

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: North Korea, HC 327

Wednesday 13 September 2017

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Members present: Dr Julian Lewis (Chair); Leo Docherty; Martin Docherty-Hughes; Mr Mark Francois; Graham P. Jones; Gavin Robinson; Ruth Smeeth; Phil Wilson.

Questions 1-47

Witnesses

Andrea Berger, Senior Research Associate, James Martin Centre for Non-Proliferation Studies, Dr Matthew Cottee, Research Associate, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Dr John Nilsson-Wright, University of Cambridge and Senior Research Fellow, Chatham House, and Professor Beatrice Heuser, Professor of International Relations, University of Reading.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Andrea Berger, Dr Matthew Cottee, Dr John Nilsson-Wright and Professor Beatrice Heuser.

Q1 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to this special session of the House of Commons Defence Committee looking into the situation regarding North Korea and nuclear weapons. We have a distinguished panel of experts to help us improve our knowledge and perhaps develop an analysis. That difficult process is not awfully helped by a persistent humming noise from machinery in the background. I do apologise for that and hope it does not put any of you off your stroke.

We are very grateful to you for coming to share your expertise with the Committee. We would like to begin by asking you in turn to say a few words about yourselves and your qualifications. We are going to work through a programme of questions, some of them set and others more ad hoc and in response to your replies.

Because there are four experts on the panel, you should not feel that you have all got to answer every question, because that could slow down proceedings. We look to you to indicate where you are particularly keen to come in and we will try to be equally self-disciplined on the Committee. Andrea, would you like to introduce yourself for the record?

Andrea Berger: Of course. Thank you for having me. My name is Andrea Berger. I am a senior research associate at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, which is based in California. Prior to that I was the

deputy director of the nuclear policy team at the Royal United Services Institute in London. My specialisation is in nuclear weapons policy, with a focus on North Korea.

Chair: Thank you. Could you all please speak up a little bit because of this extra problem that we have? Thank you.

Dr Cottee: Good afternoon. My name is Matthew Cottee. I work in the non-proliferation and nuclear policy team at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. My focus is broadly on strategic nuclear issues in Asia. Prior to the IISS, I was completing my PhD at King's College, London, focusing on nuclear terrorism and nuclear security.

Professor Heuser: Hello. I am Beatrice Heuser. I have been at the University of Reading for 10 years. I am just about to move to the University of Glasgow via Paris; I am going to be at the Sorbonne and Sciences Po for the next year. I have no expertise in Asian security—I must say that upfront. I am a nuclear strategist more in the general context. I am afraid I do not have the greatest expertise on Korea; what I can say will be more from the point of view of the extent of deterrence and issues of that sort.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Hello. My name is John Nilsson-Wright. I am senior lecturer in Japanese politics and international relations at the University of Cambridge. I am also senior research fellow for north-east Asia at Chatham House, where I previously headed the Asia programme. I am a diplomatic historian by training but I also work on contemporary political and security issues as they relate to the Korean peninsula and Japan.

Chair: That is an excellent spread of expertise. Ruth Smeeth will start off for us.

Q2 **Ruth Smeeth:** Good afternoon. As an overview for everybody, what is your assessment of the current security situation in north-east Asia? Let's start at the other end of the panel and work our way back.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: I would begin by saying that we are in a situation and at a time of maximum danger when it comes to east Asia—probably the most dangerous time for many, many years.

There are four principal factors that allow me to make that assessment. One is obviously the extraordinary speed with which the DPRK has developed its WMD capabilities. Those two missile launches in July, of course, very dramatically illustrated the increased capabilities of the North Koreans.

I would say the dramatic sixth nuclear test in terms of magnitude was a real step change in terms of the North's destructive capabilities. We know that the North Koreans are capable of reprocessing somewhere in the region of 6 kg of nuclear fissile material on an annual basis.

Current estimates suggest that the North Koreans have in their possession perhaps as many as 30 nuclear devices. By 2030, we have expectations



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that, with their plutonium stockpiles, they might be able to add an additional 20 nuclear devices to that current tally, and perhaps as many as 60, through their HEU reprocessing facilities. In terms of the immediate threat of the capabilities of North Korea, I think we need to be very concerned.

The second reason why I think that is related to the temperament and personality of the man in charge. I would argue that Kim Jong-un has shown himself to be a deliberate risk-taker and a confident leader—potentially an overly confident leader—which raises very important questions about his motivations and intentions in the coming weeks and months.

The third reason is that the challenge of North Korea is not confined to the Korean peninsula. In a region where there are no fewer than six nuclear powers, the complex geopolitics of the region underlines the gravity of the situation, because the actions of certain individual countries may have a knock-on effect beyond the immediate challenge of North Korea. To give an example of that, the debate that is currently taking place in South Korea about missile defence, prompted by the threat from North Korea, has allowed the current administration of Moon Jae-in to commit to deploying more THAAD missile batteries, which is something, as you know, that China is strongly opposed to. China's response is to build up its own missile defence capabilities and to enhance its own missile strike capabilities. That, in itself, doesn't deal with the immediate challenge of those new missile defence batteries, but it potentially creates greater strategic instability for other actors—for example, potentially in the relationship between India and China—so I argue that the knock-on effects need to be considered as well.

The fourth factor, which I am sure we will talk about at some length, is the impact of the crisis on traditional US alliance relations in the region. While the public rhetoric, certainly coming out of Tokyo and, to a lesser extent, Seoul, is quite positive in terms of the relationship with the United States, privately, I think, and certainly on the part of public opinion, there is a great deal of increased anxiety about the reliability of US extended deterrence, and partly also, of course, a great deal of concern about the unpredictability of President Trump. For all of those reasons, I argue that we are at a most perilous point in terms of regional security.

Chair: Who'd like to go next?

Andrea Berger: I'll happily jump in there. I agree with a lot of the points that John has just made. I think the real challenge we have at this moment is that the rapid advances we have seen in North Korea—I would suggest that they are advances in demonstrations, rather than necessarily the development of the capability that the North Koreans have indeed been working on for some time—are invalidating many of the policy assumptions that the US and its like-minded partners have had. Those strategies, which were predicated on preventing North Korea from acquiring the capability to strike the United States with a nuclear weapon,



no longer seem to be ones that we can use to govern our thinking going forward.

Similarly, it seems increasingly unlikely that North Korea is going to entertain the prospect of denuclearisation any time in the near future, and that our medium-term strategy needs to account for the fact that North Korea will probably have nuclear weapons in some perpetuity and will be unwilling to negotiate them away.

As John mentioned, I believe we have something of a crisis in assurance at the moment. That has partly been brought about by related challenges we have seen between like-minded partners in communications, and similarly between adversaries in communication. That has really created gaps that North Korea is all too happy to exploit, and I think that is a challenge that we need to try to get our heads around and address really quite quickly—not least because public attention is, in my view, the highest it has been to the North Korean problem since I have been in the field. That brings with it its own pressures. Indeed, in some respects, depending on the reporting, it has the ability to distort our perceptions of how acute threats are at any one point in time. I think the misreading of North Korea's statements over Guam in August is a case in point.

Q3 Chair: You refer to a “misreading” of the statements. Sorry, but can you clarify what the statements were?

Andrea Berger: Yes. I think the assumption was made, when North Korea issued the statement that North Korea was intent on conducting missile launches to “bracket” Guam, that it would indeed launch four missiles in the vicinity of Guam, rather than just consider a plan for where it could launch missiles if the supreme leader were to so decide. The North Koreans—if you take a quick look at that statement—very clearly laid it out as an option that Kim Jong-un would have for some future point in time. This is classic coercive diplomacy from North Korea, whereby it elevates a threat in order to control a negotiated—hopefully—de-escalation. It's something the North Koreans have done since the 1990s and, indeed, much earlier.

Dr Cottee: May I add to what has already been said? I don't think we are particularly shocked by any of the developments that have occurred in recent times. Having watched this for some time, perhaps I'm too sanguine about it, but these intentions have been broadcast by North Korea for some time. I think the difference now is that we have got to the point where we can no longer kick the can down the road; something has to be done. There is a need for something to be done—anything, to a certain extent.

In the US, there seems to be this push for a clear policy shift from Obama's strategic patience, which came before. That has come at a time when the responses of the key actors involved have been not necessarily opposed, but have not been very well co-ordinated. That has been further exacerbated by some poor political messaging on the part of the US Administration, with the President tweeting one thing, presumably for a



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domestic political base, and then Cabinet members having to try to roll back some of that and stabilise the policy in the background. I don't think that dual track of messaging is a terribly productive one going forward.

- Q4 **Ruth Smeeth:** This question is, in theory, especially for you, Professor Heuser, but I'm not quite sure whether it will actually be for you. How important do you think it is to the North Korean leadership that they develop the DPRK's status as a nuclear weapons state?

Professor Heuser: A lot of states have been tempted to go in the direction of showing that they can be great players either by emphasising their nuclear capability, as in Russia today, or by developing nuclear weapons in the first place. The status idea is inextricably entwined always with the idea of creating a sanctuary for their own country. I never really know if you can say where the status consideration—"I want to be a great power; I want to be taken seriously,"—ends and where the idea starts that you want to keep your own territory protected at all costs.

The forerunners of that particular line were of course the French, who called it "sanctuarisation"—the idea of the sanctuarisation of their country: "Don't touch us. If you come anywhere near our territory, we will go nuclear!" That is something that we have seen espoused particularly by the Israelis, and we take it that Saddam Hussein, when he was pursuing a nuclear scheme, had a similar idea: "Once I have nuclear weapons, nobody can invade me."

