

North Korea's First 2006 Nuclear Test: Balancing against Threat?

by

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis investigates the events leading up to and following the first North Korean nuclear test, which took place in 2006, in order to examine first, whether the test helped the North Korean regime survive, and second, how this unilateral action acted as a balance to the United States' policy of oppression. The thesis will also attempt to shed some light on the validity of the Western International Relations (IR) theories by ascertaining the balance of threat and applying the notion of "two-level games" to the nuclear conundrum. Through the lens of these IR theories, the research described in the thesis addresses three smaller questions: (1) how did the nuclear test stabilize Pyongyang's integrity as a balance to the threat of a potential American military attack?; (2) how was the test used as a bargaining mechanism to urge the Bush administration to shift away from its hostile stance and towards a policy of engagement?; and (3) how did the test influence the security environment of the Northeast Asian region?

Finally, the thesis considers various reasons why the nuclear deadlock in which we currently find ourselves will not be resolved in the foreseeable future, and it suggests that resolution of the nuclear stalemate can only occur once comprehensive deal-making incentives between Washington and Pyongyang are adopted.

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Table 2-1 Aggregate Power Index between U.S. & DPRK

List of Acronyms

ABC Policy	Anything But Clinton Policy
AF	Agreed Frameworks
BDA	Banco Delta Asia Bank
CVID	Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAI	Illicit Activities Initiative
IISS	International Institute for Security Strategy
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	Korean Workers Party
LWRs	Light Water Reactors
MD	Missile Defense
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MW	Megawatts
Neocon	Neo Conservatives
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OPCON	Operational Control
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative

ROK	Republic of Korea
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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Dedication

To people who are fighting for a better world,
To the South and North Korean people who dream of reunification,
And to my beloved family Bokyung, Yongjae and Henna.

Introduction

A. Research Question and Objective

Why do small and weak states want to possess nuclear weapons? What does the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter DPRK, North Korea, or simply the North) want to do with nuclear weapons? Foreign policy practitioners and scholars alike have wrestled with these questions for the last two decades, since the nuclear issue first emerged as a political hot topic in the early 1990s. There seems to be broad agreement over the main motivations and purposes behind North Korea's bid for nuclear armament: to deter actual attack from the United States, to stabilize state survival, and to normalize diplomatic relations with the United States. In addition, North Korea's entry into the nuclear arms race can be seen as an attempt to elicit outside economic aid, since the US is presently the North's "life-support" (Cha, V., & Kang, D., 2003, p. 18) in the US-dominated international world.

It is well known that the DPRK regime, headed by Kim Jong-Il, firmly desired to obtain external financial aid to revive its bankrupt economy, while at the same time stubbornly resisting outside political pressures toward political reform. It has been postulated that this lack of compromising may have caused instability in Kim's leadership. From America's standpoint as the world's sole hegemony, it is intolerable that the wicked and repressive communist state of North Korea continue to survive and maintain sovereignty even after the demise of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, refusing to ride the new wave of democracy and accept transfer into the sphere of the US's dominant international order (Harrison, 2002). The Northern regime believes that only possession of nuclear weapons can guarantee its survival. In fact, weapons of mass

destruction (WMD) – especially nuclear weapons – are extremely effective instruments of basic deterrence, because it is too dangerous to threaten a WMD-possessing state with conquest or “regime change” (Walt, 2005, p. 18). In terms of its steadfast security objectives, the DPRK has strived to deal with the United States as an equal sovereign state by leveraging its nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip in spite of its inferior national power. The current two-decades-old nuclear stalemate between Washington and Pyongyang has revealed the DPRK’s security paranoia, which extends beyond the standard dichotomy formula of the powerful state and weak state in the arena of international politics. North Korea’s fear of American strong-arm tactics escalated abruptly during the Bush administration, which began in the year of 2001. Once in office, the Bush administration immediately embraced an ‘ABC (anything but Clinton)’ policy, dramatically reversing the previous administration’s stance on North Korea.

This shift in US policy meant that hostile actions, not excluding the threat of pre-emptive military attack against the North regime, soon dominated the political scene, in contrast to the engagement policy of the Clinton administration; however, the Bush administration’s oppressive stance failed to prevent the launch of North’s first-ever nuclear test or produce a regime change. In current circumstances, faced with the reality of North Korea’s nuclear possession after three nuclear tests (2006, 2009 and 2013), the debate over the North’s nuclear quagmire needs to be raised anew: did North Korea’s nuclear weapons development program assist the state to ensure regime survival? The answer to the question must be “yes,” although the success of the North’s ploy has clearly been only partially successful; after all, the DPRK and the USA have yet to establish diplomatic relations, nor has substantial external economic aid come to North Korea.

This thesis aims to explore and expound upon the manner in which the DPRK nuclear weapons program helped to ensure the survival of the Kim regime. To do so, I will focus my analysis on the first (2006) of North Korea's nuclear test demonstrations under the Bush administration. This research will not provide an in-depth overview of North Korea's nuclear development history nor delve into its motivations; rather, it will focus narrowly on the hawkish policy pursued by the Bush administration during the period of 2001-2006, and discuss how this policy contributed to North Korea's subsequent nuclear testing. In doing so, this research will also address several smaller questions: first, it will analyze how the nuclear test stabilized the North's integrity and demonstrated that it could provide a balance to the threat of a potential US military attack; second, it will evaluate how the nuclear test worked as a bargaining chip to force the Bush administration to revisit the engagement policy and drop its hostile stance toward the North; third, it will analyze how the test ultimately influenced the security environment of the Northeast Asian region.

The primary contribution of this thesis is an enrichment of our understanding of how the 2006 nuclear test helped to ensure the DPRK regime's survival and act as a balance to the US's oppression policy. This research question is important from an academic perspective; the assessment of the security validity of the North Korean nuclear tests has been neglected, at least at the level of the security relationships between the nuclear weapons program and DPRK's state survival. In other words, "there has been much less discussion and consideration of WMDs in relation to North Korean political-strategic objectives" (Niksch, 2006, p. 109). Given the importance of exploring this state's security

agenda, this thesis will expose the insufficiency of present discussions in explaining North Korea's security dilemma.

A secondary contribution of this thesis will be to shed some light on the validity of the Western International Relations (IR) theories by applying "Balance of Threat" theory to the nuclear conundrum. With three nuclear tests conducted by North Korea within the last decade, it is necessary to re-think and re-examine the North Korean security agenda in the light of current political theory. Some theorists have argued that "few IR theories would offer a plausible explanation as to how a small country like North Korea has opted to pursue provocative foreign policy against the sole superpower in the post-Cold War international order" (Kim, Y., 2011, p. 22). In particular, Kolisnyk contends that the Western, ethno-centric accounts of North Korea's proliferation motivations are ill-equipped to deal with the nuclear choices of the DPRK (Kolisnyk, 2010).¹ However, all explanations require theories, and a well-elaborated theory should be applicable to a range of states, since every state has the unique characterization of a nation. North Korea was labelled as an "axis of evil" state by the Bush administration, demonstrating that administration's viewpoint that the North regime is quite different from other countries. Nevertheless, this point perceived difference between North Korea and other nations does not mean that explicit theories cannot apply to the DPRK. Policy outcomes have consistently surprised and encouraged observers into making theoretical innovations. One goal of this study is to motivate political scientists to seek and find a new perspective on this thorny and important issue (McEachern, 2010).

¹ Kolisnyk illustrates in his Master's thesis the limitations of existing theories to explain the nuclear proliferation of the DPRK. For more information, see Ben Kolisnyk, "The Limitations of Extant Theories of Nuclear Proliferation to Explain the Case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" *A thesis of toward the degree of Master of Arts, Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba* (2010).

B. Literature Review

This section examines the academic arguments that have been made concerning the DPRK's nuclear development motivations, surveying the methodologies and alternative approaches that have been applied to this problem over the last two decades of nuclear impasse.

Philip Yun (2006) discusses the importance of threshold levels for threats, and employs the "red line" model to illustrate why the Bush administration's coercive policy against Pyongyang was doomed to failure. He argues that any US administrative policy that held regime change as its objective and threat of force as its means was highly unlikely to succeed, and that the inevitable result of embracing such an unchanging (hard line) policy would be the acceptance of North Korea as a permanent nuclear weapons state. Yun's study is one of the few attempts to predictively analyze the US policy on the North Korean problem (i.e., prior to the first nuclear test) by applying an established theoretical framework on international conflict. Yun analyzes the salient factors needed for coercive diplomacy to succeed and applies them to the North Korean situation.

Youngwhan Khil (2006) contends that the conflicts over the DPRK's nuclear weapons program reflect the determination of North Korea to address both its security and its economic crisis, which threatens the regime's survival. According to Khil, Pyongyang has successfully employed a diplomatic stance of blackmail and brinkmanship in order to ensure the Kim regime's survival and secure foreign economic and humanitarian aid. The author contends that the prospect of achieving denuclearized Korean peninsula anytime in the near future is highly unlikely. To defuse the conflict that has emerged from the

nuclear crisis, Khil cautiously proposes a new alternative, which he terms a “package deal,” beyond the Six-Party talks.

Han S. Park (2007) asserts that the nuclear possession attempt was the only means of strategic deterrence available to North Korea to insure against imminent security threats. The nuke is the backbone of national defense, and, according to Park, it is important for the regime’s opponents to understand that Pyongyang will have no inclination whatsoever to bargain away its nuclear assets just for economic gains. If the nuclear asset is to be used as a bargaining tool, the payoff must include security assurances as well, and the North regime will be extremely unlikely to give away its only deterrence mechanism without reliable alternative security assurance. Park also points out that North Korea’s insistence on legally binding security assurances from the United States is reasonable, since Washington is the only nation that poses a real threat to its security. Thus, the multi-lateral setting of the (Six-Party talks) is acceptable for negotiations only if it includes a bilateral arrangement with the United States as the central component.

Chung-In Moon (2008) illustrates the nuclear impasse in terms of military balancing and security assurances; he identifies North Korea’s goals as (1) termination of the US’s hostile intent and policy, (2) international recognition of North Korean sovereignty, (3) normalization of relations with the US, and (4) economic and energy assistance. He adds that “the nuclear ambition is to balance the military equilibrium on the peninsula through the acquisition of asymmetric military capabilities,” and “Pyongyang learned that the nuclear weapons card can be utilized as powerful bargaining leverage in obtaining economic and energy gains.” To resolve the stalemate, Moon asserts that the most feasible and desirable option is a negotiated settlement through peaceful and diplomatic

means. In this vein, he favors the frame of the Six-Party talks, where the verifiable inspection and freezing of North Korea's nuclear weapons can be openly discussed, as can the lifting of sanctions. However, his conclusion fails to point out the limitations of the Six-Party talks, which give no incentives that could provide North Korea with a motivation to resume negotiations and make concessions. In reality, despite the past decade of international cooperation, from 2003 to 2012, the Six-Party talks have failed to reach any meaningful results via the multilateral negotiation frame.

Yongho Kim (2011) argues that North Korea's foreign policy should be considered a response to threat perception, with two focal variants: the security dilemma, which represents the external source of threat, and the succession, which is the internal source of threat. Lack of consideration of these perceptual variants behind North Korea's provocative behavior might lead to inaccurate estimation of its policy objectives and its resolve to take risks. In this context, Kim adds, "nuclear weapon, military-first politics, and a non-aggression pact with Washington are all policies that would bolster Kim's political survival. Other major interests, such as overcoming economic difficulty, including energy and food shortages for North Korea's state survival, would therefore be on a list of secondary priorities."

Dong-won Lim (2012), who was Director of the National Intelligence Service of Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea, henceforth), drew three conclusions through his meeting with Kim Jong-il in April 2002: "Kim Jong-il distrusted the US; he feared the US; yet he wanted badly to normalize relations with the US" (pp. 304-305). He contends that Pyongyang is strongly motivated to keep its WMDs and maintain a strong military force because of its fear and distrust of the US. It is clear that the regime is using nuclear

development as negotiation. Due to its fear of security threats from the US, “the North would find it difficult to give up the temptation to develop nuclear weapons. Washington and Pyongyang needed to carry out mutual threat reduction and build mutual confidence through a process of give-and-take.”

All of the above illustrates how the nuclear stalemate produced by the North regime was inspired by threat perception from the United States; however, the arguments described here are at times too simplistic to capture the full dynamics of the North Korean nuclear situation. In the next sections, I will show how Walt’s balance of threat theory can help us to arrive at a richer understanding of the nuclear standoff to date.

C. Methodology and Scope

This thesis draws on two theoretical bodies: the primary frame will be drawn from balance of threat theory, and the theory of two-level games will be introduced as a secondary frame (Walt, 1987; Putnam, 1991). In his book, *The Origin of Alliances*, Stephen Walt (1987) surveys the ways in which states respond to external threats to their security through an examination of the foreign policy history of the Middle East from 1955 to 1979. He finds that *balancing* (allying with other states against the prevailing threat) is far more common than *bandwagoning* (alignment with the source of threat) as a motivator for alliance formation; however, he emphasized that states balance against *threats* rather than against power alone. Further, ideology is a weak motivation for making alliances; neither foreign aid nor political penetration is a cause of alignments. In this context, threat stems from a certain possible situation: “when a leader perceives that his values and interests are endangered, and at the same time, the leader perceives an

inability to control events and faces a lack of resources to manipulate against this threat, we witness a leader who perceives threat,” (Eriksson, 2001, as cited in Kim., Y, 2011) and “Perception of threat frames the situation in a way that would emphasize possible gains or possible losses” (Kim, Y., p. 4).

According to Walt’s illustration, when states behave rationally, they will choose to build alliances based on real threats rather than the possibility of dangers; furthermore, states are more cautious toward states that display aggressive intentions and relative supremacy of power rather than they are toward states that lack aggressive intentions. States behaviors are determined by external threats and balance of threat, not by relative power or balance of power. Faced with threats, states choose a balance between external responses, created through alliances, and internal responses, including self-military buildup to maintain balancing. This theory is designed to examine independent variables that will affect “the level of threat that states may pose: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions” (Walt, p. 22).

In the case of the DPRK, there are no currently reliable alliances available to protect its security, although China has critically influenced the North regime with ideological solidarity and economic aid. Thus, the only option available to the North regime is that of a less-expensive internal military buildup and a nuclear weapons development program. Samuel Kim also mentions that “balance of threat theory is arguably a better fit for the DPRK’s security behavior as it focuses on the alliance behavior of great powers and small states” (Kim, S., 1998, p. 12).

Despite the feasibility of applying this theory to the issue, however, Kim adds that the balance of threat theory seems fairly indeterminate, as it catalogues no less than four

independent variables (*aggregate power, geographic proximity, aggressive intentions and offensive power*), “without providing a priori an aggregate weighting formula” (Walt, p. 12). I believe that Kim’s objection does not hold in the context of the Bush administration’s oppressive North Korean policy. Samuel Kim’s argument might have been more appropriate to the late 1990s Clinton administration era, during which the American administrative policy toward the North was not threatening to the regime – in fact, toward the end of the Clinton administration, the US came close to diplomatic normalization with North Korea, going so far as to agree to an exchange of high-level officials in 2000. In short, the appearance of the US under the Clinton had been as a “benign hegemony not a rogue superpower” (p. 19) to the Kim Jong-Il regime. However, during the subsequent Bush administration, the security circumstances facing the DPRK regime revealed that the best course of action for the Kim regime would be to build military capabilities (*internal balancing*). However, accumulating a robust conventional military capability was too much of a burden for the impoverished North regime; therefore, it was rational for Pyongyang to develop nuclear weapons to counteract the threat of regime change, since the cost of nuclear weapons development is low in consideration of the scale of its national power (*asymmetric balancing*). In the aftermath of the Iraq attack, furthermore, Kim Jong-Il might have been convinced that the possession of nuclear capability would be the best available option to avoid the same fate as Saddam Hussein, who did not possess any nuclear weapons. Given the security concerns of the Kim regime, the North leader feared the threats of the United States much more than he feared its power, and “it is easy to imagine why Pyongyang would want a nuclear weapon as an insurance policy” (p. 155) against the threat of regime change. In

the chapters that follow, the research will explore this central research question by applying balance of threat theory to the first nuclear test case.

On the other hand, the account sketched above raises other questions: how can we explain the US's sudden shift in its policy toward North Korea, from "benign superpower" under the Clinton administration to "threatening rogue power" (p. 19) under the Bush administration? Why did the Bush administration, in effect, abandon negotiation efforts to resolve nuclear weapons and long-range missiles development begun by the Clinton administration? What internal division within the US government resulted in that administration's failure to stop North Korea's first-ever nuclear demonstration in spite of its solid steadfast policy toward the North? What caused the change to the epistemological conversation among the US policy makers concerning Kim Jong-II, when there was no change in that leader's interests and identity? As an illustration of this shift in attitude, compare the following two quotes:

US Secretary of State Albright: Kim Jong-II is a good listener and a good party for dialogue. He gave me the impression that he is pragmatic and decisive.....Surprisingly well-informed, knowledgeable and good-humoured. (Lim, 2012, p. 253).

