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NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR QUESTION: SENSE OF VULNERABILITY, DEFENSIVE MOTIVATION, AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION

Kwang Ho Chun

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Kwang Ho Chun

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FOREWORD

Why have efforts to dismantle the North Korean nuclear program failed so far? What can be done in order to achieve a peaceful and long-lasting resolution to this conundrum? To answer these questions, this monograph scrutinizes and refutes two prevailing academic-cum-policy approaches to the North Korean nuclear questions: the use of coercive tools within a general framework of containment and bypassing the regime in Pyongyang, and engaging the Korean people with the hope that they will gain enough power to transform North Korea into a democratic nuclear-free country. Dr. Kwang Ho Chun argues that neither of these can provide any meaningful solution to the North Korean nuclear questions. Instead, he suggests that engaging the regime in Pyongyang and forgoing endeavors to forcefully push democracy in North Korea are inseparable prerequisites to a peaceful and lasting solution to this problem.

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SUMMARY

With little faith in reaching a peaceful and sustainable solution to the nuclear question through engagement and negotiations with the regime in Pyongyang, some scholars argue that nuclear nonproliferation can be forced on North Korea only through the use of coercive tools within a general framework of containment. Other scholars, alarmed by the catastrophe that might result from a vigorous attempt to confront and/or topple the regime in Pyongyang, suggest bypassing it and engaging the North Korean people, hoping that they will gain enough power to transform North Korea into a democratic nuclear-free country. Indeed, to a great extent, current American policy toward North Korea reflects both stances.

North Korea's history indicates that Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability is directly related to the developmental status of its nuclear program. This deviates from Nicholas Eberstadt's claim that the regime's rationale behind the program has been predominantly and persistently offensive since its initiation. On the other hand, this supports Joachim Krause and Andreas Wenger's claim that the predominant rationale behind Pyongyang's nuclear program is deterring what it perceives as a threat to the survivability of its regime--namely, to a large extent, American power. On the basis of this finding, it can be argued that if North Korea's perceived vulnerability can be significantly reduced, it is more likely to give up its nuclear arms program.

How, then, can Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability be significantly reduced? The observation herein suggests that Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability has been

more influenced by its perception of its adversaries' hostility than its perception of its allies' guarantee for its security. During the 1960s, Pyongyang perceived that its allies had strong interests in guaranteeing North Korean security, but its perception of the continuous hostility from its adversaries increased its sense of vulnerability, which resulted in its continuous pursuit of developing a nuclear program. Despite the decreasing guarantee by Moscow and Beijing for Pyongyang's security since the late 1960s, Washington's progressive approach toward Pyongyang had so significantly reduced its sense of vulnerability from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s as to persuade North Korea to sign the Agreed Framework in 1994. This indicates that the key to reducing North Korea's sense of vulnerability and to bringing it back into compliance with international nonproliferation regimes is in the hands of its adversaries rather than those of its traditional allies. In this sense, it can be assumed that China is not bluffing when it claims that it lacks the necessary leverage to push North Korea into an internationally agreed solution to the nuclear problem. America's calling for China to put more pressure on North Korea may thus not yield a significant breakthrough in efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. The key factors determining Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability, and hence the future of its nuclear program, are U.S. projects and, more importantly, the manner in which its messages are perceived by North Korea.

In this sense, the two previous U.S. administrations' policies toward the North Korean nuclear question can provide invaluable lessons to the contemporary U.S. Government. The 1994 Framework Agreement manifested, among other attributes, tolerance towards diversity, a theme borrowed from President Richard

Nixon and Henry Kissinger's foreign policy during the 1970s. President Bill Clinton, who included in the agreement the normalization of relations between Washington and Pyongyang, signaled the *de facto* acceptance of the totalitarian regime in Pyongyang, a clear divergence from his goal of spreading liberalism and democracy, which he had pursued since coming to office. Hence, the reasoning of the 1994 agreement was not to first wrest from North Korea its strategic deterrent and then proceed with toppling its regime. On the contrary, the purpose was to incorporate North Korea, as it is, into the international community, with the hope that time would yield a change in the nature of the regime as it mingles with the other members of the international community, particularly the United States. In other words, the purpose was not to convey the sense that the United States was planning to topple or coerce the regime in Pyongyang into a change of nature, but to patiently lure it, by its own consent, into such a change.

The Bush administration, seemingly, took an important step toward reducing Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability by expressing its willingness to give assurances to the security of North Korea, to respect its sovereignty, and to take steps toward the normalization of relations—all in return for North Korea's total nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, overshadowing and contradicting those promises and guarantees are the North Korean Human Rights Act, which strives to promote democracy in North Korea at the expense of the totalitarian regime, and the ensuing appointment of a special envoy on human rights in North Korea. Without resolving these contradictions, Washington will continue to project through its foreign policy ambiguous intentions, hindering a significant change in North Korea's sense of vulnerability.

From these experiences, the contemporary U.S. Government must learn that engagement with the current regime in Pyongyang and forgoing endeavors to promptly and forcefully push democracy in North Korea are inseparable prerequisites to a peaceful and long-lasting solution to the North Korean nuclear question.

NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR QUESTION: SENSE OF VULNERABILITY, DEFENSIVE MOTIVATION, AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION

Kwang Ho Chun

INTRODUCTION

North Korea's nuclear development has been one of the gravest threats to the security of not only the Korean peninsula, but also the Asian region and the world as a whole. The international community and the United States have thus made continuous efforts to end North Korea's nuclear program. The United States, in particular, has tried to address the proliferation challenges posed by North Korea through various policies, including military cooperation with its allies in the region and a wide range of sanctions. However, these efforts have not yet succeeded. Why have these efforts failed so far? How can a long-lasting and peaceful solution to the North Korean nuclear question be achieved?

