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THESIS

**STRATEGIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE
UNITED STATES AND NORTH KOREA:
DETERRENCE OR SECURITY DILEMMA?**

by

Murat Yetgin
December 2003

Thesis Co-Advisor:
Thesis Co-Advisor:

Peter R. Lavoy
Jeffrey W. Knopf

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Murat Yetgin
Major, Turkish Army
B.A., Army War School, Ankara, Turkey, 1988

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December 2003**

Author: Murat Yetgin

Approved by: Peter R. Lavoy
Thesis Co-Advisor

Jeffrey W. Knopf
Thesis Co-Advisor

James J. Wirtz
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

Worried about the regional and global consequences of a nuclear North Korea, U.S. governments have pursued both diplomacy and coercion to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program. However, as of December 2003, U.S. policies appear to have failed since North Korea has become the ninth nuclear weapons state. Since North Korea's motives have been ambiguous from the very beginning, the United States has had difficulty in developing strategies that would effectively address North Korea's motives and curtail its nuclear ambitions. This thesis argues that although North Korea has ambitious motives, its nuclear efforts are mostly insecurity driven reactions. Coercive policies towards North Korea increase its insecurity and compel it to resort to nuclear weapons. The United States perceives North Korea's reactions as blackmail since North Korea combines its economic and political problems with its security concerns. Mutual distrust and insecurity, which is mostly a result of misperceptions, creates a security dilemma, a vicious spiral in which the security interests of the two states are mutually threatened by each other's self-protection aspirations. Cooperation, rather than coercion, is believed to work better in such cases. However, both sides should separate nuclear issues from other issues to reduce mutual distrust and misperceptions, and to achieve effective cooperation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. A LINGERING PROBLEM

North Korea's nuclear ambitions have created several crises since U.S. satellites detected the evidence of suspicious nuclear activities at Yongbyon in the mid-1980s. The latest crisis started after the October 2002 bilateral talks in North Korea, during which Bush administration officials informed the North Koreans that they knew about North Korea's secret uranium enrichment program. According to the Bush administration, the North Koreans admitted their clandestine program during these talks. Although the North Koreans denied the Bush administration's claim, North Korea's alleged nuclear weapons program unleashed a series of events that amounted to a crisis.¹

Announcing that North Korea's secret uranium enrichment program was a violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Bush administration suspended the implementation of U.S. pledges committed in the Agreed Framework.² In return, North Korea announced that it would reactivate its nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, expelled International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, formally withdrew from the NPT in January 2003, and apparently resumed its nuclear program. North Korea justifies its actions by citing U.S. non-compliance with its commitments pledged in the Agreed Framework as well as claiming that the Bush administration has plans for a pre-emptive attack on North Korea. The credibility of these justifications, however, is in question.

North Korea's motives have been ambiguous since the beginning of its nuclear program. The North Koreans, on the one hand, could really feel threatened by U.S. policies, therefore, their recent behavior might be a direct reaction to U.S. policies, just as they have claimed.³ On the other hand, the North Koreans might want to take advantage

¹ James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, March 12, 2003.

² The United States and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework on October 21, 1994 in Geneva. With the Agreed Framework, North Korea agreed to freeze and ultimately dismantle its existing nuclear program in return for two new light-water reactors and shipments of heavy fuel oil to meet its energy needs until the first new reactor becomes operational. Under U.S. claims on North Korea's violation, oil shipments to North Korea were suspended on November 14, 2002.

³ KCNA, "Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal," FBIS Translated Text, Pyongyang, January 22, 2003, available at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/dprk012203.html>.

of the crisis to achieve some political and economic objectives, as the Bush administration has claimed.⁴ The shortage of information about North Korea's decision-making makes it hard to determine which argument is more plausible. However, clearly understanding North Korea's motives is critical to deal with the North Korean crisis effectively.

This thesis attempts to reduce the uncertainty about North Korea's real motives for developing a nuclear program. It provides an analysis of the objectives behind North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Why do the North Koreans try to obtain nuclear weapons? Is it because they feel threatened by the United States or is it because they want to realize some political and economic objectives by creating a nuclear crisis? To determine North Korea's underlying motivations, the thesis examines North Korea's nuclear program and U.S. policies since North Korea's foundation. It evaluates the impact of U.S. policies on North Korea's decisions to initiate, to suspend, and to resume its nuclear weapons program. The thesis particularly focuses on the two crises in 1993 and in 1994, and the third crisis that started in October 2002 to see if North Korea's nuclear behavior is motivated by insecurity or aggressive impulses.

The findings of the thesis indicates that although North Korea seems to have a mix of both motives, insecurity and ambitious thinking, the former appears to have had much greater influence on North Korea's decisions both to start and to maintain its nuclear weapons production capability. North Korea has felt insecure since its foundation. The North Koreans may have developed other incentives over time; however, their primary motive has been insecurity stemming from their perceptions about the vulnerability of the regime in the face of U.S. policies. As for the most recent crisis, the Bush administration's policies appear to have provoked the North Koreans to resume their plutonium based nuclear weapons program.

B. CRITICIZED POLICIES AND FRIGHTENING PROSPECTS

The Bush administration has been frequently criticized for not pursuing a suitable policy to handle the North Korean crisis. Some critics even argue that the Bush

⁴ Kelly, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 12, 2003.

administration has had no policy but merely an “attitude” towards North Korea.⁵ Despite several attempts to dissuade North Korea from resuming its nuclear program, no tangible progress has been realized as of December 2003. North Korea continues to claim that it has serious intentions and sufficient capacity to produce nuclear weapons. It wants the United States to agree to bilateral talks, sign a non-aggression pact, normalize relations, and lift the economic sanctions imposed on North Korea. The Bush administration rejects North Korea’s demands as nuclear blackmail. Considering bilateral talks as appeasement or as a reward for bad behavior, the Bush administration wants to solve the problem primarily by multilateral diplomacy while also displaying its readiness for military options.

If North Korea achieves a capacity to build its own nuclear weapons arsenal, this would have several undesirable consequences for both the United States and world security. Even if North Korea does not use nuclear weapons against the United States, it can pose a threat to the United States by selling nuclear weapons to other rogue states or terrorists. Moreover, a nuclear North Korea would threaten neighboring countries, particularly Japan and South Korea. As a result, these countries may decide to develop their own nuclear weapons to deter a nuclear North Korea. Such a development would seriously damage the nonproliferation regime. Additionally, North Korea’s success in obtaining indigenous nuclear weapons might encourage other nuclear aspirants and trigger a nuclear arms race in the absence of trust towards the regime. Therefore, an unresolved North Korean crisis not only threatens U.S. security and U.S. interests but also has the potential of devastating stability and security all over the world. This prospect requires the United States to develop urgent and precise policies to handle the North Korean crisis.

C. EXPLANATORY THEORIES

As one of the important steps towards crafting proper policies, the motives of North Korea and the impact of U.S. policies on its decision-making mechanism must be examined as precisely as possible. However, because of the absence of real data about

⁵ During an interview, Donald Gregg, who served as a national security adviser to Vice President George H.W. Bush and as U.S. ambassador to South Korea from 1989-1993, said, “the Bush administration never had a policy. It has had an attitude – hostility”. The interview is available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/gregg.html>.

how North Koreans perceive the situation and how they make their decisions about nuclear weapons, outsiders are usually dependent on assumptions. Policymakers should strengthen their assumptions with the help of models that can simulate the reality while clearly explaining the motives. For this reason, the thesis uses the “Deterrence” and the “Spiral” models, popular concepts in international security studies introduced by Robert Jervis, as the methodology to better understand North Korea’s real motives.

1. The Deterrence Model

The deterrence model helps to explain the motives behind the behaviors of a state that pursues aggressive policies to secure its national interests. The theory also describes the proper course of action that other states should take to keep the aggressor under control. The theory suggests that an aggressor state tests the other state to see if it will make concessions in order to maintain the status quo. If the aggressor feels that the other state tends to compromise, it perceives this as a weakness and takes advantage of it to obtain more gain from the other side. As long as the aggressor believes the other state is ready for further concessions, it refuses to accept any compromise that falls short of its ultimate ambitions.⁶

Robert Jervis illustrates the theory by citing a game known as “chicken.” In this game, two assertive people, who are usually young and willing to demonstrate their courage by challenging each other, drive their cars with high speed toward each other expecting that the other would clear the road before a collision. The one who leaves the competition first is called a “chicken,” which refers to cowardice. Both sides try to understand if the other side would give up first. If one side looks weak and ready to leave the road to avoid a collision, the other one takes advantage of it. Perceived or actual weakness of one side would be a good motive for the other side to insist on staying on the road even though it would mean risking dangerous consequences. Therefore, a player seeking to deter a challenger should demonstrate absolute determination in maintaining its course since a rational rival that sees the resolve of the other side would not risk a collision.

⁶ Robert Jervis, “Deterrence, the Spiral Model and the Intentions of the Adversary,” *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 58-60.

Jervis writes, “Great dangers arise if an aggressor believes that the status quo powers are weak in capability or resolve.”⁷ The aggressor tends to resist until the point that it feels there would be no further retreat from the other side. But, in the mean time, the aggressor might have passed the threshold and face a real conflict. In order to avoid a real conflict, the status quo power must often go to extremes because the aggressor may take moderation and conciliation for weakness. The status quo power must display the ability and willingness to risk war in order to avoid a war. That does not mean that the status quo power should never change its position.⁸ As Jervis concludes, “But while carrots as well as sticks are to be employed the other’s friendship cannot be won by unnecessary concessions.”⁹

On the other hand, a state that is aware of the theory might fear that concession provides the aggressor with an opportunity to exploit, and abstain from cooperative policies that might end a conflict. Therefore, the state should be able to recognize the circumstances that will encourage the aggressor to cooperate. Jervis argues, “if the distribution of power is favorable, the cost of war, the lower probability of winning, and the fear to lose what has already been won, will discourage the aggressor to go further.”¹⁰

2. The Spiral Model

The spiral model suggests that if one state seeks its own security, it tries to increase its ability to defend itself. When states increase their ability to defend themselves, they also gain the ability to threaten others. In other words, as Jervis explains, “What one state regards as insurance, the adversary will see as encirclement.”¹¹ Therefore, attempts to increase its own security by a state may be perceived as aggression by the others, so this compels them to be more prepared against the first state’s possible attacks. In order to reduce the first state’s security, they will increase their own arms forcing the first state to seek more power to defend itself against more threatening

⁷ Jervis, Deterrence, the Spiral Model and the Intentions of the Adversary, 58.

⁸ Ibid., 58-60.

⁹ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹¹ Ibid., 64.

adversaries. This creates a vicious spiral in which states' security interests are mutually threatened by each other's self-protection aspirations.

This model gets its roots from the point of view of the critics of deterrence theory stating that the world is anarchic, that is, there is no central authority. In a world without a sovereign, each state must defend its own interests.¹² In this process, political decision makers, especially military leaders, worry that their adversaries may develop aggressive intentions. They usually tend to prepare for the worst-case scenario and get ready to defend the country against every possible threat even when no actual threat exists.

Because of the high cost of underestimating the enemy, strategists often consider exaggerating the threat to be better than underestimating the threat. Accordingly, as Jervis stated, "In extreme cases, states that seek security may believe that the best way for self-protection is to attack and expand."¹³ That is, the Spiral model, which is also called "the vicious circle of security dilemma," can trigger a war even when neither side has aggressive ambitions. Jervis argues, "even a state fully satisfied with the status quo may start a war if it believes that striking first will have a decisive advantage because of the strategy or advanced technology."¹⁴

The security dilemma often leads to arms races or war. For that reason, if states think and act with pessimistic perceptions of the threat and get caught in the vicious circle of the security dilemma, they will all develop competitive policies that would threaten, as well as, weaken each other. In this case, all states are worse off than they would be if they had cooperated. Jervis proposes, "States must employ and develop ingenuity, trust, and institutions if they are to develop their common interests without undue risks to their security."¹⁵

Charles L. Glaser, on the other hand, argues that the deterrence and the spiral models are inadequate to explain real cases since a state can be both insecure and greedy at the same time. Glaser also claims that it is hard to control such states by either

¹² Ibid., 63-65.

¹³ Ibid., 63.

¹⁴ Ibid., 67.

¹⁵ Ibid., 67.

cooperative or competitive policies.¹⁶ Indeed, a state can have a mix of motives. North Korea, for example displays the characteristics of both aggressiveness and insecurity, making it hard to determine North Korea’s real motives and to craft a proper policy. Although Glaser’s approach provides a more realistic analysis, Jervis’ models are still more helpful in assuming the motives of North Koreans and in illuminating the impact of U.S. policies on their decision-making since the indicators are more recognizable and distinguishable. Although a state can have mixed motives, it is likely to be either more aggressive or more insecure, and not both equally. Recognizing the indicators provided by the models in the North Korean case help assume North Korea’s primary motive. Applying the models to the North Korean case also improves the ability to predict the impact of the U.S. policies and to determine if a policy change is needed.

D. DISTINGUISHING AN INSECURE STATE FROM AN AGGRESSOR




The Aggressor State	The Status Quo Power
action: arming purpose: to maximize own interest	 reaction : deterrence purpose: to maintain status quo
action: testing the status quo power for compromise	 reaction: compromise outcome: aggressor exploits
	 reaction: no compromise outcome (1): aggressor retreats—no war outcome (2): aggressor fails to recognize the resolve—war

Table 1. Behaviors of States in the Deterrence Model (The Game of Chicken).

¹⁶ Charles L. Glaser, “Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models,” *World Politics*, vol.44, no.4, July 1992.

The importance of models comes from their ability to illustrate how aggressive and insecure states behave in certain circumstances. For example, if a state tries to exploit other side's concessions although its security concerns are addressed, and if it shows restraint when it feels there would be no further retreat from the other side, this state should be considered an aggressor as explained in the deterrence model (Table 1). The aggressor state perceives cooperative policies as weakness; therefore, the status quo power should display strong resolve to stop the aggressor and to avoid a war.





The Status Quo Power	The Insecure State
action : arming purpose: to increase own security	perception: increase in threat 
perception: aggression reaction (1): more arming, deterrence outcome: insecure states continues arming, arms race reaction (2): preemption outcome: insecure states retaliates, war	 action: arming purpose: to increase own security 
perception : the opponent is insecure reaction: cooperation outcome: insecure state positively responds	

Table 2. Behaviors of States in the Spiral Model (The Security Dilemma).