US President Bush: Chairman Kim is a dangerous person, a failed dictator, a tyrant, the axis of evil, a spoiled child or a pigmy (p. 303).

One of the main reasons for Pyongyang's nuclear deadlock is the perceptual gap that persists between the US and DPRK's leadership. "A different interpretation of the adversary's motivations leads to different policy prescriptions even under similar situations" (Kim, Y., p. 5). Hardliners in the Neoconservative (Neocon) camp in the Bush administration believed that any deal with the Kim regime would be meaningless; Vice President Dick Cheney even stated as much, declaring "We don't negotiate with evil, we defeat it." Since 2000, Washington has engaged in a war of words with Pyongyang, but

has not showed any real military action toward it. During much of the Bush presidency, Washington's approach toward the DPRK lacked consistency, particularly on the subject of the North's nuclear policy, and was characterized by negligence, avoidance, and distrust. To investigate the puzzle of this shift in epistemology, this research will borrow from the two-level game theory of Robert Putnam, which presents a framework for analyzing the combined impact of domestic and international factors. The two-level game approach starts from the assumption that statesmen seek to manipulate domestic and international politics simultaneously (Moravcsik, 1993). "Diplomatic strategies and tactics are constrained both by what other states will accept and by what domestic constituencies will ratify" (p. 15) and "international strategies can be employed to change the character of domestic constraints" (p. 16). This approach recognizes that "domestic policies can be used to affect the outcomes of international bargaining, and that international moves may be solely aimed at achieving domestic goals" (p. 17).

North Korea's nuclear standoff is the final result of a process of international bargaining which went through a series of stages, including tension, rapprochement, conflict, and negotiation, in the aftermath of the 1994 Agreed Framework. To resolve the nuclear crisis (*external politics*) with negotiation, the Bush administration created a multilateral talk frame, the Six-Party talks, which included China, Russia, Japan and South Korea. The talks continued, with complications, to the last meeting in February 2012 from the first meeting in June of 2003. By adopting this multilateral talk frame, the Bush administration elected to substantially follow the political logic of the conservative camp within the Republican Congressional Party (*domestic politics*), which opposed the pursuit of direct negotiation with rogue states like North Korea. In other words,

embracing the Six-Party talk frame was an intentional expression of the American disinterest in direct one-to-one dialogue with the North regime. This disinterest stemmed from several sources. In particular, as the experience of the US-DPRK bilateral bargaining frame of the 1994 Agreed Framework under the Clinton administration had shown, entering into direct negotiations was likely to aggravate the financial burden for America. Additionally, the Bush administration felt that the multi-talk frame was an appropriate structure within which to threaten sanctions toward the North regime unless progress was made on the North Korean nuclear agenda. As Putnam writes, in this predicament over the nuclear issue, President Bush faced “distinctive strategic opportunities and strategic dilemmas at the multi-party negotiation” (Putnam, p. 459). Thus, the Bush administration wanted to use negotiation and sanction alternately throughout the talks. However, in the aftermath of the first 2006 nuclear test, the defeat of the Republican Party in the off-year election, and the surge of criticism over nuclear negotiation with the North, the Bush administration was forced to change over to a more measured, give-and-take negotiation approach. In the face of all these shifting factors, I contend that the two-level games approach is a compatible frame within which to explore both the various levels of bargaining that took place during the Six-Party talks over the North regime’s nuclear weapons program.

Finally, we must take into account one last problematic point: the dearth of reliable first-hand documents and literature on North Korean internal politics (and, even more significantly, on the decision-making process in Pyongyang’s political system). “For anyone who studies the North Korean foreign policy, the most serious difficulty remains that of how to get reliable data” (Kim, Y., p. 28). Understanding the North’s internal

political functions and policy decision is a basic step in analyzing and predicting policy outputs; however, results of methodologically rigorous research have been unsatisfactory and the problem has not been resolved. Han S. Park suggests that the *Juche* (self-reliance) ideology is the sole independent principle guiding North Korea's political and diplomatic goals and priorities (Park, H., 2002; as cited in Kim. Y., p. 26). However, Park's analysis is mainly concerned with the description of this policy's impact on political introduction within the North regime, rather than on the regime's foreign policy.

Recognizing this poor understanding of the North's political system, McEachern looks to fill the gap by applying the theoretical tradition of comparative politics together with empirical work on area studies (McEachern, 2010). He argues that "the lack of empirical research on North Korea is a great opportunity to make significant statements and expose substantial new data that have been largely overlooked.Even North Korea's controlled media is a useful window into the state's function precisely because it is controlled" (p. 12). He points out that "Kim Jong-Il makes the final decision with his absolute authority, without absolute power," and argues "one must evaluate North Korea's second-order institutions (the party, military and government) to more fully understand North Korean politics and variant policy outcomes" (pp. 37-38). With regard to the nuclear development attempts, McEachern illustrates "the party (Korean Workers Party, KWP), takes great pride in the high-profile ballistic missile and nuclear programs and which it views as too important not only to national defense but also to national pride. The military (Korean People's Army, KPA) also objects to negotiations because such diplomatic activity interrupts its ability to provide for the state's military based security. For the military, the weapons are an important element of national security that deters a

superior fighting force from pursuing a regime-change strategy. However, the cabinet's Foreign Ministry is the only institution that consistently presents the benefits of engaging with the Americans. The cabinet's strategic interests conflict with the military's and party's interests and platforms; it presents a strikingly different future for the North Korean state, with American security guarantees and economic revitalization" (pp. 6-7). However, McEachern fails to provide synthetic analysis of internal policy debates, mediation, and dissemination about the security agenda within the inner circle of the three political institutions that were involved during the first nuclear test incident in 2006. Without empirical materials on specific incidents, building-up theory in this case runs the risk of inaccuracy. Due to this scarcity of explicit data sources, the research in this dissertation will refrain from broad-scale speculation on the motivations of North Korea during the period of nuclear proliferation, focusing instead on the Bush administration's two-level games, i.e., his internal and external policy conflicts before and after the first nuclear demonstration.

D. Summary of Chapters

The rest of the chapters in the thesis are organized around responses to the research questions I identified earlier. Aside from this introduction, the thesis contains five chapters.

Chapter 1 searches for relevant IR theoretical approaches that may be available to study the North Korean nuclear programs agenda in terms of the North regime's political survival and security concerns. It analyzes the logic and brief theoretical basis of the neorealist approach, in order to understand why the North Korean nuclear weapons

dilemma has remained an international issue for over two decades. I will then examine why the balance of threat theory provides an effective framework within which to scrutinize the 2006 first nuclear test, and assess the logic and validity of this theoretical approach based on four independent variables (*aggregate power, geographic proximity, aggressive intentions and offensive power*).

Chapter 2 challenges certain oft-made assertions on the cause of the North's nuclear possession attempts. I will examine the mutually exclusive security interests of the US and DPRK within the US hegemonic world order. In the wake of the Cold War, the US has become a hegemonic state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). In order to maintain this US-dominated international system, one of America's main foreign policies has been the prevention of nuclear proliferation. In the international system, North Korea desires to assure the regime's security, and has used the nuclear issue as a negotiation tool to obtain security guarantees from and to improve political and economic relations with the US.

Chapter 3 will explore the hostile policy of the Bush administration toward the DPRK by using the two-level games framework developed by Robert Putnam, and illustrate how American hardline policy affected the concerned states' interests in the tensions in the Northeast Asian region. Specifically, I will assess the motives for the sudden epistemological shift in attitude toward the Kim regime within the US government, and look for an explanatory framework to account for the combined impact of domestic and international politics on American policy during the Bush presidency.

Chapter 4 applies Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory to demonstrate how the first 2006 nuclear test was an internal balancing in response to the financial sanctions

imposed by the Bush administration and the US's long-time aggregate and offensive power. The chapter compares the actions of multiple parties before and after the 2006 nuclear testing, and makes an assessment on the achievements and limits of the Six-Party talk negotiation frame in resolving the nuclear impasse. I then consider the Bush administration's late-game path change, which returned them to an engagement policy that embraced dialogue and negotiation.

Chapter 5 concludes by addressing the empirical findings from the research and provides a discussion on the present nuclear deadlock and its possibility for resolution in the foreseeable future. Although this thesis is not intended to provide any guide to resolve the two-decade old nuclear crisis, it does offer some advice on what the United States and North Korea together should do in order to resolve the nuclear stalemate. Finally, this thesis offers the insight that only comprehensive deal-making incentives between the US and the DPRK will transform the nuclear problem and put the world on the path to a peaceful resolution.

Chapter 1: Searching for Theoretical Relevance

A. Understanding DPRK's nuclear program through Neorealist Theory

Kenneth Waltz (2000) asserted that unbalanced power leaves weaker states feeling uneasy and gives them reason, regardless of the existence of specific threats, to strengthen their positions; concentrated power invites distrust because it is so easily misused. Moreover, Waltz suggests that “relatively weak and divided states may find it impossible to concert their efforts to counter a hegemonic state despite ample provocation” (p. 37). Rhetoric from both sides of the playing field has revealed a strong sense of conflict between the hegemonic US and the weaker DPRK for more than six decades since the end of World War II. The United States has a long history of intervening in inter-Korean relations, beginning with the plan for dividing the Korean territory into two countries shortly after the end of the War in 1945 and continuing with its role as a principal signatory of the armistice of the Korean War (the war with North Korea is technically not over yet). Since that time, the US has been a key ally of South Korea, and a staunch arch-enemy of its northern partner. The ongoing North Korean nuclear quagmire is a by-product of the long-standing hostile relations between the two states. This conflict has been reinforced by the stark power dynamics under the US's supreme unipolarity and reflects Scott Sagan's argument: “Every time one state develops nuclear weapons to balance against its main rival, it also creates a nuclear threat to another state in the region, which then has to initiate its own nuclear weapons program to maintain its national security” (Sagan, 1996, pp. 57-58).

In this section, I will briefly examine this problem from the neorealist perspective in order to better understand and to conceptualize why the North Korean nuclear dilemma

remains in an international stand-off despite the international community's efforts. As mentioned above, the goal of this thesis is to assess the connection linkage between Pyongyang's need for regime survival and its nuclear weapons development efforts by applying Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, which is one branch of neorealism.

According to Kenneth Waltz's argument (1979), the structure of the international system is defined as "anarchy" or the absence of central authority, in which the threat of violence is ever present (chapter 6).² This international anarchy is the principal force shaping the motives and actions of states (pp. 79-128); under anarchy, "security is the highest end as states do not have any other choices but to pursue self-help measures" (p. 126). The first concern of states is "not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system" (p. 126). Neo-realism is also called structural realism, and structural realists hold that states are constrained by the international system's unchanging (and probably unchangeable) structure (Layne, 1996, as cited in Schmidt & Williams, 2008); scholars in this ideological camp hold that change in the character of the units (states) is unlikely to change the nature of international politics (Schmidt & Williams, 2008).

The fundamental assumption of neorealism is "that 'a state's primary goal is survival'" (Kadercan, 2013, p. 1015) and "where states with power to hurt each other cannot trust each other, state behavior would be shaped largely by states' fear of violent and sudden death" (pp. 1018-1019). In short, only if survival (maintenance of political sovereignty and territorial integrity) is assured through the self-help of force equivalency, can states safely seek such other goals as tranquillity, profit, and power as means of their

² Kenneth Waltz's book, *The Theory of International Relations*, published in 1979, first illustrated the theory of structural realism, also interchangeably referred to as neorealism.

survival. Neo-realist theoreticians hold, therefore, that states value national security above all other goods and that military preponderance makes them secure (Sigal, 1998).

In the words of Henry Kissinger, the academic realist who became Secretary of State during the Nixon Presidency, “a nation’s survival is its first and ultimate responsibility; it cannot be compromised or put to risk” (cited in Baylis, Smith & Owens, 2010, p. 95).

Waltz also insists that when great powers behave aggressively, the potential victims usually balance against the aggressor and thwart its efforts to gain power (Waltz, 1979, chapters 6 & 8). To guarantee the guaranteed survival, the first concern of states is to maintain security in the system. In particular, some states try to increase their own strength or ally with others in order to bring the international distribution of power into balance (Waltz, 2000). The attainment of security is possible through the build-up of military capability (internal balancing) and the forging of secure alliances (external balancing) with great powers; these are minimum prerequisites for all states to defend against outside threats. Even the present reality of an overwhelming US hegemonic international order only reinforces the fact that anarchic order and balancing is an unavoidable outcome for states in the international system.

According to Sagan’s argument (1996), weak states do what they must: one strategy is to join in a balancing alliance with a nuclear power, utilizing a promise of nuclear retaliation by that ally as a means of extended deterrence. Walt (1987) also argues that “countries with no resources should try to affect the balance of power by bandwagoning with strong countries” (p. 33). There is no ‘trust or credit’ in terms of security, nor eternal alliances among even benign states; thus, states should consistently seek to guarantee their own survival. In world politics, “overwhelming power repels and leads others to try

to balance against it” (Waltz, p. 28), and “when great powers behave aggressively, the potential victims usually balance against the aggressor and thwart its efforts to gain power” (Mearsheimer, p. 20). In a self-help system, “a state does what it must in order to ensure its own security” (Kolisnyk, 2010, p. 7). These perspectives support the assertion that there is no security-helper when a state gets in trouble in a world political system. In the early 1990s, the end of the Cold War transformed the key system of world politics from bipolarity to the US-hegemonic unipolarity; however, the shift did not change the fundamental structure of the international system, which remains anarchic. Each state still lives in the condition of anarchy, where there is no reliable world government to protect states *per se*.

Concerning nuclear proliferation, Waltz (1979) claims that in an anarchic international system, states will be compelled to acquire a suitable deterrent to match the nuclear capabilities of a rival state, and he contends that “the acquisition of nuclear weapons should be seen as the rational response of states attempting to protect their interests” (Ogilvie-White, 1996, pp. 44-45). Waltz identifies fundamental reasons for states to go nuclear (Waltz, 2003, as cited in Kolisnyk, 2010, pp. 7, 10):

Great powers always counter the weapons of other great powers, usually by imitating those who have introduced new weapons and deeper motives than desire for prestige lie behind the decision to build nuclear weapons, and deeper motives include responding to an adversary’s conventional military strength, obtaining increased security and independence at an affordable price, ensuring security when it cannot rely on an ally’s security guarantee. States may feel inclined to possess nuclear weapons because they sense that the security guarantees offered by stronger states are weak, disappearing, or nonexistent. In other words, they may take their security destiny into their own hands either through the acquisition of nuclear weapons outright.

North Korea, for example, eventually lost its security guarantees from the Soviet Union (USSR) following the USSR’s normalization of ties with South Korea in 1990.

Pyongyang had been protected against external security threats on the safeguard of the

nuclear umbrella of the former Soviet Union throughout the Cold War era. The DPRK failed to find any reliable military alliances that were able to replace that nuclear umbrella. The security fears of the North have thus been exacerbated in the aftermath of their abandonment by the USSR in 1990; the former Soviet Union had been the first state to approve the Communist North Korean regime shortly after World War II. The DPRK regime bore bitter witness to the realpolitik, truism that “alliances are only temporary marriages of convenience” (Mearsheimer, p. 33) for the great power’s selfish interests.

In addition to the Soviet Union’s estrangement from North Korea, the dissolution of the USSR that occurred in December 1991 marked the nullification of the Soviet-North Korean military treaty which was signed in 1961. According to Article 1 of the Soviet-North Korean Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Cooperation, the USSR was to support North Korea militarily without hesitation in case the latter would get entangled in an armed conflict (Kim, Y., 2011). However, during a visit to Seoul in March 1992, the Russian foreign minister Kozyrev stated that Russia would sell arms to “any country in the world except North Korea” (p. 82). President Yeltsin also confirmed to the visiting South Korean President Kim Yong Sam that Article 1 was “de facto dead” (*Hankook Ilbo* Newspaper, 1994, June 5; as cited in Kim Y., p. 83). The treaty was nullified officially in 1996 and Russo-North Korean relations remained without a valid treaty until 2001 (p. 83).

Another big brother in the Communist bloc, China, also took the same path, normalizing diplomatic relations with the South on August 24, 1992. The symbol of a long history of positive relations between North Korea and China is the 1961 PRC-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. Throughout the Cold War era,

Chinese leaders reiterated “the immutability of their militant friendship with North Korea ‘as close as lips to teeth’ to delineate the strategic importance of Korea to China as a buffer state against hostile external powers” (Kim, S., 2006, p. 188). But then, during President Jiang Zemin’s state visit to South Korea in 1995, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that the alliance did not commit Chinese troops to defending North Korea and that it would not support Pyongyang if North Korea attacked South Korea. In short, the treaty was just symbolic, not indicative of close military commitment; in this manner, “military ties between Beijing and Pyongyang were cooled due to a generational turnover” (Kim, Y., p. 85).

