



## After the Era of the Kims?

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### Executive Summary

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Besieged by the US, Kim Jong-Un continues to threaten all out nuclear war against the US. However, he also prepares for non-nuclear surprise attacks of strategic significance. Whether they can be contained before an all-out war is launched is the key unknown.

Not only the US has no viable response to these KPA contingency plans short of a major escalation to an all-out war - but the US is to be blamed for the deterioration of the situation on the Korean Peninsula mainly because of the arrogance and ignorance of the US Korean policy since the beginning of the 21st Century.

The DPRK is already capable of implementing the bulk of its nuclear doctrine. The yet to be fully attained ability to hit the continental US is an add-on - lucrative but not crucial.

Pyongyang means every word of its threats to set the region aflame, and Beijing and Moscow dread the ramifications of both Pyongyang's reckless bellicosity and Washington's profound stubbornness and refusal to understand the situation.

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## Analysis

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Besieged by the US, Kim Jong-Un continues to threaten all out nuclear war against the US. However, he also prepares for non-nuclear surprise attacks of strategic significance. Whether they can be contained before an all-out war is launched is the key unknown. Presently, not only the US has no viable response to these KPA contingency plans short of a major escalation to an all-out war - but the US is to be blamed for the deterioration of the situation on the Korean Peninsula mainly because of the arrogance of the US Korean policy since the beginning of the 21st Century.

### The DPRK's Nuclear Doctrine

The DPRK's nuclear doctrine was originally adopted around 1990 under Kim Il-Song in the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the nascent ascent of China. The North Korean doctrine is a direct evolution of the PRC's early plans for a regional nuclear war drawn by Marshal Lin Biao in the late 1960's. Lin Biao was one of the main professional mentors of the DPRK's military elite during and after the Korean War. In the late 1960's, the PRC had a minuscule nuclear arsenal and Lin Biao sought to overcome this hurdle and still successfully confront the US. The PRC identified three targets in Japan and one in South Korea which destruction by nuclear weapons would cause immense numbers of American casualties. At a time of crisis, China could serve the US with an ultimatum. Beijing believed that "because America lacked nerve ... any American President would choose to retreat in such a situation." Should China decide to launch a surprise strike against these targets - a major worldwide pressure to avoid an escalation to a global nuclear war would further restrain the US from launching massive retaliation. Under such circumstances, Beijing believed, "a weaker China could conquer [triumph over] a stronger America" in a regional war.

The North Korean unique character of the nuclear warfare doctrine, and the subsequent development of missiles and warheads, have been formulated in accordance with a master-plan prepared and continuously perfected by General O Kuk-Yol (also spelled Ryol) since 1988. He was educated in the Air Force and Frunze Soviet military academies, and speaks English, Russian and Chinese. O Kuk-Yol rose in ranks to become the Chief of General Staff of the KPA. In 1988, he was removed from this post by Kim Il-Song in order to educate and prepare Kim Jong-Il for his eventual succession as leader, as well as chart the course of North Korea's national security in the post-Soviet era and particularly in lieu of the ascent of China. O Kuk-Yol is a military reformer and advocate of hi-tech weaponry and the development military industries. He established the Mirim Electronic Warfare Institute and the North Korean electronic and cyber warfare capabilities. He also founded the DPRK's defense industrial base – insisting on the development and self-production of all weapons from small arms ammunition to ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. In late-2000, O Kuk-Yol was nominated as the tutor for national security affairs of Kim Jong-Un in order to prepare him for the eventual succession of his father. Presently, O Kuk-Yol is a Vice Chairman of the National Defense Commission and also a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (WPK).