These questions are highly relevant to understanding why North Korea has pursued a nuclear program. The more we understand about the motivation behind North Korea's drive for a nuclear program, the greater chance we have to find a peaceful and perfect solution to the North Korean nuclear question. This monograph therefore seeks to elucidate the motivation for North Korea's nuclear program, and to consider whether it is possible to achieve a peaceful and long-lasting solution to the North Korean nuclear question, and, if it is, how to accomplish this goal. This monograph does so by providing a historical review of North Korea's nuclear program.

The main finding revealed herein is that North Korea's nuclear program has been driven by the country's intention to use the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against a perceived risk of attack. The historical narrative of North Korea's nuclear development since the 1950s has proved this defensive motivation for North Korea's nuclear weapon build up, indicating that Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability has been positively related to the developmental status of North Korea's nuclear program. Based on this finding, the author opines that some hard-line policies, built upon the assumption of North Korea's offensive motivation, cannot provide any meaningful solution to the North Korean nuclear question. Instead, he suggests that engagement with the current regime in Pyongyang and forgoing any endeavors to push promptly and forcefully for democracy in North Korea can offer a peaceful and long-lasting solution.

The monograph begins by considering the relationship among developing nuclear weapons, Pyongyang's motivations, and its sense of vulnerability. It then provides the history of the relationship between North Korea's sense of vulnerability and its development of a nuclear program. It concludes by considering the possibility of a peaceful solution to the North Korean nuclear question.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS, MOTIVATION, AND SENSE OF VULNERABILITY

Let us start with a fundamental but thus far unanswered question: Why has North Korea pursued a nuclear program since the mid-1950s? The technical school of proliferation holds that, "[T]he availability of nuclear weapons in itself constitutes sufficient

motive for pursuing them. If states can acquire the bomb, this line of thinking goes, they will."[1] However, an examination of past efforts to prevent nations with nuclear aspirations from pursuing nuclear armament provides many cases of success. South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa are all examples of states that abandoned their nuclear armament efforts.[2] This indicates that availability of technology and resources alone does not necessarily lead a nation to pursue vigorously a nuclear armament course.

An alternative explanation is provided by the motivational school of proliferation. According to Michael J. Mazarr, the motivational school holds that:

> [D]espite the pressures of a near-anarchic world system, states do not pursue the development of nuclear weapons without a reason. The associated costs, both financial and political, establish a presumption against acquiring nuclear arsenals. It is only when a state's perceived vulnerability or desire for attention or prestige overcomes that presumption that proliferation will take place.[3]

There have been two contradicting perspectives on the motivation for North Korea's developing nuclear weapons. The first ascribes a continuous and predominantly offensive rationale to North Korea's nuclear program, whereas the second argument sheds light on North Korea's perceived need to deter its adversaries from seeking to violate its sovereignty and topple its regime.

Nicholas Eberstadt puts emphasis on North Korea's desire to retrieve its lost pride. From his perspective, the North Korean nuclear program is not merely a deterrent, designed to warn the United States against any attempt to forcefully change the regime in

Pyongyang, or an instrument used to blackmail the international community to get food and fuel; it is primarily a tool designed to "fulfill a grand ideological vision: the reunification of the now-divided Korean peninsula."[4] He argues:

> [The purpose of this nuclear program] is to settle a historical grievance, namely the failure of the famous June 1950 surprise attack against South Korea [due to American intervention]. . . . The total mobilization war states that Pyongyang has painfully erected over the decades (at the cost of, *inter alia*, the North Korean famine of the 1990s) is a response to this grievance and an instrument for fulfilling this vision . . . [of] unconditional annexation of present-day South Korea.[5]

Eberstadt contends that the North Korean statecraft has built on the very vision of "an ongoing war"[6] to reunify the peninsula under the regime in Pyongyang and that the regime has seen the nuclear program as a vital tool to realize such a vision—a tool never to be given away, at least until this goal is accomplished. This line of analysis thus presents us with pessimistic prospects for resolving peacefully the political tension surrounding the issue.

In contrast to Eberstadt's argument, Joachim Krause and Andreas Wenger present us with a different analysis regarding North Korea's motivation to acquire a nuclear-weapons capability, taking their cue from Scott Sagan's three models to explain why countries strive to acquire nuclear armaments. These consist of:

> the "security model," according to which states build nuclear weapons to increase national security against foreign threats, especially nuclear threats; the "domestic politics models," which envisions nuclear weapons

> as political tools used to advance parochial domestic and bureaucratic interests; and the "norms model," under which nuclear weapons decisions are made because weapons acquisition . . . provides an important normative symbol of state's modernity and identity.[7]

Based on the security model, Krause and Wenger ascribe a predominantly defensive rationale to North Korea's nuclear program. They point to the importance of Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability in driving North Korea's nuclear weapons program:

> North Korea perceives itself as threatened by other countries, such as the U.S., which have an important military presence in the region. It is believed that the possession of nuclear weapons can be used as a deterrent against a perceived risk of attack.[8]

The process by which a country evaluates its vulnerability has received much attention in literature dealing with armament, disarmament, and the causes of war. It is presented as an outcome of a calculated process in which a national leadership's perception of its adversaries' intentions toward it and its perception of its adversaries' capability to carry out offensive intentions are measured against its self-perceived capability to thwart such danger.[9] George Kennan, and later Secretary of State Henry Kissinger relying on Kennan, provide a similar definition of what creates and precipitates perceived vulnerability: "[T]he combination of hostility with the ability to do something about it."[10] Hence, the concept of a state's sense of vulnerability consists of two dimensions: its perception of the hostility of its adversaries and its perception of its capability to deter its adversaries from fulfilling their aggressive intentions.

It is also essential to consider alliances when measuring a state's sense of vulnerability. Allying with other nations is the most prevalent method used in *realpolitik* to deter an adversary from attacking.[11] Nevertheless, the existence of alliances with powerful nations, such as the Soviet Union and China in North Korea's case, is not a sufficient cause for reducing a state's sense of vulnerability. The key thing to affect a state's sense of vulnerability is its perception of its allies' interest in reacting against an attack of its adversaries. When a state detects a thaw between its allies and its adversaries, it tends to perceive its allies' interest in reacting against an adversary's attack as decreasing and this, in turn, is likely to increase the country's sense of vulnerability.