For the Pyongyang regime, the two big allies’ normalization of relations with the ROK government and the reinterpretation of treaty commitments signified, in effect, the loss of its main allies and the “realization of fear of abandonment.” Geopolitically, Pyongyang was left more isolated than before, and economically, the North began to decline, with the loss of its most important trading partner. North Korea had little bargaining power to compel these two main allies not to normalize relations with the South. In this context, the North’s decision to develop nuclear weapons begins to seem like the sole self-rescue measure for a state that had recently lost its international “security blanket” (Jang, S., 2009, p. 309).

On the other hand, another neo realist scholar, Mearsheimer (2001), often called an “offensive realist,” departs from K. Waltz in asserting that great powers “maximize their relative power” (p. 21), and “the search for power and security is insatiable, whereas Waltz says that it has limits” (Snyder, G., 2002, p. 151). Mearsheimer supports this assertion by arguing that; “Offensive realists believe that status quo powers are rarely

found in world politics, because the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals, and to take advantage of those situations when the benefits outweigh the cost” (Mearsheimer, p. 21). “A state’s ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system” (p. 21). According to Mearsheimer’s categories, defensive and offensive realists share a common perception; states’ main cause to compete for power is ‘structure’ and the first concern for states is to preserve their position in the system; however, states differ in how much power they want: “defensive realists’ position is that states concentrate on maintaining [a] balance of power [that is] not much [greater] than what they have, but offensive realism argues that all states maximize relative power with hegemony as their ultimate goal” (p. 22). He adds that great powers behave aggressively not because they want to or because they possess some inner drive to dominate, but because they have to seek more power if they want to maximize their odds of survival (p. 21). After the demise of the Soviet Union, the main challenge for the US has been to manage its power to minimize other states’ rise in the sole hegemonic system. “The altered U.S. supreme unipolarity was a new phase for maximizing the US power while maintaining a large and sophisticated nuclear arsenal of its own” (Walt, p. 43). The security challenges the United States was faced with was to deter the DPRK’s attempt at developing a nuclear weapons program. Washington cannot tolerate the fact that a “wicked and repressive” state like North Korea is still balancing rather than bandwagoning, even after the demise of the Soviet Union and Communist bloc, and refusing to transfer to the sphere of the US’s hegemonic international order (Harrison, 2002). The US has established unquestionable, all-encompassing influence globally as well as regionally, and so must seek to prevent the rise of ‘trouble makers’

that might upset this US-dominant leading world order. Faced with this unbalanced power, conversely, the North has tried to increase its own strength and ensure its survival through the possession of nuclear weapons. For the North's Kim regime, the main goal is to preserve power by survival (*defensive realism*) rather than increasing it in the US hegemonic world order (*offensive realism*). This security conflict between survival and hegemony has caused the security issues in Northeast Asia to proliferate for the last two decades in the name of the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

From the neo-realist perspective, security guarantees are surely a critical factor in encouraging states toward pursuing nuclear arsenals. To be sure, realist accounts emphasized that "states...increasingly depend on their own indigenous nuclear weapons because of weakened or obsolete security guarantees following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of bipolarity" (Ogilvie-White, p. 47). Sagan asserts, however, that "security-focused interpretations too often assume a particular threat, or lack thereof, to explain decisions to acquire nuclear weapons" (Sagan, 1996, as cited in Kolisnyk, 2010). Waltz also admitted that "nuclear proliferation dynamics are too complex for general theories of international relations to explain" (Waltz, 1995, as cited in Kolisnyk, p. 12), and "recognized the limitations of neo-realist approaches" (p. 12). Ogilvie-White also insisted "that none of the existing theories of nuclear proliferation provide a satisfactory explanation of proliferation dynamics" (P. 55).

The thesis accepts that neo-realist approaches cannot explain all nuclear proliferation motivations and logic; furthermore, security-related imperatives are too simple to allow for a thorough conceptualization of the proliferation process. Nonetheless, this research program will reveal that North Korea's perceived need for a nuclear development

program (military usage) originated from its threat perception concerning the historic mutually hostile relations between the US and DPRK since the Korean War.

B. Why Balance of Threat theory?

Walt (1987) explores the origins of alliance formations and explains why states choose to align and how they decide with whom to align. In response to previous work on this topic, which has taken a “power-centric” perspective, Walt focuses on the influence of ‘threat’ in forming alliances. He asserts that states are more likely to ally to balance against threats than to ally against power itself. His balance of threat theory is an attempt to provide a more informative alternative to previous “balance of power” theories by adding considerations of perceptions, geography, and ideology to the question of how states respond to external threat, either by *balancing* (allying with others to oppose the states posing the threat) or by *bandwagoning* (allying with the most threatening power). He surveyed the motives behind the formation of alliances in the Middle East from 1955 to 1979 and presents three main observations: (i) balancing is far more common than bandwagoning; (ii) ideology is less powerful than balancing as a motive for alignment; (iii) neither foreign aid nor political penetration is by itself a powerful motivation for alignment.

To elaborate this theory more accurately, Walt suggests four factors that impact the level of threat that a state may pose: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions (Walt, p. 22). As the goal of the present research is to analyze the implications and causal relationship surrounding North Korea’s first nuclear test and its regime survival, I will touch on all four of these independent variables to shed

light on the North's decision to pursue nuclear weapons development. Basing my analysis on Walt's arguments, I will adopt the definitions below (pp. 22-33):

a. *Aggregate power* is the population, industrial and military capability, and technological prowess of a state. The greater a state's total resources, the greater a potential threat it can pose to others. The total power that states can wield is thus an important component of the threat that they pose to others. States with great power have the capacity to either punish enemies or reward friends.

b. *Geographic proximity* causes states to be more influenced in their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant. Since the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. When proximate threats trigger a balancing response, alliance networks that resemble checkerboards are the likely result.

c. *Offensive power* is the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost. This power is related to aggregate power in that the ease with which aggregate power can be converted into offensive power (by amassing large, mobile military capabilities) is affected by the various factors that determine the relative advantage to the offense or defense at any particular period.

d. States having *aggressive intentions* are likely to provoke others to balance against them and even states with rather modest capabilities may prompt others to balance if they are perceived as especially aggressive. Perceptions of intent are likely to play an especially crucial role in alliance choices, however, when a state is believed to be unchangeably aggressive, other states are unlikely to bandwagon.

Walt illustrates that all of these four variables are likely to play a role in determining the balancing of threat; no single factor will in and of itself determine how vulnerable states will seek an alliance. In relation to conflicts and alliances, Walt considers the question of when states balance and when they bandwagon. He argues that balancing is much more common than bandwagoning and should be preferred for the simple reason that no state can be completely sure of what another will do. He adds that bandwagoning occurs under certain identifiable conditions and is dangerous because it increases the resources available to a threatening power and requires placing trust in its continued forbearance.

Since perceptions are unreliable and intentions can change, it is safer to balance against potential threats than to rely on the hope that a state will remain benevolently disposed.

However, among particularly weak states, bandwagoning is more likely than balancing. Weak states add little to the strength of a defensive coalition but incur the wrath of the more threatening states nonetheless, and are more sensitive to proximate power; thus, they will be concerned primarily with events in their immediate vicinity. In addition, Walt points out that weak states can be expected to balance when threatened by states with roughly equal capabilities but they will be tempted to bandwagon when threatened by a great power. In regard to the availability of allies, Walt asserts that “states will also be tempted to bandwagon when allies are simply unavailable” (p. 30) and more likely to balance in peacetime or in the early stages of war, as they seek to deter or defeat the powers posing the greatest threat. Lastly, he contends that ideology, foreign aid, and transnational penetration are weak motives for making alliances.

Walt’s hypotheses and arguments on the balance of threat theory are drawn from the diplomatic history of the alliance formation in the Middle East during the Cold War era. The world situation in that time and place was very different than the one faced by the DPRK in the current US supreme unipolar system; nonetheless, this thesis will show that Walt’s theoretical focus on ‘threat,’ and the four independent variables he identifies, are helpful for analyzing North Korea’s security perception and instability against the United States.

Table 2-1. Aggregate Power Index between US & DPRK ³

³ Sources: *The Military Balance*, published at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in the UK in 2007. Seo made this table for the two nations’ Aggregate power Index and cited the sources (Seo, H., 2008, p. 51).

National Power Index	DPRK	US	DPRK/US Ratio
Size of Territory	121,129km ²	9,629,09km ²	79.5
Population	23million	0.298billion	12.9
GDP (Per Capita, US\$)	900	44,394	49.3
Trade Size (US\$)	22.6billion (2002)	2,5375billion	1,122.7
Defense expenditure (US\$)	5billion	582 billion	116.4
Number of regular army	1.1million	1.5million	1.36

First, since the end of the Cold War, the United States has become a hyper- power which overwhelms the entire globe with economic, military, and technological supremacy. In combination with the enfeeblement of its former alliances with the Soviet Union and China, the emergence of the US as the only supreme world power maximized the security threat to North Korea. As shown in Table 2-1 above, the US's power far surpasses that of North Korea on every aspect of the national power index (*aggregate power*).

Second, Washington's supreme power allows it to "threaten other states' territorial integrity or sovereignty if it just wants to do at an acceptable cost" (p. 24). The US defense expenditures in 2003 were nearly 40 percent of the global total and almost seven times larger than that of the number-two power, China. The US Department of Defense now spends over US\$50 billion annually for "research, development, testing, and evaluation, an amount larger than the entire defense budget of Germany, UK, France, Russia, Japan, or China" (p. 34). The US attacked Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein on the pretext of the possible possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in 2003. The United States possesses the largest and most sophisticated arsenal of strategic nuclear

weapons, and is only the country with a global power projection capability (*offensive power*).

Third, the geographic distance between the US and the DPRK is significant, clean across the Pacific Ocean; however, “the US army continues to maintain 28,500 US troops in South Korea” as of 2013 (Whitlock. C., *The Guardian*, October 8, 2013) at a “direct cost of US\$ 2 billion as of 2002” (Harrison, 2002), while there have been no Soviet or Chinese forces in North Korea since 1958. American nuclear weapons were stationed in South Korea for several decades beginning in 1957 with the deployment of nuclear warheads on Honest John missiles and 280-millimeter long-range artillery. The US government proclaimed in 1991 that it had removed its tactical nuclear weapons from Korea, but did not rule out “the first use of nuclear weapons against the aggression by North Korean conventional forces” (Harrison, p. ix). Moreover, the US army continues to keep a wartime operational control (OPCON) of South Korean military forces which it plans to transfer to the ROK by December 2015 (*geographic proximity*).

Lastly, President George W. Bush labeled North Korea as an “axis of evil” state in his 2002 State of the Union address, and declared that North Korea would be a pre-emptive military target as well. Furthermore, it was Bush’s policy goal to achieve the total abandonment of North Korea’s nuclear ambition; they carried out this policy at the risk of an armed conflict on the Korean peninsula and even aimed to remove of the Kim Jong-Il regime with the use of military force. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld demanded revisions in the basic war plan for Korea (called “Operation Plan 5030”) and also sought money for new bunker-busting nukes from Congress when it appeared that the invasion of Iraq would move quickly to victory (Cummings, 2013, p. 76). The strategy was to

topple Kim's regime by destabilizing its military force, after which they would overthrow him and thus accomplish a regime change (p. 76). President Bush possessed a stunning combination of utter ignorance about Korea and visceral hatred for his counterpart in Pyongyang (p. 77).

As for Kim Jong-Il, in one meeting Bush exclaimed, "We want him to get rid of his nukes, and if he doesn't ... we have to get rid of him!" (Chinoy, p. 298) (*aggressive intentions*). In tandem with the factors of US threat, "South Korea's economic growth had allowed it to increase its defense spending each year, reaching US\$ 16 billion, which is less than 3 percent of its GDP, as the North was spending US\$ 2 billion, that is 20 percent of its GDP while its economy kept shrinking" (*aggregate power*) (Lim, p. 168). As of 2002, the North's defense expenditure is only US\$ 3.2 billion, whereas the South's is US\$126.1 billion (*offensive power*) (Seo, H., 2008, p. 49). The DPRK remains a formidable military force with serious conventional capability; however, the quality of some of this capability has been eroding due to aging equipment and technology, along with a lack of spare parts and fuel (Roehrig, T. 2013, pp. 52-53). On the other side, Washington and Seoul have a stable military deterrence toward Pyongyang based on the US-ROK mutual defense treaty which has been in effect since 1954. As a result, North Korea has good reason to worry, since the US has become more powerful than the rest of the world, and in fact is so strong that it can impose its will with impunity (Walt, 2005, p.71).

The security threat faced by North Korea apparently deepened further during the early 1990s, and naturally, uncertainty of regime preservation also escalated. The sudden death of Kim Il Sung, who had ruled the North for five decades, on July 8, 1994, followed by

the economic decline and mass starvation “that killed between 600,000 and 1 million” (Roehrig, p. 55) due to the natural disasters of 1995 and 1996, caused a comprehensive crisis perception among the leaders in Pyongyang. Faced with multiple crises, the DPRK chose internal balancing instead of external balancing, which would have been far less attainable.

Along with the bandwagoning strategies, the necessity of developing nuclear weapons, which would bring with them absolute deterrence power, at an affordable price, became all the more crucial in the face of the North’s bleak economic situation and inferior conventional military capabilities. It is still a subject of speculation when and why North Korea secretly launched its own nuclear weapons program as a major enterprise (Oberdorfer, p. 253), but suspicions of a North Korean nuclear program surfaced right after the start the Gulf War in February 1991 (Lim, p. 118). To consolidate its supreme hegemonic unipolar system, the US began at that time to concentrate on the prevention of nuclear proliferation as its key foreign policy; American administrators worried that possession of nuclear weapons by the North would lead South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan to seek their own nuclear projects. From the US’s strategic perspective in the East Asian region, “preventing North Korea from developing nuclear weapons became a critical issue” (p. 118). Generally, the core direction of the weak states’ foreign policy is to adapt itself to the international environment in order to survive (Seo, p. 51), but “it is not so simple for the lesser state to enter into a cooperative relation with the power state when the power does not want to set up these relations regardless of the lesser state’s efforts” (p. 52).

Throughout the Cold War period, Pyongyang had enjoyed its relative strategic value to the Communist Bloc, which brought with it the solidarity and patronage of the USSR and PRC. In the post-Cold War era, however, the DPRK has had to accommodate itself within a world order in which these former alliances have collapsed and the US, as sole superpower, has taken the lead. This altered state of affairs has deepened the North leaders' "permanent siege mentality" concerning their basic national security.⁴ The sudden geographic change around the Korean peninsula forced the North regime to realize the dire reality which remains: at present, it possesses no external balancing resources in terms of forming alliances. Faced with the abandonment of external balancing with the USSR and PRC in the post-Cold War era, Pyongyang appeared to realize the necessity of normalization with the US, to avoid diplomatic isolation or absorption through unification with Seoul (Seo, p. 93).

In addition, in line with the emerging US hegemonic world system, Pyongyang's new goal was to achieve a fundamental change in its adversarial relationship with the United States, to ensure that Washington would no longer view, and treat, North Korea as an enemy (Chinoy, 2008). When it first began to initiate diplomatic efforts with the US, Pyongyang's ultimate goal was to maintain both state sovereign and the autonomy of the Kim family's position as *Suryong* (supreme leaders); however, from the standpoint Washington, the North held little strategic interest. "Therefore, Pyongyang had to invent

⁴ *Siege Mentality* depends on the leaders' centralized authority and the needs of the society. An example of self-initiated siege mentality is the present case of North Korea which, following the changes that took place in Eastern Europe, isolated itself from the rest of the world, attributing especially negative intentions to capitalist countries. North Korea views other countries with extreme suspicion, minimizing relations with them (except with China) by maintaining a "closed door" policy. Cited from Bar-Tal, D. (2004, September). Siege Mentality. [Web log post]. *Beyond intractability*. Message posted to <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/siege-mentality>

any strategic merits and interests to offset the escalation of the threats by developing any internal balancing measures and to elicit sustainable attentions from Washington, whether positive or negative, in order to successfully approach the US” (Seo, p. 93).

The DPRK employed coercive policy by military ‘demonstration,’ not ‘attack.’ Here, we need to assess what it is meant by “coercive.” Thomas Schelling defines “compellence” as a threat which forces the other party to do something and “deterrence” a threat that inhibits the other party from doing something (p. 93); he reports that compellence and deterrence are identical in terms of threatening forms and means which could put pressure on the enemies (pp. 93-94). “He pointed out that the dual usage of compellence and deterrence is a feature of coercive policy” (p. 94). In other words, “the policy has to show a threatening military demonstration in order to have influence on the behaviors of the other party, for the threat reason, the North’s nuclear weapons development program seeks to create military deterrence and diplomatic compellence” (p. 94). On the other hand, “the coercive policy should demonstrate both credibility and potency in order to succeed in using the threat by coercive tactics” (p. 99). One of the coercive tactics employed by North Korea was its announcement of its intent to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in March 1993, requesting direct negotiations with the Clinton administration for a political resolution.

