

The Dilemmas of Middle Powers: Australia and South Korea in the Age of Trump^{*}

중견국가의 딜레마: 트럼프 시대 호주와 남한의 경우

Dennis Argall _Former Australia's Ambassador to China

데니스 아걸 _전 주중 호주 대사

Abstract

A new and different administration has taken office in the Republic of Korea with warm and enthusiastic expectation for change on the part of voters.

The experience of a radically new Australian government, elected in 1972 but defeated three years later, may offer useful lessons. We learned that a government making changes on many fronts risks being misunderstood, risks its own coherence, risks defeat if there is not adequate coordination and adequate public knowledge and understanding of what is happening. Officials and defence force individuals need to have a clear view of the government's perspectives and their roles in the future.

This is a period of great turbulence in world affairs and western leadership by the United States. There are clashes between different types of organisation and different social perspectives that need to be considered in addressing the Trump White House, the DPRK leadership... and the chaebols.

The United States' position in the world is no longer unassailably dominant. The ROK's future is not sensibly tied as in the past back through alliance to western perspectives. It is important for the ROK and China to develop vision statements of their future together.

There is a stagnation in approaches to the DPRK and new ways forward are essential. The ROK needs to assert its right to a commanding role in discussions with the DPRK. 'Diplomacy' is not an objective. To seek by diplomacy to get the DPRK to disarm is unrealistic without consideration of and empathy towards the DPRK's perception of threat and need for deterrence. Acceptance of the status quo is important for any progress.

There must be clear directions for US and ROK officials and defence forces

* My thanks to Gavan McCormack for suggesting the sharp title of this essay, Dennis Argall.

about who decides what defence activities may be carried out and what forces may be introduced or exercised. These directions must reflect ROK sovereignty.

There is a great pressure on the Korean situation from long-established rules, military plans and manoeuvres, tabloid hostilities and mockery of the DPRK and simple-minded opinions in too many high places that the North Koreans are simply crazy.

The ROK needs freedom to put historical baggage aside in dealing with the North. The future of the Korean peninsula has to be resolved in a process of self-determination. Every step must be documented and clear at every level.

□ Key Words: Korea, Moon Administration, nuclear, China, Security Treaty

초록

한국에서 문재인 정부가 변화를 열망하는 유권자의 열망을 안고서 새롭게 출범했다. 호주에서도 1972년 급진적인 신정부가 출범한 적이 있지만, 3년 후 정권을 잃고 말았다. 호주의 이런 경험은 문재인 정부에게 좋은 참고가 될 수 있을 것으로 본다. 우리는 1972년 호주 정부의 실패로부터 많은 것을 배울 수 있었다. 예컨대 신정부에서 전방위 개혁을 추진할 경우 적절한 조정 능력을 결여하고, 적절한 공공의식도 갖추지 못했을 때, 그리고 끊임없이 발생하는 사태의 추이를 정확하게 이해하지 못했을 때, 개혁은 오해 받기 쉽고, 현실과 유리되기 쉬우며, 결국 실패할 위험에 직면하게 된다는 것이었다. 따라서 개혁 정부의 관리들은 정부가 실현하려는 비전과 미래에 자신들이 수행할 역할에 대해서 분명하게 이해하고 있어야만 한다.

미국의 트럼프 행정부가 들어서면서 국제정치가 요동을 치고 있다. 또한 한국 사회는 현재 트럼프 행정부, 북한 김정은의 리더십, 재벌 등을 바라보는 상이한 시각과 사회의 각종 단체들의 상이한 이해관계가 격렬하게 충돌하는 와중에 있다.

현재 미국은 예전과 같은 세계 패권을 누리지 못하고 있다. 따라서 한국의 미래는 과거처럼 서방 동맹국 일방에만 의존해서는 안전을 보장할 수 없다. 따라서 한국과 중국이 협력해서 미래를 개척할 수 있는 비전을 개발하는 것이 중요하다.

지금까지 북한에 접근했던 방법은 대부분 침체 상태에 빠져있다. 따라서 새로운 방법을 모색하는 것이 대단히 중요하다. 특히 한국은 북한 문제를 다룰 때 주도적 역할을 수행할 권리를 주장할 필요가 있다. “외교” 그 자체가 목표가 될 수는 없다. 외교를 통해서 북한의 비핵화를 이끌어내려는 시도는 대단히 비현실적 발상에 근거를 두고 있다. 현재 북한이 체감하는 체제 위협과 핵역지력에 집착하는 까닭을 심층적으로 이해하지 못하는 한 그런 외교적 노력은 모두 실패로 돌아갈 수밖에 없을 것이기 때문이다. 오직 현재의 상황을 인정하는 경우에 한해서만 앞으로 나갈 수 있는 실마리를 찾을 수 있다.

미국과 한국의 정부 관리들 사이에서는 군사 훈련을 누가 결정하고, 군사력을 도입해서 실행하는 과정을 누가 결정할 것인가에 대한 분명한 방향 감각을 공유하고 있어야만 한다. 그리고 그러한 방향 감각은 반드시 한국의 주권을 반영해야만 한다.

현재 한반도가 처한 위기 상황을 강력하게 강제하는 다양한 힘들이 존재한다. 예컨

대 오랜 기간에 걸쳐 정착된 행동 규칙, 반복적으로 수립되는 전쟁계획과 군사훈련의 실천, 북한을 극단적으로 적대시하거나 습관적 조롱하는 태도, 그리고 북한 사람을 미친놈으로 간주하는 단순한 생각을 너무 과도하게 신뢰하는 세태 등등이 그것이다. 한국에서 북한을 상대할 때 무엇보다도 이러한 역사적 유산으로부터 해방되는 것이 필요하다. 한반도의 미래 문제는 오직 한국인의 자주적 결정 과정을 통해서만 비로소 해결될 수 있다. 따라서 각 행동 단계의 모든 수준을 명료하게 기록해 두어야만 한다.

□ 주제어: 한국, 문재인 정부, 핵문제, 중국, 안보조약

I write as someone in Australia who has observed north Asian affairs since 1970 and who was at one time Australian Ambassador to China. I write offering a breadth of background such as I have found useful in presenting ideas to other governments. Too often governments are presented with papers telling them what to decide; instead I offer thoughts that may enhance independent thinking.

I write here with two purposes:

- To bring a view from afar of the complex environment faced by new government in the ROK, and
- To offer some thoughts on strategy.

I . Australian Perspective of Reform Government Experience

In December 1972, Australian elections gave a majority in the House of Representatives to the Australian Labor Party. In Australia, the party with the majority in the House of Representatives forms a government. This change of government was the first in Australia since 1949. For 23 years Australia had been governed by a conservative coalition.