I found the previous statements extraordinarily illuminating, particularly what Andrea Berger was saying: everybody is becoming ever more hysterical by the way everybody is interacting with everybody else. Over the last years, there have been all sorts of rumours about potential American preparations for an invasion of North Korea or how America could go in and take out all the nuclear sites—that sort of thing. The one way to keep that at bay would of course be to say, "If you touch our country, we go nuclear! And you don't know where our stuff is, so we could even do it if you had launched an attack on the sites that you know." There is this element of, "Don't touch us, because then we will do something terrible." The protection not only of the status of the leader but of the country as such makes it invulnerable to invasion.

Ruth Smeeth: Thank you very much.

- Q5 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Andrea, can I direct this question to you? Have successive sanction measures had any effect at all on the nuclear weapons and missile programmes in North Korea?

Andrea Berger: That is a question we could talk about for a very long time on its own. I will just throw two cents in on the last question, if I may, to reframe it slightly. I would suggest that North Korea has two motivations for maintaining and further developing its nuclear weapons programme at this time. The first is security and everything that comes with it, as Beatrice mentioned. Indeed, the survival of the regime is what we normally attribute as the key motivation for North Korea's nuclear programme. It is important to distinguish what we mean when we say



“regime survival”. Is it the survival of the Kim family in particular and that system? That is how I would interpret it, but others have different interpretations of what that means.

Related to that, domestic politics has huge importance, and particular importance for Kim Jong-un. He has built his legitimacy as a leader on this programme, and driving it to repeated successes, as he has shown in the last year, where each new missile or nuclear test demonstrates some new capability that he has personally authorised, is no doubt a driver in itself.

On your question about sanctions, we need to identify several different ways in which sanctions could affect the North Korean nuclear missile programme. The first is simply just to impose general costs on the decision makers who have responsibility for directing advancements in the nuclear programme, to make them realise that it is more costly than beneficial to pursue that course further. That is a general strategy for sanctions, and when you hear the current US Administration talking about how sanctions are about denuclearisation, that is what they are intending primarily as the approach—to raise the costs for North Korea.

The other way in which sanctions could have an effect on the programme is to inhibit North Korea from getting some of the goods, technology and sub-components that it needs for those programmes. While there may have been some slowing effect on the programmes by virtue of sanctions—we know things have been stopped going to North Korea that are for those programmes—probably much more gets by than we catch. North Korea has made a sincere effort to indigenise a lot of the manufacturing for those programmes, and that has been, if you will, an unintended consequence of the sanctions regime.

Lastly, sanctions can starve entities critical to the North Korean nuclear missile programme of revenue. That is another thing that the US is attempting to do—with very blunt sanctions, I would suggest, at this moment.

Q6 Martin Docherty-Hughes: It is maybe fair to say that there is some scepticism about the effectiveness of the present sanctions regime. We are now getting to the stage of banning molluscs, invertebrates and so on. The third-party nations who have to physically do that, who are technically our allies or the allies of those countries, such as the United States, who were passing the sanction regimes in August, might think to themselves, “We’re going to be doing this in 20 or 30 years’ time—for a long period.” I enjoyed very much listening to a podcast that you did recently on “Arms Control Wonk” with Jeffrey Lewis. Along with him, perhaps, do you think we have now reached the end of the road in terms of effective sanctions?

Andrea Berger: If we define “effective” as bringing about the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, I think we will be waiting for a long time. Really, if there are architects of the sanctions regime that believe that sanctions have the potential to bring about North Korean

denuclearisation, they have to do a better job of convincing me and probably a lot of others that you can connect the dots in that way.

- Q7 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** In your podcast, there was mention, which horrified me, of discussions at the United Nations, or in other areas, of food sanctions on North Korea as a means of last resort. I am anti-nuclear, but I find it profoundly ironic that we are tackling the human rights abuses and nuclearisation of North Korea, and at the same time we want to impoverish and starve the most vulnerable in North Korean society.

Andrea Berger: I should caveat that—that was not at the United Nations, and it certainly is a fringe discussion. I want to emphasise that. But as so many people are looking for other things to demonstrate to the North Koreans that there are costs of their provocations, that discussion has gone into a lot of different corners that I wouldn't have expected it to. We need to be careful that we do not just design sanctions for punishment purposes and out of frustration, and that is a very good illustration of that point.

Dr Cottee: If I could add very briefly to that, in terms of the sanctions regime, we have seen, particularly in recent months, a greater complexity. There are now obviously more sanctions, and there is more pressure on member states to try to implement and comply with those sanctions. In terms of this focus on implementation, only now has the realisation come about—largely because of some of the work that Andrea has been doing—that it is all well and good to have numerous UN Security Council resolutions after every provocation by North Korea, but they actually need to be implemented as well, and there are still massive gaps, globally, in terms of implementation.

We are seeing the US outreach at the presidential level to ASEAN states. Egypt, I think yesterday, announced that it was ending ties with the DPRK. It is only happening now that the pressure and the focus is on implementation and compliance, which has probably come too late, but at the same time it still needs to be maintained to try to sustain a policy of continued pressure on North Korea. If they are just given up on and compliance levels drop even further, they are completely pointless.

- Q8 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** We hear today that Peru has expelled its ambassador. There has been talk about regime change, which seems quite unrealistic in terms of their nuclear capability. The question is where we go from here, in terms of a non-military option, in respect of their nuclear abilities.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Just on sanctions, I have three points to emphasise. One is to endorse what Andrea was saying about adaptability on the part of the North Koreans. In the current context of the discussion about an oil embargo, the evidence seems to indicate that the North Koreans have already taken that into account and have been stockpiling oil supplies since April this year. It is a small but significant indicator of the ability of the regime to anticipate these sorts of response. The same is true for the



financial sanctions that the Chinese are now introducing on Chinese bank accounts—closing down North Korean accounts and preventing them from reopening those accounts. But again, the process of financial intermediation means that the North Koreans can rely on their Chinese counterparts to finance their transactions.

A second point worth emphasising is the extent to which there is a credibility gap emerging. For Donald Trump and the United States to threaten very, very comprehensive sanctions against third parties and third countries, despite the evident evidence that this would prompt a retaliatory trade war that would be destructive to American economic interests, further undermines the credibility of the US approach.

One small point I would add on the issue of status is that it is worth keeping in mind that the ambition of North Korea to become a nuclear power date from the 1950s. It is not purely the product of the ambitions of Kim Jong-un. I agree with Andrea that this is very much tied to legitimacy. It is also important to highlight the evidence that ordinary North Koreans—certainly members of the elite in Pyongyang—respond very positively to the evidence of military success. This is a successful political strategy in terms of boosting national pride. Part of that, of course, is the broader context of official propaganda in North Korea, which depicts the relationship with the outside world as inveterately hostile. That is another argument for expecting Kim Jong-un to continue to provoke, not purely for those technical reasons of testing the new equipment, but also to create the very hostile environment that helps to underpin his authority at home.

A final point that some analysts, particularly in Japan, have started to argue is that a third motivation may be shaping Kim's strategy when it comes to nuclear weapons testing, which is to reinforce the decoupling tendencies on the part of some of America's allies, particularly Japan, by threatening to use nuclear weapons not in a retaliatory capacity but in a first-use situation. That is creating great anxiety in Japan about their ability to respond to that challenge.

Q9 Phil Wilson: This one is to you, John, as well. Why didn't diplomatic attempts to restrict or end the North Korean nuclear programme work over the years?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: That's a very good question. I do not have an immediate answer for you. One interpretation is that those efforts to engage with North Korea have been inconsistent. On the one hand, there is the question of the reliability of America's deterrent commitments, but also the reliability of its reassurance messages to the North Koreans. On the shift in US policy towards North Korea from Clinton to Bush, certainly by January 2002, when President Bush gave his "axis of evil" speech, some would argue that helped to undermine the reliability of some of those earlier promises; but that is perhaps to put too much blame in the American corner. The reality remains that North Korea's objectives have been primarily to secure that security guarantee, because of that sense of vulnerability, which of course is capitalised on by the current leadership.



I think it is also partly a function of benign neglect on the part of the international community and the United States. Even in the aftermath of the “axis of evil” speech in 2002, one can criticise the United States for simply not giving enough credibility to the very public statements that the North Koreans were making about their intentions. And, of course, the competing pressure of other international situations and international crises meant that for successive Administrations it was possible to assume that you could shelve the North Korean issue. The problem now—and I think Donald Trump is right, as much as it might pain me to admit it, on the recognition that it is time and there is no longer an opportunity to delay dealing with the North Korean issue—is the question of the methods that the White House is using and the absence of what we could identify and describe as a clear, coherent strategy on the part of the Americans.

- Q10 **Phil Wilson:** If the sanctions are not the answer—and maybe what you are doing with sanctions is kicking the tin down the road or slowing down the process of building up their nuclear stockpile—then what is? How do we stop him? What should we be doing now? It does not seem to me that we are dealing with someone who is rational; or maybe he is very manipulative and is thinking about his own position within North Korea. How do we deal with him? You said he could be over-confident and just go one step too far. How do we deal with somebody like him?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: I suppose the most immediate important step that the international community needs to take is to provide a clear and consistent message. It needs a strategic position. It needs to make clear that deterrence is reliable, and the very problem of Trump threatening “fire and fury” and then appearing to pull his punches is, I think, one very clear, obvious problem that the United States needs to address.

