



Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies

Victor D. Cha, David C. Kang

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The regime of Kim Jong-Il has been called "mad," "rogue," even, by the *Wall Street Journal*, the equivalent of an "unreformed serial killer." Yet, despite the avalanche of television and print coverage of the Pyongyang government's violation of nuclear nonproliferation agreements and existing scholarly literature on North Korean policy and security, this critical issue remains mired in political punditry and often misleading sound bites. Victor Cha and David Kang step back from the daily newspaper coverage and cable news commentary and offer a reasoned, rational, and logical debate on the nature of the North Korean regime.

Coming to the issues from different perspectives?Kang believes the threat posed by Pyongyang has been inflated and endorses a more open approach, while Cha is more skeptical and advocates harsher measures?the authors together have written an essential work of clear-eyed reflection and authoritative analysis. They refute a number of misconceptions and challenge much faulty thinking that surrounds the discussion of North Korea, particularly the idea that North Korea is an irrational nation. Cha and Kang contend that however provocative, even deplorable, the Pyongyang government's behavior may at times be, it is not incomprehensible or incoherent. Neither is it "suicidal," they argue, although crisis conditions could escalate to a degree that provokes the North Korean regime to "lash out" as the best and only policy, the unintended consequence of which are suicide and/or collapse. Further, the authors seek to fill the current scholarly and policy gap with a vision for a U.S.-South Korea alliance that is not simply premised on a North Korean threat, not simply derivative of Japan, and not eternally based on an older, "Korean War generation" of supporters.

This book uncovers the inherent logic of the politics of the Korean peninsula, presenting an indispensable context for a new policy of engagement. In an intelligent and trenchant debate, the authors look at the implications of a nuclear North Korea for East Asia and U.S. homeland security, rigorously assessing historical and current U.S. policy, and provide a workable framework for constructive policy that should be followed by the United States, Japan, and South Korea if engagement fails to stop North Korean nuclear proliferation.

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