The Clinton administration (1993-2000) began diplomatic negotiations with the North regime in order to maintain the global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and remove the security threat in East Asia. Instead of isolating of the North regime, the administration implemented a soft-landing policy in an attempt to prevent the chaos which would occur in the event of the North regime’s sudden collapse, and tried to

induce the international participation of the North by encouraging reform and opening the country up to international society. Therefore, the Clinton administration's North Korean policy was based on "engagement & enlargement," in which the North regime was regarded as a target to be transferred into the influential sphere of the US (pp. 60-61). The 1994 Agreed Framework (AF) formed the core of US policy toward Pyongyang while Clinton was in office. Among the articles contained in the AF, articles II and III-1 were crucial for future US-DPRK relations and the North's security; they stated that the two sides would move toward full normalization of political and economic relations and that the US would provide formal assurances to the DPRK against the threat of the use of nuclear weapons by the US (Agreed Framework, *IAEA*, Nov. 2, 1994). The first nuclear crisis (1993-94) ended with the settlement of the AF under the Clinton administration, which the North regarded as a triumph of its diplomacy. Therefore, Pyongyang was able to escape from the constant perception of threat for a brief period time. Clinton also sought normalization with the North with his planned visit to Pyongyang in the latter stages of his presidency, although ultimately, the Clinton visit did not occur. Throughout the Clinton administration, the US took the role of a 'benign superpower' toward the North regime in spite of the plan of an aerial strike on the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon of North Korean territory in June 1994.⁵

However, the Bush administration (2001-2008) entered office with the intention to revamp policy, not with a continuation of the previous administration's efforts, but by

⁵ After the failure of a "package solution" between the US and the DPRK regarding inspections nuclear facilities at Yongbyun in the spring of 1994, North Korea started unloading spent fuel rods in disregard of a US warning. Having judged that diplomatic efforts had failed, then-secretary of Defense William Perry insisted that the US should wage a pre-emptive attack on the nuclear facilities at Yongbyun. This incidence is so-called the first nuclear crisis which almost developed to the brink of war, but a breakthrough was achieved when former president Jimmy Carter met with Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang. Consequently, the Agreed Framework (AF) was signed in Geneva in October 1994.

pursuing a policy opposite to Clinton's, which is often referred to as the 'ABC' (anything but Clinton) policy approach (Lim, p. 269). "The keynote of the new administration was to seek the global hegemonic strategy with a coercion based on power" (Seo. p. 61), which included insistence on regime change within the rogue state of North Korea. The Bush administration's basic mindset toward the DPRK can be summarized as follows,

"North Korea is a single-party dictatorship. It is unpredictable and suspicious; Kim Jong-Il is failing to feed his people and infringing upon human rights; their recent move toward opening is a trick and a magic show to gain economic assistance; North Korean missiles and conventional arms impose a serious threat to the United States." (Lim, p. 269)

Hardliners in the US have depicted North Korean leaders as irrational or even crazy, and from this perspective, they tried to "explain why the North regime want nuclear weapons and why they might use them to attack the US" (Harrison, p. 197). In 1997, "the CIA invited outside experts to join a panel of government officials, which concluded that North Korea was likely to collapse within five years" (Cummings, 2013, p. 74). The assembled CIA experts anticipated "North Korea will lead to collapse without major reform and Kim's regime could not persist beyond five years, yielding a political implosion" (p. 74). Nicholas Eberstadt first predicted a North Korean collapse in an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* (1990, June 25, as cited in Cummings 2013, p. 68) and elaborated on his assertion in an article, *the end of North Korea* (2000). He took the position that North Korea's collapse was close, but that Western policy-makers prolonged the situation by continuing to appease and protect the rogue state (p.50). His reasoning formed the dominant discourse in the Bush administration and the preferred policy of hard-liners for several years as well; ultimately, all of these assumptions proved false and irrational in light of recent history (Cummings, p. 75).

In 1990, the ROK's "Roh Tae Woo administration did not choose to accept the imminent collapse prognostication that the US intelligence community and some North Korea specialists supported" (Lim, p. 86). The ROK believes that, unlike the Eastern European communist country of Romania, "North Korea would not suddenly collapse, and to suppose so was wishful thinking, and the Roh administration determined that as long as North Korea had China's support, it was unrealistic to expect its rapid disintegration" (p. 86). There was no record of mass violence by the Kim Jong-II regime at that time; as such, the South Korean Kim Dae Jung administration (1998-2003) sought more comprehensive cooperation based on gradual change by holding political, economic and humanitarian exchanges with the North. This approach was termed the 'sunshine policy' following the first inter-Korean summit in June 2000. Most of all, the Kim Dae Jung administration perceived the American belief in the imminent collapse of the North as an 'unrealistic view' and opposed war with Pyongyang. Nor did they want a sudden collapse of North Korea.

Lim Dong-won, by then the ROK Director of the National Intelligence service, gave a briefing on the North Korean situation at the invitation of the CIA in February 2001, three weeks after Bush's inauguration. He said that "North Korea should have already collapsed by the yardstick of the Western viewpoint," and insisted instead on pursuing "analysis and judge[ment] in an Asian way.... with a Confucian tradition and Patriarchal system" (p. 258). Further, he warned of the problems of the collapse theory: "if the North regime were to collapse, there would be chaos, internal conflict or war, and that course would lead to its self-destruction and bring about national disaster on the peninsula" (p. 258). However, in his State of the Union address in January 2002, President Bush labeled

North Korea as one of the 'axis of evil' states, along with Iran and Iraq that would threaten the peace of the world. In addition, he labeled DPRK as a target for regime change by pre-emptive attack. "When the long-used label of 'rogue state' was replaced by 'a member of the axis of evil,' North Korea became one of the three main enemies of the US" (Lim, p. 289). Furthermore, Bush revealed his private hostility by describing Kim Jong-Il as a "failed dictator, a tyrant or spoiled child." In response to the threatening rhetoric of the Bush administration, the North regime grew angry, and was annoyed further by additional comments by the administration suggesting that the United States favored "regime change" in North Korea (Walt, 2005, p. 156).

This malicious rhetoric toward the North regime was ultimately regarded as an "oppressive intention," and the tough remarks were followed by a series of "offensive power" measures toward Pyongyang, including the missile defense (MD) program launched in May 2002, the assessment of pre-emptive strike capability, the development of tactical nuclear weapons, the launch of the War on Terror, and the implementation of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). These suddenly altered stances of the Bush administration caused a perspective shift in the North toward the US, from the "benign hegemony" of the Clinton era to a "rogue superpower." In response to the hawkish approach of the new administration, Kim Jong-Il admitted his security anxiety and perception toward the Bush administration to Lim Dong-Won during his special envoy visit to North Korea in April 2002:

We tried hard to work well with the Americans. Secretary of State Albright visited Pyongyang and President Clinton was planning to come here. We were able to communicate well with the Clinton administration.....President Bush says he wants to work with us, but doesn't he look down on us and make foul statements? Well, if they want to go war, let them do so. Of course, what we sincerely want is for Bush to withdraw hostilities against us and for us to coexist together (Lim, p. 304).

From Kim's conversation with Lim, it is apparent that Kim Jong-Il perceived the Bush administration as a threat; nevertheless, he wanted badly to normalize relations with the United States in order to sustain the North regime. North Korea's repulsion also emerged as a form of 'tit-for-tat' against Bush's hostile policy. In October 2002, the US sent James Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, to Pyongyang. Kelly presented the North delegation with evidence, collected by intelligence sources, that North Korea had secretly developed a highly enriched uranium (HEU) program. Kang Suk Ju, the key DPRK negotiator, surprisingly admitted to this. Pyongyang also asserted that, by including the DPRK in "the axis of evil," the United States had made it vulnerable to a pre-emptive attack; the Kim complained that the US was demanding that it surrender unconditionally, giving up all of its weaponry prior to any security guarantees (Khil, & Kim, 2006, p. 152). Moreover, the North demanded security assurance in the form of a non-aggression treaty between the United States and the DPRK as an immediate step (p. 152). The admission by the North vindicated the arguments of the hawks in the Bush administration that the Kim regime could not be trusted and negotiations would be useless. Consequently, the Bush administration abrogated the US-DPRK Agreed Framework, causing the North to also declare the AF null and expel the IAEA inspectors. The DPRK announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT on January 12, 2003, effective in April; thereafter, the so-called "second nuclear crisis" in the Korean peninsula surfaced, and remained active until the first nuclear test in October 2006. In sum, the North regime has shown clear threat perception toward the US, and has forged ahead with obstinate tactics in response to the hard and oppressive policy pursued

by the Bush administration toward them. Nonetheless, the DPRK is unlikely to give up its nuclear capability in order to avert the US's threat policy and receive security assurance.

Chapter 2: Beyond Perspective Threshold

A. US – DPRK: Mutually Exclusive Interests

The disappearance of the Soviet Union, which compromised the Communist Bloc's main axis during the Cold War, transformed the dynamics of global power and led to the US emerging as the supreme world order (Seo, p. 38). Under these new altered international circumstances, the DPRK's status shifted from a significant arm of the Communist Block in East Asia to a "rogue state" or "irrational but self-determined actor," excluded from the sphere of the American unipolar order (Seo, pp. 38-39). To be more exact, "the US led the democratic alliance axis, US-ROK-Japan, while the Soviet supreme communist alliance axis, USSR-PRC-DPRK, lost the balance of power with the demise of the Soviet Union" (p. 39). The ROK started to seek *Nordpolitik* under the Roh Tae Woo administration (1988-1993) and undertook diplomatic initiatives to normalize diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union (1990. 9) and China (1992. 8), both of which had been guardians for the North. In the post-Cold War period, the Soviet Union and China keenly perceived the necessity for better relations with the ROK, due to the South's emerging economic power. Unproductive ideological issues now were overlooked in favour of the two states' strategic profits. However, the North's own attempts at normalization with the US and Japan have, to date, failed.

Beginning in the late 1980s, the Soviet Union found itself in a painful economic situation, with a shortage of consumer goods and a budgetary deficit; faced with these circumstances, Gorbachev viewed a normalizing relationship with Seoul as a promising new source of economic assistance for the embattled Soviet leadership (Oberdorfer, p. 205). He wasn't concern with Pyongyang, "which was seen as a holdover from the

Stalinist era and the epitome of the Cold War states that were rapidly passing from history” (p. 205). In order to recover its diplomatic and economic handicap in the Korean peninsula, the North made efforts to normalize diplomatic relations with the US and Japan, but the two states did not reciprocate. Falling behind in terms of economy, alliances, and external security, the North has had few strategic cards to play to offset the internal and external threats it faces. Operating under the new conditions of the US-led hegemonic international order, North Korea, as a weak state, has had to deter potential military threats from the US and, at the same time, has felt it important to approach Washington in a diplomatic way, seeking to advance its regime’s survival. However, it is difficult for the weak to engage in cooperative relations with the strong unless the latter have a desire to enter into such negotiations. The North regime needed a ‘common denominator’ that could bring them up to the level of America strategic and national interests. To elicit positive political conversation from the US, Pyongyang leaders have consistently utilized nuclear cards. There are several exclusive interests that must be taken into consideration in order to explain the fundamental features of the US and DPRK relations and why any peaceful and cooperative relations have failed to materialize (Seo, pp. 42-63).

First, the two states have a tradition of hostility toward each other, having fought against one another in the Korean War (1950. 6.25 -1953. 7.27). This enmity continues, putting North Korea in the unenviable position of having its “half-century-long enemy state as the only superpower,” a situation that has resulted in an “unfavorable security environment” (Kim, Y., 2011, p. 3). Since the end of the war, “the two states were politically and economically antagonistic throughout the Cold War” (Seo, p. 43). During

this time, there were no official contacts except accidental occurrences. Kim Il Sung had been appealing for talks with North Korea's "archenemy since 1974, in hope of persuading the Americans to withdraw from the divided peninsula" (Oberdorfer, p. 193), but "Washington consistently refused even to talks without South Korean participation" (p. 194). According to Oberdorfer's explanation, "For many years the standing orders to American diplomats permitted them to speak to North Korean officials only about "non-substantive" matters when meeting them in social situations, and even then to terminate discussions as quickly as common courtesy allowed" (p. 194).

Due to the antagonistic relations, the US and the DPRK each arrived at a hostile understanding of the values, political and legal practices and national image of the other country, adding to the distrust and antipathy the two nations held against each other. In line with its keynote policy, Pyongyang established the US as its main enemy in its military strategy and consistently indoctrinated anti-Americanism into North Korean populace, promoting the US as the main enemy of the global communist revolution among its elites and the common people alike. This anti-American attitude, which functioned as an efficient tool to promote domestic integrity and reinforce its leaders' ruling power and still continues to the present, was constructed and fixed in the 1960s (Seo, pp. 43-45). During the same time period, the US declined to engage in any high-level talks, treaties, or agreements with the DPRK, refusing to even recognize the North as a legal state throughout the Cold War period. The US policy posture has remained largely unchanged, except for a brief but notable thaw during the final year of the Clinton administration (Harrison, xvi). Militarily, the US-ROK alliance has maintained a position of deterrence against the DPRK based on the 'mutual assurance treaty of the US-ROK'

which has been in effect since 1954. This military deterrence has been an excessive burden to the regime; accordingly, Pyongyang perceives this defense burden and the ultimate problem of the Korean peninsula has mainly been due to the threat of the US (p. 50). Due to the mutually hostile relationship between the two states, each military buildup has caused a “security dilemma: many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security is by decreasing the security of others” (Jervis, 1978, p. 169). Thus, “one of the most important reasons for the North Korean nuclear stalemate was perceptual gap between Washington and Pyongyang” (Kim, Y., p. 4).

Secondly, the US-DPRK relationship maintained a strong vs. weak asymmetric character since the end of the Second World War. This gap in national power between the two states is highly likely to magnify the US’s apathy, indifference or even antagonistic stance toward the North’s efforts for better relations. In addition, the US has a stabilizing alliance with South Korea, a country that is the main enemy of the North, and which has far superior economic and diplomatic influence in the East Asian region. For these reasons, North Korea had to create strategic playing cards to attract Washington’s interests. It was important for Pyongyang that “the existence of the North regime should be compatible with the national interests and strategic advantages of the US” (Seo, p. 53). The North’s national power could not compare with that of China, which boasts the highest regional power status. Although China adheres to the ruling communist party system, which is different from the individualistic democratic system of the US, nevertheless, it maintains strategic advantages with the US thanks to the supremacy of its national power in comparison to the DPRK. Furthermore, China is also a nuclear state. As a global hegemonic superpower, in order to stabilize the East Asian region, the US

has compelled the emergence of other nuclear states, especially small and weak rogue states like North Korea. American foreign policy-makers insist that nuclear weapons in the hands of rogue states, especially of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, cannot be tolerated within the American global security strategy. US leaders argue that rogue states armed with WMDs might engage in regional conflicts that directly threaten U.S. interests. The bottom line is clear: the United States remains committed to maintaining – and, if possible, enhancing – its position of primacy, at virtually all levels of strategic competition (Walt, 2005). In addition;

North Korean acquisition of nuclear weapons was seen as a potentially serious threat to the US interests, and especially the broad US goal of limiting nuclear proliferation. If North Korea got the bomb, it might be difficult to prevent South Korea and Japan from following suit, thereby triggering a potentially dangerous arms race in the Far East (p. 154).

Accordingly, “Preventing North Korea from developing nuclear weapons became a critical issue for the US” (Lim, p. 118). In 1994, the conflict between Washington’s non-proliferation strategy and Pyongyang’s nuclear development quest culminated in the first nuclear crisis.

Lastly, the US and DPRK, respectively, “hold out stark heterogeneous ideological political systems” (Seo, p. 53); the former has a democratic political system and a capitalist economic society based on individual freedoms and rights, while the latter sticks to collective communism even after the collapse of global socialism, in the name of the modern-styled dynastic Kim’s rule. For American policy makers, the continuing survival of the Kim regime, with its oppressive dynastic system, is incompatible with their ideological values. Despite the political shifts that have led to American hegemonic supremacy in the international with environment, the North regime has persisted in attempting to deal with Washington as a monarchic and dictatorial communist regime. “If

we apply the 'regime survival' interpretation of the anxiety, it becomes quite possible to suggest that the North leadership perceives a threat from the US to the stability of the present regime and is merely trying to reassure its regime survival by building deterrent capabilities" (Kadercan, 2013, p. 1025). Kadercan adds,

that... if states are compelled to choose between regime stability and territorial integrity, they would prefer losing territory to risking the survival of the regime to the point where territorial losses themselves start posing immediate threats to regime's stability. Even though territorial integrity is a major concern and most states will act as if threats to territorial integrity are in fact threats to regime's survival, when a difficult choice needs to be made, states will most likely choose regime survival over territorial integrity (p. 1028).