The enduring power and influence of O Kuk-Yol are also the result of the special relations between Kim Jong-Un and O's son O Se-Won. Officially, O Se-Won is a special advisor to Kim Jong-Un on political-economic relations with China. In reality, O Se-Won is the leader of a small unofficial group known as "Ponghwajo" ("Torch Group"). Between 2000 and his ascent to power in December 2011, Kim Jong-Un was an active member. All the members of the "Ponghwajo" are North Korea's princelings – that is, the sons and daughters of Communist



Party, intelligence/security and military leaders who have amassed fortunes through the ruling system. As well, O Se-Won and the “Ponghwajo” are running the dark side of the DPRK economy – from smuggling of drugs and counterfeit money (including counterfeit \$100 notes) to acquiring hi-tech for national security, as well as to handling the foreign currency stashes of the uppermost elite and the importation of luxury items for them. The importance and strength of O Kuk-Yol and O Se-Won was clearly demonstrated in 2004. O Se-Uk, another child of O Kuk-Yol, was ensnared in economic criminality abroad and convinced to defect to the US as the sole substitute to lengthy and most unpleasant incarceration. The position at the top of both O Kuk-Yol and O Se-Won was not affected. Nor was O Kuk-Yol’s analysis of the threats and opportunities facing the DPRK challenged.

According to the O Kuk-Yol doctrine, the virtually only casus belli as far as Pyongyang goes is a US-led attempt to impose a regime change in Pyongyang. Although Pyongyang repeatedly warns about impending US and RoK attacks and invasions – the ruling Kims know this is not a viable threat. However, there is a fixation among the Pyongyang elite with threats to the Kims and their inner-most coterie – mainly from the US, but also from China and Russia. The anticipated threats include machinations with dissatisfied princelings, conspiracies with power-hungry members of the security elite to launch a military coup, all the way to assassination by the US in order to bring in puppet-leaders from the outside (just as the Soviet Union brought in grandpa Kim Il-Song).

The DPRK’s national doctrine is based on attaining victory in the non-nuclear “initial period of war” (a Soviet term) under the umbrella of nuclear blackmail. The North Korean drive will be reinforced by a comprehensive global cyberwarfare, and, should the need arise, “sub-nuclear demonstration [of resolve]” (a Chinese term) in the form of EMP strikes that will darken South Korea, Japan, and beyond (e.g. Guam, Hawaii and parts of China and Russia). EMP is the result of a nuclear burst on the edge of space that will fry all modern electronics – thus bringing the modern state into paralysis and devastation. In case of battlefield setbacks or unanticipated strong reaction by the world powers, the DPRK will launch surprise nuclear strikes in order to compel the US-led West into ending the war. Pyongyang is convinced that under such circumstances China and Russia will contain the US before the DPRK is destroyed by nuclear counter-attacks.

### The DPRK’s Present Focus

That said, the DPRK is presently focusing on a major brinkmanship and provocations escalating into a limited and self-constrained use of force across the DMZ. The real threat to the RoK and the US comes from old fashioned artillery and special forces. The main threat comes from the 620 Artillery Corps that is deployed in the Hwanghae-bukto (also spelled bukdo) province just north of Seoul. The 620 Artillery Corps has over 8,000 artillery systems, 500 of them heavy long-range pieces, hidden in over 4,000 underground facilities. The North Korean special forces field over 100,000 elite and 150,000 auxiliary forces, as well as dedicated transportation systems.

Pyongyang has repeatedly threatened to turn Seoul into a “sea of fire” through conventional artillery and rocket barrages. Indeed, massive barrages by the 620 Artillery Corps are enough to inflict heavy civilian casualties in, and huge damage to, Seoul. The best estimates are that casualties in the larger Seoul metropolitan area alone will surpass 100,000 within 48 hours. Meanwhile, special forces will cause disruption of life throughout South Korea and, if necessary, also Japan. Detachments of special forces, many in RoK uniforms, will be rushing south through tunnels, on foot through mountain passes, as well as by hard to detect semi-submersibles and An-2 bi-planes. Their main mission will be to create widespread chaos that will make



the country ungovernable. There will be attempts at spectacular attacks on the Blue House and other key national and strategic objectives – but the success of these is not considered by Pyongyang crucial to the overall outcome.

