

Testimony on North Korea before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, November 4, 2003

**TOWARDS A "GRAND BARGAIN" WITH NORTH KOREA
INCLUDING A HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA**

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, other senators on the committee, it is an honor to appear today to discuss the terrible human rights situation in contemporary North Korea, and the means by which the United States and its regional partners might seek to improve it.

Our argument comes from a book that we recently wrote entitled *Crisis on the Korean Peninsula: How to Deal with a Nuclear North Korea* (McGraw-Hill, 2003) (The book is summarized in the attached article from *The Washington Quarterly* Autumn 2003 issue.) We make a proposal for a new, broader, more demanding negotiating agenda with the DPRK. Some have called this type of approach "more for more"--greater incentives being offered to North Korea to change, but only in exchange for deep reforms in that country going well beyond resolution of the nuclear weapons issue.

We include human rights centrally in the negotiating agenda--in the belief that American values and basic human decency demand it, and in the realpolitik conviction that any country with the current human rights practices of the DPRK cannot be a reliable negotiating partner of the United States. Among our demands are that North Korea allow the return of all Japanese kidnapping victims, and that it begin to engage the international community in a human rights dialogue about its prison camps and other forms of domestic repression that is akin to what we have conducted with China in recent times.

The broader logic of our proposal is simple. We see a negotiation focused only on North Korea's nuclear weapons as posing a catch 22 for the United States. If we offer North Korea major benefits simply for returning to compliance with the 1994 Agreed Framework, we are rewarding proliferant behavior and giving in to a form of extortion. But if we follow the Bush administration's approach and demand that North Korea give up the illicit weapons first, before other issues such as economic development assistance can be discussed, progress is unlikely. Pyongyang probably sees nuclear weapons as perhaps its only real national asset and hence will probably refuse to surrender them without getting a good deal in return. This is a recipe for paralysis in the six-party talks expected to resume later this fall.

The more logical, and it seems to us the more ethical, approach to take in this situation is to offer North Korea economic assistance, a lifting of trade sanctions, and tighter diplomatic ties and stronger security assurances--but only as a way of helping North Korea reform, not as a reward for its recent behavior or for its Stalinist form of government. We can only justify assistance and engagement with North Korea if the process begins to repair an abysmal regime--assuming it is not already beyond repair, as in fact it may be.

A reform agenda must cover all the major issues dividing North Korea from the international community and resulting in the horrible plight of the North Korean people. That means it must address North Korea's oversized military and broken economy. It also means a serious negotiating agenda must compel North Korea to reassess and gradually change its horrendous and fundamentally immoral human rights record.

This type of reform has occurred before within a communist system, most notably in Vietnam and China in recent times. It is hard to achieve, but clearly not impossible. Often, economic reforms lead the way followed by slower political change and improvement in human rights policy. Given the absence of appealing policy alternatives, we can accept such a gradual improvement in North Korean human rights in our judgment, as long as it is crystal clear that we will insist on improvement as part of any deal we negotiate with Pyongyang.

However, attempting such change could also, of course, lead to an uncontrollable sequence of events resulting in such upheaval in North Korea as to produce the demise of that regime. While few in this country would lament such an event, North Korean leaders would surely fear it. That means they would be unlikely to accept such a broad agenda for reform, unless they also faced a stern international community threatening tougher action should the strategy of diplomatic engagement not succeed. Our proposed grand bargain thus requires a continuation of military deterrence and a willingness to use economic as well as even military coercion should diplomacy fail.

By seriously attempting diplomacy first, however, and offering Pyongyang real incentives to change, the United States would improve its ability to convince South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia that tougher measures could be needed if an engagement strategy does not work.

In sum, the broad point here is that even if one swallows disbelief and attempts a serious negotiating agenda with Pyongyang, as we advocate, such an engagement strategy should include a major human rights component. Expectations for rapid change must be realistic, but aspirations must be ambitious, and pressure on North Korea to change must be real. Both American values and hard-headed U.S. foreign policy interests demand it. No narrow negotiation that leaves the present DPRK regime unchanged, but for elimination of its nuclear program, can be expected to produce lasting stability in the region. No such negotiation is in fact even likely to succeed. Ironically, only by enlarging the diplomatic agenda with North Korea do we have any hope of making real progress--or, should talks fail, of convincing our regional security partners to resort to tougher measures if that becomes necessary.