The election of the Labor Government in Australia in 1972 with Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister was a little like the election of President Roh Moo-hyun in the ROK – *a little*, inasmuch as it was accompanied by popular euphoria,

determination to bring radical social change and benefits to ordinary people... and was opposed by those who believed they had a natural right to govern. The Whitlam Government was swept from office in 1975. What brought down Whitlam was not the same as what brought down Roh. But these factors in Whitlam's downfall may be relevant to the future of the administration of President Moon Jae-in—for Koreans to consider:

- The strength of opponents who considered they had a right to rule;
- The diversity and speed of introduction of new policies and institutions;
- Collisions between internal and external economic forces: opening the economy, raising wages, heavy government deficits then world economic crisis especially after the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the first 'oil shock';
- A habit on the part of the very dominant Prime Minister to announce a new policy, create a new institution or system and hasten to the next, leaving implementation incomplete or in the hands of particular empire builders, with lack of coordination and control;
- The inexperience of ministers in the new government after 23 years in opposition; the resistance of some of the bureaucracy to demands for urgent change imposed by the new government; and
- Popular bewilderment and disconnect—especially when inflation, interest rates and unemployment accelerated.

The Whitlam Government shifted Australia's international stance in a number of ways:

- Recognising realities and establishing relations with Beijing, Hanoi and Pyongyang (to the fury of President Park Chung-hee);
- Ending our involvement in the Viet Nam war;
- Reviewing the status of US defence installations in Australia;
- Reducing involvement in the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO);
- Emphasising human rights as an element of foreign policy, opposing apartheid in South Africa, and
- Ending the racist 'White Australia Policy' and paving the way for a modern multicultural Australia.

But while many conservatives were enraged by aspects of those shifts in foreign policy, foreign policy did not contribute to the fall of the government, which came about because of domestic issues. There were conservatives appalled by any distance from total support for the US alliance but they were never going to vote Labor.

The greatest loss was of the votes of half a million trade union members, whose pay had gone up, but been eroded by inflation... followed by unemployment or fear of unemployment.

In 2017 that 'Labor Party' is now scarcely recognisable alongside the party of the 1970s – for example in the announcement in April 2017, by the party leader and potential next Prime Minister, Bill Shorten, that Labor supports President Trump's approach to the DPRK. He made no mention of the ROK or of *the right of Koreans to self-determination*. Siding with Trump in part because Labor is afraid of losing votes if it looks radical, if it distances itself from the conservatives national security policy. Also vulnerable to often extreme and racist attacks from outlets of News Limited (the original base of Rupert Murdoch, now chair of News Corp with its many arms including Fox News in the USA) which dominates Australian media. And vulnerable to the unprecedented pressures of today's social media and the speed with which public attitudes can change.

II. Australia and the USA

Australia's informal alliance with the United States dates from World War II when Macarthur had his headquarters in Australia. Australia was under attack and at risk of invasion and Australian forces were heavily committed in the war with Japan. Formal alliance with the US dates from the time of the peace treaty with Japan when Australia insisted on an alliance with the USA if it was to sign the Japan peace treaty.¹⁾ That was during the Korean War, when Australia contributed to UN forces in the south.²⁾ In an era of US 'containment' strategy (a notion begun in the 1950s and recently revived) Australia was a member of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO: with the Philippines, Thailand and

1) <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/anzus>

2) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia_in_the_Korean_War

Pakistan, US, UK and New Zealand). In North Asia the US entered into defence treaties with the ROK and Japan.

Also part of the ring of ‘containment’ was the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) with membership of Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and the UK. In the central theatre of US-Soviet contention the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was established.

Australia’s alliance with the US drew it into the Viet Nam war, Afghanistan and Iraq. Australia continues to be militarily involved in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Australian government seems keen to be part of US naval operations in the South China Sea directed against China, more keen than members of ASEAN seem to be.

A number of eminent Australians have argued the case for a more independent Australian foreign policy, notably former conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser³⁾ (1930-2015).

“Fraser’s argument [was] that while strategic dependence may have been understandable and defensible during the early years of Australia’s post-colonial history and the Cold War, it is now a liability, and a potentially dangerous one at that.”⁴⁾

I support that general view. But in February 2017 I wrote about the complexity of withdrawing from alliance with the United States:

The degree of ‘interoperability’ with US forces shapes the minds of Australian service personnel from top to bottom as also it shapes procurement planning and justification. ... Any review by us of the Alliance relationship would run-up against a deep history. It would require a radical shift in the pattern of power within Australian strategic policy-making bureaucracy and public commentariat.⁵⁾

The entanglement of Australia-US defence relations is modest compared with that of US-ROK relations.

An alliance is only worthwhile, in my view, if the major party listens to and

3) <http://www.smh.com.au/national/malcolm-fraser-calls-for-an-end-to-the-australianus-alliance-20140512-zragh.html>

4) <https://theconversation.com/book-review-dangerous-allies-by-malcolm-fraser-25995>

5) <https://johnmenadue.com/?p=9326>

takes advice from a lesser party. An alliance where the major party does not listen to a lesser party and give consideration to advice is not an alliance worth having. An 'alliance' where the lesser party simply subordinates itself to the major party is not an alliance, it is a loss of sovereignty.

A good ally is one that gives high priority to consultation⁶⁾ and respect for the sovereignty of the other party or parties. I do not foresee any soon end to the Australian-American alliance.

III. The US and Korea

Similarly the ROK does not plan to end its alliance with the US. However, in the new circumstances in South Korea I expect there will be some review of how the alliance operates, day-to-day. For example there is news as I write this of US and ROK forces engaging in a simulated attack on North Korean WMD sites⁷⁾. When this occurred and with what ministerial approval is not clear.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson spoke at length about Korea in his remarks to staff in the State Department on 3 May 2017, including this:

6) Consultation: beware of this word. In 1973 I asked one of my staff in the Australian Defence Department to research 'consultation' in American official usage. He found a reference in a hearing before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee where the State Department Counsel was asked what that word meant in an agreement with Spain in relation to a naval communications base. The answer given was that consultation meant that the other side would be told before something was done. I do not have a citation for that. In any case it is old history. The task is to clarify, preferably in writing, the meaning of consultation in agreement with anybody about anything.

That having been said I note that in 1976 when I was counsellor in the Australian embassy in Washington I sought information from the State Department regarding the JSA axe incident at Panmunjom and was advised that US forces had gone to a higher level DEFCON status. We received an expression of concern from home that Australia had not been notified as a matter of course about this shift in DEFCON status given a strategic agreement in 1974. My view was that 'consultation is as consultation does' and that the minor party should not sit back in expectation of consultation but be constantly alert.

7) <https://www.nknews.org/2017/05/u-s-south-korean-armies-simulate-raid-on-north-korean-wmd-sites/?c=1495098683205>

“We are clear – we’ve been clear to [the DPRK that] this is not about regime change, this is not about regime collapse, this is not about an accelerated reunification of the peninsula, this is not about us looking for an excuse to come north of the 38th Parallel. So we’re trying to be very, very clear and resolute in our message to them that your future security and economic prosperity can only be achieved through your following your commitments to denuclearize.”⁸⁾

It is valuable that the ‘four nos’ have been so clearly expressed in one of the rare coherent foreign policy statements by the Trump Administration.