The second problem that we need to think about where Kim Jong-un is concerned is that not only is he arguably increasingly over-confident, but we cannot be certain that he himself has access to reliable information. The climate of fear and political repression in North Korea is such that it is hard to imagine that some of his closest officials would be willing to provide him with unwelcome news. That may also be playing into his exaggerated over-confidence. I think, first and foremost, that reinforcing deterrence needs to be very visible; and secondly, a commitment to avoid anything that might suggest that a wedge strategy to divide the United States from Seoul and Tokyo would work. That means not only providing, in the words of Secretary of Defence Mattis, “iron-clad” assurances to Seoul and Tokyo, but avoiding the use of Twitter as a medium for making statements that are, frankly, irresponsible. I think the President needs to be much more cautious. I am not sure how you do it, but it needs to be a message, maybe privately, that is reinforced by other national actors that have a stake in ensuring that this crisis does not escalate. That includes the United Kingdom, which, after all, has thousands of British civilians based in South Korea and a significant economic interest in the region, not to mention the humanitarian dimension to the current crisis.

I would argue that we need stronger deterrence, efforts to reassure allies, and maybe, ultimately, given the unpalatable nature of military action and



the questionable efficacy of sanctions, there will eventually have to be some context for dialogue and discussion. Dialogue and discussion do not necessarily mean concessions to North Korea. I think this is really important. Dialogue is an opportunity to set out both the potential costs of continuing provocation but also the potential benefits of a more accommodating and moderate position by the North Koreans, because a second agenda item for Kim Jong-un, which is also very much part of his legitimacy base, is economic growth and economic reform. If you look at his public statements and his statements in repeated new years' addresses, you'll see that it is clear that economic growth is part of that agenda. I would argue that his strategy as a young man—if one can say that he has a strategy; it is certainly more discernible than Donald Trump's—is, over the course of his lifetime, and I assume that he expects to be leader for decades rather than years, to put in place an appropriate framework in which the country can succeed economically, albeit with real constraints. But that offers an opportunity to offer incentives to the North Koreans, assuming that they start to agree to behave in a way that is more responsible.

The key to doing that is to have a realistically modest agenda in terms of what we can achieve. I think that denuclearisation is not feasible or viable. The most that we can expect is a freeze, and there are competing interpretations of what that might look like in terms of a negotiation: the Chinese position, which is a suspension of US-South Korean exercises, or a more ambitious grand bargain that some have talked about, particularly in South Korean circles, involving peace talks and the gradual process of establishing close diplomatic ties with North Korea. That is again playing to the respect and status card. But that is premature; we are certainly not at that stage. As President Moon, Prime Minister Abe and President Trump have rightly said, now is not the time to be thinking of direct talks, but eventually they will have to come.

- Q11 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** You talk about reinforcing deterrence, and I was glad that at the end you talked about talking. I am minded of Etzioni's book. When he talks about avoiding war with China, he goes back to the '60s with the late President Kennedy and the strategy for peace. If there is no strategy for peace between the two biggest players—critically, the United States of America and China—on what offer we make to North Korea, reinforcing deterrence is utterly ineffective. If we are not giving some type of guarantee—it might be something that we find very difficult—and do not have a strategy combined with not only the United States but the People's Republic of China, we might as well give up now.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Very briefly, I agree with what you are saying. I think that a welcome glimmer of optimism—I wouldn't want to over-interpret it—is that two days ago Jia Qingguo, who is a professor of politics at Beijing University, published an op-ed in the East Asia Forum in which he said that the Chinese are, for the first time, needing to think about contingency planning in collaboration with the United States and South Korea. That is a really significant development. Whether it has the



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imprimatur of the Government is another question, but it is a sign of constructiveness.

- Q12 **Chair:** Right, it is my turn now. Do any of you think that there is the slightest prospect that any amount of sanctions would persuade the North Koreans, after all the effort they have put in over so many years, to give up nuclear weapons?

Andrea Berger: I'll give an easy answer to that: no. Not as long as the character of the regime looks broadly like it does today.

- Q13 **Chair:** Do you all agree with that?

Witnesses: Yes.

- Q14 **Chair:** So we are starting off on an assumption that North Korea becoming a nuclear weapons state is an irreversible reality. Is that fair? Indeed, it would seem as plain as a pikestaff that they have not put in all that effort in order to back down. If we are assuming that North Korea will not stop, is there anybody other than, conceivably, the Chinese who might be able to exert pressure on North Korea to freeze or reduce its nuclear stockpile, and is there any reason to believe that the Chinese are going to do that? Or is the answer to that no as well?

Andrea Berger: If I may, perhaps it would be useful to break the question down slightly. There is a difference, when talking about the utility of some of these policy tools, between achieving denuclearisation, or in other words where North Korea has no nuclear weapons; achieving some sort of restraint by the North Koreans or a freeze on their programme; and achieving partial or fuller—whatever you define that to be—roll-back in capability. I agree with you that it is vanishingly unlikely that we are going to see mixtures of pressure-focused tools compelling North Korea to voluntarily denuclearise entirely, which unfortunately remains the consistent declaratory policy of the Trump Administration, albeit depending on who you ask. But I think there is still a very reasonable debate to be had over whether or not there should be sanctions as part, though not the whole, of the strategy. I agree with John entirely that it needs to be aligned with a negotiating table to return to, else it makes little sense as an approach.

But I believe there is a debate to be had about whether or not that could be used to encourage restraint by the North Koreans in their nuclear programming. That comes back to the earlier question over policy options.

- Q15 **Chair:** Can I just talk to you about that point? You say, "to encourage restraint", but they have invested all this time, effort and resources, and they are now on the cusp of having an intercontinental ballistic missile capability that would enable them to hit not only Los Angeles but London.

They are not very likely, when they are on the verge of achieving that capability, suddenly to say, "We are not going to do that; we are going to stop short. We've gone to all this trouble; we've antagonised so many people but, do you know what, we're not going to go to the point where, if we were threatened with nuclear attack by the United Kingdom—



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heaven forbid, not that that would happen—or the United States, we could not retaliate.” They are not going to do that, are they?

Andrea Berger: My response is based on the presumption that North Korea already has the ability credibly to threaten the continental United States with a nuclear weapon. From a policy perspective, that is the most prudent thing to presume.

Q16 **Chair:** Once they have got that capability, frankly, whether they have a freeze or whether they have that capability six times over becomes rather irrelevant on the overkill principle, doesn't it? Once they have got the ability to hit the continental United States, then they are there. They are a nuclear power and any policy that is based on expecting them not to be a nuclear power is fantasy, isn't it?

Professor Heuser: Precisely on that point, I am constantly tempted to ask my colleagues questions and give them a slightly different angle to their own answers, which are fascinating and very erudite. I repeat that I am not a specialist in this area.

One thing that it would be important to try to evaluate is what Kim Jong-un actually wants to do with these nuclear weapons. Is it only to protect his territory? In that case, he only needs a minimal deterrent. He does not need to go further. As long as his country is not attacked, there is no particular reason to think that he is going to use them. He might in some security context, such as US-South Korean exercises, if those feel worrying to him and could be interpreted by him as potential exercises for an invasion of North Korea; he might rattle his nuclear sabre, but it might not go beyond that. So, I am not totally sure.

I totally agree with you that we can simply assume by now that it is a nuclear power and it won't stop before fully developing this capability, but we don't really see why he would want to go an awful lot further. Just keep in mind that even going further and producing more weapons will come at a particular cost for a country and economy that will have difficulty sustaining it. Keep in mind that one of the reasons Japan has not really pursued this option has been the actual cost of developing it all.

Which brings me to this question. I will say something about deterrence. I think John argued very eloquently that we need a very strong deterrence stance at the same time as negotiations. One great problem that I see in all deterrence configurations is that the act of saying, “We will do something to you if you do something else,” can make all sides hysterical and nervous.

Then you have something that NATO has identified for decades as a threat—namely, accident or miscalculation. That is actually what I am more worried about than anything else. When you say to make deterrence very clear, it is the essential security dilemma again. If I position nuclear weapons on the soil of Japan, which the Japanese would not particularly like but if that were happening as a gesture of enhancing deterrence, that could look like preparations for something, which could be misinterpreted as preparations for an attack on North Korea.



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Anything that strengthens deterrence and reassures allies can at the same time worryingly lead to further hysteria and escalation and could prepare the ground for acts of miscalculation. I am not saying I have an answer; I am saying that this is one of the great problems, which comes into the choice between different positions to have.

- Q17 **Chair:** But is there any reason, other than our assessment of the personality of the North Korean dictator—I will come back to this point later—why the principles of nuclear deterrence that applied in the cold war should not apply to North Korea?

Professor Heuser: I am a real sceptic about the idea that there are golden principles. I think this was something that we could empirically divide particular circumstances from a set of particular people. I do not think that there is such a thing as a natural law that shows how deterrence functions. Deterrence is in the eye of the beholder, and beholders differ. The same situation may look ever so worrying to someone—this is a banal comparison—

Chair: The situation of being wiped out by nuclear retaliation is a bit of a downer for anybody!

Professor Heuser: It is a bit of a downer, but just think of what a difference it would make if you have a really good shelter and plans for staying in there, or if you believe in an afterlife or things like that—for example, that we will all go to heaven. There are different ways in which you can approach that, and the classic example is that if you are very, very tall and you walk along a street, someone coming towards you with a weapon may not look as dangerous as if you are fairly small. The perception of the same situation can differ very much, and I am not sure there is a golden rule of deterrence functions.

- Q18 **Chair:** If we were concerned about an organisation such as al-Qaeda, where allegedly people do believe that they are going to a better place when they die, I would entirely agree with you, but we are not. We are concerned here with a non-religious-based totalitarian system.

