Masters of Misunderstanding
Masters of Mistiming

Spencer H. Kim
Pacific Century Institute
DPRK Motivation

- End of Cold War Robs DPRK of Strategic & Economic Depth

- U.S. is Existential Threat
  - Military Superiority
  - Manipulation of “International Cooperation System” against DPRK

- ROK Reality is Threat to Regime Narrative

- Regime Legitimacy Depends on “Glorious” Achievement
  - Kim Il Sung: Defeat Japan & US, Establish DPRK, Juche

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DPRK Default Mode

- Force U.S. to Negotiate Under Threat of Dire Consequences; Negotiate as “Equals”; Never Appear Weak

- Only U.S. Can/Would Destroy DPRK

- Take what ROK will give; but Prevent Social Infection
US Motivation

- Maintain World Order
- Reign in “Rogue” States; Compliance with “Norms”
- Strong Non-Proliferation Regime
- Defense Treaty Commitment to ROK
Prevailing View

Cartoon Image: Crazy, scotch-swalling, partying, weird, pygmy, evil, machiavellian, “brinksmanship”

Media Portrayal: Impacts policy-makers subconsciously; Difficult to “defend” or “explain” DPRK; Not good for career

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Always Somebody New

- Kanter, Gallucci, Carter, Kartman, Sherman, Perry, Kelly, Pritchard, DeTrani, Hill, Bosworth

- DPRK is a long learning/trust building curve

- Constant Subtle Impact of Cartoon Image on New Players

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Need President’s Attention

- Carter/Gallucci ☐ ☐ Clinton >> Agreed Framework
- Sherman/Albright ☐ ☐ Clinton ☐ ☐ Missile Moratorium
- Hill/Rice ☐ ☐ Bush ☐ ☐ 6 Party Progress
- Otherwise ☐ ☐ Go to Default Mode

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US Default Mode

- DPRK must follow “norms” first, then get (undefined) benefits
- If behavior bad, must be punished
- No direct relations, so tough “messages must be sent” publicly
- Mobilize China to “pressure” DPRK
ROK Motivation

- First World Economic, Political, Social Development Needs Stability
- Maintain Military Deterrence of DPRK
- Worry about Cost of Sudden Reunification
- US Alliance Gives Strategic Depth vis-à-vis China, Japan and Russia
- Emotional Attraction of Reunification
- Bitter Remembrance of DPRK Crimes
ROK Default Modes

- **Progressives:** Engage, no matter what
- **Conservatives:** Poke them in the eye whenever possible

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Agreed Framework

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Republican Congress attacks Agreed Framework; Democrats equivocate

Postpones exchange of Liaison Offices with US; Never Achieved; No Diplomatic Relations ever take place
Timing 1999-2000

- Kim Dae Jung to Pyongyang
- Perry Process
- Missile Moratorium
- Albright to Pyongyang
- Jo Myong Rok to White House
- DPRK Private Markets

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Timing 2001 - 2002

Announces major economic reforms based on "costs, prices and actual profits"; opens diplomatic relations with Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, European Union, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait, Philippines, Spain, Turkey and the UK; attends ASEAN Regional Forum; Kim Jong Il meets Koizumi; Sinuiju Hong Kong-like “Special Economic Zone”

Progress on Kaesong and Kumgang; ROK investment In DPRK; N-S Trade Increased; Divided Family Reunions

“Axis of Evil”; KDJ-Bush Meeting Fiasco; “Regime Change” talk; Enriched Uranium; Kelly Visit to Pyongyang; KEDO shut down

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Timing 2003-2004

Quits NPT
Restarts Reactor

6PT – Let China Do It
More Regime Change

Trying to Save Sunshine

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Timing 2005

Chris Hill gets Authority To Negotiate

Sept. 2005 Six PT Agreement

Banco Delta Asia
Timing 2007 - 2008

- Chris Hill Works Hard
- DPRK off Terrorism List
- Equivocation on 6PT
- Syrian Nuclear Connection
- Kim Jong Il has Stroke
- Roh – Kim Summit
- LMB Election
- Grand Bargain Policy

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Timing 2009 - 2010

- Second Nuclear Test
- UNSC Sanctions
- DPRK Succession
- “Strategic Patience”
- Cheonan
- DPRK Reliance on China

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(Mis)Timing Recap
Whither China in All This?

Rise of China...

...Biggest Story of 21st Century

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Chinese Motivation

• Economic Growth

• Geostrategic Great Power Revival
  -- DPRK as Buffer to US/ROK Alliance
  -- Become DPRK Banking System?
  -- Dominate DPRK Economy?
  -- Play Role in Succession?

-- DPRK in PRC “Sphere of Influence”? © Spencer H. Kim 2010
Chinese Veto on Reunification?

Will Korean Reunification Have To Pass Through Beijing?
Conclusions

Pressure & “Strategic Patience” Will Never Work; China is Bottomless Pressure Release Valve

Nuclear Program Will Eventually Make DPRK *de facto* PRC Province; Need $$ → Sell Nuclear Technology

North-South Issues Complicated & Delicate; Take Time and Patience; No Grand Bargains; No De-nuke First

If Crisis/War Avoided, Status Quo is Fine; Direction of Events OK

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Recommendations

• US name high-profile, bi-partisan acceptable negotiator willing to serve for ten years

• ROK do the same

• Two-tracks: US-DPRK = Security Assurances, Peace Treaty, De-nuclearization; ROK-DPRK = N-S Coop, CBMs, Long-term Reunification Template

• No central role for China; 6PT Ratifies Bi-lat Deals

• Never break off talks for the crisis of the day

Grind it out!
Remember Timing

Time is not on their side; best to start before KJI dies

Just fine to wait.