But the beginning of that statement:

“We are clear – we’ve been clear to them...”

is not true.

It may be that in backchannels and round table engagements that this has been true and it is likely the perspective of career State Department officers dealing with Korea. But the military performance of the US notably in the joint exercises from March to May, grown larger in recent years, has clearly created the impression in the DPRK that the US is keen on regime change in the North.

On 18 May 2017 Yonhap reported⁹⁾ that Tillerson had said to ROK special representative Hong Seok-Hyun that the United States wants North Korea to trust its promise of no hostility. This seems an extraordinarily naïve statement, given the context above and given that all US policy on negotiation of arms limitation (or anything else, with anyone) precludes ‘trust’. Trust is not part of the furniture in the house of confidence building.

If we bear in mind the 2014 US comedy film *The Interview*¹⁰⁾ about assassination of a DPRK leader and recent claims by the DPRK of a CIA operation in 2014 to poison Kim Jong-un,¹¹⁾ we have context to the assassination of the potential

8) <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/05/270620.htm>

9) http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2017/05/19/0301000000AEN2017051900_2651315.html

10) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Interview

11) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/north-korea-accuses-cia-biochemical-plot-kill-kim-jong-un>

alternative leader Kim Jong-nam in February 2017¹²⁾.

I have not seen any information on the nature and status of the CIA centre very recently set up in Seoul or any terms agreed between governments regarding its activities. Strangely there seems no media interest in that question.

In 2016, the head of the Americas division in the DPRK foreign ministry, Han Song-Ryol, was reported to say this to *The Guardian*, a UK newspaper.¹³⁾

“Han said US-South Korea military exercises conducted this spring were unprecedented in scale...”

“Han said North Korea believes the drills reportedly now include training designed to prepare troops for the invasion of the North’s capital and “decapitation strikes” aimed at killing top leadership.”

Any realistic view of the conduct of recent US-ROK exercises conflicts with Tillerson’s assertion that “we’ve been clear to them” in any way related to the ‘four nos’.

‘Western’ commentaries routinely suggest Pyongyang’s approach to the negotiating table is cynical, exploitative delaying tactics. Empathetic thought about DPRK leaders’ perception of the American approach to negotiation would see how they could feel the same way.

Now that the Moon administration has been installed there is a charm offensive from Washington, with gracious words from Matt Pottinger of the US National Security Council (NSC) on 14 May:

"I am also here to express my congratulations [in addition to President Trump’s congratulations] to the Korean people for another successful democratic transition of power which is wonderful thing. South Korea really is an inspiration to the region and in the world,"¹⁴⁾

12) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/15/kim-jong-nam-assassinated-south-korea-us-officials>

13) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/30/us-south-korea-military-drills-north-korea-warning>

14) <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2017/05/15/0401000000AEN20170515005653315.html>

This is a positive shift, though one might also see a somewhat naively presumptuous perspective in this middle level American official putting himself thus across to the President of the ROK. That would never have happened in the Blue House of Park Chung-hee.

If one is a president who does not stand on ceremony, who moves among the people, who is open in manner, that kind of president deserves no less respect from a foreign government than the kind of respect shown to a Park.

It was my view that in the recent ROK presidential election campaign the uproar from the US associated with the annual US-ROK defence exercises and the interchanges with the DPRK will have been calculated by some on the US side to drive ROK voters in the direction of a conservative vote. This pressure might have had significant effect were it not for the idiosyncratic interventions of President Trump on THAAD¹⁵⁾, on trade and on the DPRK¹⁶⁾.

In this journal last December Tim Beal provided a useful account of the need to see the THAAD deployment in the context of US strategic policy towards China and Russia rather than Korea:

The deployment of an initial THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) battery in South Korea is part of a wider missile defense strategy which is primarily aimed at the main challengers to US hegemony, China and Russia. The THAAD unit has two principal components – the interceptors themselves and the AN/TPY-2 radar which provides initial identification of the target missile. The literature suggests that the interceptors themselves will be largely ineffective in the context of the Korean peninsula, but the location of the radar offers forward surveillance of launch sites in China and Russia.¹⁷⁾

The haste, securing an agreement with the interim government to the hosting of THAAD and the rush to get it in place flies in the face of a general principle in democratic countries—of respecting the electoral process and limiting the gov-

15) <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-southkorea-analysis-idUSKBN17U13O>

16) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-02/trump-opens-door-to-kim-meeting-as-north-hints-more-tests/8488300>

17) Tim Beal, “The Deployment of THAAD in Korea and the Struggle over US Global Hegemony” *Journal of Political Criticism* 19 (2016.12), 19-54.

ernment in place in an election period to doing those things to maintain the status quo without entering into new agreements. As for example applies in the UK during the election campaign (current at the time of writing) during which period there can be no negotiation with the EU on the UK's withdrawal, as clearly negotiations will be in the hands of whoever wins the election, not the caretaker even though the caretaker is the former government and may be the next government.

IV. ROK Advocacy in the World

President Moon has appointed special high level representatives to visit a number of countries, providing an opportunity for the new government of the ROK to be understood and reach out for goodwill.

The ROK Foreign Ministry has half a century of skilled experience in advancing the ROK's case in global forums, but arguments needed now will differ. The case in the past has had a conservative focus. There is a need for new, basic and detailed instructions for diplomatic missions to provide information on the policies and intentions of the new ROK government.

I suggest the core argument now needs to be about self-determination. This should not be a threat to anyone. It does not imply distance from anyone. It makes evident the national priority. It is a request for respect, of the right to self-determination and also reflects the concern of the ROK Government to base itself among the people. It is also a case that needs to be advanced with like-minded parties in other democratic countries. There needs to be a vigorous information offensive in the United States — when a strategic perspective is clear. Everyone in America has a right to an opinion on Korea, not everyone is well informed, very few understand what the new ROK government thinks. In presenting views in the US it will of course be necessary to be armed with comprehensive perspectives, from THAAD to trade.

V. China, AIIB and OBOR: Power Shift from the US

Without question China seeks broader influence with its ‘One Belt, One Road’ programs. China also seeks economic advancement in many places, for China, and for others. It might in some respects be borrowing from the playbook of the United States in earlier decades, though thus far less ruthless and demanding of conformity to the imperial power’s strategy.

The world seems to show scant regard for the fact that in the past 40 years in China we have seen the greatest revolution in human history, the lives of half a billion people transformed.

There remain some deficits in China in the human rights area. There has also been a great skew in advantage from this revolution. Those who have benefited have been mainly close to the coast. The development of links from China to the west overland may bring improvements for parts of China that have not been included in the fantastic growth of the last 40 years.