Would the experts on the far east on the panel take issue with the suggestion that we have been here before? Is not Kim Jong-un cut from very similar cloth to Mao Tse-tung in the early 1960s, with the sole exception that Mao Tse-tung had killed millions more people than Kim Jong-un has so far? Looking back on what was said at the time, there were CIA reports of the Russians telling the Americans that the Chinese leaders believed that nuclear war would destroy capitalism, enabling Chinese survivors to build a new world.

In reality, is it not the case that despite all those fears and all those beliefs that Mao Tse-tung was a completely different type of threat to that posed by the Russians, once China did acquire a deterrent, it did exactly what you said, Beatrice? It adopted a policy of minimum deterrence and reasonable and stable mutually assured destruction as a means of keeping themselves and others from engaging in an exchange in the first place.



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Professor Heuser: Before my colleagues come in and say something about the personalities of these people, which I could not do, let me just mention that the difference in scale means that any nuclear war in North Korea would more surely lead to the extermination of a greater proportion of the population there than would have been the case in China, where Mao blatantly said, "If we have lots and lots of people dying, that doesn't matter, because we still have lots and lots of people, and you cannot get them all."

Q19 **Chair:** So the deterrent effect should be greater.

Professor Heuser: Well, that as well, yes.

Q20 **Chair:** I know Graham wants to come in, but would others like to comment on whether there is any reason why, just as Mao's totalitarian China did not in the end prove incompatible with containment and deterrence, North Korea should not be capable of being deterred and contained in a similar way?

Andrea Berger: I will just briefly say that I do believe we can deter North Korea. Probably the most prominent recent assessment to the contrary is from McMaster, who the other week argued that because Kim Jong-un does not care about his population, he was not deterrable in the same sense. I do not agree with that view.

In my view, if you can identify accurately what the North Korean leadership values—here we are operating under the assumption that that is its own survival—and then credibly threaten that survival in certain circumstances, I believe that they can be deterred. That is why we are seeing emphasis by the South Koreans on decapitation strikes. I believe that it is an attempt by South Korea and its allies to concretely demonstrate the capability to take out Kim Jong-un, but they have the ability to deter North Korea from taking much larger action.

Q21 **Chair:** Anybody agree or disagree with that?

Dr Cottee: In terms of the deterrence and containment argument, I think it is the least bad option that we have available to us. We have spoken about sanctions; I am sure that at some point we will talk about the military options. We have covered engagement, but there are still so many questions to do with engagement. It has been going on. There have been attempts to speak to the North Koreans.

The number of channels that are now open to do so are limited, and there are questions as to what we can offer and who realistically has access to Kim Jong-un. Previously, Russian or Chinese diplomats based in Pyongyang would be granted an audience with Kim Jong-il. As far as I understand, that is not the case anymore. Kim Jong-un doesn't meet anyone outside his very close inner circle. So how to actually try to get messages to him and engage in some kind of diplomacy is difficult.

There is an important caveat if we are going down the deterrence and containment route. That is to do with somehow maintaining and balancing denuclearisation, as an ultimate end-goal—however unrealistic and



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unfeasible that may be at the moment—simply because it is important for alliance relationships in the region. If we don't say that denuclearisation is the end goal, South Korea and Japan will then argue that they need to control their own destiny and nuclear weapon development is key for their own security, which is an argument that I don't agree with and needs to be undermined wherever possible.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: I agree with Andrea that North Korea can be deterred. The evidence for that is the change of policy that the North Koreans periodically adopt when it comes to the timing and nature of individual missile tests; we saw that in the aftermath of April. But I do think it brings us back to the question of what we are attempting to deter. What action on the part of the North Koreans are we attempting to deter by reinforcing deterrents? It seems to me that there are mid-stage steps that the North Koreans might take that could be construed as an attack on the United States or its allies, which the North Koreans might not expect would justify a full retaliatory response.

After all, there are well-documented rumours that the man responsible for the sinking in March 2010 of the Cheonan, the South Korean frigate, was none other than Kim Jong-un, who was recruited to the task to acquire, if you like, his military credentials as a tough leader. Imagine the scenario comparable to that: a missile shelling of South Korean territory, or an attempt to use cyber-technology to undercut the command and control structure of South Korea or the United States, or an attempt by special forces, for example, to take out South Korea's THAAD missile batteries. How do you deal with that situation? How do you signal the reliability of deterrents?

A final point is the question of legitimacy, which brings us back to the question of sanctions. I should point out that I am not advocating this, but one step that some people have considered is a kind of sanctions-plus regime, which is much more than economic pressure and involves deliberately and intentionally trying to undermine the legitimacy of Kim Jong-un at home.

If stability and legitimacy is what he most desires, there should be a much more active effort to use propaganda, foreign broadcasts and the importation of USB drives into North Korea in the attempt to undermine his public image at home. That would take a much more co-ordinated and concerted effort. I don't think it has really been tried to date. As I say, I am not advocating it, but logically, if one is thinking about the options to try to undercut his position and to demonstrate the costs of his activity, that should be one policy option we should be considering.

Professor Heuser: I have always been told that that was practically impossible because of the extremely closed nature of the society—even getting to them, in view of the fact that they don't get any foreign broadcasts or anything like that. It is something that I think people have seen as desirable for a long time, but has been regarded as technically unfeasible. Do you have any ideas of how one could actually do that?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Well, the BBC has just set up a Korean language service. Voice of America has its own way of broadcasting into North Korea.

Professor Heuser: Can that actually be received?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Yes. It is illegal and there are costs of doing that. Of course, there are humanitarian considerations to take into account by pursuing such a strategy. The idea that North Koreans are hermetically sealed off from the outside is, I think, an exaggeration. There is plenty of evidence to say that they do have contact, particularly among the elites. Paradoxically, that is also an argument in favour of closer engagement as a means of decoupling public opinion from the leadership.

Q22 **Graham P. Jones:** On pathways to peace, we touched on the issue that a lot of these leaders live in a gilded environment. That is particularly true in this case, but there is an opportunity there. I notice that the press were reporting, "Okay—we've demonised the leadership in North Korea, and maybe justifiably so, but he's got this friendship with this American basketball player." That goes back to the point I was making about all the different ways into dealing with the leadership in North Korea.

That was the first thing. The second thing was just a baseline of where we are with North Korea's nuclear arsenal or capability. Is there a baseline assessment that says where we are in terms of short-range and long-range ballistic missiles, nuclear warheads and the capacity to put those warheads on the missiles reliably? Is there a baseline of where the capability is? I still have not heard a clear view, either from here or from anyone, on where we are. I think there is a bit of guesswork, but are there other pathways towards peace?

Chair: I seem to remember that a ping-pong match involving the communist Chinese was one such.

Professor Heuser: I'm not talking about the baseline, as I'm not familiar with the latest intelligence on missile numbers etc., but let me pick you up on the question of whether there are any incentives one can offer. Dr Nilsson-Wright, you talked about a dual strategy of reinforcing deterrence, but also helping them achieve—or holding out the possibility of their achieving—what they want: an economic flourishing, etc. It is almost like there are two things we can give them: "On the one hand, we are trying to stop you from doing this, but on the other hand we are giving you this as a reward if you do."

This is one of the other eternal dilemmas of this sort of situation: if we hold out rewards for somebody who is playing the nuclear card, that in turn could be an incentive for other countries to go that way—not that we have too many dictatorships of that sort around at the moment, but for many decades what used to be said was, "Do not reward anybody who is trying to go the nuclear way by giving them incentives to stop that are going to be huge presents, like lots of economic aid and things like that."

Q23 **Chair:** Sorry, but just on that point, isn't it the case that the decision to



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acquire a nuclear weapons system is such a huge one that it is not really going to be swayed by considerations at that level? If a country is determined to make the effort, it will make the effort. If not, giving it some sort of perceived minor reward is not going to make it proliferate, is it?

Professor Heuser: It depends on what the perceived minor reward is and whether anybody who knows the area says that there is something so desperate that they want and that would be a large reward in their eyes. Obviously, things like giving them a permanent seat on the Security Council will not be one of them.

Q24 **Graham P. Jones:** Sorry, my question was about dialogue. I was not talking about concessions; I was talking about dialogue. I want to be clear about that.

Professor Heuser: Even so, one could start by saying, "What does he actually want?" Dr Nilsson-Wright mentioned—and I thought this was very intelligent—just seeing what we might be able to give them that they want, like an assurance that we will not try to reunite them with South Korea or have a takeover or regime change, and then seeing whether we can give it. As I said, the problem with that is that it seems like a reward.

But I agree with you, Chair. I repeat that I am not an expert on the area, so I cannot really see what it is that they want, other than prestige, status and what every dictator wants.

Q25 **Chair:** And invulnerability, presumably.

Professor Heuser: Invulnerability—hence the sanctuarisation issue—but also the "Nineteen Eighty-Four" scenario: you like to keep your own country and your own population in the constant belief that they are under terrible threat from the outside, because that is how you reinforce your regime.

Q26 **Mr Francois:** This partly follows on from something that Graham just raised. We have seen the test of warheads and we have seen the test of missiles, but in order to have a credible capability you need to integrate the two. We saw Kim Jong-un recently photographed with what was portrayed as a fusion weapon, but it did not look like a re-entry vehicle. How advanced is the North Korean programme, really? Do they have a credible ICBM?

This is one for Dr Cottee and possibly Andrea as well. You said that they can credibly threaten the continental United States. How do you justify that statement? In summary, how advanced are they and what threat do they pose?