On the basis of these insights, indicators to measure Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability in each era mentioned above are: 1) the number of its adversaries' perceived proclamations and/or acts of conciliation toward North Korea; 2) the number of its adversaries' proclamations and/or actions perceived by North Korea as a challenge to its sovereignty; and 3) the number of its allies' perceived proclamations and/or acts of conciliation toward its adversaries. The first indicator listed is expected to have a negative relationship with North Korea's sense of vulnerability, whereas the second and third indicators are expected to have a positive relationship with it.

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF NORTH KOREA'S PERCEIVED VULNERABILITY AND ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM

The Height of the Cold War (1950-68).

This time frame can be divided into two consecutive periods. During the 1950s there was an increase in North Korea's sense of vulnerability. This reflected American attempts during the Korean War to overthrow the newly inaugurated communist regime and the introduction of U.S. nuclear weaponry into the peninsula in 1957. North Korea's increasing sense of vulnerability throughout this period led to the initiation of its nuclear program. Between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, North Korea's sense of vulnerability decreased slightly. Though the American threat remained in the background, there were no substantial proclamations or actions from either Washington or Seoul to be perceived as a challenge to North Korean sovereignty. Moreover, with the Cold War at its height, Pyongyang's allies were perceived as more committed than ever to guaranteeing its security.

The Korean War was the first opportunity for North Korea to evaluate Washington's intentions regarding its regime. The war, initiated by the North, which was as eager as the Syngman Rhee regime in the South to take control of the whole Korean peninsula, taught Pyongyang some valuable lessons. Although U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson excluded the peninsula from his January 1950 announcement of the defense perimeter that marked Washington's vital strategic outposts in the Pacific,[12] the North soon came to realize that it had underestimated the political-psychological

importance of the peninsula to the decisionmakers in Washington. Not only was the United States willing to commit a huge military force into the peninsula in order to block the Northern attack and to protect Rhee's regime, but it was actually planning to seize the opportunity to proceed with a rollback of North Korean forces so as to reunify the whole peninsula under the regime in Seoul.[13] This was perceived as a grave threat to North Korea. Following the Inchon landing on September 15, 1950, the North could not balance and repel the combined American-South Korean forces by itself. It needed help.

Pyongyang's allies provided it with another valuable lesson. Allies, even brotherly ones like China, were first and foremost driven by their own interests. Joseph Stalin, then leader of the Soviet Union, who was the liberator of the Northern half of the peninsula and gave his consent to the June 25, 1950, invasion, offered no substantial support to the North following the outbreak of the conflict. Based on American intelligence sources, Bruce Cumings points out that, "[T]here is no evidence of an upturn in Soviet military shipments to North Korea after June 25; if anything, a decrease was registered."[14] Moreover, Stalin explicitly ordered Soviet ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Jacob Malik not to attend the Security Council meeting that dealt with the issue of Korea, which meant there would be no veto against U.S. plans for dealing with the situation on the peninsula under UN auspices. For Cumings, this Soviet behavior suggests that the shrewd Stalin may have hoped to pit American Soldiers against Chinese forces and thus to weaken MaoTse Tung and make him more submissive, even at the cost of abandoning the regime in Pyongyang to the threat of American military power.[15]

While China, unlike the Soviet Union, did commit its forces in an effort to halt the U.S./UN advance to the Yalu River, this was also driven by China's own interests. Cumings claims, based on retrieved North Korean and Chinese documents, that China entered the Korean War not out of fear of the American march toward the Yalu River, but rather as a response to the American rollback strategy that endangered the existence of an ally regime. As a bonus, Beijing was also toying with the notion of taking over the Soviets' position as the major patron of the infant state.[16] Other scholars who examined the rationale behind Mao's intervention in the war give more credit to his fear that North Korea would become a northern gate to China for American imperialism and to his perception of the Korean battleground as a test case for Communism in its fight against intruding Capitalism along the southern gate of China (i.e., Vietnam).[17]

In any case, both the Soviet Union and China were unwilling to risk an outbreak of a global conflict. As panic caused by the successful counterattack and the southward movement of the North Korean-Chinese forces spread throughout Washington, President Harry Truman warned that "the United States may use [in Korea] any weapon in its arsenal,"[18] thus hinting at the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons. This put Stalin on alert. Cumings wrote:

> According to a high official in the KGB at the time, Stalin expected global war as a result of American defeat in northern Korea; fearing that consequence, he favored allowing the United States to occupy all of Korea: "so what? Let the United States of America be our neighbors in the Far East . . . we are not ready to fight." Unlike Stalin, the Chinese were ready to fight, but only down to the middle of the peninsula, rather than to start World War III.[19]

The war ended with the July 1953 armistice that put the struggling forces along the opposite sides of approximately the same line that separated them in June 1950. Notwithstanding this, North Korea's sense of vulnerability was increased by American aggressive policies toward the peninsula in the aftermath of the Korean War. Just 4 years after the armistice, the United States introduced nuclear artillery shells, mines, and missiles in Korea, and kept increasing their number periodically.

The lessons Pyongyang drew from its allies' behavior during the Korean War, and from the continuous perceived American challenge to its sovereignty in its aftermath, became clearly expressed in the emerging post-war Juche ideology that emphasized self-reliance in defense, as in other fields. Kim Jung-il, current leader of North Korea, illustrates this point in his book *On the Juche Idea of Our Party*: "Of course, one may receive aid in national defence from fraternal countries and friends. But it is impossible to depend on others for the defence of one's own country."[20] From the late 1950s, North Korea started to send scientists to Soviet institutions to study nuclear technology. After receiving Soviet and Chinese assistance, the North established a research complex at Yongbyon and assembled a two-four megawatt Soviet IRT-2M research reactor next to it in 1965.[21] Nevertheless, no significant breakthrough was made during the 1960s with regard to obtaining nuclear weapons-production capability. There was no need to rush, as international and regional developments during the 1960s slightly decreased Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability.