On the other hand, if a state escalates tensions and resorts to arming when it perceives a threat from the others side but positively responds to the other side's concessions that would address its security concerns, then it should not be regarded as an aggressor. This state's real motive, in fact, should be considered insecurity as the spiral model suggests (Table 2). If the status quo power fails to understand this state's real motive because of distrust or lack of information, and if it pursues uncooperative policies

against the insecure states, then an arms race may start. If the status quo power misperceives the case and relies on deterrence, rather than cooperation, the outcome may be a war.

The findings of this thesis indicate that North Korea resists any U.S. compromise that falls short of its political and economic demands and waits until it feels that no further concession would be given by the United States. However, North Korea's demands do not look like expansionist ambitions and the North Koreans seem to be demanding compensation of their loss because of U.S. policies. For example, in the crisis that started in October 2002, they did not appear to be requesting further concessions from the United States; on the contrary, they simply demanded what the United States had previously promised. Moreover, it is certain that they were afraid of the United States, but it is not clear if North Koreans retreated because of U.S. resolve. Therefore, although there is some evidence supporting the deterrence model, it does not satisfactorily explain the interactions between the United States and North Korea. On the other hand, the findings of the thesis indicate that North Korea has responded to U.S. cooperation by restricting its nuclear weapons production capability; however it has reacted to U.S. security driven actions by resuming its capability. From this perspective, concluding that North Korea is an insecure state seems more plausible. Therefore, the spiral model *better* explains the strategic interactions between the United States and North Korea.

E. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The thesis applies the deterrence and the spiral models to the interactions between the United States and North Korea in a historical context beginning from the foundation of North Korea. Chapter II examines the initial phases of North Korea's nuclear program from the 1950s to the late 1980s. It examines why and how North Korea started its nuclear program. Although nuclear weapons were not actually used during the Korean War, the United States made several nuclear threats at that time. Additionally, the United States deployed tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea after the war. The U.S. nuclear threats, apparently, worried North Koreans in regards to the survival of their regime. Consequently, North Korea initiated its nuclear program in 1960s with the help of the

Soviet Union and China, and achieved a remarkable progress towards producing its own nuclear weapons in 1980s. The interactions between the two states in this period mostly resemble the spiral model. North Korea perceived the defensive military measures of the United States and South Korea as a direct threat to its existence and decided to equalize the power balance with the help of nuclear weapons. When the United States decided to remove its tactical nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, as explained in Chapter III, North Korea positively responded to the U.S. concession and agreed to IAEA inspections.

Chapter III covers the time period from North Korea's entrance to the nonproliferation regime, and it focuses on the two crises that were unleashed during the Clinton administration period. North Korea signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985 and agreed to inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1992. However, it resisted IAEA inspections and threatened to withdraw from the NPT in 1993. Moreover, it removed more than half of the spent fuel rods from a reactor under the IAEA safeguards in 1994 without the supervision of the IAEA. The Clinton administration tried both diplomacy and coercion to solve the North Korean problem. It came to the brink of war, then decided to cooperate with North Korea and succeeded, to some degree, in restricting North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In this period, North Korea tried to justify its actions by complaining about U.S. manipulation of IAEA inspections. North Koreans were apparently disappointed by the NPT since it was not strengthening their security; instead it was threatening their sovereignty. Therefore, although North Korea appeared to be cheating the nonproliferation regime, the spiral model can better explain North Korea's behavior since they were mostly defensive reactions stemming from perceptions about the threat against the regime. North Korea's positive response to the Clinton administration's cooperative policies also supports this claim. The crisis ended with the signing of the Agreed Framework in 1994.

The implementation of the agreement was very slow because of the failures of both sides. The agreement was prone to misinterpretation and both sides had different expectations about what the other side was supposed to do. Moreover, the Clinton administration faced policy problems in convincing the Congress to provide enough money for the commitments under the Agreed Framework. As a final point, the United

States never provided the security assurance pledged in the agreement. Apparently because of dissatisfaction with U.S. performance and because of suspicion about continuing cooperative U.S. policies, North Korea decided to start and maintain a covert uranium enrichment program, which would create another crisis as explained in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV focuses on the Bush administration's approach towards North Korea. Some officials in the Bush administration had already opposed the Clinton administration's engagement policy and regarded the agreement as appeasement. When these officials assumed their position in the government, they made it clear that they would make changes in the policy towards North Korea. According to the Bush administration, the United States tried negotiating before, but North Korea responded by deceiving the United States. In response, Bush officials adopted a position that North Korea must first verifiably eliminate its nuclear weapons programs before the United States would engage in any cooperative policies.

After accusing North Korea of its clandestine nuclear weapons program, the Bush administration has repeatedly declared its intention to solve the crisis with multilateral diplomacy, on the one hand, and deployed long-range bombers to Guam to reinforce the U.S. deterrent posture, on the other hand. After several attempts, the United States succeeded in getting North Korea to agree to a trilateral meeting in April 2003 and six-country talks in August 2003 in Beijing. However, no progress has been achieved as of December 2003 in terms of convincing North Koreans to quit their nuclear weapons program. The U.S. decision to use military options in Iraq while resorting to diplomacy in North Korea apparently has damaged the U.S. image of resolve in the eyes of North Koreans and has given them the opportunity to insist on their political and economic objectives before giving up the nuclear weapons program. North Korea's behavior, on the other hand, is prone to be interpreted as ambitious since it tries to link its political and economic goals to its security concern. Thus, although its primary concern is to get a security guarantee from the United States, many Americans perceive North Korea as a greedy state.

Chapter V concludes with the findings of the thesis, indicating that the spiral model better explains what has been happening between the United States and North Korea. Mutual distrust and insecurity has had a great impact on the strategic interactions between the United States and North Korea. Both states are mutually threatened by each other's self-protection aspirations. Both sides would be better off if they could cooperate. However, mutual distrust, which has been established since the beginning of relations, avoids real cooperation between the two states. U.S. intention to achieve a comprehensive package deal before providing a tangible security assurance to North Korea appear to increase North Korea's resistance to full cooperation. Therefore, the United States should restrain its expectations from North Korea. It should focus on the most imminent problem—North Korea's nuclear weapons program and address North Korea's primary motivation behind this program. The United States should also seek ways to convince North Korea to give up its desire to solve all its problems with the help of its nuclear weapons program.

II. INITIAL MOTIVES FOR NUCLEAR POWER

A. INTRODUCTION

North Korea initiated its nuclear program in the 1960s. Until the late 1970s, North Korea appeared to be aiming at a peaceful energy program. However, U.S. satellites detected evidence of North Korea's secret intentions for producing nuclear weapons in the 1980s. Further findings strengthened the suspicion that North Korea was developing a capability to produce its own nuclear weapons.

This chapter examines why and how North Korea started its nuclear program and serves as a basis supporting the ideas presented in the rest of the thesis. It questions North Korea's primary purpose for initiating its nuclear program: Did North Korea want to have a nuclear source to meet its energy needs or did it plan to take advantage of the nuclear energy program as a cover to produce nuclear weapons secretly? If North Koreans aimed at the latter from the very beginning, then what drove them to do so? Since the thesis seeks to understand the crisis that started in October 2002, this chapter briefly touches upon North Korea's history and provides the milestones of its nuclear program that will be useful in following chapters.

B. BACKGROUND

1. A Divided Country

Although the Korean peninsula had been invaded hundreds of times in its long history, it had remained a unified country until its partition into two temporary influence zones after World War II. During the last days of the war, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria and northern Korea, which was then under Japanese occupation. Concerned about the possible future implications of Russian invasion, the

United States decided to occupy southern Korea and designated the 38th parallel as the separation line between the temporary Soviet and American zones.¹⁷

After failing to agree on the conditions of reunification of the Korean Peninsula, the Soviet Union and the United States allowed two hostile regimes to be established in 1948 in accordance with their Cold War policies. A communist government, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), was founded in the North, and an anti-communist government, Republic of Korea (ROK), was founded in the South. Both regimes claimed to be the legitimate authority of the entire peninsula causing serious conflicts and a struggle for military superiority.

2. The Korean War and the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons

The Soviet Union and the United States withdrew their forces from Korea in late 1948 and in early 1949 respectively; however, the problems between the North and the South remained unresolved. In 1950, the North launched a surprise attack across the 38th parallel and invaded the South to reunify the Korean peninsula by force. An international force led by the United States repelled the North Korean army; however, Chinese intervention on the side of the North caused a stalemate introducing the possibility of a bigger war.

Realizing the risks of widening the war, the U.S. generals commanding the international force planned to use nuclear weapons in discouraging Chinese aggression. General Douglas MacArthur requested several atom bombs to use and his successor, General Matthew Ridgeway, repeated the request.¹⁸ Additionally, the U.S. administrations, which took office during the Korean War, hinted about using atom bombs to avoid widening the war and to accelerate the armistice negotiations. After long negotiations, an armistice was agreed upon in 1953 and the demilitarized zone (DMZ), which has been separating the two Korean states since then, was established. According

¹⁷ General information on the history of North Korea and its nuclear program in this chapter is derived from: William R. Keylor, *The Twentieth Century World: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Basic Books, 2001), Michael Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), Leon Sigal, *Disarming the Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," *International Security*, vol. 13, no. 3 (Winter 1988-1989).

¹⁸ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 252.

to Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., “[U.S. nuclear] threats were instrumental in bringing about the 1953 armistice agreement.”¹⁹ However, not all agree on the impact of U.S. nuclear threats in ending the war.²⁰

Mutual hostilities and threats continued after the Korean War. The United States supported the South, maintained its military presence there, and deployed tactical nuclear weapons to deter the North. Beginning in the late 1950s, the United States deployed approximately 950 nuclear warheads of eight types to South Korea up until the 1970s. The U.S. nuclear arsenal in South Korea included Honest John surface-to-surface missiles, 280-millimeter guns, 8-inch artillery shells, atomic demolition munitions (ADMs), gravity bombs for aircraft, Lacrosse and Sergeant ballistic missiles, Nike Hercules surface-to-air missiles, Davy Crockett nuclear bazookas, and 155-millimeter artillery shells.²¹ South Korea might have regarded the U.S. military presence and nuclear weapons as insurance against North Korea’s possible attacks; but, North Korea perceived them as a threat.²² According to North Koreans, the United States turned South Korea into “literally the biggest U.S. nuclear weapons exhibition hall” by pursuing a “neither confirm nor deny” nuclear policy.²³

After the Vietnam War, the United States decided to lessen its involvement in Asian affairs and planned to reduce its military presence in South Korea. The U.S. efforts to decrease the number of troops worried South Koreans and increased their efforts to be militarily self-reliant. In this vein, South Korea started to modernize its army and developed a secret plan to establish an indigenous nuclear weapons arsenal.²⁴ The United

¹⁹ Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Unconventional Weapons,” *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons*, Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz eds. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 185.

²⁰ Don Oberdorfer argues that although the Eisenhower administration claimed that the nuclear weapons played a major role in ending the war, recent evidences from Soviet archives made these allegations suspicious. (Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 252.)

²¹ “North Korea’s nuclear program, 2003” in Nuclear Notebook 2003, Robert S. Norris, Hans M. Kristensen, and Joshua Handler eds., *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 2003, Vol. 59, No.2, 74–77.

²² Sigal, *Disarming the Strangers*, 21.

²³ KCNA’s Detailed Report on Failure of Denuclearization, May 12, 2003, FBIS translated text, available at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/dprk051203.html>, accessed on September 14, 2003.

²⁴ Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 26.

States tried to discourage South Korea; nonetheless, U.S. efforts proved ineffective. The Carter administration had to offer more reassurance, cancel troop withdrawal, and reaffirm the U.S. nuclear commitment to stop South Korea from developing an independent nuclear deterrent.²⁵

3. Search for More Power

In the face of what could be perceived as a growing threat from the South, the North devoted its scarce resources to building a huge conventional army. North Korea also tried to get support from its powerful neighbors, the Soviet Union and China; however, dependence on its neighbors' power proved unreliable over time. The wobbling relations with China and the Soviet Union caused North Korea to prefer building military forces of its own without depending on the military forces of other countries. Thus, North Korea adopted the concept of *juche*, or self-reliance, and its military component of *jawi*, the principle of military self-defense.²⁶ North Korea initiated a massive military reorganization and modernization program that included the development of chemical and biological weapons. North Koreans initially considered its chemical weapons to be sufficient to deter the United States; however, they later realized that the United States was unaware of North Korea's unconventional capability.²⁷ Meanwhile, South Korea made remarkable progress in building a modern army with the help of the United States. North Korea's growing concern about its security compelled it to look for a reliable security guarantee and resulted in North Korea's nuclear program.

North Korea's search for nuclear power started with its efforts to obtain nuclear assistance from the Soviet Union and China in 1960s. Regarding Soviet and Chinese help to North Korea, Leon V. Sigal argues, "Although the Soviet Union and China did not provide North Korea the bomb-making technology it needed, they did not do enough to restrain their client either."²⁸ The Soviets responded to North Korea's request positively; nevertheless, they offered limited nuclear energy assistance. China provided limited help on nuclear research as well.

²⁵ Sigal, *Disarming the Stranger*, 20.

²⁶ Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 22-24.

²⁷ Bermudez, "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Unconventional Weapons," 185-186.

²⁸ Sigal, *Disarming the Strangers*, 20.

North Korea and the Soviet Union signed two agreements on nuclear research. As a result, North Korean scientists were trained in Russia, and with the Soviets' help a nuclear research center was established at Yongbyon, sixty miles from North Korea's capital Pyongyang, in 1964. The Soviets also helped North Korea build a small experimental nuclear reactor in 1965 at the same center. By these means, North Korea obtained graphite reactor technology that enables producing fissionable plutonium, which could be used for producing nuclear weapons. Since the Soviet Union insisted to keep its assistance limited to peaceful nuclear energy purposes, the research reactor at Yongbyon was placed under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), although North Korea was not a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).²⁹

After China accomplished its first nuclear test in 1964, North Korea attempted to benefit from Chinese experience. However, China rejected North Korea's request to share nuclear weapons information. According to Don Oberdorfer, the Chinese leader Mao Zedong thought that nuclear weapons were not necessary for North Korea since it was a very small country. North Korea renewed its request in 1974, but China rejected it again.³⁰ However, China provided some assistance on nuclear research like the Soviet Union.³¹

4. Detection of North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions

During the 1970s and 1980s North Korea continued to develop its nuclear program. According to Bermudez, North Korean leaders decided to transform their nuclear research program into a weapons program in the mid-1970s in the face of U.S. threats and revelations about the South Korea's covert nuclear weapons program.³² In the early 1980s, U.S. satellites detected a suspicious construction at Yongbyon. The construction later turned out to be a nuclear reactor. This was the second nuclear reactor at Yongbyon together with the small research reactor North Korea had obtained from the

²⁹ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 252.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

³¹ Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 25.