Dr Cottee: Maybe I can kick off and then Andrea can come in. The baseline question is a good one. A lot of what we are basing these assessments on is conjecture and best guesses, simply because we do not have the kind of access in terms of human intelligence that we would normally have with other regimes. So if you compare US, South Korean, Japanese and Russian estimates of what is capable, they all differ. Russian



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estimates in particular very much underestimate what North Korea is doing, and that probably has political connotations

The general assessment now is that there has obviously been rapid progress in North Korean missile capability; there is still this debate about ranges and payloads, but I think it is unproductive to assume that Kim Jong-un will not have the capability—even if not right now, there will be that capability in the not-too-distant future, simply because there is very little we can do to prevent that.

Can North Korea threaten the continental US? Based on the lofted flight trajectories of the previous missile tests, that has been extrapolated to assess that particular missile system, the Hwasong-14, can hit the west coast of the US. Again, that depends very much on the payload.

Coming to the nuclear side of things, obviously the two tests in 2016 showed some progression. The sixth test, earlier this month, was significantly larger. Overnight, there are now predictions that it was around the 250-kiloton mark, which is significantly larger—an order of magnitude larger than what came before—and it suggests thermonuclear capability. Again, we cannot confirm this, simply because we do not have the radionuclide information released from any venting of underground tests. So we cannot get to the specific makeup of the particular device that was tested, but we have a very good idea that it is now.

Perhaps I am saying this about the issue because I watch it, but this has always been the aim. We are now working on the assumption that North Korea has joined the thermonuclear club.

In terms of the missile tests, again there are various hypotheses that exist at the moment as to how such quick progress has been made. It is down to a particular rocket motor that is now used in both the Hwasong-12, which is the North Koreans' intermediate-range missile, and the Hwasong-14, which is the intercontinental-range missile. That key development of a very powerful liquid-fuelled engine has been the development that has pushed them beyond what we thought was capable before, simply because we were watching various tests of a particular system called the Musudan, which kept failing and, again, analysts said, "It's fine. North Korea can't do this." Then all of a sudden this leap was made.

Andrea Berger: Again, as Matthew mentioned, various experts, depending on who you ask, have made different assumptions about what the North Koreans can and cannot do. With technical specifics, making assumptions at any point creates quite a large band of assessments of on particular missile capabilities or nuclear capabilities, so there is still some uncertainty. However, some of the details of a US intel assessment were released in August, and in that assessment the DIA stated very clearly that it believes that North Korea can miniaturise a nuclear weapon to put it on the intermediate system and on the intercontinental missile system that Matthew described—

Chair: Can or cannot?



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Andrea Berger: Can. To do a test with a warhead on board is a different matter and it is not something that they have done. I hope we don't see it.

One of the key question marks that you raised specifically was over re-entry capability, and this is something that the press likes to belabour a little bit. The reason that many people question whether North Korea has a re-entry capability is that in one recent test, the re-entry vehicle was believed to have failed as it was coming down near Japan. Part of the reason why that happened is the way in which North Korea conducts missile launches. Basically, it shoots them at an artificially high trajectory, which creates unusual heat and pressure conditions on the re-entry vehicle that are not similar to the types of conditions that would be experienced if the missile were launched at a normal trajectory on which it would fly in the event of an actual attack. For that reason, the DIA, from my understanding, also assessed that North Korea potentially had a more reliable re-entry capability than that one missile launch indicated. So, as we have been mentioning before, I think it is prudent to assume that they can do that. The various components of a missile system that would be necessary for an operational capability are present in North Korea, or will be very soon.

Q27 **Mr Francois:** So it is true to say that, within the next five years, they will have integrated warheads and RVs with ICBMs such that they could threaten the continental US? Or do you think they can do that today?

Andrea Berger: I think we need to assume they can do that today.

Q28 **Mr Francois:** The Hwasong-14 has a range that can reach the continental United States fired from Korea.

Andrea Berger: That is right, yes.

Q29 **Mr Francois:** Can it reach the United Kingdom?

Andrea Berger: Good question.

Dr Cottee: A good question of geography.

Andrea Berger: Off the top of my head, I am not entirely sure, but my guess is probably yes, if it can reach close to the east coast of the US. My mental map is not perfect.

Q30 **Mr Francois:** I am told here—my Chairman helps me; he is a very helpful chap—that the range to Los Angeles would be 9,568 km and the range to London would be 8,672 km. So presumably yes. If you believe that the North Koreans today can deliver a thermonuclear warhead to the continental United States, presumably they could also deliver a thermonuclear warhead against the United Kingdom. I ask because, at the end of the day, we are not the House armed services Committee; we are the House of Commons Defence Committee. But you believe today that they have a capability to reach us with a thermonuclear warhead.

Andrea Berger: The capability, yes. The intent, absolutely not. This was my issue with the statement that the former Prime Minister, David



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Cameron, made in Faslane a few years ago, where he suggested that North Korea was posing a threat to the United Kingdom with nuclear weapons. That threat assessment must rest on capability plus intent, and I do not see any intent whatsoever from the North Koreans to target the UK.

- Q31 **Mr Francois:** Okay. But the first step, in a sense, is capability. You are saying that you don't believe they have the intent, which I find reassuring, but nevertheless they do have the capability.

Andrea Berger: Yes. I believe, again, if those ranges are accurate and they have the capability to strike at US targets, they have the capability to strike at UK targets too.

- Q32 **Mr Francois:** That in itself, on one level, is quite concerning. What assistance, if any, do you think they have had from other states in helping them to develop their nuclear weapon programme?

Andrea Berger: Perhaps Matthew wants to jump in. There is a difference here between assistance, if you will, through North Koreans attempting to extract knowledge from other countries by, for example, bribing individuals, getting plans and technology from foreign countries and being inspired by the designs of other countries—North Korea is excellent at copying systems from elsewhere and always has been across conventional weaponry as well—and conscious facilitation by foreign Governments or militaries to assist with the North Korean nuclear missile programme.

In terms of conscious facilitation, I believe the only concrete evidence that we have recently is of Iran's assistance with North Korean production of an 80-tonne rocket booster. In January 2016, the United States Treasury sanctioned entities in Iran for providing precisely that help to the North Korean missile programme.

So at a minimum they have had help—other experts disagree over whether or not foreign assistance goes further—but I would caution again against assuming that North Korea is dependent on foreign suppliers or knowledge for further advancement of its programme or maintenance of existing programmes. It has worked very hard to indigenise a lot of what it can do.

Chair: Before anyone else comes in—I am going to come back to Mark and to you—I know one of our colleagues, Leo Docherty, has to leave in a few minutes, so I would like to bring him in at this point and then we will revert to where we were. I apologise for that.

- Q33 **Leo Docherty:** Can I ask Dr Cottee, in the first instance, what are the military options against North Korea?

Dr Cottee: I think that we should probably highlight from the beginning that any kind of conflict in the region is in no one's interest. It certainly won't achieve all the desired objectives, with regard to North Korea, and it will cause a huge amount of loss of life and has the potential to very quickly escalate.



I think there are probably four potential military responses. I think we have generally covered the first, which is deterrence: deterring DPRK action through the threat of retaliation, for example. Again, I think the escalatory ladder, from the DPRK's perspective, is very short. There is a theory that North Korea would go nuclear very quickly, which is obviously not in anyone's interest.

The second is disruption and/or decapitation: trying to prevent any kind of North Korean retaliation by disabling command and control structures or capabilities, for example, or targeting the leadership itself. That is high risk, high reward, and there are certainly no guarantees of success. Even if all the necessary targets are identified and decapitated—

Q34 Leo Docherty: What kind of intention is that? Is that a non-nuclear first strike on behalf of the US and its allies?

Dr Cottee: Presumably it would be some kind of conventional strike against known command and control structures within the country, but it relies on very detailed intelligence, which we do not have. It begs the question: what are DPRK orders in the event of decapitation? I think we are fairly clear that orders are given, and should the leadership be targeted in North Korea, those various regimented units have their instructions and will probably carry them out anyway.

The third response is disarmament: trying to strike against the known artillery missile factories and missile forces in the country. Again, that relies on very good intelligence and reconnaissance. I also think it is highly doubtful that someone would be able to destroy all of North Korea's long-range capabilities.

The fourth response is kind of a combination of two and three, which is just destruction and a regime change-style scenario involving the total overthrow of the North Korean state. That would obviously require a huge amount of force and is, I think—hopefully—very unlikely.

One key point in this is the difficulty in trying to conceal any kind of military build-up. There are known US forces in the region. They are quite widely known; IISS has a book dedicated to detailing their structures—"The Military Balance"—and we have good indications of where various US forces are based and their various levels. Trying to actually implement a strategy by which they are increasing the levels of force in the region would be very difficult to conceal, and may prompt North Korea to enact some kind of preventive first strike, which, again, would be incredibly destabilising.

Q35 Leo Docherty: On scenario No. 4, can you talk us through the likely regional impact, and can you paint the scenario of how that might happen? For example, if North Korea launches an intercontinental nuclear warhead, can you talk us through the likely American response and the regional impact, and to what extent the response could be contained within North Korea and the likely impact on South Korea?



Dr Cottee: The likelihood of it being contained in North Korea is very remote. We have to consider not only the forces in North Korea but, obviously, US forces in the region and in South Korea, as well as the South Korean forces themselves. There is also the difficulty of knowing quite what reaction there would be from China and Russia if there were any kind of military action. China has a large number of troops that are not its best, as far as I am aware, but who are very much still in the border region, should there be any destabilisation. Similarly, Russia has forces on or near the border, which may become involved should Russia feel that is vital to its interests.

