

**Information and Influence Campaign in north Korea  
When, Why, and How?  
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***"Deterrence works, until it doesn't" Sir Lawrence Freedman***

***"There are only two ways to approach planning for the collapse of North Korea: to be ill-prepared or to be really ill-prepared" Dr. Kurt Campbell 1 May 1998***

**Sun Tzu - "never assume the enemy will not attack, make yourself invincible." - The Collapse Corollary: Never assume the KFR will not collapse - prepare now.**

**Strategic Planning and Preparation Paralysis arises from a fear of what comes next - the War/Collapse Paradox**

The Korean peninsula, Northeast Asia and the world are faced with five "big" scenarios that are going to have to be addressed in the future. The "Big Five" are:

1. War
2. Collapse of the Kim Family Regime
3. Human Rights Atrocities/Crimes Against Humanity
4. Nuclear weapons and missile development and proliferation
5. Korean Unification

I will state my bias up front. I believe that the only way that we will see an end to the north Korean nuclear program and the crimes against humanity being committed against the Korean people living in the north by the mafia-like crime family cult known as the Kim family Regime is through unification and the establishment of a non-nuclear, economically vibrant peninsula with a liberal constitutional form of government determined by the Korean people resulting in a United Republic of Korea (UROK) a name which the Center for New American Security proposed last December.

The challenge for the Republic of Korea (ROK), the US, the regional powers, and the international community is how to get from our current state to unification as the path most likely will involve some level of conflict ranging from war to civil conflict and potentially horrendous human suffering in the northern part of Korea. The ROK and its friends and allies face an extraordinary security challenge because of the "Big Five." War, regime collapse, and the nuclear and missile programs pose an existential threat. It is a moral imperative to work to relieve the suffering of the Korean people who live in the worst human rights conditions in history. While unification is the desired and necessary "end state," achieving it will be costly in treasure for sure and blood as well as there is likely no path to unification without some form of conflict, it may only be a question of scale.

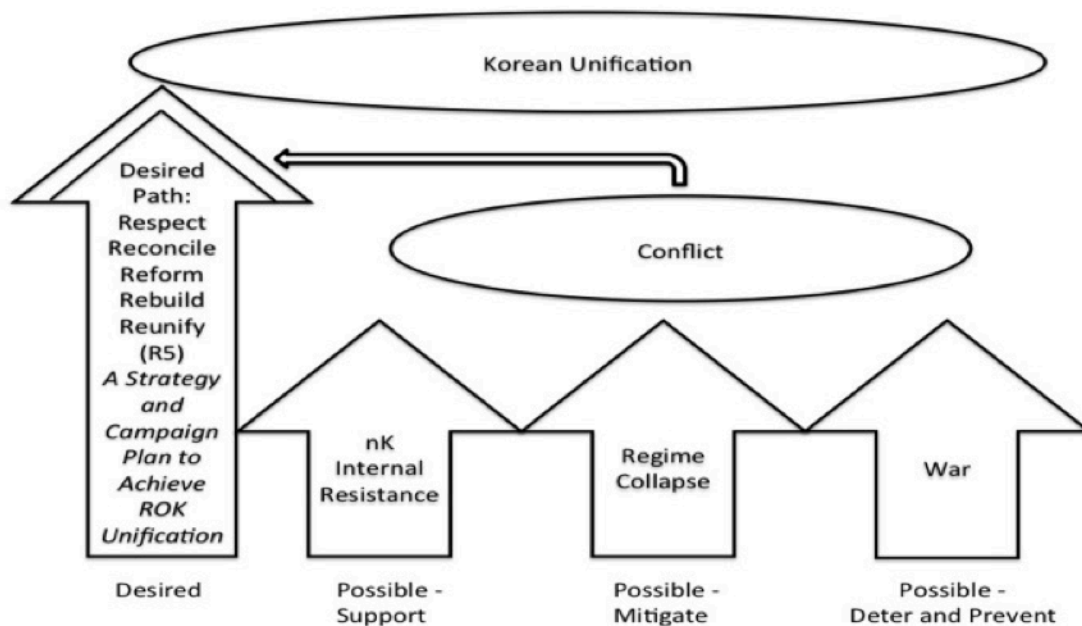
There are four paths to unification. The ideal is peaceful unification that comes as a result of respect, reconciliation, reform, rebuilding, and reunification (R5). Although this is unlikely to occur because of the nature of the Kim Family Regime and its zero sum view of unification (whichever government unifies the peninsula means the other government will be eliminated). Perhaps counterintuitive, this is the most difficult path to plan for because it requires complete integration of the political and economic systems, the security forces, and a complete overhaul of the infrastructure in the northern part of Korea. However, planning for this most difficult case will apply to any of the other paths to unification. People often are confounded by planning for unification because they want to know in what way it will be achieved: through peace, war, or regime collapse. Peaceful unification planning requires the broadest range of planning that encompasses every aspect of the Korea on the north and south side of the DMZ. The second path is through war. Of course we do not want to experience a war but that will be decided by