The US NSC team who visited Seoul to prepare for a US-ROK presidential summit also attended the “One Belt One Road” summit in China in May 2017. This shows a measure of flexibility on the part of the US, notably in comparison with the US decision (also that of Japan) to stand back and not join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)¹⁸⁾ with which China challenges the dominance since the 1960s of the Asian Development Bank.

VI. On Strategy

The 2016 Australian Defence White Paper claimed:

“A strong and deep alliance is at the core of \Australia’s security and defence planning. The United States will [to 2035] remain the pre-eminent global military power and will continue to be Australia’s most important strategic partner. Through this Defence White Paper, Australia will seek to broaden and deepen our

18) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Infrastructure_Investment_Bank

alliance with the United States...”¹⁹⁾

This statement is unwise because it is not possible to predict the world twenty years from now and I can with equal speculative merit argue that it's simply wrong.

The United States spends a disproportionate amount on defence, but for that it has achieved successful interventions in:

- Grenada, 1983²⁰⁾; and
- Panama 1989-90²¹⁾

The recent trumpeting of the movement of an aircraft carrier to near the ROK in April 2017 needs context. The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson departed San Diego for a 'regularly scheduled' deployment to the Western Pacific in February. It was in Busan in March at the beginning of the regularly scheduled US-ROK defence exercises. It went on to Singapore and completed minor exercise with the Australian navy in the Indian Ocean before returning to Korean waters. The United States has ten aircraft carriers, plus another nine ships that would be called aircraft carriers if they were in any other navy²²⁾. They have to be somewhere and preferably not simply sitting in port as someone on the right of American media observed recently²³⁾. Aircraft carriers are large and impressive and can travel vast distances swiftly. They are very much in the class of gunboats on the sense of 'gunboat diplomacy'²⁴⁾. Whether they are effective is another question. Ask Kim Jong-un. Wikipedia suggests 'gunboat diplomacy' is close to 'big-stick diplomacy'²⁵⁾ derived from President Teddy Roosevelt's expressed policy to "speak softly and carry a big stick."

19) <http://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf> p15.

20) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Grenada

21) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_invasion_of_Panama

22) <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/does-the-us-navy-have-10-or-19-aircraft-carriers/>

23) <https://www.infowars.com/sitting-ducks-every-single-active-u-s-navy-aircraft-carrier-currently-sitting-in-port-against-protocol/>

24) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunboat_diplomacy

25) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Stick_ideology

Any past quiet speech has been abandoned in the aircraft carrier era. Consultation and coherence seem lacking.

The US Defence Plan has for many decades required the capability to be able to conduct two regional wars at once (having in mind Korea and the Middle East), refined in the 1980s and 1990s to being able to hold an enemy in one war while beating an enemy in another, before shifting resources to the one on hold. This remained at the core of planning well into the Obama Administration, although “the two-war strategy is the textbook definition of fighting the last war: rather, fighting three or four wars ago.”²⁶⁾

The Afghan and Iraq wars point to the weakness of such planning, the difficulty of ending either war. The evidence is that modern wars do not end, they spread violence, causing the instability of more states and the rise of non-state violent actors. They also, in my view, tend to import into the country that goes to war some of the problems it went to war to defeat.

At the beginning of the invasion of Iraq I spoke publicly in criticism of Australian involvement²⁷⁾ and to assert that we were embarking on a slow-motion unfolding of something like World War I:

“In 1914 and again in 2001, there was a rush to alliances, a taking of sides that polarised and made more enemies and closed avenues for peace making and conflict resolution.

“In 1914 and again in 2001, there was expectation of swift victory — the French in 1914 shut down arms factories to hurry men to the front. Today United States military forces are being unsustainably chewed up at reserve as well as regular level by longer-than-planned war.

“In 1914 and again in 2001, there were flushes of nationalistic fervour and there was castigation of opinion opposed to war policy...

“In 1914 and again in 2001, there was only a war policy, only a bunch of advisors with maps and war plans and notions of taking the war to the enemy. If you only plan for war, war is all you can get. We reject the idea that war is the only option.

26) Paul D Miller, “Why we need to move beyond the “Two War” doctrine”, *Foreign Policy*, January 6, 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/01/06/why-we-need-to-move-beyond-the-two-war-doctrine/>

27) <http://aplacof.info/peace/>

“In 1914 and again in 2001, there was no real thought that there were issues to be resolved between the rich and the poor, to resolve disadvantage, to redress the balance between those who consumed most of the world’s resources and dictate terms in world affairs and those who had no such share of resources and who resent being dictated to. We reject the idea that the United States or Australia has a divine right to shape the world. We affirm our readiness to listen to people with different voices from different cultures and to learn from their wisdom.

“In 1914 and over the years that followed, as in 2001 and years that follow it, we see political leaders create a situation where they must remain consistent with already failed strategy...²⁸⁾

We live in an age dominated by economists and business experts. But economics and business should serve social interests. Well, obviously they do, but in the guise of dismissing social dimensions economic argument too often directs the benefits to the entitled and enriched.

My degrees are in social anthropology and defence studies. I am disappointed that in an educated world governments embark on military campaigns with little understanding of social mechanisms in their own country, let alone others and little concept of how war works. In particular they seem unaware that while Clausewitz noted that war was an instrument of policy, he went on to say that once taken up as an instrument, war tends to drive out policy and pursue its own ends.

I do not know if the soldiers now commanding the heights of US national security policy understand that broader concern of Clausewitz. They are lauded for their attributes in conducting war in Iraq and Afghanistan. But that is not national security policy.

28) <http://aplaceof.info/peace/040703speech.htm>

VII. The Relevance of Harari's Concept of 'Gossip-sized Groups'

In his 2014 best seller *Sapiens, A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari popularised the concept of a 'cognitive revolution' about 70,000 years ago, made possible by development of language and in particular the ability to gossip. Gossip. A shift from being able to say "I saw a lion" to "Kim says he saw a lion" and to "Should we get the lion before Kim gets it or should we let Kim fight the lion and then take it off him. Have you seen what he's been doing with Ms X?"

"Neanderthals and archaic *Homo sapiens* probably had a hard time talking behind each other's backs – a much maligned ability which is in fact essential for cooperation in large numbers...

"In the wake of the Cognitive Revolution, gossip helped *Homo sapiens* to form larger and more stable bands [than hitherto]. But even gossip has its limits. Sociological research has shown that the maximum natural size of a group bonded by gossip is about 150 people." 29)

In our modern world, Harari notes, small military groups, small businesses and so on can flourish with informal bonds rather than wider laws, rules and regulations.

"But once the threshold of 150 has been crossed, things can no longer work that way. You cannot run a division with thousands of soldiers the same way you run a platoon. Successful family businesses usually face a crisis when they grow larger and hire more personnel. If they cannot reinvent themselves they go bust."