For Pyongyang, this is a political sub-war. The ultimate objective is to convincingly demonstrate the US impotence. Indeed, there is a limit as to what the US can do to ameliorate the damage – particularly in the first hours and days following a surprise attack. Airpower is extremely limited when coming to hunting down individual pieces of artillery coming out of caves to fire a few salvos over the mountains and then pushed back in for reloads and maintenance, all the more so since the area is also saturated with low- and medium-altitude air defense. There is also a limit as to what can be done to stop the swarms of special forces. Allied forces committed to hunting down the North Korean special forces in the RoK rear are forces not available for the front-lines. All out cyberwarfare will vastly complicate the US and RoK ability to assume control and react in a timely manner. The flow of civilians rushing southwards will clog all roads and highways. Even limited use of chemical and biological weapons, or even rumors of such use, will add to the chaos and panic. These waves of humanity fleeing southwards will slow down the flow of reinforcement forces northwards. In the current state of the KPA, the DPRK can launch this type of surprise attack on a moment notice and with the US and RoK having no forewarning at all.

Whether North Korean forces will then invade the South is politically irrelevant. The KPA has several dedicated armored and mechanized Corps at the ready for the swift thrust and envelopment of virtually the entire South Korea. The KPA's main thrust formations are likely to gain major achievements in what the Soviets called "the initial period of war". Indeed, all the simulations of a KPA surprise invasion since the Soviets reorganized the KPA in the late-1980's have had the KPA achieving major initial gains. The reversal of these gains would require the amassing of huge ground forces overtime and an ensuing protracted and costly land warfare that will all but destroy South Korea in order to liberate it.

Indeed, US retaliation for non-nuclear fire strikes on Seoul and massive use of special forces, and even a swift invasion, is limited at best and possibly futile. Nuclear first use is highly unlikely (particularly since both China and Russia are bound to warn the US not to use nuclear weapons near their own borders). Therefore, a US nuclear ultimatum against a non-nuclear invasion will be all but ignored by Pyongyang. The US might attempt a regime change by force. Should escalation continue, the US can launch a massive air-war destroying the North Korean economy and state infrastructure, leading possibility for all-out war short of the use of nuclear weapons. However, both Moscow and Beijing are petrified of Pyongyang's likely nuclear extortion and threats in order to get support – military, political, economic – against the US in case of a war going badly. It is the Chinese and Russian self-interest, rather than support for Pyongyang, that will decide their reaction to the crisis and war.

### **The China and Russia Factor in the Korean Crisis**

The China and Russia factor in the Korean crisis is focused on preventing the above scenario from ever coming even close to eruption. Both Beijing and Moscow are cognizant that the Kims' determination to guarantee their self-survival and immunity to decapitation is at the core of the current instability and slide toward regional eruption. There is no love for the Kim dynasty or a commitment for their enduring in power.

However, there is the historic Chinese perception of the acceptable grand-strategic posture in the Far East that Beijing is loath to sacrifice. Moreover, Moscow has long concurred with the Chinese strategic and regional



calculations. It is Washington's persistent ignoring of these grand-strategic calculations that prevents the defusing of the Korean Peninsula.

China sought to bring prudence and pragmatism to US policy in the Far East since George Bush (43) took office in 2000. Beijing sought to remedy the aftermath of Clinton's mercurial decade. When presidents Jiang Zemin and Bush met in late October 2002 in Crawford, Texas, Jiang articulated China's position and offered assistance to the US in resolving the Kim quagmire. By then, Kim Jong-Il was openly acknowledging the violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework to the point that by the second half of 2002 the agreement fell apart with the US and the DPRK blaming the other for its failure. Pyongyang was accelerating the nuclear build-up in order to acquire dooms-day insurance against decapitation of the regime by the US as demonstrated in Serbia, Afghanistan, and, soon, Iraq. The Chinese position, as articulated in 2002 by Jiang Zemin, was raised several times with US leaders – the last being by Xi Jinping to Donald Trump in April 2017 in Mar-a-Lago, Florida.