Contrary to the North regime, the South Korean government holds ideological homogeneity with the US and is a critical strategic partner for the US in the Korean peninsula. Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton both declared that the US would consistently commit to foster individual freedoms and human rights across the globe after the extinction of the communist states in East Europe. Unlike the North regime, both China and Vietnam, which fought with America in 1950s and 1960-70s, maintain the communist one-party system politically, but economically the two countries have already been incorporated into the capitalist system. In particular, they normalized relations with the United States after resolving past hostilities. Furthermore, China has become the largest economic trading partner of the US. In short, these two communist regime states have accepted the necessity of economic freedom to their survival instead of restraining political freedom in the name of "red capitalism" (Jang, 2009, p. 162). However, as Harrison notes, "What exasperates many Americans about North Korea is the very fact that it continues to exist at all and has not gone the way of the Soviet Union and the East European Communist states, thus finally confirming the ideological victory of the West in the Cold War" (Harrison, xiv).

The above mutually exclusive interests of the two states continue to crucially affect the US-DPRK relations in the post-Cold War era, and the structure of their conflicting relations has made the DPRK take internal balancing measures due to a lack of external balancing resources. Fundamentally, DPRK's nuclear weapons attainment is the product of the mutually exclusive relations between the two states. The conflicts between the two states have compelled the North to approach Washington in an attempt to lessen the threat and to acquire economic assistance from the US.

However, as a weak and hostile state, North Korea needed bargaining chips before it could deal with the great power. The necessity for an asymmetric balancing measure has far outgrown conventional military build-ups and now requires the possession of a nuclear weapons development program. Walt also notes that "the acquisition of nuclear weapons should be seen as self-help behavior by a state seeking to preserve itself – to survive" (Walt, 2005, pp. 4-5). To be sure, these power dynamics between the US and the DPRK instigated the "go nuclear" emphasis of the North regime, and Pyongyang is not likely, at this point, to give up its long-time nuclear development attempts unless doing so will provide external insurance for the North's security and economic survival. The North regime's perception of the US military threat was reached its greatest height during the second Bush administration. The momentum of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons armament program escalated following the commencement of America's war in Afghanistan in 2001 and its military attack in Iraq in 2003; the North regime came to believe that Saddam Hussein was attacked by the US because Iraq did not possess nuclear weapons. The American preventive attack doctrine against "axis of evil" states inspired Kim Jong-Il to accelerate armament of a nuclear arsenal. In other words, the comprehensive nuclear

attainment program of the DPRK was multi-purpose and indispensable for regime sustenance. First, the program is a valuable device for military deterrence and security assurance to prevent exterior attacks; second, it is a means for creating regime stability and political leadership buildup; third, it is a tool for eliciting comprehensive economic assistance from neighboring states; lastly, it is a bargaining chip that allows for the weak nation to consolidate sovereignty and national pride. The possession of nuclear weapons, in a sense, is the necessary and sufficient condition for the Kim regime's survival; thus, the abandonment of this program comes to be seen as the *de facto* renunciation of that regime. North Korea's initial October 2006 nuclear demonstration revealed the extent of North's threat perception toward the Bush administration and their insecurity about their ability to survive politically.

B. The United States: Threat and Lifeline

“Generally, states that want to possess nuclear weapons have the same reasons; to stem the fear of outsiders' attacks, to maintain security and safety, to buildup power and influence compared to other countries or to confront other states' power and intensifying influence, and to enhance national sovereignty in the international community” (Jang, pp. 185-186). As Walt (2005) demonstrates, weaker states are aware that a WMD arsenal can offset some – though of course not all – of the advantages that stronger state would otherwise possess. The motivations of the DPRK include all of the above categories. However, debates about how the DPRK perceives the United States become complex and contradictory in light of the North regime's survival and security concerns. The historical and structural relations between the two states throughout the post-Cold War era have

been and continue to be tense, despite the exchange of high-level visits during the Clinton administration in the year 2000. The mutually exclusive ideologies held by the two countries have also crucially influenced the North's nuclear weapons program, and Pyongyang is unlikely to give up its asymmetric strategy unless it attains its goals. In essence, the North's active nuclear weapons program worked because it was seen as serious escalation toward the threat of general war in the peninsula. During the first nuclear crisis in May 1994, Senator John McCain made a Senate speech "calling for air or cruise strike pre-emptive attack against the Yongbyun nuclear facilities," clamming that such a strike "could effectively damage its capabilities with little or no radiation release" (Harrison, p. 117). In response, Secretary of Defense William Perry said that "such a strike was highly likely to start a general war in the Korean peninsula" (p. 123).

As noted in the introduction, under Clinton, the appearance of the US was that of a "benign hegemony," whereas under the Bush administration it became a "rogue superpower" (Walt, 2005, p. 19) with aims against the Kim Jong-II regime.

Paradoxically, Pyongyang came to regard the US as both the main 'threat' against its regime, and at the same time, a main 'lifeline' for its regime's survival, irrespective of the foreign policy of successive US administrations. The North's dual perception of the US was still valid even in the face of the Bush's hawkish policy and threat of pre-emptive attack. It is important to unpack the significance of this "threat and lifeline" dual role in terms of the Kim regime's survival strategy. Any stronger state has the potential to do harm to neighboring weaker states prior to taking specific actions, simply because of its powerful status. It is widespread wisdom in world politics that a weaker state runs a higher risk of being attacked by a stronger state if that certain state as that state becomes

more powerful. “The weaker states worry about violence stemming from the relative inequality of power” (Lee, S., 2011, p. 186). Ultimately, the “heterogeneous system and hostile relations” (Seo, p. 278) between North Korea and the US have massively influenced the relationship between the two countries over the last six decades. In this sense, it was rational for the Kim regime to recognize the US’s growing and overwhelming power as a source of security unrest. Since the Soviet Union revoked its status as a patron of the North, the US’s overwhelming power has more increasingly likely to influence Pyongyang. The altered geographic situation in the neighboring Korean peninsula has consolidated the threat to the North regime’s security.

On the other hand, throughout the collapse of the Soviet Union and into the Bush era of American politics, “South Korea had a strong military alliance with the United States, the only superpower in the world, and US troops were stationed in South Korea for deterrence” (Lim, p. 168). Furthermore, “the South was maintaining diplomatic relations with most nations in the world, including China and Russia” (p. 168). In response, Pyongyang needed to recover “the balance of power within the Korean peninsula” (Seo, p. 278) in order to insure its regime survival, and the North Korean leaders realize that to do so would require a renewed relationship with America, given changing power dynamics in East Asia. The Kim regime had to ward off the high possibility of a US’s military attack as well as to overcome an American policy of neglect and indifference. Generally, when a weaker state approaches a strong state, the weaker state tends to choose bandwagoning or balancing (p. 278). After looking at the North’s nuclear demonstrations over the last two decades, it is clear that the Kim regime has chosen to

consistently utilize internal balancing by nuclear weapons buildup rather than capitulate to American ideologies.

What, then, was and is the essence of the North's threat perception from the United States? When did the threat perception start? To what extent did this threat perception inspire Pyongyang's nuclear weapons development attempts? The origin of Pyongyang's fear of a potential nuclear attack by the US goes back to the Korean War. The United States made direct or implied threats to use nuclear weapons throughout the Korean War (Harrison, p. 197) and President Truman remarked at a press conference on November 30, 1950 that there has always been active consideration of atomic bomb use (Crane, 2000; Cummings, 2004). In reality, General Douglas MacArthur requested atomic capability in the early stages of the expanded war on two occasions, in December 1950 for 34 bombs primarily for retardation targets and in March 1951, to hit enemy airfields on 'D-Day' the a general war (Crane, p. 79). His successor, General Matthew Ridgway, renewed MacArthur's request, but such weapons were never used (Oberdorfer, p. 252). Declassified documents have revealed that in "Operation Hudson Harbor," B-29 bombers dropped dummy atomic bombs on Pyongyang during simulated practice runs in late 1951 (Crane, 2000, as cited in Harrison, 2002):

Soon after the truce was signed in 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles proclaimed his global massive retaliation strategy with its *threat of a nuclear response* to conventional aggression anywhere. On a visit to Seoul in January 1955, Adm. Arthur W. Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made clear that the new strategy embraced Korea, declaring that the United States would be *ready to use atomic weapons*, if needed to stop any renewed Korean aggression (Harrison, p. 197).

"The US armed forces in Korea were equipped with a variety of tactical nuclear weapons by 1958" (p. 197), and "Honest John, Lance, and Nike-Hercules missiles that were deployed in forward positions to warn North Korea that nuclear weapons would be used

in the early stages of a conflict” (p. 197). The US documents also confirm that nuclear weapons have since 1957 in South Korea, and it was known that there were as many as 763 nuclear warheads present on the Peninsula in 1972 (Lim, 2012; Oberdorfer, 2001). However, the number had been dramatically reduced to about a hundred warheads by the onset of the first Bush administration in 1989 (Oberdorfer, p. 258). To be sure, “North Korea viewed the danger of an actual US nuclear attack as conceivable and even likely” (p. 197).

From the end of Korean War, Pyongyang tried to acquire its own arsenal from communist allies, citing due to worries that the US might use nuclear weapons in a second Korean War. Kim Tae Woo, a nuclear policy specialist in South Korea, portent that the North tried to get nuclear bombs from the USSR, but the USSR refused, so it set about building its own (Greenlees, *New York Times*, October 23, 2006). In 1963, DPRK asked the Soviet Union “for help in developing nuclear weapons of its own. Moscow refused, but instead agreed to help the North develop a peaceful nuclear energy program under international safeguards; starting with the installation of a nuclear research reactor at Youngbyun in 1965 and three hundred North Korean nuclear scientists were trained in the Soviet Union during the next two decades” (p. 198). The Soviet Union maintained that its assistance to North Korea did not include weapons development but was limited to civilian activities (p. 252).

After Beijing’s successful nuclear test in 1964, North Korea asked for assistance from China to build its own program, but that request was also refused. In 1985, North Korea joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), originally created in 1970, in return for the Soviet Union’s assistance to construct a nuclear power plant

(Jang, p. 166). In the face of the increasingly aggressive nuclear threat from the US, “Pyongyang deployed intensively its conventional forces in forward position in a hugging-the-enemy strategy so that the use of nuclear weapons would endanger friend as well as foe, civilian as well as soldier” (Harrison, p. 198). Estimates indicate that North Korea has approximately 8,500 self-propelled and towed artillery pieces, along with 5,100 multiple rocket launcher systems (Military Balance, *IJSS*, 2011, p. 250; Roehrig, T., 2013, p. 52). These weapons are “capable of carrying out a massive surprise artillery attack on the Greater Soul metropolitan area” (*ROK 2010 Defense White Paper*, p.30), given Seoul’s proximity to the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). In the meantime, suspicions of Pyongyang’s nuclear program emerged in February 1991 from US intelligence sources. According to these sources, North Korea had been operating a 30 megawatt (MW) atomic reactor since 1987 and the reactor seemed to be for military use, capable of refining enough plutonium to make a nuclear bomb in a year (Lim, p. 118). However, the question of when and why North Korea secretly launched its own major nuclear weapons program is still a subject of speculation, in the absence of hard information (Oberdorfer, p. 253).

The US has long viewed ‘prevention of nuclear proliferation’ as one of its main foreign policy goals; in particular, prevention of the North’s nuclear weapons development program was a serious concern for previous administrations, since this was perceived as necessary to prevent nuclear proliferation domino effect in East Asia. However, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea lost its hope of Soviet assistance, and Pyongyang refused to sign the IAEA Safeguards Agreement, rejecting IAEA inspections. In response to the growing international pressures,

Pyongyang – which had been a consistent target of the nuclear threats of the United States since the Korean War – listed a set of preconditions for its participation in the agreement, including US assurance against nuclear threats, suspension of the US-ROK Team Spirit “nuclear war exercises,” and withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea. The US ignored these demands (Lim, p. 118); however, President George H.W. Bush announced the withdrawal of all tactical nuclear weapons deployed overseas on September 28, 1991. As part of this measure, tactical weapons in South Korea were also withdrawn by December 1991, but, the goal of this measure was not to de-nuclearize the Korean peninsula nor to accept the North’s request; rather, the withdrawal of tactical weapons from South Korea “was made as an emergency measures to prevent the proliferation of Soviet nuclear weapons in the midst of the crisis of the disintegration of the Soviet Union” (p. 119). The massive US military exercises that took place from 1958 until 1991 included “scenarios involving the use of nuclear weapons.” In particular:

the deep-strike “Airland Battle” strategy unveiled in 1983 revealed US goal was not merely to defend the South in the event of an attack but to carry the war to the North and demolish the regime, *using nuclear weapons* “to destroy assault forces before they penetrate the main battle areas and to destroy or disrupt logistics support formations....After 1993, scenarios involving the use of nuclear weapons were dropped from US military exercises in Korea....The climatic phase of the North Korean nuclear weapons effort in the mid-1980s coincided precisely with the “Team Spirit” exercises trumpeting the “Airland Battle” strategy (Harrison, pp. 199-200).

However, no successive US administration has ruled out the redeployment of nuclear weapons into South Korean territory, and these administrations have continually threatened to use nuclear weapons against North Korea if there were any conflicts. In fact, the US has never excluded the possibility of pre-emptive nuclear attack on North Korea, even during Pyongyang’s joining of the NPT in the Post-Cold War era. Pyongyang has made “nearly 15,000 underground installations related to national security” and “it has built hardened concrete shelters to survive nuclear attack, further,

the North regime spends 30 cents of every dollar in its budget to defend the country” (Cummings, 2004, p. 2). Harrison (2002) demonstrates that North Korea has responded with nuclear and missile programs designed to deter any US use of nuclear weapons in Korea and to offset the superiority of South Korean airpower over its aging Mig force (p. 200). Jang (2009) argues that the North regime’s concentration on the development of nuclear and missile programs represents an attempt to balance against the supremacy of the South’s military capabilities (p. 172). Given the enduring security threat from the US, North Korea is not likely to give up its nuclear and missile capabilities unless America “reduce[s] or remove[s] the threat of a pre-emptive strike by US aircraft” (Harrison, p. 200) and it is likely that they will “keep maintaining the WMD owing to their fear and distrust of the US, further, continue to utilize the cards until after relations with the US are normalized” (Lim, p. 305).

Given the chronic history of conflicts between North Korea and America, can we consider the North Korean nuclear development attempts to have been effective in eliciting the interest of Washington and international society? If the DPRK regime develops better relations with the United States, will the perception of Washington be changed to ‘lifeline’ from ‘main threat’? When the North’s traditional alliances with Moscow and Beijing broke down in the early 1990s, Kim Il Sung made efforts to achieve a breakthrough with the US, which was the supreme power in the opposite bloc. At that time, the North leader believed that diplomatic ties with Washington could be a ‘lifeline’ that could substitute for the alienation with Moscow and Beijing. Kim expressed his changed view at the Supreme People’s Assembly in May 1990: “If the United States cannot withdraw all her troops from South Korea at once, and she will be able to do so by

stages” (Oberdorfer, p. 224). North Korea sent a special envoy Kim Yong Soon to deliver its intention to the United States on January 22, 1992. Kim came to New York with a comprehensive proposal for the normalization of relations, in which, he “included an explicit statement that the North would not object to the presence of US forces in Korea if relations were fully normalized” (Harrison, p. 205). But the US was not interested in entering into the sort of high-level contact that had been withheld since the Korean War. Indeed, Undersecretary of State Arnold Kanter, Kim’s counterpart, was instructed never to use the word normalization in these discussions (Harrison, p. 205; Oberdorfer, p. 266). The US insisted that further meetings would be possible only as a reward for North Korean compliance with its NPT obligations (Harrison, p. 205). As Harrison and Oberdorfer assert, Washington’s failure to explore an improvement in relations with Pyongyang in the last half of 1990 was an opportunity missed, when North Korea was still reeling from the blow inflicted by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Washington’s intentionally ignorant policy against Pyongyang continued until the first nuclear crisis (1993-94) under the Clinton administration.

Kim Jong-Il, successor and son of Kim Il Sung, frankly revealed his hope for better relations with the United States in a meeting with the Director of the National Intelligence Service, Lim Dong-won, during the latter’s special envoy visit to North Korea in preparation for the first inter-Korean summit in June 2000. Kim expressed:

“Whether from a historical or geopolitical perspective, it is important to maintain relations with the United States.We already sent Secretary Kim Yong Soon to the United States in 1992 to officially convey this to the US government. The point is if we become too anti-American, it could hurt the interest of our nation. I think it is an important task to end this historically hostile relationship and achieve normalization of relations with the United States. If relations are normalized, we can resolve all security concerns of the United States. Therefore, we propose an early peace treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement” (Lim, p. 22).