The 1960s saw the Cold War at its height. The Soviet Union was catching up with American nuclear and missile capabilities, and China successfully achieved

a nuclear capability of its own.[22] The unquestionable supremacy of American technology and weapons, which characterized the 1950s, was giving way to a more balanced power equation between East and West, contributing to North Korea's confidence in its allies' capability to balance the United States. Tension rose from time to time between Pyongyang and its patrons, who tried to meddle in internal North Korean politics and stall the solidification of former North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's regime at the expense of their proxies. Despite this, however, and despite being caught from time to time in the middle of the Sino-Soviet quarrel, there were no major surface cracks in the hostile attitude of both Beijing and Moscow toward Washington.[23] On the contrary, tension reached new heights between the United States and the Soviet Union, a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the entry of U.S. forces to Vietnam in 1965.

Moreover, during the 1960s there were no substantial proclamations or actions, either by the United States or the Republic of Korea (ROK), which could have been perceived as a challenge to North Korean sovereignty. Perhaps it was a result of the U.S. fear of entanglement in a second front, in addition to Vietnam, while having to cope simultaneously, in budgetary terms, with Soviet endeavors for strategic military parity. In South Korea, the toppling of the belligerent Syngman Rhee Regime was followed by the coming to power, after a short interim parliamentary republic, of Park Chung-hee, whose main goal, at least during the 1960s, was to reform and build the ill-treated South Korean economy. However, the picture of global politics soon began to change, which corresponded to changes in North Korea's sense of vulnerability.

Détente and Rapprochement (1969-89).

During this time frame, the designated indicators reflect a sharp increase in North Korea's sense of vulnerability. North Korea's strategic allies were approaching its traditional adversaries through arms control negotiations, treaties, and mutual visits, replacing political considerations with economic ones. On top of that, Park Chung-hee began to pursue more aggressive military goals that might change the strategic balance of power between the Koreas in favor of the South. A sharp increase in North Korea's sense of vulnerability drove it to achieve a major breakthrough in its nuclear program that enabled it to produce nuclear weapons.

The increasingly thawing atmosphere between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing also increased Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability. The rudiments of change in the nature of Washington and Moscow's relations from hostility to coexistence and cooperation started to appear during John Kennedy's presidency and came to maturity during Richard Nixon's tenure. The détente initiated in 1969 created an environment in which, according to Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf, "visits, cultural exchanges, trade agreements, and joint technological ventures replaced threats, warnings, and confrontations."[24] The détente continued to characterize U.S.-Soviet relations throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with a brief interlude during the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan (1979-85). The détente manifested itself during that period in major confidence-building measures between the two: the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Treaty (SALT I, 1972), the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM, 1972), SALT II (1979), and the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF, 1987).[25]

In addition to the thawing relations with Moscow, the United States pursued a rapprochement with China. It was Nixon's national security advisor and later Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who brought a rapprochement between the United States and China. Kissinger, as a realist, held that China, though communist, did not pose a challenge to the United States since it lacked economic as well as military capabilities to challenge Washington. On the contrary, he believed on the basis of his multidimensional concept of power that China played an important role in balancing the Soviet Union on the ideological level. Unlike former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Kissinger did not see all communist states as part of one big octopus threatening the West. Having an eye to the bad blood running between Moscow and Beijing, especially along their Manchurian border, he determined to end China's isolation for the sake of global order.[26] Mao responded to the American initiative with a similarly realistic understanding. "'The leaders of China were beyond ideology in their dealings with us,' Kissinger recalled. 'Their peril had established the absolute primacy of geopolitics.'"[27] The new era of improved relationship between the two states was soon reflected in reciprocal state visits of their leaders (Nixon and Ford to China, 1972 and 1975, respectively, and Deng Xiaoping to the United States in 1979 and 1982), in exchanging ambassadors (March 1979), and in a booming trade exchange that, as early as 1987, was fourfold in comparison with the Sino-Russian trade exchange.[28] The trade volume between the two countries continued to increase from $9,790 million in 1987 to $20,043 million in 1990.[29]

With Pyongyang watching the thaw between Washington and its allies, Moscow and Beijing, with

suspicion and fear, its sense of vulnerability was reinforced by the policies taken by its adversaries, particularly Seoul, which began to pursue an aggressive military enhancement. Although the United States remained as the largest threat to North Korea, the U.S. administration was transforming its security policy toward the peninsula so as to avoid any direct clash with North Korea. Behind this was Nixon and Kissinger's conviction that the United States should avoid a second Vietnam, their fear that American forces might get entrapped in a similar situation on the Korean peninsula, and Kissinger's multipolar concept of the balance of power. The U.S. administration thought that the stability of the peninsula could be maintained through a regional, as well as global, balance of power, which could be constructed through an American-Chinese rapprochement. Falling into the trap of North Korean provocations would have only jeopardized this rapprochement. Moreover, that would have been self-defeating and contrary to the retrenchment policy of an administration that believed in a strong economy as the key to all other ingredients in the calculus of power. From this perspective, the Nixon administration carried out a policy of restraint in its dealings with North Korea in order to reduce the possibility of any clash with Pyongyang, disregarding South Korean protests.