In terms of the specifics, a lot will depend on existing assets in the region, as I mentioned. So, bombers flying from Guam, and various—numerous—bases in Japan and South Korea, in terms of tactical air assaults. But all of this is almost ignoring the fact that any kind of military strike would simply mean that Seoul is likely wiped out, and that has nothing to do with the nuclear element—there is enough conventional artillery on the border to simply strike Seoul.

Leo Docherty: I will gratefully hand back to my colleagues now.

Q36 **Mr Francois:** China has made a suggestion that US-South Korean military exercises could be suspended in return for a cessation of nuclear missile tests. Is that a sensible option for the United States?

Dr Cottee: I can cover that, as well as maybe jumping back to the assistance question as well. In terms of assistance from outside, we know of existing North Korean diplomats, particularly based in eastern Europe, who have been engaged in some kind of involvement in trying to access information related to missile systems. As Andrea said, reverse engineering and the capabilities within the DPRK to do that are thought to be very high.

We should also remember that a lot of North Korean missile technology—both conventional and ballistic missile technology—is based on Soviet legacy kit, particularly the Scud missiles that we've seen. My colleague, Mike Elleman, has suggested that the material for the most recent missile tests, particularly the Hwasong-12 and the Hwasong-14 and that very specific motor that I mentioned, may have come from the Ukraine or potentially Russia.

That has opened up a debate, particularly within Washington, as to where some of this technology may have come from. There are numerous hypotheses: whether plans have been stolen; whether former Soviet technicians have been taken to North Korea to work on these systems; or whether full products have been imported themselves. Again, a lot of this is based on assumptions and best guesses based on very, very patchy intelligence pictures. Andrea has already mentioned the link with Iran.

I would say there is a likelihood that there has been outside assistance. Whether that is still ongoing is very difficult to say. The Iran case, I think, is interesting, simply because you would assume that Iran is watched



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incredibly closely with regard to what it is doing, and sharing any information or expertise with North Korea is a highly risky strategy. I know that there have been some suggestions in the UK media in the last few days that there has been some kind of Iranian involvement. The evidence of that is fairly scant, in my opinion.

With regard to the freeze-for-freeze option, there is a sense that the US, in freezing US-ROK military drills, would be rewarding North Korea for poor behaviour. From my understanding, it is also the UK position that that is not very likely at the moment. There is still no confirmed guarantee that North Korea was necessarily interested in that deal themselves. There was an announcement from—I believe—a North Korean diplomat based in India, who suggested that that might be of interest to North Korea, but we never had any formal confirmation that it was going to work anyway.

I think a potential freeze for freeze further down the line is something that may be considered by the US, if this protracted stalemate—maybe “stalemate” doesn’t really convey the volatility of the situation—but if this situation continues for a while, then there may be the need for a concession to be made. The impact that then has on the US-South Korean alliance is difficult to predict.

There is a serious interoperability question as well, with regard to how the US and South Koreans actually co-operate militarily. Forces are on rotation through Korea, and it should not be expected that they can just land and all of a sudden work seamlessly with their Korean counterparts. It takes a significant amount of training to do so. The North Korean argument that they are preparing for invasion has worn pretty thin, I think. It is the same argument they use year after year.

Professor Heuser: Also, it flies directly in the face of what we heard earlier, very strongly proposed in Dr Nilsson-Wright’s idea that we really have to reinforce deterrence. How can we reassure allies? How can we reassure South Korea and Japan if the exercises are withdrawn? That would be counterproductive from that point of view.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: It is worth bearing in mind that historically we have been here before. In the 1990s, in the earlier nuclear crisis, the Americans offered to suspend or cancel Team Spirit exercises. It had no impact on the North Koreans in terms of deterring them from proceeding.

One of the other things that it is worth emphasising is that the demands from the North Koreans are really maximalist demands. They are not just for potentially any suspension of exercises, but for the withdrawal of all American forces not just from the Korean peninsula but from the entire region of east Asia. I think one would expect the North Koreans to move the goalposts if the offer were to come from the United States.

Andrea Berger: If I may just put in a caveat here, joint military exercises serve three purposes: they train, they deter and they assure. The type of exercise conducted at any time can be primarily about one of those things or for the other two. The US and South Korea, of late, have been engaged



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in joint exercises that I think look primarily about deterrence, rather than about training or assurance. Those are the type of exercises that the US could, in certain circumstances, contemplate exerting more restraint about. For example, the bomber overflights, which the North Koreans deem particularly provocative, are things that the Obama Administration on several occasions refrained from doing because they knew it would unnecessarily and unhelpfully exacerbate an already tense situation. It is not that we are in every single circumstance talking about trading away South Korean preparedness. Depending on the type of exercise being done, it may be more about sending a signal to North Korea, and at particular points in time we may actually get more from not sending that signal.

- Q37 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** On the suggestion from China about suspension, do you agree that it is not just about North Korea, but also about China trying to say to the United States that it is a legitimate power in east Asia and that the United States and China have to work together in that region?

Andrea Berger: I think the Chinese proposal is very in keeping with the type of thinking that China and Russia both have towards the type of resolution they would like to see, and particularly the type of de-escalation they would like to see. They have been in favour of semi-uncaveated or totally uncaveated talks with the North Koreans. The Russians chaired, as part of the six-party talks, the regional security working group during the earlier 2000s. Certainly the Chinese and the Russians would both benefit from a reduction in US-South Korean joint exercising in the region, which they do not like. So it is not a surprising proposal from them, but one that I do not think will be palatable to the US and its allies any time soon.

- Q38 **Chair:** Does anyone know what China's real attitude to North Korea becoming and remaining a nuclear power is?

Andrea Berger: No, I don't think we have a good handle on the nuances of Beijing's thinking or particularly the differences in thinking between various corners of Chinese military versus policy circles, not least at a time when the Chinese are preparing for quite a big domestic political spectacle of their own.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: I think we can say with some confidence that the senior Chinese leadership is irritated by the provocations from North Korea. They are distinctly unhelpful at a particular time. We saw that with the test coinciding with the BRIC summit. I think this was designed by the North Koreans to send a signal to the Chinese, potentially, as much as to the United States, and very much part of that status aspiration on the part of North Korea to demonstrate its autonomy of action.

If I could say one thing about historical analogies, just to go back to your point about whether Kim Jong-un is in fact a North Korean Mao, I do not think he has that comparable sentiment in believing that North Korea could sustain or withstand direct action. Nuclear weapons are therefore



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anything but a paper tiger from Kim's point of view, and that is of course underscored by his commitment to acquire them himself.

However, when we think about deterrence in the context of the Cold War—Beatrice will have a much better sense of this than I do—we should keep in mind that deterrence itself worked not necessarily because deterrence works but because of luck, chance, contingency and the willingness of individual actors. One thinks back to the Cuban missile crisis and the willingness of Castro to embrace a strategy that would have been effectively suicidal. That is worth keeping in mind, because if a decapitation strategy looked possible, it would be about not just the command and control dynamic in North Korea and the ability of people below Kim Jong-un to respond with swift, decisive military force, but Kim's own calculation that he might want to bring the temple down about his ears. That is entirely rational for somebody of his disposition and given his background and upbringing.

Professor Heuser: I recently came across an anecdote of a Chinese policy elite person who has written in the press that China should change its attitude towards North Korea and should back off from supporting it so much. Interestingly, he was challenged by four people in a dark alley who said, "Stop writing this sort of thing," which he reported to the security authorities, who said, "We can't protect you at all times." This sounds to me like a very exciting story, but given that we know how interestingly active Chinese intelligence agents are in assassinating people in south-east Asia and in all sorts of other places, and how proactively they go after technology and things like that in their espionage, I can imagine that there really is that element of bullying and individual action. That is a completely unconfirmed anecdote, but it sounded very interesting.

Dr Cottee: If I could raise one point with regard to China, I agree with John that there is certainly increasing frustration. North Korea has become a strategic liability for Beijing. One op-ed was previously mentioned by John; there is another one that has just been published in *Foreign Affairs* by a Chinese scholar, effectively saying the same thing—"We need to start preparing for the worst and thinking about cutting North Korea loose." That is a significant change. Again, whether that had the approval of authorities in Beijing I wouldn't know, but it is interesting that, with regard to the sixth nuclear test, I had heard that it would probably be delayed until after China's party congress had taken place to avoid rocking the boat. It obviously was not postponed, and it took place before that. I sense that the Chinese authorities will probably see this as a slap in the face. It is certainly true that, despite the increased leverage because of the multilateral sanctions, Beijing has a waning influence over Pyongyang, and that will certainly be causing frustration and concern.

Andrea Berger: I think we would have a very different conversation with Beijing if North Korea were to talk about its nuclear weapons as being to deter or threaten not only the United States and its allies but China as well. I raise this because there has also been limited reporting that in, I think, a provincial government meeting in one of the northern provinces of



the DPRK, an official was discussing how North Korea's missiles were now able to concretely and reliably reach Chinese cities also. We need to be very careful in assuming that that actually happened, but if it were to become apparent that North Korea actually engages in threatening-type behaviour where it uses language about its nuclear missile programmes to talk about China as well, I think we would be having a very different conversation with Beijing.

- Q39 Graham P. Jones:** Just to follow up on Mark's point, we have already discussed issues around ICBMs and re-entry, which I don't want to go over again. However, one thing that concerns me, which has not been raised, is short-range ballistic missiles and the change in thinking, particularly around a conventional war with some tactical nuclear weapons.