Kim Jong-un and his decision making process. Again it is counterintuitive that after a war might be the easiest path to unification because the north Korean military will be defeated, the economy completely destroyed, and the political system will no longer exist, and the vast majority of the infrastructure will be irreparable and require rebuilding from the ground up. The third path is arguably the most complex because regime collapse will lead to some form of conflict which could include war. Collapse is unlikely to be a benign event resulting in absorption though if it does planning for peaceful unification will have proven to be wise.

There is a fourth path that may be considered an outlier. That is one in which some form of internal resistance is able to gain power, eliminate the Kim Family Regime and if prepared and properly support by the ROK, it might seek peaceful unification in order to ensure survival of the Korean people living in the north.

These paths and the contingencies that we can expect are complex and require detailed planning and preparation. Although they are related each must be planned for in detail and each requires different forces and resources and concepts of operation.

## Paths to Unification



While these varied scenarios require complex planning and preparation, there is one action that is common to all scenarios: a comprehensive information campaign that will provide the intellectual and emotional foundation for unification. While planning is important, the ROK and its friends, partners, and allies can begin preparing now for unification through an integrated, long term, focused, and fully resourced information campaign plan.

The ROK and US Presidents need to decide to execute a holistic information campaign to support unification. Before we discuss an information campaign I would like to outline the eight

major contingencies, guiding principles and seven steps of preparation for strategy and campaign planning.

### **Big 8 Contingencies**

1. Provocations to gain political and economic concessions.
2. nK Attack – execution of the nK campaign plan to reunify the peninsula by force.
3. Civil War/Chaos/Anarchy.
4. Refugee crisis.
5. Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster relief.
6. WMD, loss of control – seize and secure operations.
7. Resistance to foreign intervention (e.g., insurgency).
8. How to handle the nKPA during regime collapse short of war.

### **Guiding Principles:**

1. Defense of ROK is paramount – all decisions must support defense of ROK against the full range of threats from the north.
2. Must provide options to national policy makers – early decisions required to overcome the law of physics: time, distance, and space. Must have the right capabilities in the right place for employment at the right time.
3. Transparency is critical when dealing with the 5 Parties and international community. Must have decisive and consistent themes and messages. This is not the situation in which we should employ deception. Only through clear articulation of alliance priorities and intent can we have a chance of reducing the chance of conflict due to misunderstanding of intentions. Examples for consideration (and these should be consistently expressed by the ROK/US Alliance):
  - A. Defense and Security of ROK is the number one priority.
  - B. UNC and ROK/US CFC have the following priorities:
    - (1) Security of nuclear weapons, followed by chemical weapons and then the biological program
    - (2) Security, health, and welfare of **the Korean people living in the north.**
    - (3) UNC and ROK/US CFC desire to work with all interested nations to bring security, stability and long term peace to the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia.
    - (4) UNC and ROK/US CFC will support the establishment of a unified peninsula – a United Republic of Korea.

### **7 Steps of Preparation**

1. Shared vision – a new durable political arrangement\*\*
2. Roles & Missions - national responsibilities for action
3. Organizational Framework for operations (UNC/ROK/US CFC, independent operations, other)
4. Command, Control, Coordination, and liaison processes & methods (including information sharing)
5. Concept of operations for deploying required forces (air, land, and sea)
6. Resource commitment – which countries provide what
7. ***And most important*** - information/psychological preparation of the environment – a sophisticated and aggressive information and influence activities campaign focused on the population to prepare them for the future (e.g., unification) and the "2d tier leadership" by using a combination of coercion and co-option. – An "exit strategy" for 2d tier military leaders and party members outside the core elite.

Such a campaign must be tasked at the highest level of government, i.e., at the national security council level, with sustained oversight of execution. From a ROK/US Alliance perspective a combined strategic working group should be established with permanent members from the ROK and US NSCs with the brief to prepare for unification. This working group will be responsible for providing the unification policy and strategy to executing organizations who will develop methods to transmit themes and messages that will begin the process of educating the Korean people in the north as to how unification will occur and what roles they will play.

