

*“Deterrence and Containment of North Korea”*  
*Daniel Sneider*

In the wake of North Korea’s recent missile and nuclear tests, Daniel Sneider, associate director for research at Stanford University’s Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center and a longtime top foreign correspondent and foreign affairs columnist for major American media, will discuss United States’ policy toward North Korea. Sneider was a Pantech Fellow at Shorenstein APARC in 2005-2006.

Sneider will explain why the United States can never accept Pyongyang’s claim to the status of a nuclear power on a par with the other nuclear-armed nations of the world. He will evaluate the Obama administration’s response so far to the serial provocations of the Kim Jong Il regime.

Sneider will argue that it would be foolish not to shape American policy based on the *reality* that North Korea has relentlessly pursued nuclear weapons and demonstrated the capability to explode a primitive nuclear device and eventually to deliver nuclear weapons by means of ballistic missiles.

Sneider regards North Korean leaders as being well aware of the failure of their economy and the undermining of their authority and legitimacy due to an increasing inflow of consumer goods and information from the outside world. Kim Jong Il’s sudden illness last fall and the succession crisis it triggered seem both to have increased North Korean leaders’ sense of vulnerability and to have strengthened the hand of those who see nuclear weapons as necessary to ensure regime survival. The North Korean regime believes that a demonstrated nuclear capacity deters a possible U.S. military attack and compensates both militarily and politically for its weakness in the ongoing contest for leadership and legitimacy on the Korean Peninsula.

Given North Korea’s apparent intentions, Sneider maintains that the United States has little alternative but to adopt a long-term strategy of deterrence and containment of the regime, drawing upon the lessons of the Cold War. Such a policy does not rule out engagement aimed at aiding the process of change within North Korea. And it should be accompanied by a clear offer from President Obama of an alternative path that the North Koreans can pick up at any time. That would be the now familiar exchange of verifiable denuclearization for full diplomatic recognition, a peace treaty to end the Korea War, and large-scale economic engagement.

Sneider concludes that the United States and the Republic of Korea must be patient in pursuing a long-term strategy, rather than seeking short-term, but ultimately illusive, gains.

About Daniel Sneider: <http://aparc.stanford.edu/people/danielcsneider/>