³² Bermudez, "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Unconventional Weapons," 188.

Soviet Union in 1965. The reactor was not attached to any power grid, meaning it was not plausibly intended for electricity generation; as a result, this raised questions about its purpose.³³

In 1985, North Korea began construction of a 50-MWe (megawatts of electrical output) reactor at Yongbyon and later a 200 MWe reactor at Taechon. In 1986, U.S. satellites discovered cylindrical craters, which were believed to be the traces of experimental high-explosive detonations.³⁴ In 1988, a very large building under construction at Yongbyon was detected. This building was later concluded to be a plutonium reprocessing plant. The purpose of reprocessing is to separate plutonium from uranium fuel rods that are spent in nuclear reactors. Plutonium, then, can be used to produce nuclear weapons. According to Sigal, “When fully operational, the plant was assessed to have the capacity to reprocess spent fuel from all three North Korean reactors--yielding 30 bombs worth of plutonium a year.”³⁵ Detection of the constructions of the reactors together with the reprocessing plant and other evidence indicated that North Korea had presumably started a secret nuclear weapons program in late 1970s.³⁶

C. ANALYSIS: THE DETERRENCE OR THE SPIRAL MODEL

Although nuclear weapons were never used in the Korean War, the U.S. nuclear diplomacy at that time apparently had a significant impact on North Korea’s decision to search for nuclear power. According to Roger Dingman, nuclear weapons, as a diplomacy tool, were applied “...ranging from verbal mention of nuclear potential only; through deployment of nuclear-configured bombers and non-nuclear weapons components and indirect disclosure of their movement; to deployment of bombers and bombs along with fuller, but still indirect, revelation of their departure from the United States.”³⁷ The North Koreans later stressed that, “Eisenhower hatched 22 plots to use

³³ Mazar, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 36.

³⁴ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 250.

³⁵ Sigal, *Disarming the Stranger*, 22.

³⁶ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 250-251.

³⁷ Dingman, “Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War,” 89.

atomic weapons against the DPRK and other socialist countries.”³⁸ As another factor to increase North Korea’s insecurity, the U.S. adopted the massive retaliation nuclear strategy at that time, which favored severe nuclear punishment as a response to any significant Communist provocation, even a limited one.³⁹ Implied and direct nuclear threats during the Korean War and the massive retaliation strategy might have convinced North Koreans that the use of nuclear weapons by the United States was very possible.

The deployment of tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea constituted a significant source of insecurity for North Koreans. They claim that the United States started the nuclear issue by deploying the Honest John nuclear missiles in the latter half of the 1950s.⁴⁰ The United States increased North Korea’s level of threat perception by deploying several neutron bombs in the first half of the 1980s. Additionally South Korea started a nuclear program in the 1970s, which was called the Yusin regime, and, according to the North Koreans, obtained a capability of annually extracting enough plutonium for 23 to 28 nuclear bombs of 20 kilotons.⁴¹ The North Koreans perceived the nuclear threat posed by the U.S. nuclear weapons and South Korea’s nuclear capability as “a crucial issue related to the survival of the nation.”⁴²

In the face of the U.S. nuclear threats during and after the Korean War, North Koreans bitterly realized their weakness against nuclear weapons. Vulnerability of its own security was, therefore, the primary cause for North Korea to start its nuclear program. Given the U.S. nuclear threats during and after the Korean War, North Korea apparently sought a counterbalance and a credible deterrent to secure its regime.

North Korea's motives might have evolved overtime.⁴³ Mazarr argues that North Korea developed secondary motives. They wanted nuclear weapons to have an insurance against an eventual South Korean conventional superiority; to obtain diplomatic leverage;

³⁸ “Rodong Sinmun on U.S. Nuclear Strategy for Aggression,” Korean Central News Agency, 16 March 2002, available at <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>, / Past News, last accessed on 14 October 2003.

³⁹ Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 20.

⁴⁰ KCNA’s Detailed Report on Failure of Denuclearization, May 12, 2003, FBIS translated text, available at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/dprk051203.html>, accessed on September 14, 2003.

⁴¹ Cited in KCNA’s Detailed Report on Failure of Denuclearization.

⁴² KCNA’s Detailed Report on Failure of Denuclearization.

⁴³ Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 16-17.

to force the world to take notice of their concerns; to promote direct, bilateral talks with the United States; to promote scientific achievement and international recognition, thus bolstering the regime's legitimacy; and to reduce its dependence on China and Russia so as to increase its freedom of independent action.⁴⁴ However, their concern about the regime has always remained at the center of all motives. According to Mazarr, "First and most fundamentally, the North wanted a nuclear arsenal to deter U.S. nuclear use and to counterbalance the U.S. nuclear umbrella that protects the South."⁴⁵ The North Koreans considered their lack of nuclear capabilities to be a potentially fatal weakness in the face of the U.S. nuclear umbrella that protects the South.⁴⁶ The desire to protect the regime required North Korean leaders to search for a reliable security guarantee.

North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 and continued to pose a threat as an aggressive state after the war. However, its search for nuclear power was not an aggressive act; it was a reflex to counterbalance U.S. nuclear threats. If the United States had not implied the use of nuclear weapons during the Korean War and had not deployed nuclear weapons to South Korea, North Korean leaders probably would not have sought nuclear weapons. Instead, they would have continued to strengthen their conventional forces to implement their ambitious goal to reunite the Korean peninsula by force. Thus, although North Koreans had aggressive goals, the motives behind their search for nuclear weapons primarily stemmed from insecurity in the face of perceived U.S. nuclear threats towards their existence. Thus, the Spiral Model better explains North Korea's reasoning. U.S. efforts to secure its interests in the Korean peninsula caused a weak regime to seek a reliable security guarantee for survival. The threat coming from U.S. nuclear weapons, U.S. support to South Korea, South Korea's relative military superiority, and South Korea's own nuclear program in combination left North Koreans worried about their existence.

D. CONCLUSION

The roots of North Korea's search for nuclear power can be traced back to the Korean War. Appreciating the political value of nuclear weapons during the Korean War

⁴⁴ Ibid, 17-19.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 17.

⁴⁶ Ibid,17.

and seeing their weakness against U.S. tactical weapons deployed to South Korea, North Koreans wanted a credible deterrent and initiated the nuclear program to produce their nuclear weapons eventually. North Koreans headed for nuclear weapons from the very beginning. The initial motive for nuclear weapons emerged as a reaction to protect the regime against perceived U.S. threats. North Korea continuously considered nuclear weapons as a security guarantee for the survival of the regime and maintained its nuclear energy program in the face of developments supporting its threat perception.

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III. THE 1993-1994 CRISES

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the U.S.-North Korean interactions during the Clinton administration period focusing on the two crises in 1993 and 1994. It assesses North Korea's motives for causing nuclear crises and the Clinton administration's reasons for relying mostly on diplomacy during this period. The chapter shows how North Korea behaved when it felt threatened and how it responded when its concerns were addressed. Understanding North Korea's behavior and the Clinton administration's approach during the first two nuclear crises will help in the following chapter see if the Bush administration has legitimate grounds to complain about North Korea's unreliability and to pursue tougher policies during the third nuclear crisis.

North Korea signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985 and agreed to inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1992. When the IAEA detected evidence of a secret nuclear weapons program, North Korea encountered massive pressure for further inspections. Irritated by the IAEA inspections and angry with the reinstatement of joint U.S.-South Korean Team Spirit military exercises, North Korea declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT in March 1993. After negotiating with the United States, North Korea suspended its withdrawal; however, it avoided full cooperation with the IAEA, and raised tensions again in 1994 by removing more than half of the spent fuel from its five MWe reactor without the IAEA monitoring.

The Clinton administration suspected that North Korea could have more plutonium than it declared and worried that it might produce even more. Thus, the administration tried both diplomacy and coercion to discourage North Korea while displaying its readiness for military options. The United States came almost to the brink of a war with North Korea. Worried about the consequences of a preemptive strike, the Clinton administration decided to solve the crisis with diplomacy. Although this approach was heavily criticized domestically, particularly by Republicans, it relieved North

Korea's security concerns. Similar to the behavior of the insecure state illustrated in the Spiral model, North Korea responded positively to U.S. concessions addressing its concerns.

B. BACKGROUND

1. Resistance to Full Cooperation

Although North Korea had accepted IAEA inspections since 1977 on its small research reactor provided by the Soviet Union, it had resisted to acceding the NPT until 1985 since it had considered the treaty unfair.⁴⁷ After detecting evidence of North Korea's secret nuclear activities in the 1980s, the United States became increasingly concerned about its nuclear program and wanted to establish international pressure on North Korea to join the NPT. In this way, the United States assumed, North Korea's nuclear program would be easier to control. Upon North Korea's resistance, the United States urged the Soviet Union to convince North Korea to accede the NPT. At that time, North Korea was trying to obtain light water nuclear reactors (LWR) from the Soviet Union for its energy needs providing the Soviets with a good opportunity to persuade North Korea. On Soviet insistence, North Korea agreed to sign the treaty in 1985.⁴⁸

Although the NPT required the member states to sign a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 18 months, the North Koreans did not agree to sign the agreement for almost seven years after acceding the NPT. The agreement would grant the IAEA permission to conduct inspections at North Korea's nuclear facilities. North Korea's resistance increased suspicions about North Korea's secret nuclear activities. The North Koreans justified their behavior by claiming that U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea threaten them and argued that this was against the spirit of the NPT. Moreover, the United States and South Korea were conducting joint military exercises, named "Team Spirit," which were increasing North Korea's nervousness. With such justifications, North Korea delayed signing the safeguards agreement until 1992. In the meantime, the relations with the Soviet Union started to

⁴⁷ Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 40.

⁴⁸ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 254.

decline; the Cold War ended; the Soviet Union collapsed; and North Korea lost its hope to get the LWRs. Nevertheless, it maintained its NPT membership so as not to cause an international conflict.⁴⁹

The United States applied diplomatic pressure on North Korea to compel it to sign the safeguards agreement and to permit IAEA inspections, which were important for verifying intelligence about North Korea's nuclear activities and ambitions. However, North Korea signed the agreement only after the declaration of the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea and the cancellation of the 1992 Team Spirit exercise.

After North Korea signed the safeguards agreement in January 1992, a delegation led by the Director General of the IAEA went to North Korea in May 1992 and visited the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. During the visit, the IAEA officials realized that the U.S. assessment about the capability of North Korea's spent fuel reprocessing capability was exaggerated. The United States suspected that the huge building detected by its satellites could host facilities capable of producing a large amount of plutonium. The IAEA visit, however, revealed "the works inside the giant building as 'extremely primitive' and far from ready to produce the quantities of plutonium needed for a stockpile of atomic weapons."⁵⁰ On the other hand, during this visit and the following inspections, the IAEA experts noticed important discrepancies between the quantity of plutonium North Korea officially declared and the quantity it probably could have produced.

In 1989, 1990, and 1991, the five MWe reactor at Yongbyon was shut down for a total of 151 days during which North Korea was suspected of removing some spent fuel rods to reprocess them to extract plutonium.⁵¹ North Korea declared to the IAEA that it had about 90 grams of plutonium. However, after detailed analysis of waste samples

⁴⁹ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 255.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁵¹ Sigal, *Disarming the Stranger*, 22.

taken during the inspections in 1992, the IAEA concluded that the North Koreans could have more plutonium than they had declared.⁵²

The IAEA findings unleashed a series of events that led to a nuclear confrontation. In addition to the six inspections conducted between May 1992 and February 1993, the IAEA wanted to carry out further investigations to clarify the discrepancies; therefore, it demanded special inspections of two undeclared nuclear waste sites at Yongbyon. North Korea refused to allow the special inspections, claiming that the inconsistencies were explainable and that the facilities to be inspected were not nuclear related and were under military control. However, after seeing several satellite photographs presented by the CIA, the IAEA was convinced that North Korea was trying to hide evidence of its past plutonium production activities. The IAEA officials insisted on inspecting the two waste sites; but, despite several attempts including a resolution by the IAEA Board of Governors in February 1993,⁵³ North Korea did not allow further investigations. In the meantime the United States and South Korea resumed the Team Spirit exercises.

2. Intention to Withdraw from the NPT—1993 Crisis

Claiming that both the demand for special inspections and the reinstatement of the Team Spirit exercise were threats to their sovereignty, their socialist system, and their existence, North Koreans declared their decision “to withdraw unavoidably from NPT as a measure to defend [their] supreme interests” on March 12, 1993.⁵⁴ According to the NPT, the actual withdrawal would take place 90 days after the declaration of intention. Dismayed with North Korea’s declaration, the United States and South Korea quickly

⁵² According to the April 1993 report of the Director General of the IAEA, (available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf419.html>) North Korea declared that only one reprocessing campaign had been carried out. However, the results of the inspections indicated that North Korea should have conducted more than one reprocessing. The report stated, “In the absence of clarification of the inconsistencies, the Agency could not exclude the possibility that material from either the IRT Research Reactor or the five MWe Experimental Power Reactor had been reprocessed but not declared to the IAEA. In the light of this, the presence in the DPRK of additional plutonium -- grams or kilograms -- could not be precluded.”

⁵³ The Board of Governors of the IAEA adopted the resolution GOV/2636 (available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf419.html#annex3>) on 25 February 1993 urging North Korea to grant the IAEA access to additional information and two additional sites in order to resolve differences and to ensure verification of compliance with the NPT.

⁵⁴ Statement of the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Pyongyang, March 12, 1993, available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf419.html#annex7>.

assessed the possible consequences of North Korea's withdrawal and reviewed options to discourage North Korea. A preemptive strike was considered to be not only incapable of destroying all North Korea's plutonium but also a cause of a general war.⁵⁵ In the meantime the IAEA decided in April 1993 to report North Korea's non-compliance with its obligations and the IAEA's inability to verify that there was no diversion of nuclear materials to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.⁵⁶ Having received the IAEA's report and stimulated by the United States,⁵⁷ the UN Security Council passed a resolution in May 1993 calling upon North Korea "to reconsider its announcement" to withdraw from the NPT and "to reaffirm its commitment to the treaty," and encouraging all Member States "to facilitate a solution."⁵⁸

Worried about the consequences of military options and encouraged by the UN resolution, the Clinton administration decided to try to solve the problem with diplomacy by initiating negotiations with North Korea. The two states conducted governmental-level talks in New York in June 1993 and issued a joint statement expressing their agreement to principles of

...assurances against the threat and use of force, including nuclear weapons; peace and security in a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, including impartial application of full scope safeguards, mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs; and support for the peaceful reunification of Korea.⁵⁹

Thus, just one day before the 90-day deadline for the official withdrawal from the NPT, North Korea declared its unilateral decision to suspend its withdrawal as long as it deemed necessary.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 282.

