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**Seoul's Current Nuclear Weapons  
Dilemma: What Does History Teach?**

Richard Lawless



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**NPEC**

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Cover images, from top left clockwise: 1) South Korea's Hyunmoo II ballistic missile is fired during an exercise at an undisclosed location in South Korea on September 4, 2017 (credit: [Sipa US / Alamy Stock Photo](#)); 2) Park Chung-hee Korean general and statesman who led South Korea from 1961 until his assassination in 1979 (credit: [Jacques Beaulieu/Flickr](#)); 3) South Korean Wolsong Nuclear Power Plant, pictured are reactors 1 to 4 (credit: [Wikipedia](#)); 4) South Korea's President Moon Jae-in attends a press meeting at the Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden on June 14, 2019 (credit: [Henrik Montgomery/TT News Agency/via REUTERS](#)).

# **Seoul's Current Nuclear Weapons Dilemma: What Does History Teach?**

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## **Nonproliferation Policy Education Center**

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# Seoul's Current Nuclear Weapons Dilemma: What Does History Teach?

Richard Lawless

## *Overview*

President Yoon Suk Yeol's public comments on January 12, 2023, that South Korea may need to acquire nuclear weapons highlighted what an increasing number of South Koreans view as their deteriorating security situation. North Korean direct threats against the Republic of Korea, as well as worries that America's long-standing commitment to "extended deterrence" may be eroding, have only fortified their concerns.

This same theme was echoed and reinforced on February 20, 2023, by the head of South Korea's ruling People Power Party Chung Jin Suk, who expressed serious concerns about the ability of South Korea's current "kill chain" preemptive strike strategy to deter North Korea. In making his case for an indigenous nuclear weapons capability, Chung went beyond President Yoon's earlier comments with his statement, delivered that day to a gathering of his party leadership. "We need to seriously consider developing our own nuclear capabilities if such a response is insufficient." (See Christian Davies, "South Korea Ruling Party Leader Makes Case for Nuclear Weapons," *Financial Times*, February 21, 2023.)

None of these current concerns are new. In fact, all have been components of an internal dialog in South Korea for many years as concern over North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons and Pyongyang's ability to deliver them with increasing precision and confidence. Beyond this, there are historical parallels with South Korea's first attempt to acquire nuclear weapons in the early 1970s that deserve closer review.

This essay explores Seoul's current security concerns and consideration of acquiring nuclear weapons as a "fix" by reviewing why and how its first attempt to acquire nuclear weapons was made and unfolded. It then uses this history to consider how such a decision on the part of South Korea in 2023 might best be detected, monitored, channeled, mitigated, and managed to inform U.S. policy making.

Given the public nature of this subject, and the degree to which it is being discussed in official and unofficial U.S. and ROK forums, such a decision would likely not result in Seoul again undertaking a covert nuclear weapons development program. (In the past, such an approach was judged to be necessary and unavoidable.) Once decided, such a program would involve

fundamental alliance compromises and would alter the structure and mutual commitments of the bilateral security and political relationship.

However unlikely it may appear at this stage, this scenario is highly possible. Once Korean leaders make such a decision, in a decision process that could well occur independent of a dialog with the United States, South Korea and the United States would find themselves challenged to craft a smooth way forward. Korean determination to proceed would meet strong American resistance but would be relevant only up to a point. The end product, a South Korea in possession of its own nuclear deterrent and thus capable of exercising its own security options, would not necessarily doom the bilateral security relationship.

### *Shades of South Korea's Nuclear Weapons Past*

The present situation shares some of the dynamic that existed in an earlier chapter in the US-ROK relationship, a period in which a number of factors injected uncertainties into the security alliance and caused the ROK leadership to doubt the staying power of the United States. The period was the early 1970s and the overall context was America's defeat in and its unseemly disengagement from the Republic of Vietnam. South Korean President Park Chung-hee and his national security team, having committed forces to fight alongside American and South Vietnamese troops in combat there, watched each iteration of the American disengagement with growing concern. It was not so much the matter of the departure itself - as it was obvious that neither the Johnson nor the Nixon administrations had the will to win the war by taking it to North Vietnam- but rather the wholesale abandonment of that country by all elements of the United States body politic.