It is not certain that this change in U.S. security policy toward the peninsula reduced Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability, but it is certain that this change increased that of Seoul. Nixon's administration continued Johnson's policy of projecting weakness toward Pyongyang, dealing too gently with incidents such as the seizure of the USS *Pueblo* on April 23, 1968, and forcing Seoul not to respond to the North's attack on

the Blue House on April 21, 1968. What was worst of all, the U.S. administration committed a greater sin—reducing the number of U.S. troops on the peninsula.[30] The withdrawal of the 7th U.S. Infantry Division from South Korea and the pull back of the 2d Infantry Division from the front line in 1971 were carried out despite fierce South Korean protests against the American disregard of previous assurances the United States had given to the Park Chung-hee regime. Park claimed that Nixon had assured him that the retrenchment policy would not be applied in the Korean Peninsula, and, on the contrary, that Nixon had vowed to strengthen the U.S. forces in the South. Fearing that such a withdrawal would invite North Korean miscalculations, Seoul tried but failed to reach a compromise with Washington that would prevent the pull out of an entire division. Perhaps the utmost disregard of South Korean fears of the potential danger embodied in the planned withdrawal was manifested in Washington's answer to Park's plea to take note of the anxiety in the South, a feeling of déjà vu reminiscent of the pull out of U.S. troops that preceded the Korean War. Washington bluntly responded, as if explaining the facts of life to an infant, that there were no grounds for South Korea's concern, since the bipolar system of the 1950s had since turned into a multipolar one.[31]

From Park's point of view, Seoul could no longer rely solely on its bilateral alliance with the United States in order to guarantee its national security. One of the initiatives that Park took in order to cover for what Seoul perceived as conventional inferiority, in comparison to the North Korean Army, was the buildup of a nuclear capability. A South Korean general, reflecting on the period, remembered that President Park, "decided upon a secret 'Master Plan' for

producing nuclear weapons in 1970 following President Nixon's announcement of possible U.S. force withdrawals from Korea under the 'Guam Doctrine'."[32] Park's June 1975 statement that "South Korea would and could develop its own nuclear weapons if the U.S. nuclear umbrella is withdrawn," was heard in Pyongyang as well.[33] While, in the face of American pressure, the South Korean nuclear adventure ended with Park's January 1977 announcement that South Korea would not develop nuclear arms,[34] it contributed to raising the sense of vulnerability north of the 38th parallel. It faced Pyongyang with a future scenario, although not imminent, that required preparation.

The aforementioned increase in Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability was followed by upgrades in its nuclear program that would enable the production of nuclear weapons. Pyongyang modernized its Soviet research reactor in 1974, bringing it to a capacity of eight megawatts, and began to build a second reactor with a capacity of five megawatts. Moreover, Pyongyang succeeded in persuading Moscow to supply it with a 50-megawatt and a 200-megawatt graphite reactor, "which would be installed at Yongbyon in the early 1980s and would become the focus of the world's concern."[35] In 1987, after its completion, the 5-megawatt reactor began operating with a capability of producing seven kilograms of plutonium per year—enough to manufacture a single atomic bomb a year. The 50-megawatt and 200-megawatt installations were estimated to produce, after completion, a sufficient amount of plutonium for the annual production of 30 atomic bombs.[36]

The Collapse of the Communist Bloc and Its Aftermath: From the Late 1980s to the Framework Agreement.

During this time frame, the aforementioned indicators reflected an overall reduction in North Korea's sense of vulnerability. Though its allies continued to tighten their relationship with its adversaries, those adversaries were initiating conciliatory gestures and acts that conveyed acceptance of the Kim Il-sung regime. Following these developments, North Korea was willing to freeze its nuclear program.

On the verge of its collapse, in September 1990, the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with the ROK, thus projecting a clear disengagement from Cold War patterns, which had been manifested in a leaning-to-one-side policy on the Korean issue.

The collapse of the communist block, which was followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, left Moscow with an economic catastrophe to deal with. Thus Russia, then under the control of President Boris Yeltsin, in dire need of economic recovery, put the promotion of its trade relations at the top of its foreign relations agenda and was willing to derogate prior political commitments to achieve this aim. Hence, Russia and South Korea signed a treaty in November 1992 with the purpose of enhancing mutual trade and market economy principles. The warming of Moscow-Seoul relations was followed by a change in Russia's attitude toward the North Korean nuclear program, discouraging rather than encouraging it. Yeltsin preferred to shun the 1961 treaty of friendship between the Soviet Union and North Korea, did not renew it in 1996, and replaced it with a much less obligatory

amity pact.[37] Moreover, 20 years after the breakthrough in Chinese-U.S. relations, a similar breakthrough came in Chinese-South Korean relations. The bilateral relationship, established in 1992, put a focus on trade relations, which grew annually during the 1990s at a 20-percent rate, making China South Korea's top trading partner and South Korea one of the major foreign investors in the Chinese economy.[38]

To North Korea's misfortune, its allies' perceived neglect of ideology in favor of trade, as a guide for foreign policy, was only part of a much larger transformation in world politics during the 1990s. The post-Cold War era gave birth to a new structure of the global system. No longer was it a bipolar system in which the Soviet Union and the United States balanced each other. Instead, an emerging uni-multipolar system left the United States as the only superpower with the economic and military clout to play a hegemonic role on the global level and in the multipolar subsystems.[39] The Clinton administration was pursuing an active engagement policy in world affairs with the purpose of enforcing international regimes, improving human rights, and enlarging the liberal-democratic community.[40] From those perspectives, North Korea occupied the center of American attention.

From the Clinton administration's point of view, not only did North Korea disregard the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) it had signed in December 1985, but it also ignored what Washington saw as U.S. appeasement efforts. Though the United States withdrew all its nuclear warheads from the peninsula, Pyongyang refused to carry out its December 1991 agreement with South Korea for making the peninsula nuclear-free, and it turned its back to the January 1992 Safeguards Agreement it had signed with the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).[41] The picture could look quite different from the North Korean point of view. The withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from the peninsula did not diminish the American nuclear threat to the North. If Pyongyang was to follow America's lead, it would have had to give up its most valuable strategic asset, required to make up for its conventional inferiority. The war in Iraq clearly illustrated how vulnerable a regime, considered by the United States as a dictatorial one, could be without a sufficient deterrent. Pyongyang's reluctance to carry out its previous obligations was followed by stick-and-carrot diplomacy on the part of Washington, trying to coerce North Korea into giving up the military aspects of its nuclear program.[42]

However, there was another aspect of Pyongyang's relationship with its adversaries that had been absent in previous time frames. Following the ousting of the military junta in South Korea from power and the initiation of an open-door policy to the North in 1988, trade volume between the South and the North increased dramatically, growing from $18.7 million in 1989 to more than $176 million in 1994.[43] Following the South Korean pattern, the George H. W. Bush administration initiated, for the first time since the armistice of 1953, a direct dialogue between American and North Korean diplomats. The two sides first met in Beijing in December 1988 and continued the talks at the consular level for the next 4 years. Eventually, the dialogue led to the first visit of a North Korean top official, party secretary Kim Yong Soon, to the United States, where he met with Under Secretary of State Arnold Kanter for discussions about the nuclear issue.[44] However significant this tacit recognition of the authority of the regime in Pyongyang north of the

38th Parallel was, it did not bring about an immediate reduction in the developmental status of the North Korean nuclear program.