The first step is for the ROK to develop comprehensive unification policies and plans that can be made public. Of course there will be classified intelligence and security plans but there must be a comprehensive unification plan laid out to gain public support and to use to educate the Korean people living in both the north and the South.

Outlining such policies and plans is beyond the scope of this paper. What follows are suggestions for specific themes, messages, and actions for an information campaign.

Before a comprehensive plan can be developed and executed a comprehensive survey of all organizations operating in the information and influence sphere should be conducted to determine all the actors, their objectives, and their strategy and methods of operation. We may learn that there are non-governmental organizations working in this space than government resources. Although NGOs will never allow their work to be orchestrated by governments it is important for government planners to know and understand the NGOs and capitalize on the work they are doing. Once the information sphere is mapped planners can begin development of a holistic strategy, a campaign plan and lines of effort.

In addition, a complete assessment of the human situation in the north must be conducted. Experts must analyze the culture, the economy, the ideology, the methods of control, the political system, and every aspect of the north in order to discern effective and ineffective messages. Such analysis might reveal that it is counter-productive to directly attack Kim Jong-un or Juche ideology or other ideas that are ingrained into the psyche of the north Korean people.

The overall objective of an information campaign should be on preparing the population and second tier leadership for unification. We can assume that the core elite of the Kim Family Regime will not support a United Republic of Korea. However, there are senior officials outside the core elite who will wield varying levels of power that can be exploited during the unification process. They must be coerced or co-opted to support unification. One policy the ROK could implement would be to state that if a military commander restrains the military forces under his command from attacking the ROK then he would have a place in a Unified Republic of Korea. The transmission of such a message over time may influence a senior military leader to take the right action in time of crisis. This must be an established ROK policy and there must be a sustained transmission of the message in various forms through various media so that it has the chance of achieving the desired effect.

While many will want to provide information to foment resistance among the population, any overt attempt to do so will likely undercut the legitimacy of the information campaign. Attempts to directly incite political and popular resistance are likely to be met with resistance to such messages. The long term objective of unification must be kept in the forefront of all planning efforts. In fact all officials should keep in mind a guiding strategic question as they plan and implement an information campaign. How will this policy, strategy, plan, or program support unification?

However, if resistance is observed among the Korean people living in the north actions can be taken to directly support them with information. However, this must be done in a very careful way so as not to undercut the legitimacy of the resistance or to cause it to be compromised when it is especially vulnerable in the nascent stages. If over zealous planners latch on to potential resistance and use it to attempt to achieve information objectives it could result in the resistance being put down.

The following are some recommendations that a combined NSC strategy group should consider in directing the execution of an information campaign to support unification.

**1. Adopt simple concepts that are meaningful to the Korean people and support the idea of unification.** One has been used throughout this paper and that is eliminating the use of “north

Koreans” and instead always talk about the Korean people living in the north and South. Use of this will reinforce the idea of one Korean people.

Rather than attacking Juche and the Kim Family regime emphasize the sameness of the Korean people. A retired ROK navy Admiral once told me about two miracles in Korea. Of course I know the Miracle on the Han – the story of the ROK rising from the ashes of the Korean War going from a major aid recipient to a major donor nation and developing economically, politically, militarily, and culturally in a great middle power with one of the most vibrant populations and successful economies in the world. However, he told me the second miracle is the Miracle on the Taedong which is the river that runs through Pyongyang just as the Han runs through Seoul. He said the miracle is that for more than six decades the Korean people living in the north have suffered under one of the most despotic and harsh regimes surviving war and human rights atrocities that are among the worst in history. They went straight from the Japanese Colonial period where the Korean culture and identity were threatened by the occupiers and went straight into the oppression of the Kim Family Regime in a political and economic system that enslaved them. The miracle is that they have survived. This is a message that should form the basis of one Korean people. If given the opportunity Koreans will thrive. The Koreans living in the South had the same history up until World War II yet after the Korean War they took the independent spirit of Koreans, turned entrepreneurial, and thrived. When Koreans are faced with hardship they survive. As different as the people on the north and South sides appear to be their inner “Koreaness” remains common to both and this should be part of all messaging.