I am not wishing to debate archaeology or anthropology but with the usefulness of this concept for addressing some communication concerns: Consider conflict or cooperation between gossip-sized groups and issues in conflict or cooperation between gossip-sized groups and the wider world of law-shaped, open society and

29) Set out at pages 25–29 of Yuval Harari, *Sapiens, A Brief History of Humankind*, Vintage Books 2014. At page 467 Harari offers citations of critics of this theory.

big organisations.

The conflicts between leaders of the KCIA and Park Chung-hee's guard unit in 1979 can usefully be seen as between gossip-sized groups — cabals wrestling for power.

The outcome of the recent ROK elections can be seen as a victory of open society over gossip-sized group power. Such groups still sit in powerful places in South Korea (and other countries too).

I suggest that chaebols, the DPRK's ruling clique and the competing factions of the Trump White House are usefully seen as gossip-sized groups, in their command structures.

Both the North Korean and chaebol elites are vulnerable, though not necessarily quickly. Compare with the time it took for the Divine Right of Kings in Europe to come to an end, eroded gently or violently over time and replaced by democratic systems.

Consider the situation of a mass populist political movement, determined on openness and modernity and determined to implement redistributive policy and to reform Korean society lawfully — in dialogue with, in contest with gossip-sized groups that are powerful small dominant cliques with very different dynamics and very different mental frameworks.

The task is not just to follow policy declaration with legislation or international agreements, but to find ways of getting across the divide in understanding.

There are also dynamics of a gossip kind within any populist movement. Shifting and conflicting small group perspectives combine with impatience and social media to produce restlessness.

There are many other ways of describing the state of political governance in China but it seems useful to consider the way in which the Chinese Communist Party was bound together in early times, before the success of the revolution, in Yan'an, by the band of survivors of the Long March. A core 'gossip-sized group' that ran the Communist Party and the nation into recent times. A group which fought over and resolved to reject tolerance of social dissonance in the 1980s. And now, in the current era of amassed wealth in China... a proliferation of chaebol-like gossip-sized groups resistant to law and regulation.

This is also a useful tool for understanding the difficulty of the Trump White

House's multiple gossip coterie coming to terms with a large and very different organisation and accepting the notions, rules, principles and ethics of democratic public life.

Harari reminds us that the grand visions of modernity (and theoretical structures for academic discourse) are also fiction-based:

"...fiction has enabled us not merely to imagine things, but to do so *collectively*. We can weave common myths such as the biblical creation story, the Dreamtime myths of Aboriginal Australians, and the nationalist myths of modern states."³⁰

...and we can observe the way gossip-based power groups find solace and energy from each other's company in Trump's welcome in Saudi Arabia on 21 May 2017.³¹ It is inappropriate to approach discussion over cultural divides with self-righteous belief in own systems of thought. However 'right' they may be, attitudes can be obstacles to constructive dialogue and limit comprehension of the other side. Firm beliefs and principles need articulation, need to be understood, but not as start points of correctness versus error.

How to proceed, how to achieve success?

Domestically, not all the youngest supporters will recall the problems of governance and conflict under President Roh Tae-woo. In advancing in a coherent way, open and precise records need to be kept and promulgated. Negotiations and rule making across divides need explanation in detail, as if... as if dealing with another planet.

It is essential that leaders in different sectors of government coordinate and are seen to coordinate and do not become competitive cabals. Individual competition for leadership is central to any democratic system, but discipline and order are central to success in government. In domestic management and international negotiations:

"... the great highroads of history are strewn with little shrines of peace which have either been left unfinished, or have collapsed when completed, for the sole reason that their foundations were built on the sands of some verbal misconception."³²

30) Harari, op. cit., 27.

31) <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-gulf-arrival-idUSKCN18G06K>

VIII. The Circular Argument with Pyongyang—breaking Out

On 19 May 2017, Project Syndicate assembled a valuable series of articles on the problem of the DPRK and its nuclear weapons program, introduced and summarised by Katharine H.S. Moon, Chair of Korean Studies at the Brookings Institution.³³⁾ While valuable in providing a history of recent ideas there is no clear way forward offered.

Moon usefully provides an account of Korean involvement with nuclear programs from the time of the Japanese occupation, the reality that the DPRK has been under nuclear threat from the US since the Korean War and an account of the conflicted history of the Six Party Talks, detailed history at Wikipedia.³⁴⁾

A threshold is mentioned – of accepting the status quo – in the arguments of Richard Haass³⁵⁾ as summarised by Moon:

“Richard N. Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, lists four possible policy choices: *accept the status quo and strengthen traditional deterrence*, **while the DPRK develops its nuclear capabilities further**; use military force, such as surgical strikes against nuclear weapons and facilities; pursue regime change; or emphasize diplomacy. Haass, like Hill, Yoon, and Fischer (and many others), concludes that diplomacy is the only way forward. [highlight added]

The conundrum is that diplomacy of the kind everyone seems to favour has an objective and for the most part governments and commentators lean towards diplomacy with the objective of getting the DPRK to cease and desist from its

32) Harold Nicholson, *Diplomacy*, 1939, 113.

Nicholson, for a long time doyen of the British foreign service, said that such precision was the second requirement of an ideal diplomat, the first being truthfulness. Sometimes however, we don't know we are not telling the truth. Tillerson: sincere but not likely to be considered truthful in North Korea, both because of the reputation of his master and his genre and because his remarks, however sincere, do not fit the overall picture.

33) Katharine Moon, “Inside the North Korea Maze”, *PS On Point*, 19 May 2017 <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/the-north-korea-maze-by-katharine-h-s-moon-2017-05>

34) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-party_talks

35) <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/north-korea-strategic-options-by-richard-n-haass-2017-03>

nuclear weapons program. Unlikely to get any further than it has in the past decade. Where Clausewitz advised statesmen that if they take up the policy *instrument* of war, the need to be aware that war may drive out policy to pursue its own ends, I take the same view of the policy instrument of diplomacy, in that it is also likely to drive out policy and pursue its own ends.

An interview in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 15 May 2017³⁶⁾ with Siegfried Hecker, of Stanford University, formerly Director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, who may know more about Pyongyang's nuclear program than any other outsider, comes more directly to the point, or points, foreseeing no reason why North Korea would fire a missile at the US and no capacity on the part of the US to surgically destroy the North Korean nuclear weapons capability. He continues:

How they developed a threatening nuclear arsenal despite global opposition is a sad reflection on unwise US policies and the international community's approach to preventing nuclear proliferation...

Insufficient attention has been paid to the demand side—that is, to why states want nuclear weapons and what can be done to influence the decision to acquire them. In the North Korean case, the Clinton administration greatly slowed North Korea's drive to the Bomb with diplomacy. The Bush administration rejected diplomacy, but was unprepared for the consequences. It stood by while North Korea built a nuclear weapon. Subsequent attempts at diplomacy amounted to too little, too late.