Congress had weighed in to prohibit U.S. support to the struggling Vietnamese and, emboldened by Kissinger's secret talks in Paris, Hanoi had launched a conventional war that doomed the RVN to destruction. In this same period, we had the Kissinger/Nixon outreach to China and all that portended for established relationships in East Asia, South Korea included. Layered in was the growing impact of Nixon's "Vietnamization" program, begun in 1969, under which the U.S. strove to transfer as much of the fight as possible to the South Vietnamese forces as the American withdrawal from its commitment progressed. The South Koreans saw this for what it was - a component of a policy to reorder the U.S. position in the world. If the Vietnamese were expendable there was no reason in a world of "realpolitik" that Seoul could not be jettisoned.

Park and his close circle had other issues of concern with the United States, and it was a delicate time for the security relationship. The United States kept Park on a short leash in terms of responses to North Korean provocations, to the degree that military actions sustained by Pyongyang over a period of several years failed to elicit any reciprocal response. The attack on

the USS Pueblo and the capture of its crew, the concurrent commando attack on Park's Blue House targeting Park for assassination, the carefully-staged shoot down of the unarmed U.S. Navy EC-121 electronics warfare aircraft in international airspace that killed 31 men, numerous ground attacks along the DMZ in which hundreds of South Korean and many Americans were killed, added to Park's frustration.

The consistent U.S. response to these deadly provocations was delayed decision making, overlaid by lame actions once that signaled resignation. The U.S. overall posture was reasonably judged to be ineffectual, sending a consistent message that neither the U.S. nor South Korea would respond in kind. This suggested that the U.S. was a fading ally that had been discombobulated by its failure in Vietnam, at least in the eyes of those in Seoul counting on the United States to stand tall if North Korea invaded in force.

At this same time, the ROK side concluded, in an assessment that was initially resisted by the U.S. intelligence community, that North Korea was doubling down on its forward-deployed conventional forces. Although the U.S. came to accept this grim assessment, to Park this reluctance to recognize increased North Korean capacity for offensive operations suggested a weak alliance partner that was unwilling or unable to confront the North Koreans. Park's assumption was that there was a real possibility that the U.S. would tire of its all-in commitment to South Korea, reduce its conventional forces there, and possibly withdraw the only real capability that could deter North Korea from launching a conventional attack - the threat of American nuclear weapons impacting North Korea in the event of war. Park and his team were under no illusions that, when and if the U.S. ground forces departed the ROK, irrespective of any U.S. commitments to the contrary, the U.S. nuclear deterrent would evaporate.

Well along in the process of losing confidence in the sustainability of the U.S. commitment and planning for the day when America could leave South Korea in an exposed position, Park decided in the Spring of 1974 to launch a covert strategic weapons development program. This initiative had four components - a nuclear weapon that could be configured for delivery by a surface-to-surface missile, a ballistic missile system to deliver the same, a chemical warfare capability, and a biological warfare capability. The focus was almost entirely on the first two endeavors, and the issue was the time required to achieve such a capability, or at least the tangible capacity to build and deploy such a system. Park structured his strategic weapons program as a covert undertaking from the overall planning and execution perspective, but proceeding at maximum efficiency required both a military and non-military component. The latter was critical given the inherently visible profile of the nuclear fuel cycle and the nuclear materials that would have to be irradiated and chemically processed, that is, spent fuel reprocessed, to yield the fissionable plutonium required by the warhead itself.

