

# Korean Unification: Political and Economic Aspects in the East-Asian Context

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## Abstract

Since Ukraine's crisis started in February 2014, the relations of the Russian Federation with Western powers deteriorated significantly and have reached the level of the Cold War conflict. That is why the "Pivot to Asia" is currently the key characteristics of its foreign policy strategy. This article analyses several scenarios of future security regime in Asia as well as Russia's vision of possible developments in the Korean peninsula. It concludes that the strategic aim of the international community of nations nowadays should be peace-keeping, conflict resolution, maintaining status-quo in those regions (the Korean peninsula, for example), where an immediate solution is impossible.

**Key Words** : Russia, Korean Peninsula, "Pivot to Asia", Multipolarity, Diplomacy

## 1. Introduction

When a Russian researcher is trying to analyze a situation of the Korean Peninsula, many research questions immediately come to his or her mind. For example, who are key stakeholders of the conflict? Why outside actors of the conflict take their positions and how they change them in time? Where can reliable

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information be obtained about the real situation of the Korean Peninsula, especially the one inside the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)? How significant is the danger of losing control over security regime? Is the collapse of the DPRK unavoidable? How can a military confrontation be avoided in the Korean Peninsula? Is North Korea planning to use nuclear bombs as weapons of the last resort? How may Russia preserve its growing cooperation with the Republic of Korea while keeping the door for dialogue with the DPRK open?

Debates on conflict resolution and de-escalation of tensions have been dominating in discussions about East Asia and the Korean Peninsula for about sixty years. Unfortunately, each Korea's so-called "national idea" today concerning the conflict (the Korean puzzle) is firmly based on a suppression of the other Korea. That makes the whole discussions about the Korean situation a classical "zero-sum game"—a situation in which one participant's gain (or loss) of utility is exactly balanced by the loss (or gain) of the utility by the other participant. That is why all negotiations about peace process in Korea is an example of distributive bargaining in the atmosphere of conflict and lack of trust in partners.

At the same time, a sort of "mutual understanding" exist in the interpretations of the Korean War (1950-53). Both North and South Korea have become puppets in the hands of great powers during the Cold War. The Korean War was a typical "proxy war" between the USA and the USSR, in which the United Nations fought on the American side (the U.S. loss was 54,246 people, and the total UN loss was 628,833 people). Recent scholarships have estimated that the full death toll of the battle on all sides was a little bit over 1.2 million (Gleditsch, Nils Petter, and Bethany Lacina, 2005). That makes the Korean War one of the largest international conflicts of the previous century. It should not be repeated due to diplomatic mistakes and growing competitions between contemporary great powers in the region—above all, the USA and China.

These days, the Russian Federation is trying to accommodate its foreign policy strategy to realities of global and regional (Asian) politics. These new realities include conflicts with the USA and its allies in Europe over issues of the civil war in Ukraine, such as Crimea's accession to Russia as one of its regions and economic sanctions and attempts of "regime change" in Russia initiated by

Washington D. C. We may expect in a near future new programming documents, which reflect fundamental changes in Russia's vision of the world and its own place in the emerging new global security architecture.

Today the key programming document of foreign policy that presents Russia's worldview is "The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation", which has been approved by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, on February 12, 2013. Here are some quotations on Russia's vision of its national interests in the Asia-Pacific region from this document:

75. Strengthening Russia's presence in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) is becoming increasingly important since Russia is an integral part of this fastest-developing geopolitical zone, toward which the center of world economy and politics is gradually shifting. Russia is interested in participating actively in APR integration processes, using the possibilities offered by the APR to implement programs meant to boost Siberian and Far Eastern economy, creating a transparent and equitable security architecture in the APR and cooperation on a collective basis.

76. Improving political and security environment in Asia is of fundamental importance for Russia as the potential for conflict in the region remains significant, military arsenals are built up, and the risk of WMD proliferation is increasing. Russia consistently comes out in favor of settling all differences among the stakeholders through political and diplomatic means with strict adherence to the fundamental principles of international law.

77. Russia considers it vital to create and promote a partner network of regional associations in the APR. In this context, special emphasis is placed on enhancing the role in regional and global affairs of the SCO whose constructive influence on the situation in the region as a whole has significantly increased". (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013)

The Concept also pays special attention to the Korean peninsula and inter-Korean dialogues, even if it ignores the formulation of position towards the prospects of the Korean Unification.