The quintessence of the Chinese grand-strategy is that there can be no US forces and no "US puppet" or "US colony" on the banks of the Yalu River under any circumstances. Significantly, the recent Chinese explanation of their own and the Soviet intervention in the Korean War. Their invasion of North Korea and the attacks on the US/UN forces were not in order to save Kim Il-Song, but in order to prevent US forces from reaching the Chinese border. These strategic imperatives remain valid to this very day. China will therefore actively prevent the US from reaching its border at a heartbeat should the need arise again.

Thus, the Chinese have always been extremely worried about the Kims' penchant for brinkmanship and provocations, and there was no love lost between the mercurial Kims and the prudent Forbidden City. Hence, Beijing has been ready to accept, and even actively support, a regime change in Pyongyang under the overall acceptable strategic posture of no US forces and/or allies on the Yalu. At the same time, Beijing is cognizant that there can be no drastic changes in Pyongyang without cooperation with, or the agreement of, Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

Therefore, since 2002, Beijing has repeatedly raised two possible solutions for the post-Kims Korean Peninsula. Preferably, Korea remains divided with North Korea becoming a neutral buffer state – a type of Cold War Finland and Austria. Given the US insistence on unification, China has been willing to consider the Finlandization of the entire united Korea. But this would require the US abrogating all pertinent treaties and agreements with Seoul, and withdrawing all US/UN forces. In response, Washington has adamantly insisted that the united Korea will continue to adhere to all treaties with the US, and that US forces will remain and be based throughout the entire united Korea. The US push of NATO eastwards in blatant disregard and contradiction of promises to Gorbachev and Yeltsin convinced Beijing they cannot trust US assurances. Having to choose between the mercurial Kims and a US-dominated Korea on China's border – Beijing has chosen the Kims as the least of evil, and will continue to prop-up Kim Jong-Un's regime.

### **China's Political and Military Mid-April 2017 Moves**

In mid-April, 2017, upon Xi's return from Florida, Beijing articulated the Chinese doctrine for North Korea in a most authoritative statement distributed to the military and diplomatic elites. "China very much hopes that the DPRK nuclear issue can be solved as soon as possible. But no matter what happens, China has a bottom line that it will protect at all costs, that is, the security and stability of northeast China." Beijing's Korean policy is based on two crux issues about which there will be no compromise. First, "DPRK's nuclear activities must not cause any pollution to northeast China." The focus on pollution means that China will not tolerate nuclear



pollution from US nuclear strikes, as well. Second, “the DPRK must not fall into the turmoil to send a large number of refugees, it is not allowed to have a government that is hostile against China on the other side of the Yalu River, and the US military must not push forward its forces to the Yalu River.” The document asserted in no uncertain way that “China will not allow the existence of a government that is hostile against China on the other side of the Yalu River, and the US military must not push forward its military forces to the Yalu River.” Beijing threatened military action if these crux interests are threatened. “If the [above] bottom line is touched, China will employ all means available including the military means to strike back,” the document asserted. “By that time, it is not an issue of discussion whether China acquiesces in the US’ blows, but the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) will launch attacks [on] DPRK nuclear facilities on its own.”

To reiterate China’s commitment to a military intervention should the US encroach on the Yalu, Beijing brought back the ghosts of the Chinese intervention in the Korean War. It was “an advance such as this” by the US-led forces in October 1950 that compelled Beijing to commit “the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army” to attacking the US-led forces and to pushing them back to the 38th Parallel. Beijing stressed that the Chinese military intervention and the turn-around of the US fortunes in Korea could have been avoided had the US complied with Chinese demands that US forces stop a short distance from the Yalu. Beijing noted that during the Korean War, “the United States-led united army troops from multiple countries announced that the united troops would not advance the battlefield to the Yalu River, but would stop at 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of the Sino-DPRK border. They called this line MacArthur Line back then.” When the US-led forces failed to stop along the MacArthur Line as demanded by China, the PLA moved in and launched the major offensive. The message is clear – Washington must not repeat the mistakes of 1950 for it would risk another Chinese intervention and war.