The fuel cycle activity was assigned to the government-controlled Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI), a modest organization possessing a couple of small U.S.-supplied research reactors. Empowered by the parent government ministry to move out smartly and given a budget to do all that its researchers could only have dreamed of undertaking in past years, KAERI managers got very busy very quickly to contract for a nuclear research reactor, a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, fuel fabrication facilities, and associated labs. Under then current international nuclear cooperation standards, all of this was totally acceptable as a complimentary activity to South Korea's ongoing nuclear power generation program.

By mid-1974, KAERI was building itself out as a top-flight research organization, aggressively recruiting from abroad to bring home experienced Korean nuclear engineers. In the space of months, KAERI found itself more than capable of inducing all of the expertise required to create a new research center capable of delivering the fissionable material the Park team needed for its weapons program. With these elements of the overt program on the way, the only issue was the time needed to put all of the piece parts in place. A reasonable goal would be KAERI operating a complete fuel cycle capable of generating quantities of plutonium within four years, that is, by 1978. This was an ambitious but not unrealistic goal given the quality of the researchers and facilities which Park's spare-no-expense funding was delivering.

On the covert side, all responsibility devolved into the capable hands of the Ministry of Defense's Agency for Defense Development (ADD), a relatively new organization which had been created to reverse engineer and develop conventional weapons systems for the ROK military. ADD's mission was to actively support the advancement of Korea's civilian industrial sector committed to the domestic production of weapons and munitions for self-sustainment and export purposes. Under Park's plan, ADD would create a nuclear weapons design group, as well as a missile development team that would engineer the existing U.S. Nike Hercules air defense system to provide the initial strategic weapons delivery vehicle. In parallel, the development of more capable missile systems was initiated to perfect a later phase delivery capability that could range all of North Korea. Extensive funding for an entirely new ADD research center was buried deep within another Park initiative - a special multi-year military upgrade allocation named for a scholar-warrior of a previous dynasty. The "Yulgok Plan" was semi-visible to the U.S. side but allowed plenty of space for the covert funding for all of ADD's activity that was deemed protected from U.S. military and civilian visibility, not to mention interference. Park's planning was intuitive and comprehensive.

Very fortunately, although the South Korean side made extensive attempts to conceal all of the constituent elements of the program from the United States, that is, both the ADD covert weapons design activity and its link to the complimentary KAERI fuel cycle activity, the CIA was able to penetrate the covert program. This penetration occurred within months of the Park decision, and while it took several months to expand the penetration and understand all its working elements,

the CIA presence in Seoul was able to provide the U.S. Government with a complete view into almost all of the ongoing work. In this clandestine reporting activity, the Agency found itself literally tracking progress as ADD and KAERI managers strived to assemble their teams and build out the program's covert and overt facilities.

Along the way, particularly in the early months of the Agency's clandestine source reporting, there were issues at home within the U.S. intelligence and policy communities. At CIA Headquarters, analysts doubted the veracity and quality of the early intelligence and had to be convinced that their agency colleagues in Seoul had it all right. Back at the Langley flagpole, a shortcoming that too frequently entered the process came to the fore when superiors overrode operational judgements made in the field on a given reporting area. This top-down approach wherein home base could and often did shut down field station reporting by assigning a grade to collected intelligence which conveyed that "Washington is not interested." Too often, and here the author speaks from first-hand experience of five years in Seoul, we were told that information which we in the field deemed to be important to policy makers, was not valued at home base. Such evaluations came either from analysts who knew it all and were not to be challenged, or from disinterested policy consumers.

At policy levels, at that point in time, the U.S. government did not yet have a comprehensive or even coherent non-proliferation policy from which to work. The entire U.S. Government was caught in its own dilemma coming out of the Eisenhower era "Atoms for Peace" initiative that advocated the world-wide adoption of nuclear power and all the accoutrements that attended such, to include the fuel cycle itself.