I also have a further question about intellectual transfer once North Korea becomes a nuclear state. We have talked about incoming intellectual transfer, but what about 10 years hence, when that intellectual transfer is leaving—particularly when we talk about more tactical nuclear weapons, as opposed to devastating thermonuclear weapons? That is a real concern that I have, and I wondered what your thoughts were on it.

Andrea Berger: Just for clarification, is your question about the risk of North Korean intellectual export?

Graham P. Jones: Yes, so the export of intellectual knowledge to other rogue actors—not necessarily even with the state endorsing it, but with it being unable to control or contain actors who may be able to export intellectual property.

Chair: A bit like Iran has been helping other rogue states, could North Korea do that?

- Q40 Graham P. Jones:** At a state level, similar to, as you mentioned previously, where the old Soviet technology or plans have found their way to North Korea—you can question whether that was individuals or whether the plans themselves were in collaboration. Could we see that in reverse in 10 years' time, but with nuclear technology instead of just ballistic missile technology? That is a real worry for me: once intellectual property has been created and we have no control over it, what happens next?

Andrea Berger: Maybe I will start on this. I am sure Matthew has thoughts as well; I know I have talked to him about it many times over coffee. The starting point for this is that North Korea is one of the world's most active military proliferators. It ships and assists foreign countries with a range of military technology, from small arms and light weapons up to ballistic missiles, and has done for many decades. Indeed, it is the largest exporter of ballistic missile technology to the developing world. Everyone from Egypt, to Iran, to Syria, to the UAE and Yemen has ballistic missile capabilities in part because of the assistance of Pyongyang, and in some cases entirely because of Pyongyang. That remains a concerning fact.



We also know that North Korea has, in the past, exported nuclear knowledge. In 2007, the Syrians found that one of their reactors that they had been constructing in the desert in al-Kibar had been bombed overnight by the Israelis. The North Koreans were sustaining the production of that reactor. North Korea has, in the past, exported nuclear knowledge. That is not to suggest that North Korea is necessarily going to participate in the transfer of nuclear weapons knowledge, technology or related goods to other countries in the future. It is possible, but I think many of the assessments that it will inevitably do that, because it is cash-strapped and will sell anything for the right price, are overwrought.

North Korea may partner with some other countries that it regards as its closest foreign friends in providing them with technology or assistance that they request, but it won't do that if it thinks the cost-benefit calculation in doing so is not in its favour. I would argue, when it comes to the transfer of nuclear weapons technology, which would be one of the most egregious violations of any international law or norm you could think of, that it would not engage in that sort of behaviour unless in circumstances that I cannot even really put a finger on.

Short of that, if it thought, for example, that it could get away with intangible knowledge transfer, for example in a future scenario with Iran or another close friend with proliferation aspirations, perhaps, but it would have to be very confident that it would get away with it. That is really where the question mark is in my mind over that sort of transfer.

Dr Cottee: I agree with everything that was said. There will be increasing concern if DPRK is still constrained by sanctions; if the economy becomes an issue, we assume there will be that motivation to sell. At the same time, the sanctions provide some safety net in preventing the export of certain materials and technologies.

I think there is a bigger concern. If there were ever to be a regime change within North Korea, whether by force or because of internal political-economic collapse, the scenario for them—what would happen to nuclear facilities, nuclear material and nuclear warheads—is a much bigger concern. There is certainly some planning and thought on the way as to what would happen in that situation. I am not sure there is a clear view of who would be the responsible party who would come in and try to clear up that situation. You can assume that China probably wouldn't be very happy with any US forces moving north into what was, or still would be, North Korea. Would South Korea do that job? Would China themselves do it? I think those are all big questions, but we can clearly imagine a situation in which whatever factions are left in North Korea then try to sell complete warheads or nuclear material. That would be a concern. It is something that is being thought about; I just don't think there is any clear consensus yet on what would actually be done in that situation.

- Q41 **Graham P. Jones:** Following on from that, what can be done? What level of influence does China have over North Korea? To follow up on an issue you discussed before, sanctions can seem punitive, but there is a rusty old oil pipeline that the North Koreans rely on. What influence does China



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have? Clearly, it has a lot of influence, but what sort of influence does it have? Is oil one of the options in terms of sanctions?

Dr Cottee: I would direct you towards a piece that a colleague of mine, Pierre Noel, wrote recently, because of the talk of a potential oil embargo on North Korea. He assesses what that would actually do to the country. Again, the assessment is that this will have been foreseen by the North Koreans, who will have stockpiled resources. Also, there is the potential that through coal gasification and liquefaction, they would have enough coal reserves within the country to maintain the desired level of activity. It is an interesting assessment and not something that I had personally thought about beforehand, but apparently this technology exists in North Korea. The coal export ban from North Korea that previous sanctions enacted effectively push it in that direction anyway, potentially.

There are still questions about how much oil moves into North Korea. There were media reports that the Chinese state oil company, CNPC, had actually stopped exporting to North Korea anyway, and that that was purely a commercial decision: they would receive payment in advance and then ship in the required amount, but they had not received payment, so they cut off the supply. Again, that is one report among many regarding oil embargoes. I point you towards my colleague's short piece on that.

Andrea Berger: There are, in effect, a huge number of places in which the Chinese could continue to tighten the screws. I have characterised their approach to sanctions implementation for some time as "minimum compliance". They will pay attention to some sanctions, especially when we are paying attention to those sanctions, and implement them fairly robustly while completely ignoring other areas. We saw that for a long time even with their simple approach to allowing or ignoring North Korean-designated entities operating on their territory. That is probably the best example.

That continues to be the case. We have major gaps in implementation from the Chinese on financial sanctions, shipping sanctions, designated entities, commodity-based sanctions—you name it. There is poor or patchy implementation on all those fronts within China. So there is huge room for improvement from the Chinese on things that we have already designed. It is not necessarily that you would even need new sanctions to be able to increase that pressure. If China were to simply implement some of the things that are already allowed through the UN Security Council, that might change the level of pressure that North Korea is experiencing. The question then comes back to strategy. If we were to do that, do we think it would tip the North Korean cost-benefit calculation, and over what? If not, is there value in beating the Chinese with a stick repeatedly over the head about sanctions implementation, if we don't believe that the implementation of at least some of those sanctions is going to convince Kim Jong-un to behave?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: I have one point on this issue. I agree completely with what Andrea was saying about core implementation. I do think it is worth bearing the importance of public opinion in China in mind, and the



extent to which the broader threats posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and nuclear testing—particularly the fear of radiation exposure—is a source of concern to Chinese living in close proximity to the border. There is also a more fundamental reason why the Chinese Government have good reason not to consider regime change, which is the negative example of seeing an authoritarian Government collapse. Steve Tsang, my Chatham House colleague, who is also Professor of Chinese at SOAS, wrote an interesting piece just a week ago, pointing out that it is not only the historical ties between China and North Korea, cemented by the 1961 bilateral alliance, but also the perception that they are in some way similar types of regime. We should not overlook the extent to which that may be a factor in the thinking of the political leaders in China.

Professor Heuser: Analogies can only go so far, but we see the similarity here between the Russians clinging to the Syrian regime and the Chinese clinging to North Korea: "It may be a devil, but it's our devil and our reputation is at stake if we give them up."

Q42 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** John, can I ask you, are the United States and South Korea divided about how to respond to this? Is North Korea exploiting that?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: I think there is a very easy door to push against in South Korea, given the long history of anti-Americanism and the fact that we have a progressive leader in Moon Jae-in, who came to power with an agenda that was explicitly focused on engagement and dialogue, underlined very powerfully by his speech in Berlin. He provided precisely the sort of reassurances that Beatrice raised: "What does North Korea want? They want confirmation that we have no hostile intent and that we want to resolve the conflict peaceably. We also want to ensure that unification, if and when it takes place, would be done in a way that accommodates your interests as well as ours." Rhetorically at least, all that provides perfect reassurance to North Korea.

A progressive President, who has staked a lot of his political reputation on delivering that engagement strategy, is in an extraordinarily difficult position. I think he is being squeezed by both the left and the right at present. The left will respond instinctively with opposition to Donald Trump's threats of a decision to tear up the bilateral trade agreement. It will respond very negatively to his language, characterising South Korea's Government as engaged in appeasement.

Moon has tried, cleverly, to insulate himself from that to some extent by embracing THAAD and by developing a much more muscular defence policy, and by committing, even before the current crisis, to an expansion in defence spending of, I think, about 2.3% or 2.6%. Of course, there have been signs of closer co-ordination with the US military, such as the agreement on the part of Washington to accept that the South Koreans can enhance the range and weight of their own missile capabilities to target North Korea, and talk of a potential rotation on a quarterly basis of American forces back to the peninsula to again reinforce deterrents. But



that is all happening in the context of ordinary South Koreans on both sides of the political divide. Conservatives, for example, are now arguing very forcefully for the introduction of tax relief for weapons as a minimum in South Korea, and the possible acquisition of South Korean independent tactical nuclear weapons. That is a sign of just how divided South Korean opinion is.

The other factor is that this is happening in a context where other countries, Japan in particular, share that sense of concern and anxiety. There is an argument for saying that, at this stage, there ought to be much more close co-ordination between Seoul and Tokyo in addressing those concerns. Fundamentally, the fractured nature of South Korean politics cannot be underestimated.

For now, Moon's popularity is still relatively high by historical standards—in the region of 70% to 80%—and there is no real credible opposition. The Liberty Korea party, which is the main Opposition party, did extremely poorly in the elections. A further confirmation of Moon's ability for now to stave off some of that criticism from the right has been this show of force, bombing South Korea's own territory, to demonstrate the strategic resolve of South Korea. It is uncharacteristic behaviour for a South Korean progressive President. We should not forget that some of his senior advisers, including Chung-in Moon, a professor at Yonsei University and a long-standing advocate of engagement, believe strongly, on the basis of their own direct contact with North Koreans and also with the Chinese, that at some point the engagement approach will have to be adopted.