Subsequently, this theme has been elaborated on to new extremes as a message to the Trump White House that the Forbidden City is focused on guaranteeing the PRC’s vital interests rather than shielding the Kims’ Government. Shen Zihua, one of the most prominent experts on the Korean War, formally distanced Beijing from Pyongyang. “Judging by the current situation, North Korea is China’s latent enemy and South Korea could be China’s friend,” he observed. “We must see clearly that China and North Korea are no longer brothers in arms, and in the short term there’s no possibility of an improvement in Chinese-North Korean relations.” Shen Zihua emphasized that his statements are the result of a professional analysis rather than reinterpretation of the past. “The fundamental interests of China and North Korea are at odds.” He opined that China should lead the quick resolution of the North Korean challenge and menace before the US had an excuse to intervene unilaterally. He alluded to the North Korean nuclear blackmail doctrine. “If North Korea really does master nuclear weapons and their delivery, then the whole world will have to prostrate itself at the feet of North Korea,” Shen Zihua explained. “The longer this drags out, the better it is for North Korea.”

In mid-April 2017, China started to undertake military moves in order to prevent US occupation of North Korea and deter US nuclear strikes but not to save the Kims’ regime. Beijing ordered the activation of wartime readiness of the eastern parts of the Northern Battle Zones (Theater), mainly in areas that used to be the Shenyang Military Region (MR) before the February 2016 military reform. Beijing ordered the main formations at all five military regions “to maintain preparedness because of the situation in North Korea” and to be ready to move in the event of a crisis or conflict in the Korean Peninsula. Additional units all over China were ordered to prepare for a possible move eastward.





Beijing is preparing for the eventuality of a major and protracted war in Korea. In the Northern Theater, the Northeastern District Defense Command ordered over 150,000 troops to mobilize all resources and prepare to move toward the Yalu. The main units affected are the 16th, 23rd, 39th, and 40th Group Armies (in the former Shenyang MR) and the 26th Group Army (in the former Jinan MR). Most important are the 39th and the 40th Group Armies – both with headquarters in Yingkou and Jinzhou in Liaoning Province. The 39th is a heavy armored-mechanized unit and the 40th is the regional rapid reaction force. The 16th and the 23rd are armored-mechanized units. The 26th is part of the PLA's strategic reserve so that its activation implies that Beijing is anticipating a lengthy conflict.

Elsewhere in China, several armored and mechanized-infantry brigades in the provinces of Shaanxi, Shandong, Zhejiang and Yunnan received “the state mandate” to raise their readiness level, mobilize resources, and be ready to move eastward. By mid-April, 25,000 troops of the 9th Armored Brigade (HQ in Chengcheng, Shaanxi Province) of the 47th Group Army (HQ in Lintong, Shaanxi Province, former Lanzhou MR) were the first to begin the deployment eastward. Additional civil defense, medical and back-up support units from all over China were informed they will be dispatched to “train for North Korean refugees” along the border.

Concurrently, the Northern Theater started raising the readiness levels of the regional strategic assets – including nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles. These are under the command of the 51st Rocket Army with HQ in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. The Army includes 12 Dongfeng-03 ballistic missiles, 24 Dongfeng-21 “Carrier-killer” missiles, and a number of the new Dongfeng-31A mobile ballistic missiles. In order to expedite the operational status of the Dongfeng-31A elements – one was test launched. The Northern Theater also issued “the orders for full-scale pre-emptive” deployment to all the submarines and submarine units under their command. Concurrently, the People's Liberation Army Air Forces of the former Shenyang MR were put “on high alert” in order to “reduce the time to react to a North Korea contingency.” These units include “land-attack, cruise-missile capable bombers” whose missions include “an invasion of that country to eliminate its nuclear weapons making program.” In addition, a large number of Chinese military aircraft – mainly tactical fighter-bombers and helicopters – are being brought up to full readiness through intensified maintenance. The PLAAF units were informed specifically that these undertakings are aimed to “reduce the time to react to a North Korea contingency.”