Eventually, it was an increase in North Korea's defiance that brought its American adversary to propose a package deal attractive enough to substantially lower Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability, encompassing the possibility that its American adversary would be transformed into a cooperative partner. North Korea's refusal, on February 10, 1993, to allow the IAEA to inspect two suspected sites, followed by the announcement on March 12, 1993, of its intention to withdraw from the NonProliferation Treaty (NPT),[45] forced President Clinton to consider two options presented to him by the Pentagon and former President Carter, respectively. The Pentagon's operational plan 5027, designed to destroy North Korea's nuclear installations, entailed the probability of a high cost in human lives. Carter's Track II diplomatic efforts focused on breaking the deadlock with North Korea by lowering its sense of vulnerability.[46] Clinton chose the latter.[47] Thus, it was the American guarantee of the safety of the regime in Pyongyang, wrapped up in a series of gestures as manifested in the Framework Agreement, that enabled its signature. Pyongyang "committed itself to give up nuclear-arming in return for replacement of its nuclear reactors (with two light water reactors), a supply of fuel oil, security guarantees, an end to the American economic embargo, and gradual diplomatic normalization."[48]

FOLLOWING THE 1994 FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

The high expectations that followed the signing of the Framework Agreement were not fulfilled. The

project suffered many setbacks because of mutual suspicions and mistrust. Pyongyang was reluctant and hesitant to accept South Korean modeled light water reactors. The American Congress, for its part, was uncooperative in appropriating the necessary funding for U.S. obligations as agreed upon in the 1994 framework, though Washington's economic role in funding the project was a symbolic one in comparison with Seoul's, which promised to bear the lion's share of the costs, estimated at around $4.5 billion.[49] In 2001, the reactors' project was 5 years behind schedule.[50]

As the Framework Agreement was experiencing major setbacks, another issue inflamed the reemerging mutual mistrust. The American rhetoric surrounding the negotiations that dealt with North Korea's missile development and deployment program and its missile proliferation activity was aggressive and demanding. It conveyed the impression that the United States was interested in scraping off another layer of North Korean strategic defense even before the implementation of the nuclear bargain had marked substantial progress. The 1998 Rumsfeld Report depicted Pyongyang's violations of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), with an emphasis on its development of the long-range Taepodong I and II missiles, as a national threat. It also pointed out that North Korea's August 1998 ballistic missile test-fire of the Taepodong I over Northeastern Japan "served as a major catalyst for the [U.S.] NMD [National Missile Defense] effort."[51] Pyongyang had a different perspective regarding the NMD, especially after pledging in September 1999 a moratorium on missile tests for as long as the missile negotiations with the United States continued. Scott Snyder points out that:

> The North Korean media has been unusually sensitive to high-level U.S. administration characterizations of North Korea as a threat and as a rationale for NMD. North Korean officials have reacted negatively to the perceived double standard of continued U.S. NMD testing while they have pledged Moratorium on North Korea's Missile tests.[52]

The tension between Washington and Pyongyang was aggravated further with the coming to power of George W. Bush. It did not take long for the new administration, which placed at the center of its foreign policy the active promotion of liberal political institutions and democratic values,[53] to come head to head with the regime in Pyongyang. In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, President Bush depicted the North Korean regime in a diabolic manner, alongside the Iraqi and Iranian regimes:

> North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens … States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger.[54]

Still, both countries continued to comply partially with the 1994 agreement, and North Korea continued to keep its plutonium project in deep freeze. This situation was not to last long. In late 2002, less than a year after the State of the Union address, as a result of U.S. intelligence evidence presented to it by Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, North Korea was compelled to admit that it had developed in secrecy—probably since 1996[55]—a different nuclear project, one based on enriched uranium. Consequently, the Framework

Agreement, already dysfunctional due to the setbacks in its implementation, was put on hold.[56] Nevertheless, Washington had knowledge about Pyongyang's enriched uranium track at least since 1998, as reported to Congress by Larry A. Niksch of the Congressional Research Service on August 27, 2003.[57] Clinton, in his memoirs, denies Niksch's claim that his administration knew about the uranium track since 1998.[58] However, let us presume for a moment that Niksch[59] reported the truth to Congress. In such a case, why didn't President Clinton deactivate the Agreement? We may find the answer in his memoirs:

> Some people said this development [producing high enriched uranium] called the validity of our 1994 agreement into question. But the plutonium program we ended was much larger than the later [uranium] laboratory effort. North Korea's nuclear program, had it proceeded, would have produced enough weapons-grade plutonium to make several nuclear weapons a year.[60]

Indeed, a data analysis conducted by the Institute for Science and International Security reveals that North Korea stopped discharging plutonium from its 5-megawatt reactor with the coming into force of the Framework Agreement (see Table 1). Moreover, it reveals that, prior to October 1994, Pyongyang had separated less than 20 percent (0-10 kg) of its present stock of separated plutonium (20-53 kg, as of mid-2006). This means that while up to the collapse of the Framework Agreement North Korea did not have any nuclear weapons, or possessed two at most, it might currently hold between four and 13 nuclear bombs.[61] Thus, the mere presence of the Framework Agreement, though mutilated by the setbacks in its imple-

mentation, contributed to a significant decrease in the developmental status of North Korea's nuclear program during the late Clinton era.