In my view, there will be no progress on this issue without focus on North Korea's motivation, to accept the status quo.

There seems little systematic thinking as regards the Korean situation about issues of nuclear deterrence and conflict escalation. There were two main architects in the 1960s, the classic era of thinking about nuclear weapons and their 'use': Bernard Brodie and Herman Kahn. Brodie³⁷⁾ on nuclear deterrence, Kahn³⁸⁾ on war fight-

36) Elizabeth Eaves, "North Korean nuclear program can't be stopped with weapons, says Siegfried Hecker" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 15 May 2017, <http://thebulletin.org/north-korean-nuclear-program-cant-be-stopped-weapons-says-siegfried-hecker10769>

37) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Brodie_\(military_strategist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Brodie_(military_strategist))

ing and conflict escalation.

Kahn's 'escalation ladder'³⁹⁾ provides a framework for thinking about points reached in escalation and ways to step back from escalation. Friedrich Glasl⁴⁰⁾, coming from a management studies perspective, has set out a ladder of escalation with fewer steps than Kahn's.

These ladders do not solve a problem with the DPRK but may be useful devices for discussion with all the parties to secure some sense of the points on escalation ladders that has been reached... and steps needed to move in safe directions.

I am not without hope that President Trump could be prevailed upon to grasp at new perspectives. He will of course have advice from the two main stream coming from the NSC and State: more of the stalemated language of diplomacy plus sanctions and force-oriented notions from National Security Advisor McMaster, Defence Secretary Mattis and the newly appointed deputy to McMaster, Ricky Waddell⁴¹⁾. Thus the advice Trump is most likely to be given is more of the same, more of the conflicting advice on the one hand about modalities and feasibilities for the use of forces and on the other reassuring language about restraint. I do not believe the US has a constructive way forward. For the ROK the priorities seem to be to secure:

- Recognition that the Koreans must find ways towards self-determination in the peninsula and for the ROK to have a veto over US and joint forces actions that impinge upon the capacity of the ROK to enter constructive discussions with the north;
- Acceptance that the position reached in the UN Security Council and in the discussions between the six should not be placed as restraint upon the ROK in discussions with the DPRK; and
- Acceptance that the objective is safety and human survival on the Korean peninsula, not humiliation of the enemy. I note Siegfried Hecker's arguments

38) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Kahn

39) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escalation_ladder

40) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Glasl%27s_model_of_conflict_escalation

41) "Major General Ricky Waddell" US Army Official Website <http://www.usar.army.mil/Leadership/Article-View/Article/742127/major-general-ricky-waddell/> accessed 19 May 2017.

on the inadequacy of international approaches to non-proliferation and the need to address the motivations for the DPRK's need for weapons. Rogue State labelling is a nonsensical start point.

To provide Trump with a new major idea, to secure his endorsement that the ROK should follow that idea, have the lead on that idea, is an approach to be considered.

IX. Regarding China

The rest of the world has, as noted earlier, largely failed to accept that the last forty years in China have seen the greatest revolution in world history. We read about, speak about, write about little details more often. Many people think of China in fear and apprehension, sometimes with old racist attitudes that can rise to the surface again in Australia but are thought of as real, not-fake, not prejudiced. But leaving that aside, there is a tendency of many observers of China to focus on a point on the perimeter of the wheel of the vehicle rather than the direction of the vehicle itself. The dominating financial analysts know today's charts, but do they know China?

The difficulties of running a very large country are obvious. They have not been made easier by the increasing economic openness of the last forty years. There are unresolved issues of national governance.

The Australian Government in 1980 made a package of decisions to guide the modern relationship with China. We were pleased to develop many exchanges to assist officials in China develop an understanding of practical matters involved in the foundations of our kind of government and economic system, of civil society. Before then, rights of an individual in China were largely determined by membership of a 'work unit': rights to be born, to have housing, to enter day care, to go to school, to have opportunities for work, for marriage, for housing, to become and remain pregnant... and round again. The reform process meant the need for the fate of businesses to be determined by market forces, for businesses to keep conventional accounts, the prospect of individual unemployment and change of

employment. Beginning with no personal property rights, with a shift from all production to the state, all ownership by the state to a situation where after producing a quota for the state, all else could be produced by farmers for self. This began in Sichuan in 1978 and was allowed progressively to extend in the 1980s. And with difficulties, into the cities and industry.

Basic ideas of accounting systems, basic concepts of law, auditing, taxation, micro and macroeconomic management, all these were new concepts. They advanced with resistance from dinosaurs in the party, and with little pre-existing ethical framework.

In the evolution of ROK-China relations it may be important to make very clear Korean thinking on issues from time to time. Each side will have its own view of the meaning of terms and concepts. It is not constructive to presume that there are no differences of perception when a common-sounding term is used.

In 1986 the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Hu Yaobang embarked upon a political and cultural reform campaign called *sankuan*, shorthand for 'generosity, tolerance and relaxation'.⁴² But it was not part of Supreme Leader Deng Xiaoping's perspective to allow a political and cultural openness alongside economic reform. Hu Yaobang was removed from office.

Hu Yaobang's death in May 1989 led to an outpouring of sorrow and demonstrations calling for more openness. Hard positions on both sides led to the imposition of martial law and then to many deaths in Tiananmen Square. This was a crisis point in Chinese modern history as significant as the events in Gwangju in May 1980 was for South Korea. In South Korea it is now a turning point in history. In China, there has been no 'turning'.

This difference between the situation in the ROK and that in China is going to be a factor in Chinese leaders' attitudes to the ROK.

(In my view) it is of fundamental importance to the future of the world that China remain a stable state. There is no example of 'huge state governance' for China elsewhere: not in Russia, having seen what became of the USSR; not in the USA, whose political processes now creak; not in the EU, which is far from secure... and not in India, the other super-state with very different history and

42) Henry Yuhuai He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the Peoples Republic of China*, 2001, 366.

socio-political fabric. What China has had to do over 40 years is *invent*, while holding the ship afloat through storms.

Chinese leaders will be watching what happens in the Moon era in the ROK, both for potential threats to China's fabric if people in China are inspired by the mass movement in South Korea, and to see if the Moon reforms work.

China is at the moment stuck, more than is South Korea, with the way modernisation has increased social and economic inequality.

It is difficult to find a comparison in history of states entering into new dialogue about futures as grand as is possible between the ROK and China. Both countries equipped with intellectual depth, notional cultural and historical understanding but in reality a lot of gaps in current understanding to be recognised. At the same time, the two countries each have gaps in understanding of themselves and the tensions in their own societies.

On both sides the traders and raiders will wish to proceed with minimal interference. Statesmen need to embrace more than trade and business and look to shared visions of the future. Sharing visions with their people in ways that can be supported. The ROK needs a 'vision statement' for relations with China.