Meanwhile, the Russian Armed Forces on the Pacific coast also began mobilization and force movements. Local units, mainly air defense missiles and heliborne special forces, are being rushed to the North Korean border. These forces include units normally earmarked for the defense of Vladivostok and nearby strategic installations – reflection of Moscow's sense of urgency.

### **Tensions in and around the Korean Peninsula Keeps Rising**

The tension in and around the Korean Peninsula keeps rising. Beijing is increasingly petrified that a small incident will spark a regional war that might escalate into a nuclear exchange. There is plenty of blame to go around, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi explained on April 14. “The United States and South Korea and North Korea are engaging in tit for tat, with swords drawn and bows bent, and there have been storm clouds gathering. If they let war break out on the peninsula, they must shoulder that historical culpability and pay the corresponding price for this.”

Yet, Trump's Washington still misunderstands, or simply ignores, the legitimate concerns of both Beijing and Moscow. In his April 12 interview with the *The Wall Street Journal*, Trump acknowledged that the situation in



Korea was more complicated than he had estimated. He attributed this to his exchange with Xi in Mar-a-Lago. “He then went into the history of China and Korea. Not North Korea, Korea. And you know, you’re talking about thousands of years ... and many wars. And Korea actually used to be a part of China. And after listening for 10 minutes, I realized that it’s not so easy,” Trump explained. In this discussion, Xi stressed that Korea has been a crucial part of China’s historic buffer and sphere of influence, and that this posture must continue. Trump listened carefully, but there is no indication that the White House internalized, let alone accepted, Beijing’s concerns. US rhetoric continues to insist on the imperative of a US-dominated unified Korea once the Kim dynasty is overthrown by agreement or war.

With the situation deteriorating rapidly, China reiterated its policy on April 22nd in another authoritative statement distributed to the military and diplomatic elites. The quintessence of Beijing’s policy is that while China can tolerate surgical strikes destroying the North Korean nuclear infrastructure, China will not tolerate a regime change by force and the occupation of North Korea by US-led forces. “If Pyongyang’s unwavering pursuit of its nuclear program continues and Washington launches a military attack on North Korea’s nuclear facilities as a result, Beijing should oppose the move by diplomatic channels, rather than get involved through military action.” However, the statement emphasized, China would consider “full-scale military intervention” if US and RoK forces advanced beyond the inter-Korean border. The statement asserted that Beijing would not “sit back and watch foreign military forces overthrow the Pyongyang regime.”

Subsequently, Xi Jinping called Donald Trump on 24 April and implored restraint and prudence. He emphasized Beijing’s “hope that all sides exercise restraint and avoid intensifying the situation on the peninsula. Only when each side takes responsibility and works together, can we can solve the nuclear issue.” China is willing to work with the US to defuse the crisis, Xi said. At the end of the conversation, Chinese senior officials reported, Trump and Xi “committed to strengthen coordination in achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.”

The next day, senior officials elaborated on Beijing’s frustration with the US and trepidation of an imminent eruption. “The game of chicken between Washington and Pyongyang has come to a breaking point.” They harshly criticize Washington’s expectations that Beijing can solve the crisis “as if such an effort is as easy as saying abracadabra.” It is impossible to negotiate with Pyongyang under the threat of imminent war and regime decapitation. Pyongyang must be given a way out. “The US should [also] offer North Korea a carrot,” they opined. Beijing complained that Washington intentionally ignored the crux of the crisis. “In the eyes of the Pyongyang regime, the US aim is to topple it. Pyongyang worries that once it gives up its nuclear deterrence, Washington will overthrow its regime. The Trump administration needs to prove that the US has no intention of doing so. ... From Beijing’s perspective, Washington’s efforts are not enough. The US is advised to make up for it,” the senior officials noted. Meanwhile, with US incessant pressure increasing the likelihood of miscalculation and “a life-and-death struggle” – Beijing expects Pyongyang to be prudent. “The North Korea nuclear issue is like a puzzle filled with bombs. Pyongyang must not strike a match and detonate it. What it needs is big wisdom to realize a soft landing.” However, the contradictory positions of Washington and Pyongyang all but prevent the formulation of a viable compromise. “Beijing cannot possibly satisfy both sides,” the Chinese senior officials acknowledged.