Plutonium Discharged from 5 M We Reactor		Plutonium Separation		Weapon Equivalents*
Date	Amount (kg)	Date	Amount (kg)	(number)
Before 1990	1 – 10**	1989 – 1992	1 – 10	0 – 2
1994	27 – 29	2003 – 2004	20 – 28	4 – 7
Spring 2005	0 – 15	2005 – 2006	0 – 15	0 – 3
In core of 5 M We Reactor	5 – 7	--	--	--
Total	43 – 61		20 – 53	4 – 13***

Comments
* It is assumed that each nuclear weapon would require 4-5Kg of separated plutonium.
** This quantity includes up to 1-2 kilograms of plutonium produced in the IRT reactor prior to 1994 service. (See text.)
*** The upper bound of the number of weapons is higher than the sum of the individual upper bounds, because particular periods list more plutonium than needed to give the upper bound for that period.
Source: David Albright and Paul Brannan, "The North Korean Plutonium Stock Mid-2006," Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), June 26, 2006, p.10.

Table 1. North Korean Plutonium Production and Separation, as of Mid-2006.

Though a mechanism known as the Six-Party Talks, which include the United States, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea, was launched in an attempt to resolve the deadlock over the nuclear issue, it has failed so far to persuade North Korea to discontinue its uranium project and its renewed development of the plutonium project. It is only plausible, though, that U.S. efforts would encounter fiercer North Korean resistance, since these talks are overshadowed by an increase in North Korea's sense of vulnerability. North Korea's inclusion in the axis of evil and the breakdown of the Framework Agreement were followed by other proclamations and actions perceived as challenges to its sovereignty. Prominent among

these actions is the North Korean Human Rights Act. Passed by the Senate in September 2004, it authorizes funding for programs to promote human rights, democracy, and a market economy inside North Korea and for increasing the availability of information sources that are not controlled by the North's regime. It calls on other countries to join Washington in ensuring that humanitarian aid will be delivered only by way of monitored transparent channels, and it states that any future nonhumanitarian aid will depend on the progress in human rights.[62] The act and its innuendo, the need to change the North Korean regime or its nature, were soon followed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's denouncement of Pyongyang as an, "outpost of tyranny,"[63] and by the appointment of Jay Lefkowitz as a special envoy on human rights in North Korea.

All in all, during George W. Bush's presidency, the renewed increase in North Korea's sense of vulnerability gained much momentum. This increase had started during Clinton's presidency because of the setbacks in implementing the Framework Agreement and the controversy over Pyongyang's missile program. However, although during Clinton's late years in office Pyongyang was secretly initiating a new nuclear project based on uranium enrichment, it refrained from reactivating its larger plutonium project until President Bush deactivated the Framework Agreement.

The time period from 2005 to 2009 demonstrates the dramatic ups and downs of the North Korean nuclear resolution. There were two weddings and two funerals during this period. Hopeful progress had been made with the 2005 Joint Statement and the 2007 Beijing Agreement. In the September 2005 Joint State-

ment of the Six-Party Talks, North Korea committed to "abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards."[64] At the Six-Party Talks held in Beijing in February 2007, North Korea did pledge to give up its nuclear weapons capabilities. Following this, it provided a U.S. delegation with about 18,000 pages of documentation detailing the operations of two of its primary plutonium-related facilities at Yongbyon in May 2008 and submitted a declaration of its nuclear holdings on June 26, 2008, which indicated that it had extracted a total of around 30kg of plutonium and used 2kg. However, these hopeful promises became immediately overshadowed by North Korea's two nuclear tests in October 2006 and May 2009.

Two changing factors, related to North Korea's two adversaries, had resonated with this North Korean nuclear roller coaster: the Bush administration's ambivalent approaches toward the North Korean nuclear issue and the emergence of the conservative administration in South Korea. With the start of its second term, the Bush administration sought to use its sticks and carrots for North Korea in a more balanced manner. However, with hindsight, this approach was no more than ambivalent. In the face of North Korea's Foreign Ministry announcement on May 11, 2005, that it had finished the retrieval of 8,000 spent fuel rods from its Yongbyon reactor,[65] the United States had an unprecedented number of bilateral talks with North Korea within the Six-Party Talks framework in July 2005, which would eventually lead to the 2005 Joint Statement. On the other hand, the United States used financial sanctions to put more pressure on the North. Under Executive Order 13382, issued on June 29,

2005, by President Bush,[66] the U.S. Treasury Department announced that it was freezing the U.S. assets of three North Korean entities responsible for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the missile program and barring its citizens and companies from doing business with them. Just 4 days before the agreement on the 2005 Joint Statement, the United States froze U.S.$25 million in North Korean accounts in the Banco Delta Asia (BDA), which was accused of helping North Korea launder funds and distribute counterfeit U.S. currency. These and subsequent U.S. financial sanctions increased Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability, deteriorating North Korea's cash-flow problems. They served consequently as a stumbling block for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem in general and the Six-Party Talks in particular. Pyongyang boycotted the Six-Party Talks, demanding the lifting of the freeze of the BDA's fund. Just 1 month after the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project to build two light water reactors (LWR) in North Korea was formally terminated in June 2006, Pyongyang test-fired seven ballistic missiles, including its longest-range missile, the Taepodong-2, breaking its voluntary moratorium on flight testing longer-range missiles, which it had observed since 1999. On October 9, 2006, North Korea conducted an underground nuclear test. It is quite reasonable to argue that North Korea conducted missile and nuclear tests to end the U.S. financial sanctions and urge Washington to make a deal with Pyongyang. Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, made sure that North Korea was considering U.S. policy toward the country as the main factor for determining its nuclear testing. He said, "[T]he issue of future nuclear tests is linked to

U.S. policy toward our country . . . If the United States continues to take a hostile attitude and apply pressure on us in various forms, we will have no choice but to take physical steps to deal with that."[67]