83. Russia is ready to actively contribute to the efforts to establish effective

mechanisms for strengthening peace, security, mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation in Northeast Asia as a regional element of the new security architecture in Asia-Pacific.

84. Russia seeks to maintain friendly and neighborly relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation and to better use the potential of those relationships to speed up regional development and support inter-Korean political dialogue and economic cooperation, which are fundamental to peace, stability and security in the region. Russia has always been in favor of the non-nuclear status of the Korean Peninsula and will fully support a step-by-step progress in the area based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including within the framework of the six-party talks. (Ibid.)

## 2. Russia as an Asian (and not-only-European) country

The Russian Federation is a new player on the stage of Asia-Pacific security and political economy. Up to a rather recent time (the end of the twentieth century) Moscow's interest in the region was driven by the threat of a direct military confrontation with the People's Republic of China as well as the absence of a peace treaty with Japan after the World War II due to the territorial disputes over Kurile Islands.

Russia's "Pivot to Asia" is a very new development and is only 15 years old (Tkachenko, Stanislav, 2011a.). On July 16, 2001, Kremlin made the first strategic step towards the region, signing "the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation" in Moscow. The Russian-Chinese border, which is one of the longest in the world (4,209 kilometers) was approved internationally and given a legal status. It was a tremendous leap forward from the old times of the Soviet-Chinese confrontation over the issue of the delimitation of it.

Further initiatives that Russia has taken ever since demonstrates the durability of its newly-born interest in the Asia-Pacific region: for example, huge infrastructural

projects in Siberia and the Far East of Russia, as well as between Russia and its neighbors; APEC Economic Summit in Vladivostok in September 2012; visa-free regime with the Republic of Korea and liberalization of visa regime with many other regional countries; emergence of East Asia as a new market for Russian energy resources (oil, natural gas, electricity, coal, etc.) We live today in a period, when the idea of “European Choice” of Russia as the only strategic area of its foreign policy is rapidly disappearing. Instead, Russian foreign policy has become multipolar and it serves interests of “high politics” as well as day-to-day interests of ordinary Russians. That is why Asia and its future, which is an important new area of research for Russian scholars, have practical implications for Russian businessmen as well as for diplomats and politicians.

Four years ago, my colleague Professor Konstantin Khudoley and I made a research on long-term prospects of Asian security and Russia’s place in the changing geometry of power in this region. We developed four scenarios of trends in the region from the most probable (“multipolarity”) to the least possible (“chaos”). Here I would like to briefly recall the logic behind these scenarios (Khudoley, Konstantin and Stanislav Tkachenko, 2011).

### **a) Multipolarity**

Initially the idea of multipolarity was proposed by Russia as an attempt to forestall the deterioration of its political and economic standing that was steadily falling year after year ever since it had inherited from the Soviet Union. The concept of multipolarity, which has been reflected in almost all the doctrines and policy documents governing the military-political aspects of Russia, looks better in theory than in practice. Russia’s appeals for overcoming unilateralism in the contemporary world politics dominated by the United States and the NATO, has received verbal supports from virtually all the leading Asian states. The periodic summits of BRICS suggest that the idea of multipolarity as one of the options for the development of politics in continental Asia is still alive. From Russia’s perspective in the late 1990s, such three-pole architecture of security and balance of power for Asia (China, India and Russia) is optimal. However, 15 years later,

it has now become obvious that the idea of strategic partnership and joint management of Asian security is unworkable. There are no doubts that Russia will continue its efforts to create an Asian multilateral security system based on the balance of the largest regional powers. Kremlin will try to delay the reform of the UN and the Security Council. It will not oppose the extrusion of the U.S. military forces from different areas of the Asia-Pacific zone and will try to clean up Central Asia from any influence of USA and the European Union.

### **b) China's Leadership**

Since October 2014 China has been the largest economy in the world. China will be able to determine the direction of global economic processes from now on, and its opinion will not be disregarded even by such giants as the United States, the European Union and Japan. Since the world economic crisis in 2008-2010 some Russian economists have acknowledged the reorientation of the Russian economy towards the Chinese market and considered its inclusion in the global division of labor as a supplier of raw materials or semi-finished products as a major source of its interests during the global crisis and afterwards.