In the 1980s Deng Xiaoping advanced and China adopted a concept of 'One Country, Two Systems' for China's reunification. Reunification remains a hard and determined attitude towards Taiwan, where the government remains the 'Republic of China', descendant of the government that retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after defeat in the revolution. It is a policy that sits uncomfortably with many people in Hong Kong as dissent is suppressed.

X. But What about the Relationship with the United States?

I have discussed issues specific to the US grasp of the Korean question earlier under 'the circular argument regarding Pyongyang'.

The United States' strategic perspectives tend towards zero-sum thinking: that any new development away from the US subtracts from the interests of the US.

President Trump represents a bloc of opinion on economic relationships comparable to 'mercantilism' in earlier times in Europe: promoting and controlling at

home, exporting the maximum, importing the minimum. But at a broader level, on the 'progressive' side of American leadership, the Obama-Clinton side, supporting and supported by military capability, geopolitical perspectives are of the same mind: to contain enemies, overwhelm them if possible. This saw the destabilising expansion eastward of NATO, a breach of agreements reached with Russia after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.

American strategic thinking continues rooted in a popular myth of 'American exceptionalism'. Apart from that driving force to 'get out there', dominant defence strategy has emphasised a global role of domination. Naval strategy has for long been based loosely upon ideas based on the writing of Alfred Thayer Mahan, nineteenth century commandant of the US Naval War College, focused on how only one navy can command the sea. This general notion of 'only one' rather than balance has been taken up by other arms of the services and defence planners generally.

However Trump's campaign also drew on isolationist sentiment, a desire for no more war baggage. In office, of course, he finds as did Obama that disengagement is hard to do and military engagements in several place are so complex that their command and the future of engagements has become largely the preserve of the military. This is a huge industry. Trump's position is now articulated thus:

President Trump said Monday [27 February 2017] the U.S. has squandered trillions of dollars on military operations in the Middle East over the past two decades without winning any of the wars.

"We never win, and we don't fight to win," the new commander-in-chief told the nation's governors at a White House meeting. "We've either got to win, or don't fight it at all."

In previewing his first budget proposal, the president said he'll call for a big increase in military spending to send "a message to the world" about America's strength and resolve. Mr. Trump said he wants to provide soldiers with the tools to deter war and, when called upon, "to start winning wars again."

"When I was young, in high school and in college, everybody used to say we never lost a war. America never lost," Mr. Trump said. "Now, we never win a war."⁴³)

The general tendency has been for Republican Administrations (Reagan, Bush, Bush) to be more assertive and combative, less inclined than Democrats (Clintons, Obama) to enter into consultations.

Anxious about the Reagan Administration's strategies, Robert McNamara, Defense Secretary in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations 1961-1968 published a polemic called *Blundering into Disaster*⁴⁴⁾ in 1987, concerned that nuclear war could break out. My perspective at the time was that it was the constant development of war plans, the elaboration of ways to do whatever one might imagine, that was the risk: the opposite of blundering. A risk arising from habits of handling and discussing plans, belief that this or that plan is feasible, without adequate consideration of wider, non-military dimensions: the social and political costs of war. In 1986, in Reyjavik, the capital of Iceland, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev together blundered — sending everyone out of the room, discarding their carefully argued brief papers, sitting alone to consider together major arms reductions.⁴⁵⁾

'Blundering' is sometimes important. Leaving aside all the plans can be essential to progress and positive outcomes. The number of plans for war in the Korean peninsula is large, on both sides.

It is of course the job of military staffs to make sure plans are up to date and that they 'will work'. One of the most tragic illustrations of where such thinking can lead was this report from a journalist during the Viet Nam war:

"It became necessary to destroy the town to save it', a United States major said today. He was talking about the decision by allied commanders to bomb and shell the town regardless of civilian casualties, to rout the Vietcong."⁴⁶⁾

At the beginning of H.R. McMaster's book *Dereliction of Duty*⁴⁷⁾ he is scathingly critical of the civilian team around President Kennedy advising him on national

43) <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/feb/27/donald-trump-says-us-never-wins-wars-anymore/>

44) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1987-03-01/blundering-disaster-surviving-first-century-nuclear-age>

45) <http://www.thereaganvision.org/the-reyjavik-summit-the-story/>

46) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B%E1%BA%BFn_Tre

47) H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, HarperPerennial 1997.

strategy, beginning with management of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the rejection of aggressive advice from military chiefs. He goes on to disparage the failure of both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations to advance a military strategy for victory in Viet Nam.

McMaster is as noted now the US National Security Advisor. Another general, James Mattis is Secretary of Defense. Another General, Ricky Waddell, has been appointed deputy to McMaster. Waddell is a desk general, expert in logistics, including for J4, US Forces Korea, also with a time in management of US oil interests in South America. Their expertise is in the effective deployment of force rather than national security. Whether they understand the difference is not clear.

So far notable things that have occurred with this intensified military command of the US Administration are:

- The missile attack on Syria in April 2017⁴⁸)... without coherent attachment to any strategic purpose, a token but delivering large quantities of depleted uranium, which will have far more enduring poisonous effect than the chemical weapon event for which they were retaliation;
- The use of the single most explosive non-nuclear weapon in Afghanistan in April 2017⁴⁹)... which has not reversed the forward momentum of the Taliban;
- A dramatic increase in reported civilian deaths as a result of US offensives in the Middle East⁵⁰);
- The sabre rattling, aircraft carrier shaking and nuclear weapon bomber demonstrating against the DPRK; and
- McMaster's awkward, new, perhaps unexpected, role of trying to explain Trump to journalists.⁵¹)

Earlier in this essay I noted the good sense of Secretary of State Tillerson's re-

48) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/06/trump-syria-missiles-assad-chemical-weapons>

49) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39596333>

50) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/after-reports-of-civilian-deaths-us-military-struggles-to-defend-air-operations-in-war-against-militants/2017/04/10/838e950a-1893-11e7-855e-4824bbb5d748_story.html?utm_term=.285c01fc36d1

51) <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/hr-mcmaster-appointment-takeaways-235233>

marks on Korea on 3 May and since.⁵²⁾ What influence Tillerson has on high policy is unclear.

And so to return to the subject of blundering versus good plans.

- There is a dissonance, a discord, in high level American planning towards the Korean peninsula;
- The line of negotiation with Pyongyang was muddled by American failures to maintain commitments entered into in the 1990s. That one American administration promised and the next administration dishonoured the promise is irrelevant sophistry to the North Koreans;
- What Tillerson says has been made clear to the DPRK is quite contrary to the DPRK's view of American intentions. It's not what you say that counts, it's what you do... and beyond that it's not what you think is your position that counts, it's what your enemy thinks it is that counts. Without doubt the military perspectives dominating US strategy are understood in Pyongyang, as reflected in Pyongyang's responses. Somewhere there needs to be empathy. Empathy is not sympathy, empathy is not appeasement. Empathy is an essential ingredient in understanding as situation and searching for ways forward;
- The military plans won't achieve a sensible outcome in Korea, some civilian 'blundering' seems worthwhile. Military planners and conservative pundits will certainly regard anything outside their rules and reasonings as blundering. Whatever 'different' initiatives are taken need clear, written, public supporting information.