Other developed nations which had embraced their own nuclear future, to include Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and others, were each determined to promote with third-party sales and technical assistance their respective technologies and solutions. In terms of nuclear technology, in the early 1970s we were experiencing a "wild west land rush" among a host of would-be nuclear suppliers competing to sell various reactor designs and differing fuel cycle methodologies. This was occurring with almost no regard for the intentions of nations to which these transfers were directed. Soon-to-be nuclear proliferators were the direct beneficiaries of this surge, including India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, and Taiwan among others. South Korea simply got in line and found a wealth of vendors, all eager to sell sensitive technology, often with the quid pro quo that sensitive technology buyers would commit to purchase nuclear power reactors nominated by the fuel cycle vendors.

The agency's team in the field in South Korea was vindicated when it was shown that its clandestine reporting had been extremely accurate from day one. Human source reporting was collaborated as buildings came out of the ground where reporting stated they would be built in remote locations to support the covert program. As foretold, contracts were signed with foreign

vendors behind closed doors for KAERI fuel cycle facilities, the existence of which was denied to U.S. officials. In Langley, the analysts soon fell into place, made the correct assessments as to Park's intent and the capability of KAERI and ADD to deliver, and from this informed the policy makers. The issue was quickly elevated to Henry Kissinger by his team and he immediately discerned all the implications of the Korean initiative. At this point, seized with the magnitude of this challenge, the State Department and the National Security Council moved expeditiously to craft and execute an aggressive approach designed to deny Park his strategic weapons program. But gaining the upper hand with Park and resolving the issue in a manner that protected the alliance with no collateral disruption to the regional security order would be a year-long hard slog.

Understanding Park's calculations, namely the factors that compelled him to take such risks with the overall US-ROK relationship and with the alliance, was critical. Human-source intelligence allowed the U.S. to confirm that Park was not only seized with the need for the program but very confident that the plan to deliver this capability was feasible. It seemed that Park intended to undertake both the overt component (securing an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle) and the covert companion activity knowing that it could well be discovered by the U.S. and that, when a confrontation did occur, he could still deal with that event to his and to South Korea's advantage.

The author here speculates with hindsight that, in a medium-case scenario, Park may have calculated that if the U.S. did not detect his strategic weapons program until it was down the road a couple of years, with the nuclear fuel cycle in place and weapons designs and missile systems being perfected, he might have advanced his gambit to a point where he could compel the U.S. to accept his indigenous program and accommodate it within the alliance. In a worst-case scenario, again having arrived at the two-year point, if the U.S. then discovered the program and demanded that Park shutter it, he would be in a position to bargain and trade that concession for improved strategic assurances.

Not beyond the range of possibility would be a ROK demand that the U.S. allocate tactical nuclear weapons to the control, either exclusively or under a dual-key arrangement (a la the NATO nuclear sharing program), of the ROK military. In sum, Park's move to initiate the Yulgok 971 project was a very ambitious, high risk but calculated gamble, and as such it was consistent with the inherent "Korean risk taking" mentality. In other words, whatever the outcome, Park's game to quickly achieve a sovereign strategic weapons capability that would provide his nation with an ultimate deterrent against North Korean, or Chinese aggression, was worth the candle.

In the case of the earlier Korean nuclear situation, by sustaining a maximum effort to collect well-sourced and timely-presented intelligence the U.S. policy makers were able to track the results of the U.S. approaches designed to derail the activity. This visibility into the discussions among Park's inner circle allowed the U.S. government to tailor its approach to include

leveraging the differing priorities among Park's advisors. Through this, one was able to expose to Park inconsistencies in the promises made by his nuclear team, and raise issues with the Blue House inner circle which we could confirm had not been thought through. One such question that was selectively put to this group was "Have you all developed a plan for the control of strategic weapons once the ROK possesses them?" This was certainly a valid question in the context of Park's one-man rule and it resonated.