By maintaining a high GDP growth rates and boosting the consumption capacity of its national market, China is increasing its attractiveness as a center of magnetism for the world economic processes. Thus, the current Chinese leaders are planning to turn their regional leadership into a global one.

China will undoubtedly be the most notable actor of Asian politics in the long run. But its influence will be counterbalanced by other states or their alliances. Russia will make great efforts to develop economic ties with China, but not security cooperation within the frameworks of the SCO or of the Asian members of BRICS, which will be minimal.

### **c) The U.S. Leadership**

The U.S.'s actual defeat in Iraq and its perceived difficulties inherent in the task of completing operations in Afghanistan and withdrawing American troops

from there have already resulted in an apparent decrease of the military and economic power of the U.S. in the Asian region.

Nevertheless, the U.S.'s ability to act independently in protecting its own interests in Asia as well as in alliance with other states such as Japan, South Korea, and in the future, possibly, India, gives us a good reason to consider a scenario in which Washington would be able to preserve its key position in the region, as fairly realistic in the short and medium run. Virtually all Asian countries want the U.S. to remain a potent regional power for various reasons. China vitally needs its products to access the U.S. market even if nowadays Beijing is working on a de-dollarization of its tremendous currency reserves. India is interested in increasing cooperations with the U.S. in the domains of information technology and high-tech. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan view Washington as the chief guarantor of their security and territorial integrity. Therefore, in the future, the U.S.'s influence in Asia will be significant, especially concerning the most pressing military and political issues.

Russia is quite happy with the U.S.'s moderate meddling in the affairs of Asia since it counterbalances the positions of other major regional players (China, Japan, India, etc.). The litmus test of Russia's reaction to the U.S. policy in Asia is the Russo-Iranian relations and Moscow's readiness to support tougher sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program. Since non-nuclear Iran serves the long-term interests of Russia, Moscow will try to promote the goals of the U.S. policy toward Iran, while avoiding a complete rupture of Russo-Iranian relations. This is an extremely difficult task for the Russian diplomacy, and there is no guarantee that it will be able to handle it successfully in the next few years.

#### **d) Chaos**

This scenario seems unlikely for Asia as a whole since the forces that promote order and stability in the mega-region are considerably stronger than the forces and processes of destruction.

On the one hand, in some parts of Asia, to which we tend to consider Afghanistan, the neighboring areas of Pakistan, and Central Asia around the

Fergana Valley to belong, the lack of effective governance as well as the desire of some extra-systemic players to destabilize the situation could lead to chaos and armed conflicts.

On the other hand, we are convinced that, as of now, no state in the Asian region is interested in a turmoil of revolutionary scale or is betting on a large-scale conflict instead of a diplomacy and a search for compromises in an attempt to enhance its status in the regional system of security and economy.

Russia will try to prevent the realization of this scenario in every way possible, as the chaos on its southern borders could become a threat not only to its national security, but, in the long run, to its territorial integrity as well. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by new states of Asia in the long run could bring down the threshold of their use to dangerously low levels. A nuclear conflict in the most populous part of the world would lead to global shocks of unprecedented scale. Consequently, Russia's policy will aim at the preservation of controllability of Asian security and the maintenance of regional stability.

### 3. The Korean Peninsula and Russia's Interests

The diplomatic and economic cooperation between the USSR and the Republic of Korea began in 1990 when the two countries established diplomatic relations and opened embassies in each other's capital. We should emphasize the fact that the two countries have been developing their economic relations since 1988, when the first trade agreement was signed and came into force.

The Soviet period of economic cooperation and partnership, however, was short and rather unimpressive since there were many limitations to trades and investments then. A key reason for that was the ideological and political proximity between Moscow and Pyongyang, and Moscow's distrust of the Republic of Korea, which was considered a semi-sovereign country under the occupation of the U.S. troops since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

The almost peaceful disintegration of the USSR and the emergence of modern democratic Russia with liberal economic system was the key element for the



successful development of all types of political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries. The pro-market reforms in Russia and the tremendous success of modernization efforts by the South Korean leaders, especially since the 1980s, were prerequisites for their cooperation in trade, such as an establishment of joint ventures and, later, an opening of the Russian market to Korean investments. Korea has become one of the leading trading partners of Russian Far East. But Saint-Petersburg is emerging nowadays as another important region inside the Russian Federation in which Korean big business is developing megaprojects in different sectors of economy (Tkachenko, Stanislav, 2011b, 191-205).