The United States took the lead in the passage of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1718 against the North, but at the same time it began to take a softer policy toward North Korea. In the 2007 Beijing Agreement, the United States committed to providing, in phase, heavy fuel oil to North Korea in parallel with Pyongyang's gradual dismantling of its nuclear program. It also agreed to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and not to apply the Trading with the Enemy Act to North Korea. In April 2007, the United States agreed to unfreeze the U.S.$25 million in the North Korean BDA account with the condition that these funds would be used only for humanitarian purposes. With Pyongyang's involvement with a Syrian nuclear facility reinforcing the Bush administration's fundamental mistrust of North Korea, however, the United States demanded excessive verification measures that went beyond the agreed commitments of the Six-Party Talks. This issue of verification had begun to serve as a major cause for U.S.-North Korean conflict and mutual mistrust. With the United States and the North failing to make a breakthrough on this issue, the North launched the so-called Unha-2 rocket, a modified version of its Taepodong-2 ballistic missile, in April 2009 and conducted the second nuclear test in May 2009.

North Korea's rocket launch and nuclear test in 2009 was also catalyzed by the inauguration of the conservative administration in South Korea. After the election of conservative president Lee Myung-Bak in 2007, the South Korean administration immediately

denounced the so-called Sunshine Policy of reconciliation with North Korea adopted by its two predecessors and even proclaimed the possibility of not being bound by two declarations made by the North-South Summits in 2000 and 2007. Given the growing importance of the economic relationship with South Korea in the North's economy, this posed a greater threat to the North. Additionally, in March 2009, South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan indicated the country would participate formally in the Proliferation Security Initiative in response to the expected North Korean rocket launch.

CONCLUSION

With little faith in reaching a peaceful and sustainable solution to the nuclear question through engagement and negotiations with the regime in Pyongyang, some scholars argue that nuclear nonproliferation can be enforced on North Korea only through the use of coercive tools within a general framework of containment. On the other hand, other scholars, alarmed by the catastrophe that might result from a vigorous attempt to confront and/or topple the regime in Pyongyang, suggest bypassing it and engaging the North Korean people in the hope that they will gain enough power to transform North Korea into a democratic, nuclear-free country. Indeed, current American policy toward North Korea reflects to a great extent both stances.

However, the problem is that these approaches are built upon the assumption of North Korea's offensive rationale for developing nuclear weapons. North Korean history indicates that Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability has a positive relationship with the devel-

opmental status of its nuclear program. This deviates from Eberstadt's claim that the regime's rationale behind the program has been predominantly and persistently offensive since its initiation. On the other hand, this supports Krause and Wenger's claim that the predominant rationale behind Pyongyang's nuclear program is deterring what it perceives as threats to the survivability of its regime—namely, to a large extent, American power. On the basis of this finding, it can be argued that if North Korea's perceived vulnerability can be significantly reduced, it is more likely to give up its nuclear arms program.

Then how can Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability be significantly reduced? The observations of this study suggest that Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability has been more influenced by its perception of its adversaries' hostility than by its perception of its allies' guarantee of its security. During the 1960s, Pyongyang perceived that its allies had strong interests in guaranteeing North Korean security, but its perception of the continuous hostility from its adversaries increased its sense of vulnerability, which resulted in its continuous pursuit of a nuclear program. Despite the decreasing guarantee by Moscow and Beijing for Pyongyang's security since the late 1960s, Washington's progressive approach toward Pyongyang had reduced its sense of vulnerability so significantly during the period from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s that the North was willing to sign the Agreed Framework in 1994. This indicates that the key to reducing North Korea's sense of vulnerability and bringing it back into compliance with international nonproliferation regimes is in the hands of its adversaries rather than those of its traditional allies. In this sense, we may thus assume that China is not bluffing when it claims that it lacks the

necessary leverage to push North Korea into an internationally agreed upon solution to the nuclear problem. America's call for China to put more pressure on North Korea may not yield a significant breakthrough for the North Korean nuclear resolution. The key factors to determining Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability and, hence, the future of its nuclear program, are what the United States projects and, more importantly, the manner in which its messages are perceived by North Korea.

In this sense, the two previous U.S. administration's policies towards the North Korean nuclear question can provide invaluable lessons to the contemporary U.S. Government. The 1994 Framework Agreement manifested, among other things, tolerance toward diversity, a theme borrowed from Nixon and Kissinger's foreign policy during the 1970s. President Clinton, who included in the agreement the normalization of relations between Washington and Pyongyang, signaled the *de facto* acceptance of the totalitarian regime in Pyongyang, a clear divergence from his goal of spreading liberalism and democracy, which he had pursued since he came to office. Hence, the reasoning of the 1994 Agreement was not to first wrest from North Korea its strategic deterrent and then proceed with toppling its regime. On the contrary, the purpose was to incorporate North Korea, as it is, into the international community, with the hope that time would yield a change in the nature of the regime as it mingles with the other members of the international community, particularly the United States. In other words, the purpose was not to convey the sense that the United States was planning to topple or coerce the regime in Pyongyang into a change of nature, but to patiently lure it, by its own consent, into such a change.

The Bush administration seemingly took an important step toward reducing Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability by expressing its willingness to give assurances to the security of North Korea, to respect its sovereignty, and to take steps toward the normalization of relations—all in return for North Korea's total nuclear disarmament.[68] Nevertheless, overshadowing and contradicting those promises and guarantees is the North Korean Human Rights Act, which strives to promote democracy in North Korea at the expense of the totalitarian regime, and the ensuing appointment of a special envoy on human rights in North Korea. Without resolving these contradictions, Washington will continue to project ambiguous intentions through its foreign policy, hindering a significant change in North Korea's sense of vulnerability.

From these experiences, the contemporary U.S. Government must learn that engagement with the current regime in Pyongyang and the forgoing of endeavors to promptly and forcefully push democracy in North Korea are inseparable prerequisites to a peaceful and long-lasting solution to the North Korean nuclear question.

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