We were also fortunate that there existed several very senior and influential Korean officials who did not share Park's desire to develop an independent nuclear deterrent, at least at that time. These men, many of whom were the leading lights of their nation's dramatic economic development as skilled technocrats, immediately recognized that Park's clandestine program was a very bad idea from almost every angle imaginable. Once these individuals were carefully brought into the equation, several individually or collectively resisted and helped bring the program down. Once again, the U.S. ability to selectively share detailed intelligence with these individuals carried the day. The fact that we knew it all, or almost all, and were able to convey this, was decisive.

### *Still, a Close-Run Thing*

There was absolutely no doubt among any of the U.S. officials involved in this issue during the 1974-1978 period that there was real concern on the part of the ROK leadership that the U.S. could well abandon the ROK. Close on the devastation delivered by the Korean War, the fear of abandonment, for whatever combination of reasons, be they logical or whimsical, was real and ever present. We were fortunate to acquire the protected information we did secure when we did and to possess the will to apply unrelenting pressure on all of the involved parties to force the issue. The latter included not just Park's regime but also Canada, the United Kingdom, and France once we appreciated the role that each was playing in our contest of wills.

As if to drive home this concern and keep it at the fore in the ROK, the United States elected Jimmy Carter as its president in 1976. Within weeks of Carter taking office in early 1977, his administration would stun U.S. policy makers and shake the US-ROK alliance to its foundation. Carter made it known that he was determined to withdraw U.S. forces from the ROK and scale down the security guarantees there, the implication being that the ostensible strategic guarantee that had existed as a companion to the presence of conventional U.S. forces there was in doubt. President Park and his inner circle soon came to regret the decision to abandon their strategic weapons program as the reality of the Carter presidency asserted itself a few short years after the U.S. forced the shutdown of that covert weapons program.

Had the U.S. failed to detect and dismantle the ROK strategic weapons program when it did, and had that program still existed in 1977 when Carter arrived on the scene, the eventual outcome could well have been quite different. It is probable that different calculations would have driven different decisions in the Blue House if the facilities and mechanics were then still in place to allow the weapons system to be built. Almost certainly, given the drama that attended the Carter years and the impact of his obsession with the U.S. presence in South Korea, a ROK strategic weapons program would have been sustained if not accelerated. In the final accounting, both nations were fortunate that the entire issue was resolved when it was and that minimal damage was delivered to the relationship and the alliance.

### *An Intelligence Approach in 2023 to Non-Proliferation in Northeast Asia*

In 2023, the dynamic among Japan (as a U.S. ally with embedded strategic security guarantees), the ROK (ditto albeit with nuanced differences), North Korea, and China (the latter in both the Taiwan and first island chain context) is historically fraught with tension and unpredictability. In policy discussions in years past, the author has compared this region to a nuclear reactor in which the United States plays the role of the control rods vertically inserted to moderate the chain reaction among the fuel elements, allowing the system to generate heat while preempting a criticality run-away that would destroy the facility and contaminate all around it. In the current case, we have disparate fuel elements inserted and active, some of which are beyond the ability of our control rods to moderate, with the certain prospect that ever more complex fuel elements are being crafted, soon to be introduced into the mix.

At some point, certainly within the next few years, the U.S. role as the ever-challenged manager and control rod provider for this East Asia nuclear reactor will no longer be sustainable. This could occur as a result of simple fatigue with the mission, or part of a broader national retrenchment that abandons certain too-difficult obligations far from home, or because the U.S. has come to reluctantly judge that this effort is beyond its reasonable capacity to sustain even if it wished to do so. In such a case, the U.S. may be forced to distance itself from the Northeast Asian reactor as it begins to go critical, and leave the system to its own ends. As one senior U.S. diplomat once said of the U.S. commitment to do its level best to deliver on its stewardship of Korean and Northeast Asia stability as beyond America's writ, referencing a Chinese proverb, "It may be time to just poison the shrimp and burn the fields and depart."