Below we develop three scenarios of future processes in the Korean peninsula, which may change the existing status-quo and bring a reintegration of the two Korean states into reality. Here we proceed from the least possible scenario (a major war in the Asia-Pacific region and a reintegration of Korea as a side-effect of the war) to the most probable scenario (a gradual rapprochement of North and South Korea without losing their respective sovereignty).

#### **a) Scenario 1: A Major War in the Asian Pacific Region**

This scenario is based on growing tensions between USA and China for hegemony in Pacific Rim – the leading region for global economy and security in the twenty first century. We do live in the period, which Robert Keohane labeled “After Hegemony”. In the next 10 to 20 years we will have a new architecture of the global political and economic system. The transformation of current global system into a new one may be peaceful, but at least at this moment we do know that Washington will try to preserve its global domination (leadership) and China is the sole country in the world which at least theoretically may pose a threat to the US hegemony.

Arms race has already started in Pacific Rim and it is driven by the US aspirations to lead an international coalition against China. According to Bonnie S. Glaser from Washington-based think-tank CSIS: “Under the current (Barack Obama – S.T.) administration, the pendulum in U.S. policy toward China has swung from attempting to cooperate with China on global problems to pushing

back against Chinese assertiveness and challenges to international laws and norms” (Glaser, Bonnie S., 2011, 22).

In the case of a major US-Chinese military conflict, the reintegration of the two Korean states may be realized as “a side effect” of the conflict. The line of defense “of last resort” for North Korea is nowadays based on Beijing’s military and diplomatic support. As soon as China for any reason loses its willingness to have North Korea as a “cordon sanitaire” with the US troops in South Korea, a door for the unification of Korea may be opened.

We should emphasize that this scenario is the least possible and totally unrealistic one today. But we cannot help but mention it due to a simple fact that history taught us about intended and not-intended consequences of major conflicts and world wars. Nobody among politicians and diplomats in European capitals, who made the decision to go into a wholesale European military conflict in the late July of 1914, could imagine consequences of their decision. Three empires have been destroyed; dozens of new sovereign states have been established; the multipolar global system have been transformed into a bipolar one in which backward Russia becomes one of the two poles.

We do believe that rational calculations and natural cautiousness of the U.S. and Chinese leaders will prevent their rivalry from shifting into a military conflict. We also have to take into consideration the fact that the pillar of the political system of North Korea is the military force, which has nuclear weapons, enjoys access to all resources of the North Korean economy and receives China’s support. During the crisis in spring 2013 between North and South Korea, Beijing sent a very clear and straightforward message to Washington: a collapse of North Korea as a result of a military pressure and economic sanctions is unwelcomed. The two Korean states once went to a “proxy war”. Both Seoul and Pyongyang should do their best to avoid a new unnecessary confrontation.

At the same time, the picture of politics and security in the Korean peninsula is not too simple. The Western countries together with Japan and the Republic of Korea are no longer ready to tolerate the totalitarian regime in North Korea and the brutalities that this regime commits in the DPRK on a daily basis. Pressures from human right groups and media push Washington, Tokyo and Seoul to

consider more effective means to change the regime in North Korea, or at least, to initiate reforms and democratizations. The experience of the USSR shows that it is rather easy for architects of reforms to lose control over the process of transition from totalitarian state and planned economy to democracy and market. But external parties (China and USA) will monitor process closely and, in the case of failure of North Korean democratic transit, may one day find themselves at the edge of military conflict.

The tragic development of the crisis around Ukraine demonstrates with unprecedented clarity that it is more and more difficult for USA to project their military and economic power into those regions of the world where Washington faces oppositions from a leading regional power (Russia in the case of Ukraine). The American pivot to Asia, which was announced by the President Obama in 2009 and is known today as “China containment policy”, has brought instability to the Pacific Rim – the center of global economy in the new century. Thus, though we may consider the scenario of the US domination in the region valid, we have to make many reservations about it. USA will definitely keep the status of one of the leaders in the Pacific region, but the days of the US hegemony is already gone today.