⁵⁶ Resolution (GOV/2645) adopted by the Board of Governors of the IAEA on 1 April 1993.

⁵⁷ Robert Galluci, CSIS Conference: Nuclear Confrontation with North Korea: Lessons of the 1994 Crisis for Today, March 20, 2003, Seoul, Korea.

⁵⁸ Resolution 825 adopted by the UN Security Council on 11 May 1993.

⁵⁹ Joint Statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America, New York, June 11, 1993.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

3. Attempt for More Plutonium—1994 Crisis

The North Koreans later stated that with their decision to suspend their withdrawal from the NPT, they obtained “a unique status” regarding their relations with the NPT.⁶¹ Since the legal validity of the safeguard agreements had been virtually suspended from June 12, 1993, the North Koreans said, they no longer had to allow full scale inspections as long as no special agreement was reached between the IAEA and North Korea.⁶² On North Korea’s declaration of its intention to negotiate IAEA inspection terms after the second round of talks with the United States in July 1993, the IAEA made a new agreement with North Korea in February 1994. Thus, North Korea accepted inspections at its seven declared sites with the exception of the two waste sites. However, it restricted the activities of the inspection team arguing that the inspection should not be considered a regular one, but an inspection “aimed exclusively to maintain the continuity of safeguards, proper for the unique status of the North Korea.”⁶³

After the IAEA reported to the UN Security Council that the Agency was still “unable to draw conclusions as to whether there has been either diversion of nuclear material or reprocessing or other operations,” the Security Council urged North Korea to allow the IAEA inspections that had been agreed upon on 15 February 1994.⁶⁴ North Korea accused the IAEA of lacking impartiality and being manipulated by the United States; however, it accepted the inspections that it had rejected before. The IAEA conducted these inspections and while analyzing the results, North Korea declared its intention to refuel its five MWe Reactor. The IAEA wanted to examine a number of fuel rods during the removal of spent fuel, but North Korea refused the request and started to discharge the reactor without the agreement of IAEA, causing a nuclear crisis again. By not allowing the IAEA to monitor the discharge and to take samples from the spent fuel, North Korea prevented an important opportunity to learn if any spent fuel had been

⁶¹ KCNA, “Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal,” FBIS Translated Text, January 22, 2003.

⁶² KCNA, “Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal.”

⁶³ Statement by a spokesman for the General Department of Atomic Energy of North Korea, 18 March 1994, Pyongyang, available at <http://fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf437.html>.

⁶⁴ UN Security Council Presidential Statement, March 31, 1994.

previously taken out for possible reprocessing and plutonium separation.⁶⁵ Additionally, North Korea could extract more plutonium from the 8,000 spent fuel rods removed during the discharge.

The Clinton administration prepared to submit a proposal to the United Nations Security Council for applying economic sanctions against North Korea and contemplated a military buildup. The United States came almost to the brink of a war with North Korea. William Perry, the Defense Secretary of the Clinton administration, later revealed that “We were within a day of making major additions to our troop deployments to Korea, and we were about to undertake an evacuation of American civilians from Korea.”⁶⁶ Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was also convinced that if the United States had been successful in imposing an embargo against North Korea, North Korea would have risked a war.⁶⁷ Thus, he decided to accept Kim Il Sung’s invitation to North Korea in July 1994. He was not officially representing the United States, and the Clinton administration was not very happy with this visit. However, Carter’s visit revealed North Korea’s willingness to cooperate.

While President Clinton was discussing the military options and its possible consequences with his top defense advisors, Carter called from North Korea and said that North Koreans agreed to negotiate a freeze of their nuclear activities. Some observers argue that North Korea was expecting support from China, and when China informed North Korea that it would not veto economic sanctions, North Korea decided to change its course and agreed to a freeze of its nuclear activities.⁶⁸ Regardless of this, North Korea declared its willingness to freeze its nuclear program during former President Jimmy Carter’s visit to North Korea in July 1994. Worried about North Korea’s nuclear program, the Clinton administration welcomed the outcome of Carter’s visit since it provided an opportunity to solve the problem without resorting to military options. As

⁶⁵ Brief Selective Chronology Regarding Safeguards in DPRK, IAEA, 10 June 1994, available at <http://fas.org/news/un/dprk/iaea-chron.htm>.

⁶⁶ “Washington was on brink of war with North Korea 5 years ago-Pentagon had predicted up to 1 million deaths, CNN, October 4, 1999, available at <http://www.cnn.com/US/9910/04/korea.brink/>

⁶⁷ Jimmy Carter, Interview by Martin Smith for *Kim’s Nuclear Gamble*, Frontline, PBS, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wbbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/carter.html>.

⁶⁸ Larry A. Niksch, North Korea’s Nuclear Program, CRS Issue Brief for Congress, updated August 27, 2003.

Galluci stated, the administration “wanted to talk to them, get them back into the NPT, get them to abide by the North-South Declaration on Denuclearization, and to accept special inspections by the IAEA.”⁶⁹ Thus, the administration agreed to drop its sanctions proposal and initiated high-level negotiations with North Korea.

One month after Carter’s visit, the founder of North Korea, Kim Sung Il, died and his son, Kim Jung Il, took over as the new leader. He maintained his father’s recent cooperative approach, and, after a number of negotiations, the United States and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework on October 21, 1994 in Geneva. With the Agreed Framework, North Korea agreed to freezing and ultimately dismantling its existing nuclear program in return for two new light-water reactors and shipments of heavy fuel oil (50,000 tons in 1995 and 500,000 tons annually beginning in 1996) to meet its energy needs until the first new reactor becomes operational. The agreement also called for improved diplomatic relations and economic ties, and for U.S. assurances that it would not use nuclear weapons against North Korea.

To advance the implementation of the Agreed Framework, an international consortium, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), was created in 1995. However, the speed of implementation of the Agreed Framework was slower than expected. Since the Clinton administration’s cooperation with North Korea was heavily criticized domestically, particularly by Republicans, as rewarding North Korea’s bad behavior, the Clinton administration encountered difficulties in convincing the Congress to support the agreement. Moreover, the Congress was suspicious of North Korea’s nuclear activities and the heavy fuel oil shipments were costly. As a result, the administration faced several policy problems in convincing the Congress to approve the money needed to implement the Agreed Framework. There were also some rumors that North Korea was not using the oil for only energy purposes. Claiming that North Korea was violating the Agreed Framework, the United States slowed its efforts to complete the

⁶⁹ Robert Galluci, the Clinton administration’s chief negotiator during the nuclear crisis of 1994, Interview by Martin Smith for *Kim’s Nuclear Gamble*, Frontline, PBS, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wbbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/acarter.html>.

construction of the two promised power plants. The slow implementation provided North Korea with sufficient pretexts to complain about U.S. reluctance to fulfill its commitments.

C. ANALYSIS: THE DETERRENCE OR THE SPIRAL MODEL

1. North Korea's Motive to Join the NPT

While explaining their agreement to the NPT, North Koreans say that they had examined other options, such as hydroelectric and thermoelectric energy production capabilities, to meet their energy needs before resorting to nuclear reactors as an energy source; nonetheless, these options were incapable of meeting their increasing energy demands.⁷⁰ Nuclear energy was the best option for their energy needs, and for this reason they wanted to purchase LWRs from Western countries, including Canada, Sweden, and France. However, North Koreans claim, this was obstructed by the U.S. Coordinating Committee for Export Control to Communist Areas (COCOM). Thus, they turned to the Soviet Union for LWRs although Soviet technology was not well developed. The Soviet Union said that if North Korea wanted to get nuclear-related technologies, they must enter the NPT and sign safeguard agreements with the IAEA. In addition to the conditional Soviet offer, North Koreans say that the NPT's negative security assurances caught their attention, and they joined the treaty “with the purpose to realize international cooperation in the nuclear power industry sector, remove nuclear threats toward them, and make the Korean peninsula a non-nuclear zone,”⁷¹ and to secure the country's sovereignty.⁷² From this perspective, North Korea resembles the insecure state illustrated in the spiral model, which tries to survive in the face of threats against its existence.

North Korea's agreement to the NPT membership, however, is not a strong piece of evidence to believe that North Korea was sincere with its naïve concerns. Although the NPT required member states sign a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, North Korea did not sign the agreement until 1992. Moreover, despite its agreement later, North Korea appeared to be blocking the inspections. The North Koreans, as Oberdorfer argued, might

⁷⁰ KCNA, “Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal.”

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² KCNA's “Detailed Report on Failure of Denuclearization.”

not have precisely understood the consequences of adherence to the treaty,⁷³ or they might have calculated that they could delay the IAEA inspections for a time sufficient to secretly produce enough plutonium for nuclear weapons. Additionally, they might have thought that agreeing to the agreement would give them an opportunity to suspend the agreement in the future for some reasons and then to offer resuming the agreement in exchange for further benefits. According to the United States, North Korea had something to hide. If these assumptions were correct North Korea would be an aggressor state, which wants to take advantage of the weaknesses of the other side as described in the deterrence model. According to the North Koreans, however, they delayed the inspections because their security-related expectations from the NPT had not been addressed yet. Additionally, the North Koreans claimed that they objected to the inspections after signing the agreement because the inspections turned out to be threatening North Korea's sovereignty.

On balance, the evidence suggest that the North Koreans delayed the signing of the safeguards agreement because they believed that the United States continued to threaten them, which was a violation of legal obligations under the NPT. The NPT requires the nuclear weapons states guarantee that nuclear weapons will not be used against other members. However, the United States, the North Koreans argued, was still threatening them by deploying tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea on a massive scale. In addition to this, the United States and South Korea were conducting the Team Spirit exercises.⁷⁴ The North Koreans said that they had signed the NPT on the assumption that the U.S. nuclear threat would be removed.⁷⁵ However, the North Koreans claimed that the United States increased nuclear threats against them after they entered the treaty. As a result, North Korea did not sign the safeguard agreements.⁷⁶

The North Koreans, indeed, agreed to the safeguards agreements when their concerns were addressed. Beginning with the Carter administration, the number of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea was gradually reduced. Finally in September

⁷³ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 254.

⁷⁴ KCNA, "Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal."

⁷⁵ Cited in Mazar's *North Korea and the Bomb*, 56.

⁷⁶ KCNA, "Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal."

1991, the United States unilaterally announced the withdrawal of all tactical nuclear weapons deployed abroad, including those in South Korea. This withdrawal was part of the overall change in the U.S. nuclear strategy "...calculated to bring reciprocal steps from Moscow."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it had a positive impact on the Korean peninsula. Following this unilateral move of the United States, North and South Korea concluded the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in January 1992, under which they agreed not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons, or to possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities.⁷⁸ Additionally, South Korea and the United States decided to cancel the 1992 joint Team Spirit exercise. North Korea regarded these developments as positive responses to its demands based on its security concerns and agreed to sign the safeguards agreement with the IAEA in January 1992.

North Korea appears to have two expectations from its membership in the NPT and from its agreement to the IAEA safeguards: to easily obtain nuclear energy related materials, and to be safer against U.S. nuclear threats. States do not resort to nuclear weapons unless they have strong incentives, and states do not give up their capability unless their concerns are addressed satisfactorily. North Korea's entrance into the NPT, despite its resistance for a while, suggests that the conditional nuclear energy offer from the Soviet Union and the negative security assurances provided by the NPT were sufficient to address its concerns. North Korea's expectations from its membership to NPT do not look like greedy demands. Moreover, if North Korea had had aggressive motives for producing nuclear weapons, it would have preferred to stay out of the non-proliferation regime to avoid being inspected and restricted internationally. Therefore, the spiral model better explains North Korea's agreement to the NPT. Its behavior was mostly insecurity driven actions, however, outsiders perceived North Korea's behavior as greediness because of general distrust against North Korea and because of its suspicious moves.

⁷⁷ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 259.

⁷⁸ The Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, January 20, 1992.

2. North Korea's Reasons to Resist International Control

When IAEA requested further investigation in 1993, North Koreans informed the IAEA that North Korea declared a state of semi war because of the reinstatement of the US-South Korea Team Spirit military exercise for 1993. Under such circumstances, the North Koreans argued, they "...could not but reserve consideration of the receipt of the inspection team concerning the implementation of the unjust resolution of the February Board meeting."⁷⁹ North Korea, moreover, argued that the IAEA's demand for special inspections was a U.S. manipulation. The United States and some circles in the IAEA, North Korea claimed, "...abused the inspections...as a way to spy on [their] interior and crush [their] socialist system."⁸⁰ According to North Koreans, although forbidden by the safeguards agreement of 1992,⁸¹ some IAEA Secretariat circles informed the United States about the inspection results, "...and the United States came forward demanding special inspections of [North Korea's] military facilities with the excuse of some inconsistencies or other, which the United States created."⁸² Accepting IAEA inspections based on U.S. manipulations meant providing the United States, "the counterpart of [their] war," with the opportunity to conduct reconnaissance in North Korea's military bases, and it was impossible "...under the special circumstances in which the country was divided and [North Koreans] were constantly under the U.S. nuclear threat."⁸³

⁷⁹ The letter from the Minister for Atomic Energy of North Korea to the Director General of the IAEA, March 10, 1993, available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf419.html#annex5>.

⁸⁰ KCNA, "Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal."

⁸¹ The Agreement of 30 January 1992 between North Korea and IAEA for the Application of Safeguards is available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf403.html>

Article 5 of the 1992 agreement reads:

(a) The Agency shall take every precaution to protect commercial and industrial secrets and other confidential information coming to its knowledge in the implementation of this Agreement.

(b) (i) The Agency shall not publish or communicate to any State, organization or person any information obtained by it in connection with the implementation of this Agreement, except that specific information relating to the implementation thereof may be given to the Board of Governors of the Agency (hereinafter referred to as "the Board") and to such Agency staff members as require such knowledge by reason of their official duties in connection with safeguards, but only to the extent necessary for the Agency to fulfil its responsibilities in implementing this Agreement.