### Pyongyang Remains Defiant

Meanwhile, official Pyongyang remains defiant and increasingly bellicose. Already on 21 April, Pyongyang attacked Beijing’s position and cooperation with the US for the first time. “A neighboring country has recently





been unable to say a single word about the US sending an unprecedented amount of strategic assets to waters near the Korean Peninsula and pushing the circumstances to the brink of war, and it has been openly threatening to do something to us," the DPRK's communique read. Pyongyang warned Beijing of the calamitous consequences of such policy. "If they miscalculate our resolve and keep relying on economic sanctions against us as they dance to someone else's tune, they may receive the applause and praise of our enemies, but they will have to resign themselves to the catastrophic consequences that this will have for their relations with us."

On 22 April, Pyongyang warned that a "great war is coming" to the Korean peninsula. Such a war might escalate into a nuclear exchange. "Now that we possess mighty nuclear power to protect ourselves from US nuclear threat, we will respond without the slightest hesitation to full-out war with full-out war, and to nuclear war with our style of nuclear strike, and we will emerge victor in the final battle with the United States," the latest statement of the foreign ministry read.

The official newspaper *Nodong Sinmun* warned that the DPRK will not hesitate to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike if threatened and provoked. "The US has now gone seriously mad. It is mulling frightening the DPRK and achieving something with nuclear strategic bombers, nuclear carriers, etc. However, the army and people of the DPRK will never be browbeaten by such bluffing," the April 22nd Editorial read. "Under the situation where the US hurts the DPRK by force of arms, we have nothing to be bound to. The DPRK will answer to such war moves and provocations with pre-emptive strike of its own style and a great war of justice for national reunification."

On 24 April, Minister of the People's Armed Forces General Pak Yong-Sik issued a statement on the eve of the Armed Forces Day (25 April). He announced that the DPRK's "precise and advanced striking means" have already been deployed to strike the US and allies. Pak Yong-Sik warned that the DPRK is preparing for a fateful war that will decide the future of the Korean Peninsula. "Our nuclear weapons capable of striking US military bases in Asia-Pacific areas and the US homeland are fully prepared to be fired from launchers. ... If the enemies dare opt for the military adventure despite our repeated warnings, our armed forces will wipe the strongholds of aggression off the surface of the earth through the powerful preemptive nuclear attacks as they have already declared and thus accomplish the historic cause of national reunification without fail." The April 25th Editorial of the *Nodong Sinmun* escalated the bellicose rhetoric. "If the US and warmongers run amok with a reckless preemptive strike, we will stage the most brutal punishment of a pre-emptive attack in the sky and land as well as at sea and from underwater without any warning or prior notice." The message coming out of Pyongyang is that the DPRK is losing patience and is gearing to strike out.

North Korea commemorated Armed Forces Day with a massive artillery conventional firing drill on the beach near Wonsan. It was the KPA's largest ever artillery exercise with some 300-400 artillery pieces of all sizes firing in unison. Kim Jong-Un and the entire KPA High Command personally conducted the drill. It was a grim demonstration to Seoul about the inevitable "sea of fire" should anybody strike the DPRK. North Korean media continues to warn that "a great war" is coming because the US "has gone seriously mad."

Pyongyang means every word, and Beijing and Moscow dread the ramifications of both Pyongyang's reckless bellicosity and Washington's profound stubbornness and refusal to understand the situation.

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**Remarks:** Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

### About the Author of this Issue

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He is the author of eleven books – including *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (*New York Times* No. 1 Bestseller & *Washington Post* No. 1 Bestseller), *The Secret History of the Iraq War* (*New York Times* Bestseller & *Foreign Affairs Magazine* Bestseller), and *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* – and hundreds of articles, book chapters and Congressional reports.

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