#### **b) Scenario 2: A Collapse of the North Korean Regime Resulting in Either an Annexation of the DPRK by the Republic of Korea or an Invasion of China**

This scenario is the most popular among scholars (both Russian and foreign) and there are plenty of researches on the topic. The weakest element of the scenario is that it is based on very limited reliable sources of information about the real situation in North Korea (Snyder, Scott, 2002, 20-21). Most supporters of the scenario study rumors rather than facts or reliable statistics and opinion polls.

There could be many reasons for turmoil in the DPRK, which may lead to a civil unrest, a chaos and a total collapse of the system of governance. Still, there are only two outcomes of the collapse: an annexation of the DPRK by the Republic of Korea or an invasion of China and a subsequent establishment of an artificial

North Korean state as a satellite of Beijing. Both options are dangerous for the regional stability. They may open a way to conflict with possible participations of countries outside the Korean peninsula.

Still the probability of this scenario has been decreasing since the death of Kim Chŏng-il in December 2011. It is possible to suggest now that the most difficult period of the transition of power from Kim Chŏng-il to his son Kim Chŏng-un is over. In addition, despite the information about purges of some of the ruling elites in North Korea and its radical rhetoric towards the Republic of Korea, Japan and USA, there is a growing volume of information about its attempts to reform economy (it has taken steps to improve its investment climate and open the North Korean economy to foreign capitals). Until today China is the key beneficiary of this politics, even if Russia is also trying to use several infrastructural projects (access to sea-ports, railway and pipelines' initiatives) to strengthen its positions in the North Korean economy.

Still there are many doubts about whether new ruling elites of North Korea around Kim Chŏng-un have enough experiences and practical skills to carry out reforms. These new elites already demonstrated that they can compensate for their lack of ideas concerning the management of North Korea with aggressive diplomacy and rhetoric. It is high time to implement real policy measures to transform North Korea. The recent visit of the high-level North Korean statesman Tsoy Ren Khe (Цюй Рен Хе) to Russia, who has delivered a personal message of the North Korean leader to the Russian President Vladimir Putin and met with the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, is rather encouraging news for Kremlin and its policy towards the Korean peninsula. The recent Ukrainian crisis demonstrated the obvious "subjectivity" of the Russian Federation as a separate and autonomous pole in the global politics, which is considered a reliable partner and effective proxy for high-level conflict resolution measures. Besides China, it is the Russian Federation that may expect concrete benefits from the transformation of the totalitarian North Korea into a "normal country".

### c) Scenario 3: A Gradual Rapprochement of North and South Korea without Losing Their Respective Sovereignty

From my point of view, this scenario is the most probable and the most desirable way to cope with growing tensions in and around the Korean peninsula. Since the late 1990s the Republic of Korea and the DPRK have developed many lines of contact, cooperation and assistance that they can use for their policy of rapprochement. This scenario, definitely, is the best one for the national interests of the two Korean states as well as those of the Russian Federation.

The new President of the Republic of Korea Pak Geun-hue's initial decisions show that her Administration is planning to change the strategy of conflict towards North Korea. This policy of keeping high tension was typical for South Korea's previous leaders. Already in February 2014 the Committee for the Preparation of Unification of Korea has been established in the RK. The committee is directly subordinated to the President of the RK and could become a contact point as well as a negotiation table for debates about concrete steps on the way to a Korean reunification.

On October 4th, 2014, three high-level officials from the DPRK visited the Republic of Korea to have talks with the Security Advisor of the RK President and the Minister of Unification. The outcome of the meeting—to hold another round of negotiations on reunification—sounds rather trivial. But we should keep in mind that there had been more than 5 years without any dialogue of high-level representatives of the RK and the DPRK on reunification.

The economic infiltration of China into neighboring provinces of North Korea put the issue of restarting cooperation into agenda of leaders both in Seoul and Pyongyang. There are a lot of speculations that, in addition to the three provinces of North-East China (Manchuria), a major part of North Korea may become the fourth Chinese province without any invasion and even political conflict. A transformation of North Korea into a Chinese economic stronghold is not in the interests of Seoul. We may expect new initiatives on cooperation and even integration in next weeks and months.