(ii) Summarized information on nuclear material subject to safeguards under this Agreement may be published upon decision of the Board if the States directly concerned agree thereto.

⁸² KCNA, "Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal."

⁸³ Ibid.

The North Korean government stated that demanding a special inspection of their military sites unrelated to nuclear activities was "...a violation on the sovereignty of the DPRK, an interference in its internal affairs and a hostile act aimed at stifling [their] socialism."⁸⁴ The North Koreans claimed that accepting the demand for the special inspections would be the first step in further exposing all their military installations. Indeed, as David Albright argued, inspections of the two waste sites would merely show whether North Korea had more plutonium. The exact amount of plutonium, however, could not be reliably determined with those inspections; therefore, further investigations would be required to verify the total plutonium North Korea has separated.⁸⁵

The North Koreans believed the demand for special inspections was a U.S. scenario written in advance to realize U.S. goals one by one. By implementing the scenario, the United States would learn more about North Korea's military capability. If North Korea resisted, the United States would take the matter to the United Nations in order to impose collective sanctions on North Korea.⁸⁶ North Korea had joined the NPT to remove the U.S. nuclear threats. However, the reinstatement of the Team Spirit exercises, North Koreans argued, violated the spirit of the NPT jeopardizing the sovereignty and security of North Korea. Under such circumstances North Korea had to withdraw from the NPT "...as a measure to defend its supreme interests."⁸⁷ Thus, North Korea declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT in March 1993.

The United States, on the other hand, insisted that North Korea was hiding something significant and this was the obvious explanation for its behavior. During a Senate hearing, James Woolsey, the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the Clinton administration said, "Of greatest concern is the real possibility that North Korea has already manufactured enough fissile material for at least one nuclear weapon and is hiding this from the IAEA."⁸⁸ According to the Clinton administration

⁸⁴ Statement of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Pyongyang, 12 March 1993, available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/dprk/inf419.html#annex7>.

⁸⁵ David Albright, "North Korea Drops Out," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 1993, available at <http://www.bullatomsci.org/issues/1993/may93/may93reports.html>

⁸⁶ Statement of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 12 March 1993.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ James Woolsey, Director Central Intelligence Agency, Hearing of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, February 24, 1993, available at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

North Korea had built its reactors at Yongbyon not for energy production but for plutonium production. If the North Koreans had allowed the special inspections, this would have substantially restricted their ability to develop nuclear weapons.⁸⁹ That was the reason for North Korea's resistance to inspections. As some experts argued, North Korea might have underestimated the technical capability of the IAEA, or hoped a possible revelation of its past nuclear activities would be downplayed.⁹⁰ However, for other observers, like Leon V. Sigal, if North Korea had wanted to produce nuclear weapons it could have shut down its reactor at any time and produce enough plutonium to make five or six nuclear weapons.⁹¹ On the contrary, North Korea agreed to the safeguards agreement and allowed the IAEA inspections. As Sigal stated, "For a country supposedly hell-bent on bomb-making, its restraint was difficult to explain."⁹²

North Korea's ambition to hide its past nuclear activities supports, to some extent, the possibility that North Korea wanted nuclear weapons in any case independent from its threat perception. From this perspective, its resistance to international control on its nuclear program resembles the behaviors of the greedy state illustrated in the deterrence model. North Korea appeared to be resisting to the point it understood that no further excuse would be accepted by the international community and by the United States. On the other hand, North Korea's resistance to special IAEA inspections and its decision to withdraw from the NPT can be justified by two reasons: (1) North Korea was really embarrassed by the IAEA's insistence for special inspections believing that it was an unjust U.S. manipulation ignoring its sovereignty. That is, North Korea wanted to be treated as a sovereign member. (2) Combined with the reinstatement of the Joint Spirit exercises, IAEA insistence provided the North Koreans with sufficient reasons to believe that the NPT membership was a disappointment since it was not strengthening their security, instead it was threatening their regime. Despite some evidence that supports the deterrence model, these reasons sound convincing and suggest that North Korea's

⁸⁹ Woolsey, Hearing of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, February 24, 1993.

⁹⁰ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 270-271; Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb*, 63.

⁹¹ Leon V. Sigal, "Jimmy Carter Makes a Deal," *The Bulletin of Atomic Science*, January/February 1998, Vol. 54, No. 1.

⁹² Sigal, "Jimmy Carter Makes a Deal."

behavior can be better explained by the spiral model. North Korea was concerned about the survival of its regime and resisted to the point it thought there would be less threat against the regime.

3. The Clinton Administration's Reasons to Prefer Diplomacy

In 1993, the United States reviewed the military options but decided to rely on diplomacy. First, it tried to obtain international support and stimulated the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution. Then, it initiated bilateral talks with North Korea. According to Robert Galluci, the Clinton administration's chief negotiator at that time, bilateral talks with North Korea were a concession and the Clinton administration "knowingly made that concession, because they thought it was the right thing to do."⁹³ In response to this concession, North Korea agreed to suspend its withdrawal from the NPT. It also agreed to quit reprocessing spent fuel and to continue accepting inspections. In 1994, after North Korea discharged spent fuel in a way not approved by the United States and the IAEA, the Clinton administration stopped negotiating. According to Galluci, the United States "only went back to the table after [the administration] raised the bar a bit and told North Korea they could also no longer produce more plutonium in their reactors."⁹⁴ That is, North Korea had to agree not to operate its nuclear reactor in addition to its former concessions.

The Clinton administration could have conducted a military operation; however, they believed that the outcome could have been "a lot more costly even than constructing light water reactors and delivering heavy fuel oil."⁹⁵ The United States had the capability to conduct a surgical operation to the facilities at Yongbyon with conventional high precision munitions without causing an environmental problem.⁹⁶ However, nobody could guarantee that all the plutonium extracted would be at Yongbyon facilities. Moreover, given North Korea's million man army deployed very close to the DMZ, and

⁹³ Robert Galluci, CSIS Conference: Nuclear Confrontation with North Korea: Lessons of the 1994 Crisis for Today, March 20, 2003, Seoul, Korea.

⁹⁴ Galluci, CSIS Conference: Nuclear Confrontation with North Korea, March 20, 2003.

⁹⁵ Galluci, CSIS Conference: Nuclear Confrontation with North Korea, March 20, 2003.

⁹⁶ Ashton Carter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 1993-1996, Interview by Martin Smith for *Kim's Nuclear Gamble*, Frontline, PBS, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wbbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/acarter.html>.

its thousands of artillery tubes and several SCUD missiles aimed at Seoul, the officials of the Clinton administration assessed that the consequences of a U.S. preemptive strike might be a deadly North Korean attack on South Korea with tens of thousands of deaths on both sides.⁹⁷

The United States and South Korea had jointly devised a contingency plan called Op Plan 5027 against North Korea's attacks, and, according to Ashton Carter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy from 1993-1996, the United States and South Korea could destroy North Korea's forces within just a few weeks and destroy its regime. However, Carter said, the officials of the Clinton administration could not assure anybody, including the President, that North Korea would not act irrationally and would not risk a war to respond a U.S. preemptive strike.⁹⁸ As a result, the Clinton administration mostly relied on diplomacy.

The Clinton administration's policies in this period were actually a tit-for-tat strategy. The United States made conditional concessions which required important reciprocal movements from the North Korean side. Given that North Korea had some reasonable excuses to resist international control on its nuclear program and that it positively responded to the Clinton administration's tit-for-tat strategy, it is not fair to claim that North Korea increased tensions to obtain further concessions. Therefore, North Korea does not exactly resemble the aggressor state illustrated in the deterrence model. North Korea mostly behaved like the insecure state in the spiral model. It reciprocated to U.S. concessions that addressed its security concerns by agreeing to further compromises.

One can think that North Korea's reciprocal moves might also be a result of its perception about U.S. resolve to strike. However, given the Clinton administration's concerns about the consequence of a military operation, North Korea must have made it clear that it was ready to retaliate, not to retreat. If North Korea had been an aggressor eager to increase its interests, it would have acted less determinedly and retreated in the face of U.S. military buildup in the region, as suggested in the deterrence model. Given its resolve to retaliate, claiming that North Korea was a greedy state does not sound

⁹⁷ Carter, Interview by Martin Smith.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

conceivable. But, it is also possible that the Clinton administration misinterpreted North Korea's bluffing as resolve. The U.S. assessment about North Korea's readiness to retaliate might have been a misperception. Therefore, it is still possible to believe that North Korea decided to cooperate in the face of U.S. resolve. However, North Korea's main concern was the survival of its existence. Additionally it agreed to more concessions in exchange for U.S. concessions. Therefore, concluding that the spiral model better explains the interactions between the Clinton administration and North Korea looks more reasonable.

D. CONCLUSION

The reason for the North Korean crisis in 1993 and 1994 was the U.S. suspicion that North Korea might have separated more plutonium than they had declared to the IAEA, and that it could increase the amount of its plutonium by reprocessing the spent fuel that it removed from the five-MWe reactor. The Clinton administration calculated that North Korea might have produced enough plutonium for one or two nuclear weapons. The administration believed that if they could not prevent North Korea from producing nuclear weapons, it would weaken the deterrence-based stability on the Korean peninsula and make war more likely.⁹⁹

North Korea justified its struggle with the IAEA by pointing out the threat posed by the United States and so-called unjust decisions and impartial behaviors of the IAEA. It apparently maintained a desire for nuclear weapons as a hedge against the threats it perceived. North Korea seemed to be reciprocating to cooperative approaches; however, it also tried to circumvent its obligations. North Korea's resistance to IAEA inspections and its efforts to hide its past nuclear activities suggested that it was an aggressor. Its desire to maximize its gains whenever it was possible made North Korea seem greedy. However, its persistence to maintain a nuclear weapons production capability still appeared to be primarily an insecurity driven reaction. As a matter of fact, when the Clinton administration's cooperative approaches relieved North Korea's security concerns, North Korea positively responded to U.S. concessions, as suggested in the

⁹⁹ William Perry, Interview by Martin Smith for *Kim's Nuclear Gamble*, Frontline, PBS, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wbbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/acarter.html>.

spiral model. As a result the Agreed Framework was signed between the two states preventing North Korea from producing more plutonium.

The Agreed Framework was not sufficient to address to all U.S. concerns about North Korea, however it was the optimum solution for that time. Although criticized as appeasement, the Agreement Framework was a success. As some expert stated, if the Clinton administration did not freeze North Korea's plutonium based nuclear program, North Korea would today have enough plutonium for at least 30 nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁰ According to U.S. intelligence disclosures in 2002, North Korea apparently tried to obtain uranium enrichment technology in the late 1990s circumventing the Agreed Framework. Nevertheless, North Korea's attempt to try a second track to produce nuclear weapons does not necessarily indicate the absolute failure of cooperative approaches. At least, the Clinton administration's approach was successful in freezing North Korea's plutonium production capability and in avoiding an imminent war. Moreover, as the following chapter will discuss, neither North Korea's alleged violation in the late 1990s nor its attempt to resume its nuclear program after October 2002 was a result of the failure of cooperative policies. On the contrary, North Korea's behavior appeared to be either a reaction to unsatisfactory execution of cooperative policies or a response to coercive policies.

¹⁰⁰Victor D Cha and David C Kang, *The Korea Crisis*, *Foreign Policy*, Washington; May/June 2003.

IV. THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND NORTH KOREA

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the confrontation between the United States and North Korea after the George W. Bush administration took office in 2001. It focuses on the crisis that started in October 2002 with the U.S. announcement of North Korea's admittance of its clandestine uranium enrichment program. The chapter also examines the motives of North Korea to withdraw from the NPT in January 2003 and to resume its nuclear program that had been frozen since 1994. It considers the reasons for the Bush administration to pursue an uncooperative policy towards North Korea when compared to the Clinton administration's policies. The chapter analyzes the correlations between North Korea's recent behavior and the Bush administration's policies to see whether North Koreans are provoked by the U.S. policies and the preemption concept in the new U.S. National Security Strategy, or they are trying to leverage U.S. concerns about their nuclear weapons program to achieve some political and economic objectives, or some combination of both.

The findings of the chapter suggest that the North Koreans, on the one hand, might have decided to initiate a secret uranium enrichment program long before the Bush administration came to power mostly because of their dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Agreed Framework and their distrust to the continuity of the cooperative policies of the United States. On the other hand, the reason for the North Koreans to resume their plutonium-based nuclear weapons program, at the end of 2002, seems to be the shift in U.S. policies from bilateral cooperation to multilateral coercion after the Bush administration came into power.

B. BACKGROUND

1. The Bush Administration Policies Towards North Korea

Although the Bush administration announced, when they took office, that they would maintain the Clinton administration's approach towards North Korea, their policies have turned out to be remarkably different over time. President Bush's remarks during a press briefing at the White House with the South Korean President on March 7, 2001, signaled the shift from the Clinton administration's policies regarding North Korea. In his responses to questions about North Korea, President Bush cited his skepticism

about the North Korean leader, Kim Jung Il, and said that the United States was not certain whether or not North Korea was adhering to existing agreements with the United States.¹⁰¹

Although President Bush mentioned U.S. interest in establishing a dialogue with North Korea, his remarks mainly stressed the unwillingness to resume talks with North Korea that were initiated during the Clinton period. Nevertheless, the Bush administration decided to resume the talks after a comprehensive review of the policies towards North Korea. In June 2001, President Bush announced that he had directed his national security team to undertake serious discussions with North Korea on a broad agenda. The aim of this comprehensive approach was to offer North Korea the opportunity to demonstrate the seriousness of its desire for improved relations. If North Korea accepted this offer, President Bush said, the United States would expand its efforts to help the North Korean people, ease sanctions, and take other political steps.¹⁰² On this presidential guidance, officials from both sides met to arrange bilateral talks.

While preparations for bilateral talks were ongoing, President Bush again indicated that his administration's policies would be very different towards North Korea. In his well-known State of the Union address in January 2002, he condemned North Korean leadership for arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction while starving its citizens. Moreover, he identified North Korea, along with Iraq and Iran, as part of an *axis of evil*, and accused it of arming to threaten the peace of the world. Bush said, "the United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons."¹⁰³ With this blunt accusation and threat, North Koreans should have understood that the United States policies would not be as cooperative as in the Clinton period.

¹⁰¹ George W. Bush, President, *Remarks by President Bush and President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea*, The White House, March 7, 2002, the full text of the remarks is available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/stories/01030762.htm>.