From his first discussion with Kim Jong-II, Lim acknowledged that Kim seemed to recognize the need to improve inter-Korean relations and open the door to the Western world to improve North Korea's underdeveloped economy. He wanted to get President Kim Dae Jung's help in improving relations with the United States. Despite the regime's propaganda, Kim revealed its inner intention that "the North does not want the United States out of Korea, but wants to stay involved to deal with a new and threatening strategic environment since the collapse of the Soviet Union" (Cummings, 2004, p. x). Kim Jong-II said in a later meeting with Lim in Pyongyang in April 2002, "What we sincerely want is for Bush to withdraw hostilities against us and for us to coexist together" (Lim, p. 304). Lim recognized Kim's dual perception of the U.S.: "Kim Jong-II distrusted the United States; he feared the United States; yet he wanted badly to normalize relations with the United States" (pp. 304-305). Lim also concluded that the Kim regime strongly recognized the US as a crucial threat to its isolated political system, yet, at the same time, still the main lifeline if security could be assured.

In an attempt to divert America's threat into a lifeline, the North regime has embraced the tactical use of coercive diplomacy and brinkmanship, seen in its two-decade struggle for nuclear weapons attainment, to carve out for itself a better position at the international negotiation table. The identification of the nuclear issue turned North Korea into an international security concern and provided the North with strategic significance in East Asia, yet failed to elicit any concession for diplomatic ties and security assurance from the United States. Pyongyang's "tactically brilliant" (Snyder, S., 1999, p. 85) nuclear leverage won the 1994 Agreed Framework, but subsequently attempts backfired, causing increased hostility from the Bush administration in spite of successive nuclear tests.

Chapter 3: Bush's Two-Level Games

A. Tensions in the Korean Peninsula

The Bush administration's policy on the North Korean nuclear issue was inspired by the new administration's perception of the failure of Clinton's engagement approach. What most upset the incoming Republican government about the previous administration's legacy on the North was the Agreed Framework of 1994, the stated goal of which was to freeze (not to abandon) the DPRK's nuclear program. In return for the freeze, the KEDO (Korean Energy Development Organization), an international consortium, was to build two light water reactors (LWRs). Additionally, the US agreed to take responsibility for providing a half million metric tons of heavy oil to North Korea each year until the first LWR was completed. Washington and Pyongyang also agreed to open liaison offices in each other's capitals. However, the incoming Republican administration worried that the agreement brokered by Clinton rewarded the DPRK's bad behavior with a nuclear reactor that could give Pyongyang access to fissile material (Pritchard, 2007, p. 4). The new administration also described Secretary of State Albright's visit to Pyongyang in 2000 as "an example of lowering the US diplomatic posture," and claimed that by even a considering a personal visit to North Korea, President Clinton's had "hurt the pride of the United States" (Lim, p. 269). This dismissive view toward the Clinton administration's actions constituted the Bush government's starting point for renewing America's nuclear negotiation policy with North Korea. Within a few months, the Bush administration had reversed all of Clinton's North Korean policies and was committed to pursuing a policy opposite to the engagement approach of the Clinton era. In some circles, this new approach was coined the ABC (Anything But Clinton) policy. From Bush's inauguration

until 2006, the Republican administration pursued a hostile policy that sought the total collapse of the North Korean regime. In response, the Kim regime of North Korea warned that it would press forward in developing its nuclear capability unless the Bush administration lifted its hostile policy; this exchange of threats culminated in Pyongyang's revealing its nuclear power in its first-ever nuclear test conducted in 2006. As of writing this thesis, North Korea has conducted two more nuclear test demonstrations, one in 2009 and another in 2013, despite numerous sanctions from the international community. Taken in stark terms, therefore, the Bush administration's objective of preventing nuclear weapons proliferation in North Korea must be seen as a complete failure. North Korea succeeded in advancing its missile program and demonstrating nuclear capability during the Bush administration, and the threat of conflict has only escalated since Bush took office in 2001. As we shall see below, after the first nuclear test in October 2006, the Bush administration changed its tone and took a more cooperative approach, eventually entering into bilateral talks with North Korea in 2007.

Why was the Bush administration's North Korean policy so different from that of the Clinton administration? To explore this, it is necessary to take into account certain changes in domestic factors that influenced international issues; these changes include the chief of state's (president's) mentality, bureaucratic politics (conflicts between hawk and dove agents), parliament, and the media. Robert Putnam's metaphor of the "two-level games," which places attention on the link between domestic politics and international negotiations, provides a useful frame for investigating both the Bush administration's initial decision to split from the Clinton policy of engagement and the Bush

administration's later about-face toward a more cooperative approach (Putnam, 1988; Evans, Jacobson, and Putnam, 1993). To better understand the factors influencing US policy-makers' decisions at both domestic and international levels, Putnam breaks the situation down into two levels (pp. 431-460): Level I constitutes bargaining between negotiators at the international level leading to a tentative agreement: Level II refers to the separate series of discussions that take place between the chief negotiators of a state (the president, in the case of the US) and their domestic constituents about whether to ratify the Level I agreement. "The actors at Level II may represent bureaucratic agencies, interest groups, social classes, or even public opinion" (p. 439). According to the metaphor, a chief leader should be able to persuade related domestic interests groups to accept the results of the agreement (Level II) after negotiations with other states (Level I), working things out so that events are resolved in a way that plays to the optimal interests of the nation.

Under these circumstances, Putnam defines a "win-set" for a given Level II constituency as the set of all possible Level I agreements that would "win" – that is, gain the necessary majority among the constituents (p.439). He explains that it is easier to reach agreement when the win-set at Level II is larger, as this indicates a higher possibility of finding a compromise where all negotiating parties' interests overlap. Putnam also provides three determinants which can affect the win-set size in the two-level games: 1) distribution of power, preferences, and possible coalitions among Level II constituents; 2) Level II political institutions; 3) strategies of the Level I negotiators. Based on these factors, an agreement will be acceptable to a country if it "satisfies Level II pressures for all participants" (Lisowski, 2002, p. 103). On the other hand, the smaller

the win-sets, the greater the risk that the negotiations will break down (Putnam, p. 440). For example, if state *A* is more powerful than others in the Level I negotiation, *A* would presumably be able to drive a harder bargain for its own benefits in the negotiations (Wilson, 2010, p. 19). In the case of hostile relationships, in particular, it is normally difficult to find mutual win-sets, as the bi-relations frame results in a zero-sum game. The chief of government's personal perception will also determine also whether he plays the two-level games as a dove (engagement, or soft-line) or hawk (oppression, or hard-line). Thus, if the chief leaders of the each state have a will to resolve the antagonism, they will strive to reconcile common win-sets, breaking away from the zero-sum. In the case of the relationships between the US and the DPRK during the Bush administration, the US had a powerful position at Level I and President Bush (chief negotiator of the state) held more hard-line, narrow win-sets; in other words, he lacked the consistency and political willingness to resolve the nuclear issue displayed by his predecessor, President Clinton. When Bush took the presidency in 2001, his epistemological disposition on Pyongyang regime was that 'North Korea is bad,' – thus, not trustworthy. His skepticism and distrust of Pyongyang partly stemmed from his ignorance of the Korean peninsula and foreign issues generally. South Korea's then- President, Kim Dae Jung, who hosted the first- ever inter-Korean summit meeting with Kim Jong-II in 2000, sought to make Bush understand the inter-Korean issues in the early part of 2001, but Bush questioned Seoul's approach to Pyongyang. According to Pritchard:

The administration's lack of Korea experience became evident early, when President Bush made his first telephone call to President Kim Dae Jung of ROK in February 2001. When President Kim began telling Bush about the need to engage North Korea, Bush put his hand over the mouthpiece of the telephone and said, "Who is this guy? I can't believe how naïve he is! (Pritchard, p. 52).

President Kim Dae Jung was awarded a Nobel Peace prize in 2000 owing to his life-time struggle for the democratization of South Korea and his efforts for the peaceful unification of the two Koreas. Bush had no knowledge about the political leader, nor did he have even a basic understanding of the inter-Korean issues. Additionally, the number of people in positions of power who had even a modicum of experience regarding North Korea was extremely limited during the first term of the Bush administration (p. 45). Bush's negative attitude toward the North Korean regime is assumed to derive largely from the views of his hardline Republican and Neo Conservative (Neocon) advisers, particularly Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Both men had career experiences in the Department of Defense under the previous Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations, and they both subscribed to the notion of "realistic diplomacy based on power" (Lee. S., 1994). This diplomatic doctrine has traditionally been more favored by the Republican Party; therefore, it was expected that the keynote of the new administration would take a more hardline approach compared to the previous Democratic administration under Clinton. The viewpoint of the new administration toward North Korea had three basic tenets: North Korea is not trustworthy; North Korea will not change, but will collapse; the US has to remove the North Korean threat first (Lim, p. 269). In the decision-making process, Bush was hostage to his own appointees' perspectives, and compensated for his inability to understand complex situations by resorting to tough language and emotional vehemence (Buszynski, 2013). His lack of knowledge and understanding of the country's internal and external agendas made it difficult for him to implement comprehensive North Korean policy. On the other hand, those people who directly met with Kim Jong-Il, including

Kim Dae Jung, Lim Dong-won (former director of the ROK CIA and Minister of Unification) and former US Secretary of State Albright, all mentioned Kim Jong-II's personality and leadership positively in their own memoirs (Kim Dae Jung, 2011; Lim Dong-won, 2012; Albright, 2003).

At the outset of the Bush presidency, there was an impending win-set, since, through the expeditious efforts of the previous Clinton administration, the missile issue between the two states had begun to be addressed by the 1994 Agreed Framework. President Clinton had been considering a visit to Pyongyang in the final term of his presidency, and was even thinking about entering into diplomatic normalizing negotiation – a concession that the North regime had ardently wanted for decades (Albright, 2003, p. 468). However, the hardline officials had no intention of facilitating a direct dialogue with Pyongyang to resolve the missile issue, since the development of long-range missiles by North Korea would justify ongoing development of Washington's missile defense (MD) system. President Bush accepted the hardline Neocons' view that the development of the MD system should be his policy priority for the new administration.

Bush's mentality and the low diplomatic priority that he placed on North Korea informed his North Korean policy attitude, and his policy motivations were utilized at Level II to persuade his domestic audience (parliament, media, and citizenry) that the development of MD was justified. President Bush actually announced a new security strategy that included the construction of an MD system in May 2001. The administration's altered policy priority led to narrower win-sets which could easily reach acceptable ratification at the domestic level. However, not all the advisers inside Bush's cabinet subscribed to the same hardline policy regarding the North Korean issue. Shortly

after the inauguration of the new president in February 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell said in a meeting with Lim Dong-won, then-ROK Minister of Unification in Washington, “The new administration will continue to observe the Agreed Framework....We are prepared to pick up where the Clinton administration left off in negotiation with North Korea” (Lim, p. 267). His remark was confirmed during President Kim’s visit to Washington in March 2001, but his approach to the North was resisted by President Bush, who supported the Neocon group’s hostile policy against Pyongyang. In a press conference with Kim Dae Jung, President Bush revealed again his negative attitude toward North Korea:

I do have some skepticism about the leader of North Korea. We’re not certain as to whether or not they’re keeping all terms of all agreements.... I am concerned about the fact that the North Koreans are shipping weapons around the world...and we can verify that (Lim, p. 272).

As a result, Secretary Powell was forced to retract the statement he had made. It was known that Powell and career diplomats at the State Department agreed that the United States should keep engaging in missile negotiations with the North, which were then in the final stages. This incident illustrates the sort of Level II uncoordinated internal division that was common during the first term of the Bush administration. The inner split between hard and soft approaches toward Pyongyang continued until the first nuclear test incident in 2006. This attitude also resulted in diplomatic cleavage with America’s ally, South Korea, regarding the most appropriate approach toward Pyongyang. By the end of the Clinton administration, the inter-Korean relationship was making considerable progress towards cooperation in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres through close coordination with Washington and Seoul; in fact, the

U.S.-ROK relationship during the Clinton and Kim Dae Jung era was the best it had ever been (Lim, p. 188).

With the hope of continuing the engagement policy, at the first U.S.-Korea summit with President Bush in Washington on March 8, 2001, President Kim explained the effectiveness of the sunshine policy, and asked that the new administration pick up where the Clinton administration had left off in dealing with North Korea and play a leading role to end the Cold War on the Korean peninsula. However, Bush refused Kim's request and did not show any interests in negotiation efforts for an early resolution of the missile program; furthermore, the administration believed that bilateral talks with Pyongyang would somehow reward the Kim regime. The Bush administration's approach to the North was consolidated with the conclusion of the North Korean policy review on June 6, 2001. The review contains some guiding principles:

“...We will not reward bad behavior. But we will respond positively to positive steps by North Korea...The administration is skeptical about the intentions and sincerity of the DPRK regime. That is why any agreements we may pursue must be effectively verifiable.....Our priority is in the curtailing of DPRK activities that threaten us, our allies, and regional stability...”
(Pritchard, pp. 4-7).

In summary, this review revealed that US-Korean joint efforts to facilitate a peace process on the Korean peninsula would be highly unlikely during the Bush administration. The fundamental approaches of the Bush administration to Pyongyang was so diametrically opposed with that of the Kim Dae Jung administration, that the Bush administration decided to wait until President Kim had finished his term in office, in February 2003, before re-opening US-ROK discussions about North Korea (Pritchard, p. 75). On June 17, 2001, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), North Korea's government media agency, issued a statement criticizing the new US policy, saying that

“we cannot but assess the U.S. administration’s recent proposal to resume dialogue, in nature, is unilateral and preconditioned and, in intent, hostile” (Pritchard, pp. 7-8). With this rebuttal, the North regime indicated that it would not accept the agenda unilaterally set by the Bush administration; however, it had already lost the chance to enter into dialogue with Washington. Later on, many of the principles listed in this initial policy statement were incorporated into proposals made by the US during the June 2004 third round of Six-Party talks, and they were the basic principles that the Bush administration stood by until the first nuclear weapons test in 2006. For Washington, these guidelines made the win-sets larger, and guaranteed that the policy would gain the necessary majority at the US internal politics.

By contrast, for Pyongyang, these guidelines modified the win-sets such a way that a very narrow range of overlap was available to make a deal, and large concessions were demanded from Pyongyang. As Putnam asserted, when win-sets are higher risk, this may lead to a breakdown between negotiators. The low priority placed on the North Korea missile issue by the Bush administration originated from the mutually hostile relationship that had persisted chronically between the two countries except for the short period in October 2000.

In addition to the long-hostile relations, the asymmetric power dynamic between the two countries also influenced the Republican administration’s choice to insist on tougher win-sets requirements; they knew that the North’s security assurance was dependent on the United States’ policy determination. From the standpoint of Pyongyang, it was very unlikely for the North to accept the Bush administration’s changed attitude when there was not yet any foundation of trust between the two countries. As Wilson (2010) argues,

“more power at Level I produces a bigger win-set at Level II and vice versa. The relative power at Level I is the distinction between the US and DPRK” (Wilson, 2010, p. 22). In the early years of the first term of the Bush administration, the US failed to display consistent and unifying North Korean policy, and did not maximize support from its allies in order to implement hardline policy at the international level. After the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, however, Bush’s hostile policy toward Pyongyang was redirected. The terrorist incident transformed the perceptions of threat and security in the United States and “led to the US foreign policy that is more moralistic and more risk acceptant” (Mastanduno, 2008, p. 264). The administration recognized that the main challenge to the US security was “found at the intersection of terrorism of global reach, rogue states, and WMD” (p. 268). For the US policy-makers, the rogue state, North Korea, and its missile program raised an urgent security concern that had to be resolved sooner rather than later. Shortly thereafter, America invaded Afghanistan in October 2002 and overthrew the Taliban regime in the name of the “war on terror.” President Bush declared North Korea to be as a member of “the axis of evil,” along with Iran and Iraq, in his State-of-the-Union of address in January 2002, and announced that North Korea would be a target for “regime change” via pre-emptive attack. His naming of the “axis of evil” states alarmed the South Korean people as well, and caused a sense of insecurity and war crisis to spread rapidly among the people. It was commonly believed in South Korea that North Korea would immediately launch missile attacks to turn the Korean peninsula into an all-out warzone if the US military attacked. Bush’s pro-war rhetoric hindered mobilization of the alliance’s support for the development of a consistent North Korean policy at Level I. However, a more serious issue emerged in

October 2002. On a visit to Pyongyang, the special envoy James Kelly presented evidence from the U.S. intelligence sources that North Korea had been pursuing the Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) program (Carpenter & Bandow, 2004, p. 59).

Normally, any negotiations require appointment of a presidential envoy dispatched to the counterpart state with a personal message from the president that conveys the negotiation leader's strategic decisions and builds an atmosphere of trust. North Korea initially believed that the sending of special envoy James Kelly to Pyongyang was an attempt by America to rebuild the US-DPRK relationship; on the contrary, however, it turned out that his mission was to interrogate various high-ranking members of the DPRK government to confirm US suspicions concerning the secretive HEU program. Kang Suk Ju, Kelly's Northern counterpart, responded angrily with a statement suggesting that the information about the HEU program was true. According to Pritchard, a member of Kelly's entourage, there was some potential misinterpretation of Kang's use of language; it was possible that Kang had not claimed that North Korea *possessed* the HEU program, but merely that they were "entitled to possess" or would "come to possess" such a program (Pritchard, pp. 38-39; Chinoy, pp. 119-122; Lim, pp. 336-337; Jung, pp. 51-52). Nevertheless, the U.S. delegation reached the conclusion that Kang had effectively and defiantly admitted to having an HEU program (Pritchard, p.38). The ROK intelligence community was suspicious of the credibility of the information and the political intentions of the U.S. since they were pushing inter-Korean relations in full swing that summer (Lim, p. 338).