In the mid-1970s Australia established diplomatic relations with the DPRK and opened what was then the only western-aligned embassy in Pyongyang. The relationship ended in late 1975, a complex story very familiar to me. I have placed a paper on that at the National Library of Australia, linked to my oral history lodged there⁵³⁾. A good friend, Park Soo-gil, ROK Counsellor in Canberra who moved to the UN mission in New York around the time I moved to Washington, chided me in Washington over lunch in 1976, laughing at how the North Koreans

52) <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/05/270620.htm>

53) <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/191367484>

had made fools of us. I replied that surely he wanted a peaceful outcome in Korea; the DPRK had been locked in the broom cupboard of Asia for decades, someone had to talk to them sometime. He and his colleague from the ROK embassy in Washington fell quiet. There are two points to make from this:

- Yes indeed one must go and speak to the DPRK, locked in that broom cupboard of Asia for so long ... and it is not going to be simple; and
- It is – it *must* be – possible to appeal to those pillars of ROK conservatism in the foreign ministry and elsewhere to get them in line with new policy. There will still be forces of conservatism in the ROK, inside and outside government who will want to castigate efforts to deal with Pyongyang. Commitments to lining up with government policy need to be in writing.

Part of the legend of North Korean ‘madness’ is the axe murder in the Joint Security Area in 1976. The text at footnote provides an orthodox conservative account of that event.⁵⁴) There is no mention there or in the legend as generally retold of the failure of the US commander to engage normal armistice consultations when North Korea objected to removal of the tree by US forces. The unilateral decision by an American military command to proceed with what US Forces wanted to do in the face of opposition led to a predictable response... and to heightened global tension and elevation of the US forces DEFCON status to a level 3. This is a stupid example of how war can begin because military commanders wish simply to assert their authority. The legend, that this event proves North Korean wickedness, is likely in President Trump’s TV input. The truth, a military desire to assert, without expectation of opposing logic, is to be compared with H.R. McMaster’s naïve performance to the media in support of President Trump on 16 May: "The story that came out tonight as reported is false."⁵⁵)

There was some annoyance on the part of officials in Australia that Australia had not been notified of the raising of DEFCON status to level 3 and they only learned of it because I had sought information on the crisis from the State

54) http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/paul_bunyan.htm

55) <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/05/16/mcmaster-defends-trump-sharing-information-russians.html>

Department. Annoyance because of the understandings reached by the Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Lance Barnard and US Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger in 1974.⁵⁶⁾ My attitude then and since is that ‘consultation is as consultation does’ and it is not sufficient for the minor ally to sit at its desk waiting to be consulted.

In the current situation in the ROK, in relations between ROK forces and US Forces Korea and the overall context of command instructions to US forces in the North Asian theatre, it seems desirable that some doctrine, some set of instructions be agreed, to regulate what may be done without consultation with the ROK Government and what matters require consultation and how consultation is to take place. As noted earlier there is some historical tendency of the US to regard consultation as “tellin’ ‘em what we’re doin’” ... which is not adequate.

In 1977, in Washington, the the new US National Security Advisor to President Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinsky, came to lunch at the Australian Embassy, along with his Asia team. I set out what we had sought to do in our relations with Pyongyang, also saying that the US needed to consider sooner rather than later a reduction in military tension in the peninsula, to reduce military presence as a way of encouraging the Koreans to come to terms with each other. Michael Oksenberg, senior staff member of the NSC responded that whatever the merits of the argument I was offering, the problem was that it was not possible for the US to address more than two problems in the region at a time, and the base negotiations with the Philippines and normalisation of relations with China had priority.

What Michael said about relations with China was true and the issues with the Philippines were indeed urgently expressed by the government in Manila. Whereas the political situation in Seoul in 1977 in no way advocated change.

Nonetheless, it seems to be a pattern of Korea slipping back in the queue because the military have had the situation under control. So the tension on the peninsula has racked up and up without the increase in forces and the rooms full of military plans enhancing peace prospects. It is always ‘too soon’ to solve the problem. It is always too soon if people can’t back up a little. It is always necessary

56) “U.S. and Australian Defence Ministers meet” DEFENCE press release DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE CANBERRA THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1974 <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FHPR04005692a%22;src1=sm1>

to turn away from military plans to seek solutions.

In the early 1980s Australia made a modest effort to sound out in major capitals new ways forward on Korea. The response of Mikhael Kapitsa, then head of the Asia department in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, remains in my mind. To explain the practical necessity of Moscow staying onside with Pyongyang he observed [I quote from memory] that when two nations that should be friends are not friends, the fault is on the side of the more powerful.

XI. Concluding Observations

I offer these concluding observations:

- This new administration in the ROK has come to office at a time of unprecedented turbulence in international relations and reduced coherence in US global leadership;
- There has been turbulence in the ROK. While a sensible and positive outcome has been achieved in elections, the management of both internal and external issues will be complex and interwoven. International policy needs to be clear to all;
- There is no zero-sum in world affairs. This needs to be a keystone of perspectives of any country wishing to benefit from the present world situation. Conflict is the child of zero-sum thinking;
- There is a fundamental need to consider where relations with the DPRK sit on an 'escalation ladder' and use such a framework to consider new directions;
- The notion of diplomacy simply trying to get the DPRK to end its nuclear weapons program before anything else is unproductive;
- The ROK needs US and UN Security Council endorsement for room to discuss ways forward with the DPRK;
- China is becoming stronger, the US weaker. This does not mean there must be a shift of fealty from the one to the other, but for allies it means improved communication and a need to counsel the major power towards adjustment.

- There will be a general change in the balance of power. We should not presume that new powers will act just like old powers. We should be alert to the prospect of conflicts arising because of the stresses in adjustment;
- These transformations will be very difficult for the United States, involving 'loss' which domestic politics may not tolerate, involving loss of America's 'manifest destiny';
- We all need to study the 'five principles of peaceful coexistence' that are the declared base of Chinese foreign policy, hold China to those principles, and where possible share them;
- Central to Korean policies, on both sides, there needs to be a shared objective of self-determination;
- The ROK government has capacity to present itself to the US as a good ally, not simply a subordinate but as acting in self-interest and arguing good sense to mutual advantage;
- The ROK needs a vision for its relations with China and vice versa;
- The ROK and Japan also need visions for bilateral relations. I have not discussed this difficult question, but I have a question: If by mutual agreement the President of the ROK and the Prime Minister of Japan were to address each other's parliaments, would this push forward a capacity for dialogue rather than habits of addressing domestic constituencies?

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