¹⁰² George W. Bush, President, *Bush: 'Broad agenda' for N Korea talks*, CNN.com/U.S., June 6, 2001, the full text of Bush's statement is available at <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/06/06/bush.nkorea/index.html>.

¹⁰³ George W. Bush, President, *The President's State of the Union Address of 2002*, The United States Capitol Washington, D.C., available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

2. North Korea's Perceptions

Observing the different approach of the Bush administration from the outset, North Korean leaders had already decided that the new administration's approach was aiming "to isolate and stifle North Korea...to torpedo the dialogue between the North and the South...and to put the brake on the movement of the Korean nation for reunification."¹⁰⁴ President Bush's remarks, the North Koreans said, raised the question: "...why did the present U.S. administration rule out even the possibility of seeking a negotiated settlement of the nuclear and missile issues created in the period of the preceding administration."¹⁰⁵ They argued that the Bush administration's "hardliner stand" and "policy of strength" was the continuation of the previous efforts of the United States to block peace and reunification of Korea.¹⁰⁶

The North Koreans seemed to perceive President Bush's axis of evil speech as an open disclosure of U.S. intentions. In their opinion, rhetoric about resuming the bilateral talks was proved not credible by Bush's remarks while propositions for negotiation and dialog were masks to hide the real aims of the United States. The United States, according to the North Koreans, was pushing the situation to the brink of war. A spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry described President Bush's axis of evil speech as "little short of declaring a war."¹⁰⁷ However, the North Koreans were "fully prepared for both dialogue and war" and determined "to take thousand-fold revenge on aggressors."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, they stated, "The option to 'strike', impudently advocated by the U.S., [was] not its monopoly."¹⁰⁹ The United States, the North Koreans said, should abandon the aggressive and hostile policy towards the North Korea and honestly implement the Agreed Framework of 1994.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ KCNA, *U.S. hostile policy toward DPRK under fire*, March 15, 2001, available at <http://kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>

¹⁰⁵ KCNA, *Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry slams Bush's accusations*, January 31, 2002, available at <http://kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>

¹⁰⁶ KCNA, *Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry slams Bush's accusations*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ KCNA, *U.S. hostile policy toward DPRK under fire*.

¹⁰⁹ KCNA, *Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry slams Bush's accusation*.

¹¹⁰ KCNA, *U.S. hostile policy toward DPRK under fire*.

3. North Korea's Alleged Violation

Despite the mutual provocative remarks and movements, the Bush administration maintained its decision to resume the talks. After North Korea announced that it would indefinitely extend its moratorium on testing long-range missiles on September 17, 2002, the Bush administration said that it would send an interagency delegation to North Korea.¹¹¹ Subsequently, an interagency delegation led by James Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian-Pacific Affairs, traveled to Pyongyang and met with North Korean officials on October 3-5, 2002. During the talks, U.S. delegation “advised the North Koreans that [the United States] had recently acquired information that indicates that North Korea has a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of the Agreed Framework and other agreements.”¹¹²

The Bush administration had acquired this information in the summer of 2002. The CIA, according to Seymour M. Hersh, had informed President Bush and his top advisors in June 2002 that North Korea started to enrich significant quantities of uranium in 2001 with the help of Pakistan, which it had received since 1997.¹¹³ Even before the CIA report, the Bush administration suspected North Korea of cheating and accused North Korea of violating the relevant treaties. Based on the same suspicion, some congress members had urged the administration to suspend the U.S. commitments in the Agreed Framework. However, the Bush administration was not sure whether to confront the North Koreans or maintain silence.¹¹⁴ Apparently, the administration did not want another crisis with North Korea while worldwide discussions about a military operation

¹¹¹ Paul Kerr, North Korea Extends Missile-Test Moratorium; U.S. to Send Kelly, Arms Control Today, October 2002, available at http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_10/nkoreaoct02.asp.

North Korea tested a Taepo Dong-1 missile over Japan in August 1998 which increased the tensions in the region. Later, North Korea declared that it would stop testing long-range missiles in September 1999, and said that it would maintain its decision as long as the dialogue with the United States continued. When Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State of the Clinton administration met with Kim Jong Il in North Korea in October 2000, Kim promised not to conduct further tests. As part of the North Korea-Japan Pyongyang Declaration signed during a summit between Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il on September 17, 2002, North Korea expressed its will to extend its moratorium on missile tests beyond 2003. (Derived from Paul Kerr's article.)

¹¹² Richard Boucher, Spokesman, *Statement on North Korea's Nuclear Program*, U.S. Department of State, October 16, 2002, available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/02101701.htm>.

¹¹³ Seymour M. Hersh, “The Cold Test: What the Administration knew about Pakistan and the North Korean nuclear program,” *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2003.

¹¹⁴ Hersh, “The Cold Test: What the Administration knew about Pakistan and the North Korean nuclear program.”

against Iraq were ongoing. “The CIA report,” according to Hersh, “had predicted that North Korea, if confronted with the evidence, would not risk an open break with the 1994 agreement and would do nothing to violate the NPT.”¹¹⁵ The CIA assessment about North Korea’s reaction seemed to have convinced the Bush administration that openly talking to North Koreans would not cause another crisis, which proved incorrect after the October 2002 talks. On October 16, 2002, the United States officially announced that North Koreans admitted during the talks that they had a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.¹¹⁶ Later, during a press briefing in South Korea, Assistant Secretary Kelly said,

I told the North that they must immediately and visibly dismantle this covert nuclear weapons program. After initial denials, North Korean officials flatly acknowledged that they have such a program and declared that they considered the Agreed Framework to be ‘nullified.’ The North Korean side attempted to blame this situation on recent U.S. policy, but I pointed out that this was inconsistent with information we had that their uranium enrichment program is already several years old.¹¹⁷

According to James Kelly, North Koreans had admitted the existence of their secret uranium enrichment; however, North Koreans repeatedly denied that they admitted the covert program during the October 2002 talks. For example, in August 2003, North Korea's vice minister of foreign affairs said,

Kelly, who came to the DPRK as a special envoy of President Bush in October 2002, failing to present any specific ‘evidence,’ groundlessly pulled us up, using coercive words and rudely behaving, ignoring the oriental custom. He claimed that we have secretly pushed forward an enriched uranium programme in breach of the Agreed Framework. In this regard we made it clear that we have no secret nuclear programme but we are entitled to have weapons more powerful than those based on enriched uranium. We have powerful weapons, including single-hearted unity.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Richard Boucher, Spokesman, *Statement on North Korea’s Nuclear Program*, U.S. Department of State, October 16, 2002, available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/02101701.htm>.

¹¹⁷ James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Briefing in Seoul, South Korea, October 19, 2002, available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/easec/af10.htm>

After Kelly's Pyongyang visit, the U.S. misled the public opinion, saying that we admitted to the secret nuclear programme...¹¹⁸

Although denied by the North Koreans, the Bush administration insisted that North Korea had been cheating. On this claim, the administration decided to change its approach towards North Korea. The Bush administration focused on consultations with friends and allies “to bring maximum international pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions.”¹¹⁹ Following this decision, a series of events unfolded that amounted to a nuclear crisis between the United States and North Korea.

4. The Third Nuclear Crisis

After announcing North Korea's alleged admittance of its clandestine nuclear program, the United States persuaded the other members of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) to suspend the oil shipments to North Korea. On November 14, 2002, KEDO announced, “Heavy fuel oil deliveries will be suspended beginning with the December shipment. Future shipments will depend on North Korea's concrete and credible actions to dismantle completely its highly enriched uranium program. In this light, other KEDO activities with North Korea will be reviewed.”¹²⁰

North Korea responded to the U.S.-led decision to cut oil shipments by saying that the 1994 agreement had collapsed. North Korea later announced that it would restart the five megawatt-electric gas-graphite reactor, the plutonium separation facility, and the fuel fabrication plant at Yongbyon. North Korea also announced that it was resuming

¹¹⁸ The text of the speech is published by KCNA, North Korea's official news agency, and available at <http://us.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/east/08/29/nkorea.text.reut/>.

¹¹⁹ Kelly, Briefing in Seoul, South Korea, October 19, 2002.

¹²⁰ The Statement of the KEDO's Executive Board, November 14, 2002, available at http://www.kedo.org/news_detail.asp?NewsID=10

On September 15, 2003 the White House announced President Bush's decision to provide up to \$3.72 million in assistance to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) for administrative expenses for fiscal year 2003. The Presidential Determination Regarding Kedo Funding (available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030915-11.html>) reads, “No part of the FY 2003 U.S. contribution will be used for construction of light-water nuclear reactors in North Korea, which was premised on North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear arms program. The members of the KEDO Executive Board will convene soon and the United States believes it should then agree formally to stop work on the LWR project. Our contribution also will not be used to finance heavy fuel oil shipments to North Korea, which KEDO suspended in November 2002.”

construction of the 50 megawatt-electric reactor at Yongbyon and a 200 megawatt-electric reactor at Taechon.¹²¹ Then, North Korea expelled the IAEA officials, removed the IAEA seals and monitoring equipment from Yongbyon facilities, and officially withdrew from the NPT in January 2003. Subsequently, in February 2003, the North Koreans declared that they had restarted the reactor in Yongbyon to produce electricity. Further increasing tensions, North Korea conducted test firings of a developmental cruise missile, intercepted an unarmed U.S. airplane operating in international airspace, and gave the impression that it was reprocessing the 8,000 spent fuel rods to extract plutonium, which would be enough for five or six nuclear weapons.

According to the Bush administration, North Korea's behaviors were "provocations designed to blackmail the United States and to intimidate its friends and allies" to get the United States agree to bilateral talks, which means "giving the North what it wants, and on its terms."¹²² However, according to the North Koreans, their behavior was a reaction to U.S. noncompliance with the Agreed Framework and to the Bush administration's intention for a "pre-emptive nuclear attack" on North Korea.

North Koreans argued that the United States had no will to implement the Agreed Framework and it systematically violated the agreement expecting the collapse of North Korea.¹²³ The United States, in their opinion, deliberately delayed the conclusion of the contract regarding the LWRs to force North Korea to receive South Korea-type LWRs, whose technological feasibility and capability were in question by North Koreans.¹²⁴ The construction of the LWRs was also delayed with some pretexts, and, as a result, North Koreans suffered a huge loss of electricity and a big economic crisis, threatening their existence today. Additionally, North Koreans said, the United States did not properly deliver the 500,000-ton heavy fuel oil pledged in the Agreed Framework to compensate North Korea's energy loss. North Koreans also accused the United States of lifting only

¹²¹ David Albright, "North Korea's Current and Future Plutonium and Nuclear Weapon Stocks" *ISIS Issue Brief*, January 15, 2003, available at <http://www.isis-online.org/publications/dprk/currentandfutureweaponsstocks.html>

¹²² James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, March 12, 2003.

¹²³ KCNA, *Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal*.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

some symbolic sanctions while refusing to lift the trade and investment related sanctions, although this was an obligation imposed on both sides by the Agreed Framework.

As a matter of fact, the implementation of the Agreed Framework was slow for several reasons. First, the United States was suspicious about North Korea's compliance with the agreement. For example, in the mid-1998 the United States detected an underground site near Kum-chang-ri in North Korea, so the LWR project was postponed in 1999 since the United States suspected that North Korea was hiding a nuclear facility in Kum-chang-ri. After negotiations with North Korea, the United States visited the facility in Kum-chang-ri in May 1999 and in May 2000. However, "the United States concluded that the site as then configured was not suited to house a nuclear reactor or reprocessing operations and therefore was not a violation of the Agreed Framework."¹²⁵ Although disproved, the suspicion about North Korea continued to cause resistance in the Congress.

The second reason for the slow implementation of the agreement is that the Congress insisted on linking its support to North Korea's performance in other areas which are not directly related to the Agreed Framework. For example, during the KEDO General Conference in May 2002, Ambassador Charles H. Pritchard, U.S. Representative to KEDO, said,

The U.S. Congress, for example, has required the President to make certain certifications before funding can be obligated to KEDO. The language has varied from year to year, but Congress clearly harbors deep concerns about North Korea's missile program, about its deteriorating relations with South Korea, which we all hope are now on the mend, and about the degree of its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).¹²⁶

This meant that North Korea's further concessions in other areas irrelevant to the Agreed Framework were required to implement the agreement without interruptions.

¹²⁵ Fact Sheet on U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework by Bureau of Nonproliferation, Washington, DC February 15, 2001, available at <http://www.state.gov/np/rls/fs/2001/5284pf.htm>.

¹²⁶ Charles H. Pritchard, Ambassador, U.S. Representative to KEDO, Public Statement for KEDO General Conference, May 23, 2002, available at http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/s_20020523_USA.pdf.

A third reason for the slow implementation concerned interpretation of the Agreed Framework. Daniel Pinkston, a Korea specialist, argues that the Agreed Framework required a number of very complex transactions.¹²⁷ According to Pinkston, the document is very short; nonetheless, there are a lot of details that had to be worked out. This makes the agreement prone to misinterpretation; therefore, both sides had different expectations about what the other side was supposed to do. For example, the Bush administration wanted North Korea to come into full compliance with its IAEA safeguards agreement immediately after the concrete pouring ceremony for the light water reactor since completing the IAEA inspections would last 3-4 years.¹²⁸ On the other hand, North Koreans argued that they did not have to do so until the construction of the reactor grew closer to completion as described in the agreement.¹²⁹

Raising money for the implementation of the Agreed Framework was another problem. South Korea, who had the biggest responsibility in funding the LWR project that would cost approximately 4.5 billion dollars, asked the United States to provide financial support for the project. However, since Congress was delaying the approval of the necessary budget, the United State said it could not make any contribution to the LWR project.¹³⁰ The Congress also resisted funding for oil shipments since North Korea was suspected of diverting some of the oil for military use. Although the State Department declared that “no clear evidence has emerged of any significant diversion of

¹²⁷ Daniel A. Pinkston, Interview by Murat Yetgin, CNS, Monterey, August 6, 2003. Dr. Pinkston is a senior research associate and Korea specialist at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, California.