At any rate, the apparent admission the existence of Pyongyang's HEU program was a burst of encouragement to the Neocon hardliners at the US national level, and an

atmosphere conducive to the international bashing of North Korea was created (p. 341). With the admission of the North's secretive HEU program, the North Korean nuclear issue re-emerged as an international security concern; in the aftermath of the Agreed Framework (AF) of 1994, it was named the 'second nuclear crisis.' The Bush administration terminated the provision of heavy oil to North Korea in December and abrogated the AF. In reaction, the North responded by reactivating a 5 Megawatt (MW) nuclear reactor in Yongbyon on December 12, unsealing frozen nuclear facilities, removing monitoring cameras, expelling the three IAEA inspectors on December 21, withdrawing from the NPT on January 10, 2003, and announcing the reprocessing of spent fuel rods on April 18, 2003 (Moon, 2008, p. 241). The US reiterated that North Korea must discard its nuclear program before any further negotiations could proceed. In particular, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld threatened that, "North Korea would learn that it had made a mistake by recklessly taking advantage of the Iraq situation" (Lim, p. 347). In the meantime, the controversy over the truth about the HEU program continued to be a key cause of conflict between the U.S. and ROK administrations – a conflict that continued until Pyongyang admitted the development of the HEU in the name of "self-production of light water reactors for nuclear fissile on April 29, 2009" (Lee, Y., 2010, p. 124). The truth of the matter was confirmed by US nuclear scientist Siegfried S. Hecker, a Stanford professor who visited the uranium enrichment facility on November 12, 2010 (Hecker, 2010; Sanger, *New York Times*, November, 21, 2010).

One month after North Korea admitted to housing the HEU program, on November 5, 2002, the United States held mid-term elections, in which the Republican Party gained control of both the Senate and the House of Representative. With the winning of the

Parliamentary power, President Bush regained the support he needed for the invasion of Iraq and for pursuing his foreign policy. Finally, the Bush administration invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003 on the pretense of having discovered weapons of mass destruction and evidence linking Saddam Hussein to al-Qaeda. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld commented that the US was capable of fighting two major regional foreign conflicts at the same time and called North Korea a “terrorist regime,” perhaps the most obvious justification for attack given the administration’s overarching “war on terrorism” (Carpenter & Bandow, p. 29). By then, witnessing the reality of the US’s invasion of Iraq, Pyongyang recognized the high risk posed by the threat of a pre-emptive military attack against North Korean’s borders. On April 6, 2003, a spokesperson for the DPRK’s Foreign Ministry issued the following statement:

The Iraq war shows that to allow disarming through inspection does not help avert the war but rather sparks it...Only a physical deterrence force, a tremendous military-deterrence force powerful enough to decisively beat back an attack...This is a lesson drawn from the Iraq war. (*Korean Central News Agency*, April 6, 2003; as cited in Funabashi, 2007, p. 126).

The statement shows Pyongyang’s threat perception of the US’s pre-emptive military attack against the North. Shortly after that announcement, Li Gun, a North Korean representative at the China-DPRK-US trilateral meeting held in Beijing in April 2003, warned his US counterpart that, “We are now able to demonstrate, produce, and transfer nuclear weapons to other countries” (Funabashi, p. 126). These remarks by Kang Sok Ju and Li Gun suggest that the North aimed to have the US change its hostile policies by overstressing itself to appear to be a nuclear power or at least to be capable of nuclear deterrence (p. 126). Kelly concludes that, “North Korea wanted to enrich uranium in order to win the United States’ respect and wanted to develop a retaliatory capability that could not easily be interfered with” (p. 127). Consequently, the onset of the second

nuclear crisis was based on the “fundamental inconsistency of the intentions” between the US and the DPRK (Jung, W., 2005). Washington sought to justify its hostile North Korean policy by raising the nuclear card. Conversely, Pyongyang wanted to utilize the nuclear card as a bargaining chip for a direct negotiation with the US since there seemed to be no other specific tools that could force the US to return to the negotiation table at that time.

In the face of the second nuclear crisis, ROK President Kim Dae Jung’s strategy was to continue to persuade the Bush administration to keep the dialogue open with Pyongyang. President Kim proposed that “if Pyongyang explains the truth of the uranium issue and re-freezes its nuclear facilities, then Washington and DPRK could engage in negotiation to simultaneously resolve the nuclear issue and normalization of relations” (Lim, p. 348). However, the US’s response to Kim’s proposal was divided: Secretary of State Powell and National Security adviser Rice responded positively, accepting the ROK government’s suggestion, but Defense Secretary Rumsfeld did not support the proposal. The different reactions at the cabinet level revealed yet more discord concerning the North Korean policy in the domestic politics of the Bush administration. Amid the second nuclear crisis, Roh Moo Hyun was elected the new president of the ROK in December; his election was “a big headache” (*Economist*, January, 4, 2003; as cited in Carpenter & Bandow, 2004, p. 37) for the US, which had favored conservative candidate Lee Hui-chang. Roh was known to be a supporter of Kim Dae Jung’s sunshine policy, and his administration believed that the US hardliners were actively contemplating military options in dealing with North Korea. Roh confessed his concern in a meeting with James Kelly and Charles Pritchard on January, 2003, noting his fear that “I would wake up one

morning to find that the United States had taken some unilateral action affecting the Korean peninsula without my knowledge” (Pritchard, p. 78). In his inaugural address, Roh promised to continue the engagement policy with North Korea pioneered by his predecessor, Kim Dae Jung, and insisted that the nuclear crisis could only be resolved through dialogue. Roh’s statement was in clear opposition to the US’s military option, and it led to another fall-out with the Bush administration that had pushed on hardline policy toward Pyongyang. Moreover, Roh’s North Korean policy also led to a diminishment in the driving force the Bush administration had access to in attempting to mobilize oppressive negotiation at Level I.

In summary, President Bush’s personal attitude of repulsion toward the North regime and internal division within the cabinet at Level II led to narrowing win-sets and consequently made agreement with Pyongyang less likely at Level I. Even worse, the ROK government also failed to contribute to any driving force to elicit meaningful policy inducement from Pyongyang during the Bush presidency at Level I. The bottom line was that Bush’s skepticism toward the Pyongyang regime hindered any bilateral talks. Additionally, the threatening remarks made by the Bush administration about the prospect of “regime change” led the North to believe that regime survival was at stake. Fundamentally, it brought about the collapse of the possible win-sets between the two negotiators; the US was not interested in holding a direct negotiation with Pyongyang except on the condition of pre-abandonment of the nuclear weapons program. They continued to hold this position up until North Korea’s first nuclear test in October 2006. The next four years until 2006, “saw twists and turns in Bush administration policy and

uneven progress by the North toward the development of its nuclear program” (Bader, 2012, p. 27).

B. Repeated Standoff

Pyongyang consistently demanded bilateral talks with Washington to resolve the second nuclear crisis; however, Washington refused the North’s direct negotiation request based on the judgment that the direct contact was a “reward” for bad behavior. Instead of entering into bilateral talks, President Bush called for a new negotiation forum, insisted on the “internationalization of the North Korean nuclear issue” (Lim, 356) and pushed for a multiple-talk formula for the resolution of the nuclear issue, involving the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and the two Koreas. Before the talks, ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-Kwan also called on the US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to have bilateral talks with the DPRK to resolve the nuclear issue, but Armitage refused, saying it was the US policy to reject bilateral contact with the North. The ROK government perceived the multiple-dialogue frame as a way to “pit five states against one to force North Korea to surrender by pressure and isolation” (Lim, p. 356); as a result, the US reaction foreshadowed another deep division between Washington and Seoul on the North Korean nuclear issue.

Given the uncertainty of a successful resolution of the nuclear issue, Washington sought to ‘outsource’ responsibility for the possible failure and to minimize the burden of negotiations. To be more exact, Washington’s motivations in choosing the Six-Party talk were as follows: First, at Level I (International), the US objective in taking the multilateral approach was to avoid bilateral contacts with Pyongyang (Pritchard, p. 57;

Chinoy, p. 182) as well as to promote a more responsible attitude from Pyongyang by working towards an agreement in front of four other concerned parties. In this context, Washington saw Beijing as a crucial member of the talks, as China was North Korea's only great power patron, and exerted an inordinate amount of influence on the North through its economic assistance and party and military ties (Cha, 2012).

By encouraging the Six-Party talks, Washington's main intention was to push the message: "negotiation is OK, but not directly with the North." The US's stance was the expression of the Bush administration's Level II (domestic) avowal that it "never would repeat the mistake of the 1994 Agreed Framework" (Prichard, p. 57). From the perspective of the Bush administration, the Agreed Framework had failed due to its inability to implement the North's nuclear abandonment (Lee, Y., pp. 135, 141). Overall, four problems were to be addressed during the Six-Party talks: dismantlement of the nuclear program, implementation of previous agreements between the US and the DPRK, Light Water Reactors (LWRs), and security assurance to the DPRK (p. 140). The most impending problem of the Six-Party talks was the question of which would occur first: the complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantling (CVID) of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons, or the resumption of energy and economic assistance to the region, together with diplomatic normalization. This agenda was set by Vice President Cheney, a staunch supporter of the hardline stance, who stated that the 'irreversible' dismantling of Pyongyang's nuclear program and 'verification' that it had been done need to occur first. He added that "We don't negotiate with evil; we defeat it" (Pritchard, p. 103; Chinoy, p. 197). The US rhetoric, in a word, was that only a "sincere behavior," and not a mere promise, would be trustworthy, and that only such behavior would constitute the win-set

that would be acceptable to the US. In summary, the key issue of the Six-Party was the shutdown of the nuclear program, implementation of the agreement, and the renewal of US security assurance toward Pyongyang. The complexity of these tasks suggests that negotiation of nuclear dismantlement would be far more difficult and complicated during these talks than it had been during the period of the Agreed Framework.

Second, from the onset of the Six-Party talks at Level II, the US wanted to disclose its administration's strong non-nuclear policy to the domestic audiences by pushing for the immediate abolishment of Pyongyang's nuclear program. At the same time, it wished to disperse responsibility for any potential failure of the multi-frame nuclear negotiations among the concerned nations, and "to send signals to other four parties there were to be no free-riders" (Cha, p. 258) in case the talks succeeded. It is important to take into consideration here each party's stakes at the outset of the Six-Party talks. Initially, the North had petitioned strongly for direct bilateral talks with the US, but agreed to take part in the Six-Party talks as Pyongyang had high hopes for achieving eventual bilateral US-DPRK contact by utilizing the other talk participants as mediators or patrons. Throughout the talks, the North consistently argued that the US needed to reverse its hostile policy prior to Pyongyang's abandonment of the nuclear program. In return, Pyongyang proposed a non-aggression pact between the two nations, a normalizing of diplomatic ties, and the resumption of economic cooperation among the ROK, DPRK and Japan. For Pyongyang, "a security guarantee without a US commitment to normalizing relations would have been meaningless" (Pritchard, p. 103). North Korea's proposal contained a series of steps based on the principle of "simultaneous action" (Chinoy, p. 184).

Seoul also insisted on resolving the nuclear issue diplomatically without any tensions on the Korean peninsula, which was quite distant from the “complete resolution” stance of the US. Most importantly, the ROK wanted to preserve North-South rapprochement gains in order to maintain a peaceful denuclearization. China also wanted to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully with negotiation in the region and hoped to avoid possible nuclear domino effects in East Asia following the North’s nuclear possession. For Beijing, the key national interest was peaceful denuclearization without the loss of the DPRK (Shi, Y., 2008). Russia wanted “to take advantage of economic incentives offered to North Korea in a negotiated settlement” (Chinoy, p. 97). Lastly, Japan’s goal was to maintain access to North Korea to pursue its nation’s abduction issue and sustain alliance solidarity with the US (pp. 84-97). These different strategic stakes among the six-parties made multilateral resolution impossibility. The first round of Six-Party talks was held in Beijing on August 27-29, 2003, and two successive rounds (on February 25-28, and June 23-26, 2004) also showed dismal results due to the deep-rooted mutual distrust and differences in policy stances between Washington and Pyongyang (Moon, p. 242). After the August 2003 session, when asked what the biggest obstacle in the negotiations had been, the Chinese chair, Wang Yi, replied, “The American policy towards DPRK is the main problem we are facing” (McCormack, 2008, p. 232; Pritchard, p. 101).

The North, meanwhile, persisted in advocating for the abandonment of the US’s hostile policy toward its regime and to push for bilateral negotiations, but President Bush had continued to show little interest in the request. Throughout the third round of talks, each nation’s attitudes to these contrasting agendas revealed that the chasm was too great to be bridged. The US’s central position was the term CVID – ‘complete, verifiable, and

irreversible dismantling' of Pyongyang's nuclear program. Simply put, the rhetoric was an expression of the 'distrust and verify' stance that characterized the Bush administration's attitudes toward the Kim Jong-Il regime (Lee, Y., 134; Joo & Kwak, p. 20). This stance was not favored by Colin Powell nor by the Department of State, but was embraced firmly by the head of the hardliners, Dick Cheney, who insisted on maintaining this policy during a sharp exchange of debate in the White House. Nuclear disarmament, fundamentally could not occur without mutual trust, and was an incredibly complicated issue to lead through resolution. Therefore, as long as Pyongyang distrusted Washington, no deal could be struck. During the Six-Party talks, the US's refusal to hold direct talks with the North Koreans led them to believe that regime survival was at stake; under such conditions, North Korea was unlikely to give up its nuclear card. After the fruitlessness of the third round of the talks, Pyongyang seemed to finally accept the US's complete unwillingness to resolve the impending nuclear problems; thereafter, the North Koreans refused to attend the fourth round of the talks and continued to refuse to attend the talks for over a year. To make matters worse, during this break in the talks, President Roh revealed his own opposition to the military option advocated by the US hardliners. In a visit to Warsaw, Poland in December, 2004, President Roh said,

“...There are a number of people in the United States favoring hardline approaches....Whoever takes charge of the problem will have to take the Korean people's safety and prosperity as a major premise. They cannot pursue only the nuclear dismantlement at the cost of leaving the Korean Peninsula torn into pieces” (Pritchard, p. 78).

Roh's statement fueled tensions between Washington and Pyongyang again; as suggested that the hardliners were actively contemplating military options in dealing with North Korea (Pritchard, p. 78). The main issue of Seoul's position was a balance between Washington and Pyongyang (p.78); however, Roh's approach did not jibe with South

Korea's status as Washington's key ally in East Asia. The chilly mutual relationship was sustained throughout the Bush administration (pp. 76-80).

In the meantime, North Korea seemed to think that Bush would lose his re-election bid in November 2004 and expected that John Kerry, who was likely to embrace an engagement-oriented stance to Pyongyang, would be the next president (p. 107). In other words, Pyongyang expected that changes in the US domestic situation would lead to a more cooperative approach toward the Northern regime; however, Bush won a solid victory, defeating John Kerry on November 2, 2004. His re-election meant that his hardline approach would not shift, and the administration's harsh remarks revived again. At his second inaugural address, Bush declared that the policy of the second term of his administration would promote democracy with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world. Nevertheless, some changes took place in the diplomatic personnel of Washington. President Bush appointed Condoleezza Rice the new Secretary of State, ending the tenure of Colin Powell, who had failed to persuade the President with his pragmatic approach toward North Korea. Powell had been battered by hardliners in the Pentagon and the office of the Vice President during the first term of the Bush administration. James Kelly, the assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and the US head of the Six-Party talks was also "left dispirited by the infighting within the administration" (Chinoy, p. 225) and was replaced by Christopher Hill. North Korea waited to see what direction the administration was going. In the opening statement during confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 18, 2005, Rice called North Korea "an outpost of tyranny" (Chinoy, p. 228; Funabashi, p. 372). On February 10, 2005, North Korea publicly stated that it had "manufactured nukes

for self-defence,” angrily declaring that it would “suspend the Six-Party talks for an indefinite period” (Chinoy, p. 232). It was the first time that the North Korean government officially acknowledged, in the form of a Foreign Ministry statement, that it did in fact possess nuclear weapons (Funabashi, pp. 372-373). Following its declaration of nuclear capability in February, Pyongyang revealed in May that it had completed extracting 8,000 nuclear fuel rods from the graphite-moderated nuclear reactors in Yongbyun. The US administration officials reportedly regarded North Korea’s plans for a nuclear test as an event which crossed a “red line” (Sanger, *New York Times*, 2005, May 16). Further, they worried that Pyongyang had switched to “exposure tactics,” boasting of the destructive power of its nuclear weapons from, “obscure tactics,” – keeping its nuclear capability hidden (Funabashi, p. 375). To avoid a nuclear fiasco, Beijing and Seoul both made efforts to resume the talks and bring Pyongyang back to the negotiation table. Finally, the fourth round of Six-Party talks took place in Beijing on July 26, 2005. Unlike the previous three rounds of talks, the fourth meeting was characterized by the first *de facto* bilateral negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, and produced the September 19 Joint Declaration. The document of “principles did not negate a reward for freeze component but did commit the United States to the principle simultaneously as part of its approach to the North under the Six-Party framework” (Snyder, S., 2007, p. 163). The document was essentially a road map to summarize the basic agenda and tasks for further negotiations; however, “the vagueness of the Joint Statement foreshadowed the potential for extreme difficulty in carrying out the task of determining specific actions to implement the principles embodied in the statement” (pp. 163-164).