Professor Heuser: Engagement in the sense of talks towards reunification?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Potentially, but also in the first instance dialogue and discussion about resurrecting the so-called sunshine policy. But obviously there is no space to do that at the moment.

- Q43 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** You are not really mentioning the United States in reply to my question about the division, if there is a division, between the United States and South Korea about how they approach this. I recognise some of the issues you mentioned about the South Korean Government. You mentioned briefly the incumbent in the White House who will not always be there. Those in the Department of Defence in the United States clearly should be talking to those in South Korea about how they have a rapprochement with China in terms of what Etzioni calls mutually assured restraint in the entire region. That might actually help in the long term some type of peace in the Korean peninsula.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: On the problem of the way the United States has approached South Korea—Andrea, we were talking about this just before we came in; I am sure you can highlight some of your conversations—partly it is capacity; partly it is the absence of having an ambassador in Seoul; partly it is the temperament of Donald Trump; but it is a genuine concern. Also, we should not forget the extent to which at an emotional



level—this is probably quite a controversial statement—the American political community feels less genuine affinity for its alliance ties with South Korea than it does with Japan, despite the fact that these alliances have a similar pedigree in terms of historical longevity: '54 in the case of South Korea and '51 in the case of Japan. It is the fractured nature of South Korean politics and the fact that past American Administrations were associated with authoritarian regimes that has meant it has been very difficult for successive American Administrations, despite the rhetoric, to really reassure their South Korean colleagues that they have their backs.

- Q44 **Gavin Robinson:** May I thank you for a fascinating and insightful contribution from all four of you? Although this is a great geopolitical issue, may I try and bring it back a little toward the United Kingdom? Should things escalate militarily, do you believe the United Kingdom would be under a moral obligation or compulsion to participate in any scenario that involves military escalation? Sharing with you a military quote that we received that must remain anonymous, would you agree with the assessment that our leaders and population at large will need to understand that we are no longer able and equipped, because of their own deliberate choice, to play a major military role in a crisis of this nature?

Dr Nilsson-Wright: On the issue of moral obligation, clearly there is the historical context here. British forces fought in the Korean War. The importance of ties between veterans is not insignificant. Britain's commitment to the rule of law in defence of democratic values means that it would be almost inconceivable to imagine that a British Government would stand on the sidelines in the event of a crisis in the region. Certainly there is pressure from Governments in the region, particularly from Japan. You will note from the visit by Prime Minister May to Tokyo recently how important the joint declaration on North Korea was. I think that is a measure of how much the Japanese would like to see the UK play a role. That has been part of the bilateral defence dialogue between the UK and Japan in terms of strengthening the co-operation between the two countries to anticipate a possible conflict. So there is the commitment to deploy HMS Argyll in December 2018 and the commitment to joint exercises in Japan involving British and Japanese forces. There is a two-plus-two mechanism for both South Korea and the United Kingdom, and Japan and the United Kingdom, that provides lots of material opportunities for Britain to be actively involved in anticipating contingency, strengthening defence preparedness, sharing intelligence and maybe actually acting as—I hesitate to characterise it as a mediator—a bridge between Seoul and Tokyo. I think that we ought to give more attention to that.

Leaving that to one side, I think that the position that the British Government have adopted in the UN is a very obvious way in which Britain can demonstrate its resolve and support for a tougher sanctions regime. It may also be the case that because of its 16 years of diplomatic relations with the DPRK, Britain is also well positioned to adopt the sanctions-plus



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approach that I mentioned earlier, even though that is potentially quite a risky strategy. In the unlikely event that we ever get to a stage where engagement becomes a real possibility again, there is Britain's considerable experience of how we direct contact with the DPRK in both a diplomatic context and through the provision of education and bilateral channels.

I don't think that we should underestimate the importance of that. From my experience in Cambridge, having received delegations of North Korean students, if we look beyond the political, authoritarian leadership, there is an appetite on the part of ordinary North Koreans, much like their South Korean compatriots, to engage with the outside world and to learn. That is a very useful carrot, which we should not forget about, especially in the context of the past experience of other countries, including Japan, of having, with modest success, approached the idea of re-engaging and the normalisation of relations with North Korea. Prime Minister Koizumi achieved that in 2002 and 2004, and even Prime Minister Abe, at least in private, still entertains the notion that this might be an opportunity at some point in the future. That is where Britain, Japan and South Korea could share their experience.

Dr Cottee: If I may add very briefly that if there were to be some kind of military option that was imminent, any UK involvement would be purely symbolic. From a practical point of view, given the need for swift action and relative secrecy, as I mentioned before, getting any kind of UK assets into the region would be a slow process, and would probably further stretch an already stretched military capability. So the only thing that may be feasible is for the UK perhaps to cover some of the US commitments in Europe or the Gulf and allow those freed-up assets to be moved to the Asia-Pacific. Beyond that, we don't really have any assets based in the region.

- Q45 **Gavin Robinson:** Would you agree with the reflection that because of previous engagement—this experience, and so on—while we may be able to participate quite considerably, our participation would not be within the military field?

Dr Cottee: I agree.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: If I can add just one point to keep in mind, we may not have military assets but we have acute vulnerability in terms of personnel. I am not sure of the exact numbers, but I think that something in the region of 15,000 British civilians are living in Seoul. One hopes that the contingency plans for evacuation in the event of a crisis are well laid, to evacuate those individuals in the case of military action taking place.

- Q46 **Gavin Robinson:** There seems to be an appetite to understand what you would do if you were Donald Trump in this scenario. I assume that the question is based on your particular expertise, rather than on any general view that you might have if you were in that position.

Andrea Berger: Which scenario specifically are we referring to?

Gavin Robinson: If you were Trump in this scenario, what do you think you would do? What is most likely?

Professor Heuser: Frankly, I think John already came up with a very comprehensive plan to start with, when he began with saying that Trump really needs to reassure the allies exposed in the area, to be consistent with his Government, to not tweet—I think you had a wonderful long list of programmes there—and at the same time not to engage in things that are unnecessarily provocative or can lend themselves to misinterpretation, i.e. not to do anything that is not authorised, such as exercises and things like that, that look as though they were planning a surprise attack. I think you had a very comprehensive list.

Andrea Berger: If it were me—I realise that to some this may sound somewhat defeatist, but I think that it is also relatively pragmatic—I would devise a strategy for the medium term that assumes that North Korea will continue to have nuclear weapons and the ability to strike the United States with them, and will show little interest in denuclearisation. I would devise a strategy to effectively contain, constrain, deter and communicate in a more co-ordinated fashion on all those fronts.

Dr Cottee: I would agree. I think that the key is probably messaging and communicating what US policy is and, although, “red lines” is perhaps an overused term these days, trying to establish what US responses would be in certain scenarios; establishing military-to-military communication, if possible, to avoid any kind of miscalculation or misperception; and reassuring allies in the region—this comes back to the messaging aspects. But again, I agree with Andrea that for the future, mid-term deterrence and constraining is the likely option.

Professor Heuser: May I add one little note? This is really on the earlier question of what the United Kingdom should do and what the military contribution should be. It will come up—I am not saying it, but somebody will say, “What good is it make even a symbolic contribution militarily to anything going on in the far east when the cost of this might be a nuclear weapon on London?” That is going to come up. So it has to be really thought about and thought through if any such—

Chair: Except, of course, that a nuclear weapon on London would lead to a lot of nuclear weapons on Pyongyang.

Professor Heuser: I am just saying—

Chair: We are back in the realms of MAD.

Gavin Robinson: I think you are right that it will come up as an issue. Perhaps we can invite you back—

Mr Francois: Your point is that if we were to get involved, that could theoretically hold us at risk.

Professor Heuser: Indeed. My point is that there is probably a lot of value in doing everything to express solidarity, but the question of making



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just a symbolic military contribution should be weighed against all the other factors.

Q47 **Mr Francois:** If I may say so, I think this has been an extremely valuable session. The thing that comes out of it for me, which I did not know before I came in here this afternoon, is that they have an ability to reach us with a thermonuclear device. That is the first time anyone has ever said that to me with any certainty.

Andrea Berger: It is not certainty.

Dr Nilsson-Wright: Not to put a spanner in the works, can I just register a very slight note of dissent with Andrea on that issue? I think there is more ambiguity—I certainly hope that is the case.

As for channelling my own inner Donald Trump, I would say: speak rarely, listen more, and make sure you have an extensive arsenal of carrots as well as sticks. Because the one way to appeal to Donald Trump is to recognise that he believes—at least, he says he does—in the art of the deal. If he can be incentivised into thinking that there is a potential, at least, to explore the possibility of a deal, for the sake of regional security and more broadly, one certainly hopes that he pursues it.

Chair: Mark is absolutely right: it has been a tremendous session, and we have all benefited greatly from the sum of your cumulated knowledge and expertise. I think we might all try to be realistic enough to accept that there is even less prospect of Donald Trump giving up Twitter than there is of North Korea giving up nuclear weapons. Perhaps the best advice we can give is: keep calm and carry on deterring.

It has been of enormous value to the Committee, and the transcript will be made available on the Committee's website. If this does develop into a full-scale inquiry with a report at the end, you can be sure that the sum total of your expertise will be absolutely central to our findings. Thank you all very much indeed.