Howsoever the U.S. geostrategic position in Northeast Asia evolves, and in that evolution what solutions we find or fail to find regarding penultimate security guarantees to the ROK, as well as to Japan, the experiences of America's non-proliferation exercise in the 1970s suggest some must-have elements of an action plan that keeps U.S. policy makers on top of developments in the region. A key theme for all intelligence collectors, be they clandestine collectors working the

streets or imagery analysts bent over a photo table in a non-descript building just outside the Beltway, is the mantra of “no surprises.”

Detailed timely knowledge allows preemption and, in fact, such information is the sine qua non for all policy formulation and execution. The failure to collect aggressively and work objectively with that collected product, discarding presumption and prejudice, condemns national leadership to a come-from-behind scramble that too often gets the solution wrong. Put another way, grand intelligence failures, of which the United States has had far too many, are acceptable if the missed event is a coup in West Africa. But in the category of nuclear issues, with the Cuban Missile Crisis as our poster child for failure writ large, there is no margin for poor performance. This is particularly so when we have multi-billion-dollar intelligence budgets feeding the trough from which a score or more of collection entities feed.

### *Intelligence Considerations for Future Practitioners*

Revisiting the former non-proliferation adventure with South Korea and venturing a guess that Seoul will sooner rather than later conclude that it has little choice but to again seek the ultimate security guarantee, the following considerations related to intelligence collection and processing are suggested:

- Do not assume that the recently resurrected US-ROK dialog on strategic assurance or nuclear reassurance will carry the day, at least beyond the next few years. It is probable that North Korea, in adjusting its confrontational strategy, will continue to emphasize provocations designed to embarrass and degrade the ROK leadership and undermine the credibility of the US-ROK security alliance. In such a case, every nuance of the South Korean reaction will require close attention.
- If the U.S. elects to deepen its strategic guarantee to Japan, possibly with the stationing of INF-class conventional and nuclear missiles, either on land or at sea to protect the Japanese home islands, the ROK will expect and accept nothing less. Failure to secure the same level of U.S. protection and commitment will trigger a go-for-broke program to build and field a nuclear weapons deterrent. South Korea’s ability to realize such a program should not be underestimated, nor should the U.S. ability to constrain such a program be overestimated. Such capabilities for ROK breakout require the attention of intelligence collectors, of both the covert and overt varieties, as well as a constant updating of assessments by analysts dedicated to tracking this target.
- While North Korea’s ostensible end goal is the reunification of the peninsula under Pyongyang’s control, the near-term, must-have objective of the Kim regime is a direct

relationship with the only nation on the face of the planet that can assure its survival, namely the United States. The Kim dynasty would be willing to sacrifice millions of South Koreans to achieve this end. If the next nuclear weapon test successfully demonstrates that a neutron weapon is in hand, South Korea has reason to tremble. Meanwhile, already holding Japan proper and U.S. bases there hostage to its missile forces, Pyongyang will accelerate its ICBM program to credibly threaten the U.S. homeland. A North Korean scheme that imagines that it will be able to dissuade and deter any U.S. strategic response to a substantial conventional or nuclear strike on Japan or South Korea or both is increasingly in the realm of the possible. The ROK and Japan have concluded as much.

- Expect no assistance from China, Russia, or any other actors as long as North Korea's aggression is directed at America and its Asian security partners. We need to actively collect to determine the attitude of the Chinese leadership as well as its military planners as North Korea becomes more disruptive to the regional order. China probably expects that, as Pyongyang's nuclear capability grows, it will be even less restrained than it is already, and increasingly unresponsive to Chinese attempts to influence Pyongyang's behavior. While we should assume that China will remain standing on the sidelines as North Korea runs its playbook, we should not assume that there will not be a breaking point for China. The possibility of such is too important to miss and we need to collect intelligently with such an eventuality in mind. Similarly, on the South Korean nuclear front, it is likely that a nuclear South Korea would be an inherently unacceptable development for China. Thus, we need to track China's assessment of and reaction to the dialog that has begun in Seoul over a possible nuclear future.

