overarching conclusion is that the U.S.-Chinese relationship will shape the international response to control North Korean WMD and counter proliferation. U.S. leadership in bilateral dialogue with China is essential to mitigate the potential for unilateral responses that could lead to miscalculation and unnecessary confrontation among stakeholders. While there are significant risks, cooperative resolution of North Korean WMD threat could offer a unique opportunity for mutual benefit to China and the United States. To this end any U.S. actions toward North Korea must consider China's need to protect its sphere of influence and its role as a regional power. Likewise, China must recognize the U.S. role in regional stability and its regional treaty obligations.

U.S. Army War College assessment resulted in the following recommendations that are offered in the context of "Prevent, Shape, and Win" actions. These actions may occur simultaneously to both prevent conflict and shape the security environment for success while setting the conditions for an enduring solution to the threat of North Korean WMD.

**Prevent.** U.S Army readiness to counter North Korean WMD requires realistic training, expert leaders, modern equipment, and quality Soldiers capable of immediate response to North Korean actions and potentially doing so in a nuclear, chemical or biological environment. This wargame highlighted the following key element of prevention:

- Anticipate and Prepare for the Potential Conflict Environment - The nature of a potential WMD environment requires that the U.S. Army ensure and enhance Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) readiness to ensure an effective response to release, leaks and elimination.

**Shape.** The United States can set the conditions for successful response to North Korean WMD through initiation of constructive dialogue with China now. The U.S. Army must help shape the security environment to enable our regional partners to react to and contain North Korean WMD. This may be accomplished through engagement to foster mutual understanding through military-to-military contacts and helping partners build the capacity to defend themselves. Security environment shaping actions that would enable development of long-term stability on the Korean Peninsula are:

- Military-to-Military engagement - among stakeholders likely to intervene in North Korea, particularly with The People's Liberation Army in China, is essential to open clear lines of communication ensuring a mechanism to articulate intentions and prevent miscalculation. In addition, the United States should develop cooperative mechanisms and protocols for responding to WMD hazard releases with all stakeholders.
- Understand Partner CBRNE Capabilities -The scope and scale of North Korean WMD production significantly exceed the capabilities of the United States or any other individual stakeholder to control, contain and eliminate them. This requires multinational resourcing and coordination of CBRNE capabilities to meet such a challenge.

**Win.** The complex and uncertain nature of the mission to control, contain and eliminate North Korean WMD requires a multinational response. The U.S Army must be prepared to

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operate in a nuclear, chemical or biological environment. Assessment of this issue indicates that winning in this environment requires early and transparent dialogue with regional states to ensure clarity of intentions and to mitigate the potential for miscalculation.

#### Joint and Army Doctrine

Army doctrine is not fully developed to address the conduct and mission command of WMD elimination of the scale and environment found in North Korea and on how to completely eliminate a WMD program (munitions, people, equipment, facilities).

This scenario potentially engages all eight CWMD Military Mission Areas (MMA) specified in JP 3-40 (Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction). Threat reduction cooperation would only occur if a cooperative successor regime emerged in the DPRK following the collapse of the Kim Jong Un regime and WMD consequence management would be a 'be prepared to' mission. The other six MMAs, WMD security cooperation and partner activities, WMD interdiction, WMD offensive operations, WMD elimination, WMD active defense and CBRN passive defense, would have to be executed were events similar to those in this scenario to occur.

#### Army Force Structure

Given the Army's executive agent responsibility for WMD disposal, realization of this scenario would rapidly deplete the Army's capacity if it were directed to execute WMD elimination on the scale required in North Korea. In addition, the requirements to simultaneously defend against threats in the Combined Forces Command Joint Operating Area, against threats to allies and friends in the rest of the USPACOM AOR, and potentially against threats to the U.S. Homeland would likely require the Secretary of Defense to make significant allocation decisions.

There is currently no approved Army force structure for a deployable chemical/biological destruction capability (e.g. a portable incinerator). This capability, if required, would be provided by creating ad hoc task forces using engineer, chemical and combined arms forces, or contracted destruction experts.