¹²⁸ During the concrete pouring ceremony for the light water reactor in North Korea on August 7, 2002, Ambassador Pritchard said “KEDO is on course to complete a significant portion of the project and deliver key nuclear components in mid-2005, before which the DPRK is obligated to come into full compliance with its IAEA safeguards agreement, including taking all steps that may be deemed necessary by the IAEA. The IAEA believes that with full cooperation from the DPRK it will take at least 3-4 years to verify the completeness and correctness of North Korea's initial safeguards declaration. That means the DPRK must start meaningful cooperation now with the IAEA and to comply with its other obligations under the Agreed Framework.” The statement is available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/easec/pritchard806.htm>

¹²⁹ Article IV, Para.3 of the Agreed Framework reads “When a significant portion of the LWR project is completed, but before delivery of key nuclear components, the DPRK will come into full compliance with its safeguards agreement with the IAEA (INFCIRC/403), including taking all steps that may be deemed necessary by the IAEA, following consultations with the Agency with regard to verifying the accuracy and completeness of the DPRK’s initial report on all nuclear material in the DPRK.”

¹³⁰ The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance, Arms Control Association, January 2002, available at <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework.asp?print>.

the deliveries of heavy fuel oil to North Korea to unauthorized purposes,”¹³¹ convincing the Congress to finance the oil shipments was a problem for the administration. To add to the problem, the oil prices and the cost of shipment increased, and KEDO needed additional funding to pay for the scheduled heavy fuel oil deliveries.¹³² As a consequence, North Koreans did not receive the heavy fuel oil regularly and continued to complain about the consequences on its economy.

In addition to the dissatisfaction with the heavy fuel oil delivery and the LWR project, North Korea also complained that the United States did not provide the formal security assurances not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons, which was an obligation described in the 1994 agreement.¹³³ Increasing their security concerns, the North Koreans claimed, the United States issued the *U.S. -Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines* in 1994, which they believed were aimed at the Korean Peninsula, and moved depleted uranium shells from Japan to South Korea in 1997 to use in a possible war.¹³⁴ Moreover, the North Koreans said, the U.S. Chief of Staff and the top South Korean military men claimed in a joint statement in 1999 that “North Koreans remained a constant threat to their national interests” and they would “strongly retaliate against North Koreans with nuclear weapon and all other means in the case of emergency.”¹³⁵ And finally, the Bush administration, the North Koreans believed, “openly declared that they would ‘break down’ [our] system.”¹³⁶

5. Multilateral Diplomacy and Deterrence

While using rhetoric on both conditional cooperation and deterrence to solve the problem, the Bush administration continued to charge North Korea of cheating and blackmailing. The administration’s officials, including the President, repeatedly stated

¹³¹ Gary L. Jones, Associate Director, Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, “Heavy Fuel Oil Delivered to North Korea Under the Agreed Framework,” *Testimony before the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: United States General Accounting Office, for release on October 27, 1999), available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/gao/rc00020t.pdf>

¹³² Jones, “Heavy Fuel Oil Delivered to North Korea Under the Agreed Framework.”

¹³³ KCNA, *Detailed Report Explains NPT Withdrawal*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

that the crisis should be resolved through peaceful and multilateral diplomacy. They insisted that North Korea should end its nuclear weapons acquisition program verifiably and irreversibly before any cooperative engagement. The administration rejected North Korea's appeal for bilateral dialogue, considering it as *nuclear blackmail*, and stated that the United States tried negotiating before, but North Korea responded by deceiving.¹³⁷ This time a different and more comprehensive approach, a multilateral approach was necessary. Moreover, the administration argued, North Korea must first shut down its nuclear weapons program and other regional powers should be included in any talks.¹³⁸ Besides the rhetoric about solving the problem by multilateral diplomacy, the United States also demonstrated its readiness for military options in early March 2003 by deploying 24 long-range bombers to Guam, within striking distance of North Korea. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said that the Bush administration's decision to put U.S. bombers on alert in the Pacific was simply to reinforce U.S. deterrent posture.¹³⁹ That is, the well-known *carrot and stick* policy was at work.

After several attempts, the United States succeeded in convincing North Korea to join a trilateral meeting in April 2003 and a six-country talk in August 2003 in Beijing. However, no progress has been achieved in terms of convincing the North Koreans to quit their nuclear weapons program during these diplomatic initiatives. North Korea insisted on U.S. security assurances, and the United States insisted on the irreversible and verifiable elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The North Koreans repeatedly denied their admittance of the secret uranium enrichment program and reiterated their claims about the misconduct of the United States at every opportunity. They kept saying it was the United States that claimed the existence of the secret nuclear program in North Korea without presenting any specific evidence. On the other hand, the North Koreans claimed that they had successfully finished the reprocessing of some

¹³⁷Kelly, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 12, 2003.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Paul Wolfowitz, Q&A at a forum on U.S.-Korea relations sponsored by the Washington Post, Feb. 6, 2003, available at http://www.dod.mil/news/Feb2003/t02072003_t0206wp.html

8,000 spent fuel rods.¹⁴⁰ They also implied that they had nuclear weapons and they would enlarge their arsenal. A spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry said,

As the United States has no intention to drop its hostile policy, the DPRK will consistently maintain and increase its nuclear deterrent force as a just self-defensive means to repel the U.S. preemptive nuclear attack and ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region according to the decision of the First Session of the 11th Supreme People's Assembly.¹⁴¹

As of this writing, the Bush administration still insists that the issue is not between the United States and North Korea but a multilateral one. Nevertheless, they appear to be willing to act more cooperatively to support the multilateral approach. During a trip to Asia in October 2003, President Bush announced that the United States would consider providing North Korea with a written security assurance, if not a treaty. Secretary Colin Powell explained that they preferred an agreement instead of a treaty because an agreement would be easier to achieve since it would not have to go to the Senate for approval.¹⁴² Although the North Koreans initially rejected the Bush administration's offer, they later announced that they would consider it as long as their concerns are addressed.

C. ANALYSIS: THE DETERRENCE OR THE SPIRAL MODEL

1. The Impact of Bush Administration's Policies

The Bush administration has basically claimed that North Korea is not trustable; therefore, North Korea does not deserve the U.S. commitments pledged by the Clinton administration. North Korea has proven to be a greedy state, so, they concluded, cooperation with North Koreans means appeasement. Thus, North Korea should either be contained by multilateral diplomacy or deterred by military options. As a result, the Bush administration preferred a less cooperative policy towards North Korea. The administration wanted to force North Koreans to cooperate not on their terms but on U.S. terms. Moreover, the Bush administration repeatedly pointed out North Korea as a

¹⁴⁰ KCNA, *DPRK to Continue Increasing Its Nuclear Deterrent Force*, Pyongyang, October 2, 2003.

¹⁴¹ KCNA, *DPRK to Continue Increasing Its Nuclear Deterrent Force*, Pyongyang.

¹⁴² Colin L. Powell, Secretary of State, Interview by Bob Schieffer on CBS's *Face the Nation*, Bangkok, Thailand, October 19, 2003.

possible target of the preemption concept and displayed readiness for military options on several occasions as well. Linking these policies to the hardships of implementing the Agreed Framework, North Koreans seem to have perceived the Bush administration's actions as a scenario to deny U.S. commitments and as a prelude before a preemptive strike.

According to Daniel Pinkston, some people in the Bush administration had opposed the Clinton administration's approach to North Korea before Bush was inaugurated, and these people were looking forward to scrapping the Agreed Framework. When they assumed their position in government, Pinkston claims, it was a good opportunity for them to accomplish that goal.¹⁴³ Another fact about the Bush administration is that prominent officials had indicated their intention for more severe foreign policy options toward rouge countries long before they took office. For example, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, Richard Perle, and Richard L. Armitage were among those who wrote a letter to President Clinton urging him to act decisively against threats and "to turn [his] administration's attention to implementing a strategy for removing Saddam's regime from power. This [would] require a full complement of diplomatic, political and *military* efforts."¹⁴⁴

This mindset appears to have continued after they came to power. They believed the United States should adapt itself to the new security environment with a more proactive strategy. The terrorist attacks of September 11 vindicated them by revealing that the homeland of the United States could easily be threatened. In order to defend the country more effectively threats should be eliminated before they fully materialize. As a result, they devised a proactive security strategy based on prevention and preemption concepts. Many arguments took place after the announcement of the new strategy. The emphasis on preemption has been criticized for providing incentive to targeted countries to get more prepared militarily to defend themselves. Whether these arguments are reasonable or not, at least North Korea justified its behaviors by citing the preemption concept.

¹⁴³ Daniel Pinkston, Interview by Murat Yetgin, the author of the thesis, CNS, Monterey CA, August 06, 2003.

¹⁴⁴ The letter written to President Clinton by the members of The Project for The New American Century is available at <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>

The new U.S. National Security Strategy emphasizes the concern that the actors who pose current threats will not provide warning before they hit, so the threat should be eliminated before it fully materializes. Thus, while preserving the deterrence and containment strategies of the Cold War era, the new strategy underlines the need to be more proactive against contemporary threats. The emphasis on the preemption concept to deal with the contemporary threats is clearly stated in Chapter V of the new strategy: “The United States must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction.”¹⁴⁵

According to the Bush administration, pursuing a proactive strategy is reasonable because the Cold War is over, the threat environment has changed remarkably, it is harder to deter enemies who have no country to defend, and containment is not possible when dictators obtain weapons of mass destruction and are prepared to share them with terrorists.¹⁴⁶ The Bush administration insists that there is little or no time to react against the new threats if they are allowed to materialize. The United States might not obtain a warning before an attack; therefore, threats should be eliminated beforehand to provide more security for the country.

In addition to the emphasis on preemption, there is an uncertainty concerning the scope of the new strategy. Some statements in the new strategy are subject to wide interpretation. For example, after explaining how legal scholars and international jurists often conditioned the legitimacy of preemption on the existence of an imminent threat, the strategy proposes that the United States must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries.¹⁴⁷ This proposition can be interpreted in a broad spectrum that may agitate many countries including North Korea. Therefore, it is easy for North Korea to think the United States would prefer to eliminate its military capabilities or remove the existing regime if it perceives those as *imminent threats* to the security concerns of the United States. In order to defend the United States more effectively, transforming the security strategy into a more proactive one seems

¹⁴⁵ The U.S. National Security Strategy, September 2002.

¹⁴⁶ Richard B. Cheney, Vice President’s Remarks, October 2, 2002, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021002-15.html>

¹⁴⁷ The U.S. National Security Strategy.

reasonable. However, the United States is not the only country that needs security. Targeted states also need to defend their interests. Although the new strategy states that “the United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression,”¹⁴⁸ the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review explicitly named North Korea as a possible target for U.S. nuclear weapons. Thus, North Korea has sufficient reasons to feel insecure.

2. The Interpretation of North Korea’s Behavior

The North Koreans have basically asked the United States to agree to three things in exchange for accepting more international control on their nuclear program: (1) to promise not to invade North Korea by signing a non-aggression treaty, (2) to lift the sanctions and not to block its economic development, and (3) to normalize relations. Since the North Koreans regard the consequences of economic and political isolation as a direct threat to their existence, they tend to consider their isolation as one of their security concerns. That is, the North Koreans want to solve all their problems before renouncing their nuclear weapons production capability, and this makes them prone to be misperceived. Although the United States tries to combine several issues to agree to cooperate with North Korea in a similar way, it nevertheless interprets North Korea’s behavior as blackmail, and it considers North Korea a greedy state. What North Koreans want in reality is, according to the Bush administration, to use their nuclear weapons program as a leverage to achieve political and economic objectives. Therefore, the United States should show its resolve, as in the deterrence model, to prevent North Korea from going further. When the North Koreans see that they could not take advantage of U.S. goodwill, they will give up expecting further concessions and quit leveraging their nuclear weapons program. The belief that North Koreans are good at taking advantage of crises supports this assessment of the administration as well.

Some experts claim that the North Korean leadership is quite capable of assessing costs and benefits while having sophisticated political skills. For example Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang say that “Kim Jong Il is as rational and calculating as he is brutal.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, “The Korea Crisis,” *Foreign Policy*, May-June 2003.

Some observers point out the strategy that North Korea pursued in nuclear negotiations with South Korea and the United States between 1991 and 1993 to demonstrate how successfully North Korean leadership used those skills. For example, while reviewing these negotiations, Yong-Sup Han states that North Korea employed different strategies and tactics against South Korea and the United States to achieve its goals.¹⁵⁰ While negotiating with South Korea, it adopted a mixed strategy of compromise and toughness including insults and slander, propaganda wars, and delay. On the other hand, North Korea preferred brinkmanship diplomacy to draw the United States to the negotiation table and extract concessions. Yong-Sup Han claims that in order to conduct that strategy against the United States, North Korea created a crisis in the NPT regime; it violated the agreement on purpose, and made its previous commitments a negotiation agenda item.¹⁵¹

This crisis generating diplomacy of North Korea in the 1990s, and the other tactics presented in Yong-Sup Han's study, such as reaching the brink first and threatening the counterpart, forcing the United States to the negotiation table, proposing a comprehensive deal, blackmailing, dividing issues into pieces and making use of each piece, are similar to North Korea's recent behavior. The smart and greedy nature of North Korea's behavior when negotiating with the Clinton administration suggests that North Korea does not ignore the value of its nuclear program as a leverage. From this perspective, North Korea looks like the greedy state in the deterrence theory. If this were the truth, then North Korea would be exploiting cooperative approaches of the United States. The North Koreans, however, appear to be willing to reciprocate U.S. concessions, even those which are beyond meeting their expectations. Democratic representative Eliot Engel of New York, a member of a congressional delegation that visited North Korea in early June 2003, said, "I believe North Korea is willing to end their nuclear program for some assurances from the United States that we are not seeking regime change there."¹⁵² As a matter of fact, the North Koreans have not asked more than what was pledged in the Agreed Framework. Therefore, despite the common belief about

¹⁵⁰ Yong-Sup Han, "North Korean Behavior in Nuclear Negotiations," RAND, Reprinted from *The Nonproliferation Review*, Spring 2000, vol.7, no.1, 43.

¹⁵¹ Han, "North Korean Behavior in Nuclear Negotiations".

¹⁵² United States Must Begin Talks with N. Korea, Engel Says, *National Journal's Congressional Daily, Defense*, June 6, 2003.

North Korea's greediness and past experiences about its negotiation tactics, it is hard to claim that North Korea is just trying to leverage its nuclear potential for further concessions.

The North Koreans, moreover, have continuously denied the Bush administration's claims and argued that the Bush administration misinforms the world against North Korea while trying to stifle their regime at the same time. The United States, they have said, did not give North Korea what it promised in 1994; moreover, the Bush administration collapsed the Agreed Framework and planned a preemptive attack against North Korea. Therefore, the North Koreans might think that they have the right to resume their nuclear program. They might even think that the recent developments vindicated their decision to initiate a secret uranium enrichment program several years ago, if there is any.