There is not a single country in the world, which is ready for a collapse of

the DPRK and it is difficult to imagine what an effective way to cope with such a crisis would look like. At the same time, only China has nowadays enough resources to guarantee the protection of its national interest in North Korea and to establish controls over the situation in its neighboring provinces. This can be done rather easily due to the ideological proximity existing between Chinese leaders and members of the establishment in North Korea, who are afraid of a unification of Korea. Some members of the DPRK establishment have committed multiple crimes against humanity; others are victims of several decades of brainwashing campaign against the Republic of Korea and American Imperialism. These North Korean bureaucrats are natural allies of China. They will serve as the fifth column of Beijing if a turmoil starts in the DPRK one day.

There are a lot of “phobias” in China towards the Korean peninsula and the DPRK as well. Beijing realistically expects that, as soon as a dialogue between North Korea and USA restarts, the first item on agenda will be a traditional one: a guarantee of the North Korean regime’s survival and an economic assistance in exchange for the freezing of the nuclear program and, hopefully, for a denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Seoul has never supported these debates in the past, but the growing power of China in East Asia may change its position towards direct negotiations of North Korea and USA.

Another important element of the analysis of this scenario is the cost of a peaceful unification for the Republic of Korea. The price ticket starts from \$1.5 trillion, and it is possible to find even bigger numbers. This looks totally unrealistic for today’s South Korea (it equals the sum of its three year GDPs) if its authorities would like to preserve its living standards, social welfare system and competitiveness of the national economy.

Still, the experience of the Western Germany’s integration of the Eastern German provinces shows that the best approach to the problem should be “never say never”. The time horizon for the unification process is very long, and the process could be managed with the assistance of those neighboring countries (including Russia) which are interested in the future unification of Korea according to a model of regional integration (free-trade zone, zone of currency stability, even custom union). At least, the Russian Federation appreciates the willingness of the

Republic of Korea to cooperate with Russia and avoid any economic sanctions towards it. For Kremlin, it is the best possible confirmation of good prospects for cooperation between Republic of Korea and Russia for many decades to come.

#### 4. Conclusions

We should emphasize the intentional conventionality of all three above-mentioned scenarios of ours. The most probable scenario from a mid-term perspective at least (5 years) would be: no major changes in the region, the preservation of the status-quo with a lot of bilateral and multilateral negotiations as well as forums for debates about the security regime in the Korean peninsula and around it. USA is definitely able to guarantee security and territorial integrity of their allies, including the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and, of course, Japan. China will continue its peaceful rise. A real economic multipolarity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond will emerge.

Being subject to unfair economic sanctions from USA and their allies, Russia is switching these days from the traditional economic cooperation with its European neighbors to the new partnership with countries of the Pacific Rim. This is a sort of Kremlin's response to the US's Asian pivot of 2009. In its policymaking towards the Korean peninsula, Russia's first priority is to ensure against the emergence of new threats to its national security and interests in the region. That is why Russia should be considered the most reliable partner of the countries in the region that deem peace to be the best solution for the Korean peninsula (or for the two Korean states).

Starting in 2013, international politics has entered the period of instability, growing tension in different regions and between many countries involved. Key centers of such instability are Ukraine, Middle East and newly-borne Islamic State, as well as USA and Japan's attempts to intensify pressure on North Korea. The strategic aim of the international community of nations in this situation should be peace-keeping, conflict resolution, maintaining status-quo in those problems, where an immediate solution is impossible.

Today there is no state in the world interested in a military conflict in the Korean peninsula. Any experienced politician would know very well that war is a very risky business. When millions of people, different nations and IGOs are involved in a war, there is a possibility that something will go wrong at any given moment. This perspective is especially realistic if countries involved in a military conflict have nuclear weapons in their possession.

An alternative to a military solution of the conflict in the Korean peninsula is today (and it has always been) negotiations. The six-party talk format is the most reliable today. It includes all major stake-holders. There is no realistic alternative to this format. A fruitful cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation in an atmosphere of trust, which has been inherited by the current generation of Russian and North Korean diplomats from their predecessors is a good prerequisite for the significant role that Moscow will continue to play in the reunification of the two Korean states. Among the three scenarios of unification we consider the gradual rapprochement of North and South Korea as the most probable and the most desirable way to cope with the situation in the Korean peninsula. It is a heritage of the Cold War period that the current generation of leaders and diplomats should be able to overcome in the future. We think that there is no real alternative to this scenario.



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