**2. Focus on human rights violation by the Kim Family Regime.** This is important for three purposes. First it is the morally right thing to do. Second, the Korean people living in the north must be made aware that the Koreans in the South and the international community are concerned for their welfare. Third, this undermines the legitimacy of the regime. Over focusing on the north’s nuclear program enhances regime legitimacy. Along with human rights, inform those in the north that they will be able to establish truth and reconciliation processes and play leading roles in reconciliation and the administration of justice.

**3. Focus on educating the people on the unification process.** The Korean people will have to quickly learn about such things as property ownership and market economics. It is important to build on the gray market economy that has arisen after the failure of the regime’s public distribution system. Although still overseen by the regime and the people are vulnerable to crackdowns at any time by the security services any free market activity will have positive long term benefits.

**4. Emphasize local leaders in the north during the unification process.** Since the Koreans in the north have been so thoroughly indoctrinated with the notion that all outsiders, to include those from the South, are bad, the ROK must emphasize that local leadership vice imported external leadership will play the leading role in the unification process. The ROK should abandon plans to use people who used to live in the north as new province governors and instead plan to provide advisers to help local leaders guide the unification process.

**5. Identify and support key communicators in the north.** With more and more contact between people in the north and South particularly with the defector community, the focus should be on identifying Koreans who have leadership potential and are able to influence their fellow Koreans. Support through covert funding, communications, equipment, and when feasible training to help them develop organizations that will be vital to support unification. If these organizations develop the means to resist the regime then that could lead to the outlier path to unification although it is admittedly a long shot. Perhaps even more valuable than resistance to the current regime would be organizations that are supported by the South that would **NOT** resist unification. One of the biggest challenges facing the ROK will be resistance among the 2d tier leaders, the military and the Korean people in the north to unification. The “Guerrilla Ethos” as described by Adrian Buzo will be a threat to unification. If potential resistance can be co-opted before war, collapse, or peaceful unification the effects of resistance could be mitigated. If there

is war of regime collapse we should not assume that any outsiders to include those Koreans from the South will be welcomed with open arms. Certainly many may welcome the outside relief but there is likely to be a significant amount of resistance and this could make the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan pale in comparison. Therefore, the more Koreans in the north who can be influenced and educated about the benefits of the unification process the less resistance we will encounter.

The above five planning recommendations are not all inclusive. They are provided merely as points of departure to consider in developing an information plan. The question is how do we operationalize the right themes and messages?

Defector organizations are sending balloons with DVDs and thumb drives, leaflets and even cash to the north. They are using creative means to get information into the north. NGOs and government organizations do conduct broadcasts into the north with limited access due to north Korean jamming and restrictions on receivers. Although currently the north's access to the Internet is severely restricted by the regime and the cell phone infrastructure is not connected to the outside the internet and cell phones will eventually penetrate throughout the north and we should plan now for that.

All of these actions can have some effect and we know from anecdotal reporting that the Koreans in the north know much more about the outside world. Some of the anecdotes we hear from defectors is that South Korean dramas are very popular in the north. Such popularity could be exploited to help educate the Korean people about unification by developing a concept of "Unification Dramas."

The ROK should "operationalize" its unification plans and policies by providing information to the Korean entertainment industry and in return Korean companies can develop dramas that will illustrate the unification process. The storylines would be almost infinite. Such dramas could focus on what happens during regime collapse and follow a village or province from the time of the collapse of the Kim Family Regime through liberation, to land ownership to political integration and economic development. Dramas about the north Korean military could show what happens to commanders and units who do not attack the South and what happens to those who do. Other dramas could illustrate resistance organizations and how they can prepare for unification. These stories could be filled with human interest stories from tragedy to love stories to include relationships between Koreans from the South and north. By understanding the ROK government plans and policies for unification entertainment companies can craft dramas that are entertain and profitable while subtly and indirectly influencing the Korean people living in the north.

Korean unification is one of the most complex strategic problems in Northeast Asia. It is the only outcome that will ensure elimination of the north Korean nuclear program and the threat to the South, the region and the international community. It is also the only way to end the human rights atrocities being perpetrated against the Korean people living in the north. We experience strategic planning paralysis because of the complex scenarios and contingencies we are likely to face. However, regardless of the scenario or contingency the one concrete effort we can take is to focus on an information campaign to prepare the Korean people living in the north for unification. This must be a comprehensive, fully resourced, and sustained campaign plan. It must be based on ROK unification plans and policies. The guiding principle for policy makers and strategist in the ROK and US is how does this policy, strategy, plan, or program support achievement of Korean unification?