All in all, although there is some evidence that supports the deterrence model, the interactions between the Bush administration and North Korea mostly resemble the spiral model. The emphasis on the preemption in the new strategy and the uncertainty of the scope of implementation seem to have a clear potential of intimidating North Korea. The most recent example of the execution of the new strategy, Operation Iraqi Freedom, seems to be a contributing factor in North Korea's increased alertness. On the other hand, claiming that only the Bush administration caused the current crisis is not fair since North Korea seems to have started its covert uranium enrichment program long before President Bush took office. However, the Bush administration's policies seem to have strengthened North Korea's suspicion and distrust about the U.S. policies while the preemption concept appears to have increased their insecurity. As suggested in the spiral model, the North Koreans seem ready to forgo their nuclear weapons production capability if their security concerns and economic and political needs are addressed properly by the United States. Therefore, believing that North Korea is an insecure state seems more reasonable.

D. CONCLUSION

The Bush administration could possibly perceive North Korea as a greedy state and consider its security concerns as fabricated pretexts. The administration might also be calculating to circumvent the costly obligations of the Agreed Framework. No matter

what the real mind set of the Bush administration is, North Koreans seem to perceive U.S. policies as a direct threat towards their existence. They appear to be trying to prevent the United States from destroying the existing regime in the country. Since they linked all military, economic and political threats to each other, North Koreans want the United States to address all their concerns together in exchange for renouncing their nuclear weapons production potential. This makes it more difficult for them to express what they are really afraid of. It also makes it difficult for the outsiders to understand what they really want.

If the United States displayed its willingness for full cooperation with North Korea, and if North Korea did not reciprocate to U.S. goodwill, then it would be reasonable to claim that North Korea resembles the greedy state illustrated in the deterrence theory. However, given that the implementation of the Agreed Framework has not been satisfactory, that the United States has not provided the security assurance pledged in the Agreed Framework, and that North Korea had enough evidence to suspect the continuity of the cooperative approach of the United States, North Korea's violation seems to be a result of prudence rather than ambitious thinking. Insecurity, which was increased by the Bush administration's security strategies, in general, and their uncooperative policies towards North Korea, in particular, appears to be the most dominant motive in North Korea's resuming the nuclear weapons program.

Getting the United States to better implement the Agreed Framework might be a supporting incentive for the North Koreans. Nevertheless, the real factor that caused North Korea to resume its nuclear program seems to be the Bush administration's policies and aggressive aspects of the new strategy. North Korea's behavior resembles the reactions of the insecure state illustrated in the spiral model. As the model suggests, the Bush administration's strategy, which apparently ignored North Korea's security concerns, possibly caused a security dilemma provoking North Korea to resume its plutonium-based nuclear weapons program. North Korea's response to recent U.S. proposal to provide some form of security guarantee also supports the spiral model. The North Koreans initially rejected U.S. offer; however, they later stated that they were ready to consider President Bush's remarks on providing written security assurances "...if they are based on the intention to co-exist with [North Korea] and aimed to play a

positive role in realizing the proposal for a package solution on the principle of simultaneous actions.”¹⁵³ As seen, U.S. willingness for cooperation does not stimulate North Korea’s aggressive ambitions; instead, it gets North Korea to act more positively. North Korea’s stress on simultaneous action clearly points out the existence of distrust, which is one of the main reasons of the security dilemma.

¹⁵³ “North Korea says it intends to consider US security offer”, *AFP, Yahoo Asia News*, October 25, 2003, available at <http://asia.news.yahoo.com/031025/afp/031025111310int.html>.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

Although North Korea engages in some behavior similar to the aggressive state in the deterrence theory, it more closely resembles the insecure state in the spiral model. North Korea's positive responses to cooperative approaches addressing its security concerns support the idea that its efforts to obtain nuclear weapons are insecurity driven reactions. North Korea seems to have perceived U.S. policies as a threat towards its existence since its foundation. It still believes that the United States wants to destroy the regime; therefore, it resorts to the ultimate deterrent, nuclear weapons, to save the regime.

Looking at only its massive armed forces, one can think that North Korea's conventional military capability is sufficient for North Korea to deter the United States. However, over the past fifteen or twenty years, North Korea's conventional military capability has declined relatively.¹⁵⁴ Many people look at the quantity of weapons. But the quality of hardware and training has been relatively in decline. Moreover, the decline in North Korea's economic situation and the erosion of their alliance relationships since the collapse of the Soviet Union contribute to their sense of insecurity.¹⁵⁵ Thus, nuclear weapons remain the only credible deterrent against the threats towards the regime.

B. MISPERCEPTIONS AND MIXED MOTIVES

The North Koreans link all their military, economic and political concerns to each other and want the United States to address all of them together in exchange for renouncing their nuclear weapons program. This makes it more difficult for them to express what they really afraid of. It also makes it difficult for outsiders to understand what the North Koreans really want. When the details of the strategic interactions between the United States and North Korea are carefully examined, one can see that primary reasons for the confrontations have been mutual distrust and insecurity that have been established since the artificial partition of Korea in the late 1940s. Mutual distrust

¹⁵⁴ Dr. Daniel A. Pinkston is a senior research associate and Korea specialist at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, California. Murat Yetgin, the author of the thesis, conducted the interview on August 06, 2003.

¹⁵⁵ Pinkston, Interview by Murat Yetgin.

and insecurity has created a security dilemma between the United States and North Korea, in which the two states mutually felt threatened by each other's efforts to increase own security. As a result North Korea initiated its nuclear weapons program apparently because it perceived the U.S.-South Korean alliance as an offensive nuclear threat to its existence. North Korea resisted any international control on its nuclear program mostly because it perceived it as a U.S. manipulated threat against its sovereignty. North Korea suspended its nuclear program when the Clinton administration addressed its security concerns as well as its economic and political problems. However, as revealed after October 2002, North Korea probably had initiated a uranium enrichment program because of its doubts about the reliability and continuity of U.S. cooperative policies.

If the United States displayed its willingness for full cooperation with North Korea, and if North Korea did not reciprocate such U.S. goodwill, it would be reasonable to claim that North Korea resembles the greedy state illustrated in the deterrence theory. However, given the reluctance of the United States in fulfilling its commitments regarding the Agreed Framework, North Korea's alleged uranium enrichment program seems to be a result of prudence rather than ambitious thinking in the light of its threat perception. The Bush administration's policies appear to have vindicated North Korea's doubts about U.S. cooperation. Additionally the emphasis on the preemption concept probably increased North Korea's insecurity and provoked it to resume its plutonium-based nuclear weapons program.

However, with respect to a technically capable country, one should not necessarily expect that only strong security concerns could explain its desire for nuclear weapons. Michael Mazarr argues that once a state has developed a capacity to produce nuclear weapons on a strong motive, it would be easier for that state to find other justifications to maintain this capability.¹⁵⁶ To start a nuclear weapons program, states should have strong motives that overcome the heavy costs of political and economic consequences. However, after achieving a certain technical potential, weaker evidences and secondary motives supporting the main motive might encourage states to maintain their nuclear program. Therefore, the impact of motivations should be assessed

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 183.

differently before and after achieving technical capability for producing nuclear weapons. As for the North Korean case, North Korea's initial motives were products of its security concerns, and North Korea still perceives continuity in the nature of threats. Therefore, although North Korea has developed other motives over time to maintain its nuclear weapons program, North Korea should still be regarded as an insecure state because of its main concern, the survival of the regime.

C. THE STAKES AND POSSIBLE REMEDIES

The Bush administration might be perceiving North Korea as a greedy state and considering its security concerns as fabricated pretexts. The administration might also be calculating to avoid the costly obligations of the Agreed Framework. No matter what the real mind set of the Bush administration is, North Korea seems to be closer to establishing a large nuclear arsenal. According to David Albright's technical assessment, North Korea's spent fuel contains about 27 kilograms of plutonium, which is enough for producing about five nuclear weapons. If North Korea regularly operates the five-MWe reactor at Yongbyon and finishes the constructions of two larger reactors at Yongbyon and Taechon in a couple of years, it could produce about 280 kilograms of plutonium per year, or enough for about 56 nuclear weapons per year. If North Korea could establish a uranium enrichment plant in the next few years, it could produce enough highly enriched uranium for two-three nuclear weapons per year. Therefore, as a mathematical possibility, North Korea could produce a total of 8-10 nuclear weapons by the end of 2005 and over 200 nuclear weapons by the end of 2010.¹⁵⁷

If the United States cannot stop North Korea until the late 2005, it will have not only to think about what to do with North Korea's nuclear weapons but also to think about what to do to keep neighboring countries calm and what to do to keep the nonproliferation regime alive. If North Korea passes the threshold towards being a nuclear weapon state with several weapons it will pose a real threat to regional and global security. If North Korea becomes more threatening, Japan may consider obtaining nuclear weapons of its own for deterrence, or, as some analysts claim, it may choose to

¹⁵⁷ David Albright, North Korea's Current and Future Plutonium and Nuclear Weapon Stocks, ISIS, January 15, 2003, available at <http://www.isis-online.org/publications/dprk/currentandfutureweaponsstocks.html>

terminate its bilateral defense treaty with the United States to appease its adversaries.¹⁵⁸ Other American allies that enjoy the deterrent umbrella of the U.S. nuclear arsenal also might reassess their positions. George Perkovich says, “Yet, South Korea, Germany, and Japan today seem more alarmed than reassured by U.S. strategy.”¹⁵⁹ The reactions of such countries to a nuclear North Korea are critical to the future of the nonproliferation regime.

The Clinton administration’s cooperative approach appeared to be a good policy choice since North Korea positively responded to U.S. concessions. Although North Korea raised tensions again by conducting long range missile tests in 1998 and by allegedly initiating a secret uranium enrichment program in the late 1990s, the cooperative approach of the Clinton administration still seems to be the most appropriate policy option for that time since it avoided a forthcoming war and froze North Korea’s plutonium production capability. The Bush administration should also try to restrict, if not stop, the nuclear weapons production capability of North Korea as soon as possible by defining a more feasible goal for the short term. A number one priority for the United States should be to deal with North Korea’s nuclear potential first. The United States does not seem to have the luxury to link all issues and wait for solving all problems with North Korea with minimum or no concessions. The United States should avoid putting all eggs in the same basket; instead, it should separate its concerns about North Korea’s nuclear potential from other issues making North Korea’s compromise easier.

North Korea’s mixed motives, similarly, make the North Korean crisis complicated and hard to resolve. Although North Korea wants nuclear weapons primarily to deter the United States, its insistence on political and economic provisions to maximize its gains makes North Korea seem like a greedy state. North Korea’s ambition to solve all its problems in exchange for renouncing its nuclear weapons program provides U.S. hardliners with a valuable opportunity to insist on uncompromising policies. Therefore, the U.S. administration should convince North Korea to separate issues as the starting point towards solving the problem. The administration should make it clear that if North

¹⁵⁸ Francois Heisbourg, “A Work in Progress: The Bush Doctrine and Its Consequences,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2003, 84.

¹⁵⁹ George Perkovich, “Bush's Nuclear Revolution: A Regime Change in Nonproliferation,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2003.

Korea is sincere about its security concerns, it should not link its political and economic demands to its nuclear weapons program. The United States should display its willingness to strongly assure North Korea's security concerns and, then, show its readiness to negotiate other items in the future provided North Korea agrees to separate its demands.

D. CONCLUSION

Since the North Korean case is a time sensitive issue, it is not plausible to try to achieve a long-term comprehensive solution. For the short term, acting more cooperatively seems to be the most rational course of action. The United States should negotiate with North Korea bilaterally in order to better understand what North Korea wants. Bilateral dialogue does not mean compromising national-security interests; in fact, it might prove useful in restricting North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

Some critics, like Henry Sokolsi and Victor Glinsky, think that North Korea should pay a price for breaching the NPT.¹⁶⁰ They say, if the United States resorts to an engagement policy again and North Korea goes without punishment, this will encourage other proliferation aspirants. The primary assumption of such critics appears to be that North Korea will never forgo its nuclear weapons production capability even if North Korea is granted a tangible security assurance. According to such critics, North Korea will cheat in any case, because its real goal is to be a nuclear state. Although their prediction about the impact of a nuclear North Korea on nonproliferation efforts seems undeniable, their proposal for an effective solution of the North Korean crisis does not look so plausible. This is because they do not care about North Korea's motive as much as they care about the consequences.

Avoiding undesirable consequences does not necessarily justify a hardliner stance against North Korea because, as Jervis argued, cooperation works better than coercion for insecure states. Empirical evidences show that North Korea reciprocates when its major concerns are addressed. It cheats; however, it is not fair to say that it cheated although its counterpart was in full compliance with its commitments. Given the United State's poor

¹⁶⁰ Henry Sokolski and Victor Glinsky, "No New Deals with Korea," *The Weekly Standard*, advanced copy from the January 20, 2003 issue: They never work.

performance in the implementation of the Agreed Framework and the provoking nature of the Bush administration's approach, North Korea's attempt does not appear to be pure insincerity. Additionally, its attempts to maximize its gains cannot be accused of pure greediness. North Korea mostly responded to cooperation positively. Engagement policy did not remove all its ambitions for nuclear weapons but restricted them to some degree.

The Agreed Framework was not the best deal for the United States but it was the optimum solution that could be reached at that time. It did not fully stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program but it restricted its nuclear ambitions. Despite its weakness against cheating or circumventing, engaging North Korea should be considered the best option for the time being also because there are two alternatives to this option: either watching North Korea enlarge its nuclear arsenal or risking a bloody war. The United States can try a better agreement by establishing more feasible goals and by pledging more sustainable commitments. Insisting on fully dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons production capability does not seem feasible since it would require endless inspections to verify North Korea's compliance. Actually, verifying nonexistence is almost impossible as seen in the Iraqi case. Even if North Korea agrees to this initially, it will eventually complain about U.S. misconduct and try to circumvent its obligations as it did before. Therefore, the United States should aim at restricting North Korea's nuclear ambitions again. If North Korea's security concerns can be addressed satisfactorily and if North Korea can be integrated to international community successfully, it will possibly want to forgo all its nuclear potential voluntarily as some other countries did before. The United States can achieve this by providing the security guarantee that North Korea wants while not insisting that North Korea should act first.

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