One Korean peninsula nuclear futures scenario which has not received adequate attention but requires additional focus is the potential for a North Korean regime collapse and the consequent fate of Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal. Prudent planning suggests that the ROK would desire to seize and incorporate some or most of that capability into its own force structure in the event of such a collapse. Even the best-intentioned leadership in Seoul would probably find itself under substantial domestic pressure to gain and sustain some degree of control over such "national" assets. Covert collectors and analysts cannot ignore the potential for such a Black Swan event, even if the analytical elite judge it to be unlikely. Because the national security implications of such a fast-moving event are serious given the regional reordering that such a situation would occasion, policy makers need to be informed by balanced assessments and game out these scenarios. Critical components of such an assessment will only be derived from the ROK mission planners so involved, not to mention their Chinese counterparts and even Japanese counterparts.

The potential for a nuclear South Korea in this decade remains high and worthy of deliberate attention and planning. Solid intelligence will be needed to inform the analytical process from

which realistic policy scenarios will be crafted. All-source intelligence, to include human intelligence reporting that provides intent and context, will perform an essential role. An approach that fails to put such a comprehensive collection effort in place today will leave policy makers with a come-from-behind scramble to catch up to events, leaving little margin for error given the velocity at which decisions will be made.

One additional thought, overriding some of the above, but reinforcing most of it, is as follows: There is the case that the U.S. recognizes that the denuclearization of North Korea is an impossible goal however diligently that is pursued and concludes that it is time to either walk away from the “vortex” or opt to explore a solution that may seem inherently foreign to its best interests as well as to the entire non-proliferation regime. In that realization, U.S. may manage to bring both South Korea and Japan along with it to recognize North Korea as a bona fide nuclear weapons state and deal with it formally and frontally and objectively as such. There is little doubt that Pyongyang would welcome such an engagement, in company with the recognition of its statute that such an understanding would confer. It would also do everything possible to insist on an elevated North Korea-United States partnership that relegates South Korea, Japan, and even China to a secondary status in Northeast Asia.

If the U.S. sought to explore such a solution, the goal being to create and sustain a nuclear modus vivendi of sorts in the region, there will be a range of compromises in the works that impact, possibly irritate the other involved nations, with secondary effects that would need to be anticipated, modeled, contained, and managed. It is obvious that none of this could occur absent an aggressive and comprehensive intelligence collection and analysis effort. In such a policy move, or even the consideration of the same, that capability would have to be in place, collecting and providing policy makers with quality intelligence from the outset.

## About the Author

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### **Richard Lawless**

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Richard Lawless is a Founder and Principal of NMV Consulting, LLC. Richard also serves as the Chairman Emeritus of the Board, Texas Central Partners, LLC, a partnership that is deploying high-speed rail technology on the 240-mile Dallas-Houston, Texas corridor. Finally, Richard is a co-founder and Chairman of mobile technologies development company, Modo Labs, Inc. Richard served the United States government for over 20 years, most recently as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs. In this capacity Richard was responsible for formulating U.S. security and defense policy in the Asia-Pacific region, including East, South East, and Central Asia. He retired from this position in July 2007. Prior to his appointment at the Department of Defense, Richard co-founded and served as the Chairman/CEO of U.S. Asia Commercial Development Cooperation from 1987-2002. Mr. Lawless served as a career employee of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1972 through 1987, serving in Washington, D.C., and various postings in the Far East and Europe. He specialized in subjects related to high technology, nuclear proliferation and Far East security issues. Richard is a graduate of Bradley University's School of International Studies (B.S. International Relations, Magna Cum Laude) and the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California (Korean language program). In addition to the January 2023 publication of "[Hunting Nukes](#)," a second book, "[Nightstalkers-The Wright Project and the 868<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron in World War II](#)," will be available from Casemate Publishing (UK) in March 2023.



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