Chapter 4: Threat Balancing

A. The 2006 Nuclear Test: A Perpetual Provocateur?

The fifth round of Six-Party talks, which took place in November 9-11, 2005, was the last series of talks prior to North Korea's missile testing and nuclear testing, conducted on July 5 and October 6, 2006, respectively. Almost literally before the ink was dry on the September 19 agreement in 2005, the US Treasury Department condemned Banco Delta Asia (BDA), a small bank in Macau, as a "financial institution of primary money-laundering concern and counterfeiting dollar bills and a willing pawn for the North Korean government to engage in corrupt financial activities under Section 311 of the USA Patriot Act" (Chinoy, p. 251; Buszynski, p. 101). Following the announcement, the Macau authorities froze US\$25 million worth of North Korean accounts at BDA and the US Treasury issued an advisory warning all US financial institutions to guard against any dealings that could bring them in contact into North Korea (Chinoy, p. 266). "The financial sanctions were issued prior to the joint statement on September 15, 2005, and this issue became a major stumbling block for suspending renewal of the Six-Party talks" for over a year (Snyder, S. 2007, p. 157). Banks around the world limited their dealings with North Korea, and the White House gave the Treasury and Justice Departments "full authority to take additional legal and financial actions against North Korea" (Brinkley, J., *New York Times*, 2006, March 10). "There were some conspiracies within and outside Washington over the timing of the revelation of the money laundering and counterfeiting activities with the Six-Party talk's process, and Hill was also furious about the timing and the political motivations of the announcement" (Chinoy, pp. 259-260). However, the fact that the decision came so close behind the joint statement was purely coincidental

(Funabashi, p. 418). Since 2003, the Bush administration had been working toward the launch of the Illicit Activities Initiative (IAI), a government-wide task force to impede North Korea's illicit activities, such as manufacturing and smuggling counterfeit bills. "According to the U.S. investigative agencies, more than fifty North Korean corporations have conducted money laundering through the BDA, and some 40 percent of its business has been North Korea-related" (p. 412). The US suspected that Pyongyang's illegal financial activities must be deeply related to their nuclear weapons program, and repeatedly warned the DPRK that the carrying out of such illegal activities was an act of war against the United States. For the Bush administration, "the issues of laundering money and counterfeiting dollar bills became new areas of unarmed conflict between Washington and Pyongyang" (p. 414). The effect had "a fearful ripple effect on Pyongyang's international transactions and in reality, North Korea's ability to conduct international business was under stress and shunned around the world" (Chinoy, p. 266). In practice, the BDA financial sanctions had a very serious effect on the North's already tense economic situation; such direct economic punishment had not been imposed on Pyongyang during the previous US administrations.

The BDA financial sanctions against the North, coming as they did in conjunction with Bush's increasingly aggressive stance toward Pyongyang and the actual armed strikes perpetuated against Iraq in 2003, maximized the fear of the Kim regime's collapse. In the eyes of the Kim regime, the financial sanctions of the Bush administration constituted an unarmed, but nevertheless hostile threat, particularly when considered in conjunction with the historically constant American aggregate and offensive power. In effect, "the financial pressure by the freezing of the US\$ 25 million worth of North

Korean accounts at the BDA appeared to be proving far more effective than anyone had dreamed, reigniting hopes that it could become a weapon to produce a subversion of regime” (p. 266). That this sanction could be imposed by the US Treasury Department itself, without any American military measures or approval from the UN, was seen as a dreadful economic weapon, powerful enough to suffocate the North regime’s life-line. “Kim Gye Gwan at the fifth round of the talks also compared financial flows to blood circulation in the body – if clogged, it would stop the heart” (Funabashi, p. 412).

According to a member of the Japanese delegation who was present at the talks, when Kim spoke, “It sounded like a cry squeezed out from deep inside his body....allowed itself to expose its true weakness” (p. 412). Robert Kimmitt, the deputy secretary of the treasury, also confirmed the effect of the sanctions, arguing that “eliminating North Korea’s money laundering activities would contribute greatly to crippling Pyongyang’s development of the WMD and severing the country’s relations with international terrorist groups” (p. 417).

At the fifth round of the Six-Party talks, Kim Gye Gwan warned Hill that the US’s action was “a concentrated expression of US hostile policy against North Korea” (Lim, p. 358) and “that talks on denuclearization could not proceed without first removing the new obstacles that those actions created” (Pritchard, p. 130). Kim requested bilateral negotiations with Washington to settle the BDA issue, but Hill was faced with “stiff opposition from well-organized hardliners again who were stubbornly opposed to any bilateral meetings with the North Koreans” (Pritchard, p.130; Chinoy, p. 265), since “the financial pressure reignited hopes that it could become a weapon to produce a regime change to hardliners camp” (Chinoy, p. 266). “According to Kyodo News of Japan on

February 11, 2006, Chairman Kim Jong-Il also indicated his fear of US financial sanctions against North Korea by remarking that the North could collapse if the United States continued to impose financial pressure against North Korea in a meeting with Hu Jintao in January 2006” (Kwak, 2007, p. 23). It was clear that this sanction was an economic threat against the North regime. The US financial sanctions against Pyongyang raised “energizing reaction from the hardliners” and at the same time “fear from the moderates” (p. 25) in Washington regarding the effectiveness of persuading North Korea to disarm. On the other hand, China worried that the financial sanctions would have a negative impact on the Six-Party talks; the ROK also “seemed to fear that pushing the counterfeiting issue may derail the talk process” (p. 25). Washington, however, insisted the nuclear and BDA issues were separate, stressing repeatedly that the financial issue had no direct relationship to the Six-Party nuclear talks (pp. 34-35). In the meantime, North Korea repeated that it would refuse to talk about the nuclear weapons issue until the restrictions imposed on its accounts were lifted, so the sharp split between Washington and Pyongyang over the financial restriction continued to remain in stalemate.

The US had expected that China would support them in pressuring Pyongyang to come back to the talks. China had two main motivations for doing so: first, so the world could see that the nuclear issue had been resolved through its influence and second, to maintain regional stability during Hu Jintao’s visit to Washington in April 2006.

It should be noted, further, that the Chinese government had also become independently convinced that the BDA was implicated in North Korean money-laundering activities following its own independent investigation of the bank (Funabashi,

p. 415). China naturally realized the seriousness of the situation and let the US law enforcement operation's investigation into the details of North Korea's activities. China and the other four countries of the Six-Party talks had no leverage to stop Washington's lopsided punishment toward Pyongyang. As for North Korea itself, realizing that the economic sanctions imposed by the US could be fatal to the regime, the leaders may have believed that only a military showdown could coerce Washington into ending its hostile stance and lifting the financial sanctions. For the North Koreans, therefore, it must have seemed like the introduction of brinkmanship tactics was necessary in order to balance the US's new non-military threat and finally bring change to Bush's bigoted stance.

Finally, on June 21, 2006, Pyongyang declared that it would launch a ballistic missile test unless Washington accepted its demand to hold a direct talk on the lift of financial sanctions stemming from the BDA issue. Nevertheless, Pyongyang disclosed its intention to return to the Six-Party table contingent upon American acceptance of the North's request for direct talks. The US's financial restrictions over North Korea were seen as another 'economic threat' which could make the Kim's family regime instable. Splits were also emerging among the other Six-Party nations, along fault lines that had been present since the inception of the talks at the international level (Level I). ROK President Roh complained that, "Neocons in the Bush administration had wrecked the 2005 agreement by imposing financial sanctions on the North" and warned that "there would be friction and disagreement between the South and the US if the US were to continue in this way" (Buszynski, p. 2013, p. 112). As tension mounted in June 2006, "President Bush made phone calls to allies in attempt to have them dissuade Pyongyang from going through with the launch, but excluded President Roh from the list of leaders that Bush

had consulted” (Pritchard, p. 82). This fact clearly illustrates the discord (or strain) that existed between the two allies regarding the method of dealing with North Korea at Level I. Chinese President Hu Jintao and Russia’s Vladimir Putin also called for “Washington’s more flexible attitude over the financial sanction issue with a constructive attitude for a peaceful resolution of the dispute” in their joint statement in March 2005 (p. 112). Japan, which had almost always been on the US side since the second nuclear crisis, urged the DPRK to return to the negotiating table of the Six-Party talks without any conditions (Kaseda, p. 2007, p. 122). “The DPRK responded by restating its position that its return to the talks was conditional on the lifting of recent US financial sanctions on it” (p. 122). Further, Pyongyang also warned that it would resort to potential physical countermeasures to any sanctions by Japan (p. 122).

Meanwhile, in response to announcements that the DPRK was preparing to launch a Taepodong-2 intercontinental missile, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asked the North to halt the launch. International outcry was ineffective, however, and North Korea finally launched the long-range (6,700km) Taepodong-2 missile on July 5 (the afternoon of July 4 in Washington). Pyongyang also launched five scud and Rodong shorter-range (1,300km) missiles. DPRK announced that the missile launch was a response to the US’s imposition of financial pressure through the BDA sanctions, and it voiced the possibility of a return to negotiation if Washington would accept its demand for bilateral negotiations. The reality of the test gave a strong shock to both moderates and the hardline camp in Washington, who viewed the launch as an outrageous provocation beyond America’s “red line.”

To make matters worse, just three months later, North Korea escalated its military provocation a statement warning of the anticipated nuclear test on October 3, 2006. In defiance of stern international warnings by the US, China, Russia, Japan and the ROK, the DPRK successfully conducted its first-ever nuclear test on October 9, 2006. North Korea's missile and nuclear testing marked a turning point that has influenced the tactics of Washington and Pyongyang in the years since, and which sent alarm bells ringing through all the Six-Party talk members. The twin showdowns of the long-range missile launch and the first-ever nuclear test demonstrated North Korea's determination to take a strong balancing stance vis-à-vis the US's non-armed threat.

Kim Jong-Il's regime had finally become the world's eighth nuclear power. Under these circumstances, however, the international reaction varied according to each state's strategic interests at Level I. Beijing was deeply shocked and suffered embarrassment at seeing Pyongyang conduct the nuclear test despite the close relationship between the two countries and Beijing's persistent discouragement. China was placed in an awkward position by the tests, causing the country to "lose face internationally" (Kim, Y., p. 144) and to be "cornered diplomatically" (Buszynski, p. 121). The test also produced significant outrage in South Korea and caused public opinion to view more skeptically the 'peace and prosperity policy' of the Roh administration. The test critically deteriorated the security on the Korean peninsula, raising fears that further actions by North Korea could directly affect the South and lead to a larger crisis, which could be "the worst nightmare" (*Hankyora* Newspaper, October 10, 2006). The Roh government was placed in an awkward predicament, but "it declared South Korea would continue

economic projects on friendly terms with Pyongyang in spite of the nuclear test” (Buszynski, p. 126).

Within the UN Security Council, Resolution 1716 was passed unanimously on October 15, 2006, denouncing the nuclear test as a threat to international peace and security. Even in the wake of Pyongyang’s nuclear test, however, “China and South Korea continued to attach a relatively higher priority to preserving stability on the Korean peninsula than Washington” (Martin, C. 2007, p. 79). Moreover, the Bush administration, as a sole global hegemon, failed to return any military action of its own against Pyongyang in the wake of the twin military shocks; after all, nuclear war with North Korea was the last situation the Bush administration wanted to see. Both the international community and US domestic audience bore witness to this unusual display of constrained American power and lethargy. The emergence of North Korea as a nuclear power significantly shifted the security terrain of East Asia, leading to a security environment than was considerably bleaker than the one that had preceded Bush’s presidency. At the international negotiation level, “the Six-Party process was virtually dead, primarily due to the inflexibility and intransigence of both Pyongyang and Washington” (p. 28). Perhaps the most significant outcome of the altercation was the fact laid bare for the entire world to see, that as the global hegemon or “self-perceived hegemon” (p. 80), the Bush government failed to hinder the nuclear-armed North Korea, neither launching a surgical attack against the nuclear facilities nor extracting a regime collapse.

What caused the US’s failure to compel the collapse of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, despite America’s unmatched military power and Bush’s threat of a pre-emptive military strike? How can we explain the effectiveness of the North’s

brinkmanship and coercive threats, which drew out such drastic military showdowns, in light of the country's weak position in the negotiation table? To understand the situation, it is necessary to refer to the bargaining process and power dynamics of the Six-Party talk multilateral framework at Level I and the discussions regarding the domestic constituents at Level II.

First, at the international level (Level I), the negotiation with Pyongyang was set out with an indirect contact formula within the frame of the Six Party talks, the wake of a rejection by the US of one-on-one discussions between Washington and the DPRK (p. 70). Buszynski (2013) argues that the structure and intention of negotiations is largely shaped by the interaction of the parties (p. 7). However, the true intentions of the US lay elsewhere, and due to resentment of and contempt for the Kim's regime, the US consistently insisted on the CVID (complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantling) and no reward for bad behavior, and refused to conduct diplomatic relations until after the North's security and human rights concerns were resolved. Because of the complicated negotiation frame and the anticipation of additional pressure from other nations involved in the talks, Washington had initially expected to achieve Pyongyang's pre-surrender without persuading or bargaining with Pyongyang. However, Washington's hardline stance did not sit well with other participants; in particular, Beijing, Moscow, and Seoul held a more conciliatory and concessional stance toward Pyongyang. Throughout the talks, these three states had a "soft balancing"⁶ approach to limit the excessively oppressive and demanding stance of the United States toward North Korea. Although

⁶ *Soft balancing* is the conscious coordination of diplomatic action in order to obtain outcomes contrary to U.S. preferences-outcomes that could not be gained if the balancers did not give each other some degree of mutual support. Cited from Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to US Primacy*, p.126.

Tokyo was aligned with Washington's hardline policy, it was also resistant to the military solution proffered by Washington, as it feared the provocation of North Korean attack on Japanese territory.

As a result of this failure of coordinated agreement on the nuclear problem, little concrete progress was made toward Pyongyang's nuclear abandonment; instead, the lack of coordination merely provoked a balancing behavior of threat from the DPRK in the form of demonstrating nuclear testing and missile launches. More precisely, the US's independent financial sanctions on Pyongyang through the BDA and the decisions those sanctions inspired among the negotiation states concerning the implementation of restriction inspired Pyongyang's perception of its own risk on the world stage, both in terms of its tottering economic situation and its continuing security anxiety. Prior to launching its long-range missiles and conducting its nuclear test, Pyongyang was incensed, and repeatedly demanded that Washington lift the economic sanctions, but "the American delegation insisted that the financial issue was separate from the nuclear problem that they were discussing at the Talks" (Buszynski, p. 101).

In fact, it seems that the American delegation was alone in considering these two problems to be unrelated. Both the PRC and the ROK were disturbed by the US's independent sanctions, which they worried would damage or interrupt the process of the Six-Party talks. Whereas the US wanted to maintain its CVID agenda and its economic sanctions at the same time, the strategic priority of China, Russia and South Korea was the stabilization of the Korean peninsula, rather than any other type of military conflict. Because of the different strategic interests of the dominant and supporting parties, the US was hamstrung, unable to exact military punishment against Pyongyang. The North's

Kim regime might well have calculated these conflicting power and interest dynamics at Level I and capitalized on them to achieve its first nuclear showdown. The interaction of the member countries during the multi- state negotiation revealed that power alone will not always permit the dominant player to attain its objective; rather, “much depends on the relationships between parties in the negotiations, their commitment to the process and their expectation of benefit” (p. 16).

Next, at the domestic level, Lisowski (2002) argues that if Al Gore had been elected president, he would not have repulsed the Agreed Framework or chosen a hardline policy toward the DPRK. The Bush administration’s policy toward North Korea on the nuclear problem can be understood on the basis of President Bush’s psychology and the contemporary status of domestic and international games. To arrive at a clearer understanding of the exposition, I will focus first on the national politics of the US administration – more precisely, on the salient qualities of President Bush as a chief negotiator – and the US’s domestic constituents at Level II.

First, on an individual level, according to Martin’s analysis (2007), Bush’s personal inclination as well as his ideational disposition created a negative enemy image – ‘North Korea bad’ – that resulted in his expressing open revulsion for Kim Jong-II from the inception of his presidency (pp. 90-93). Bush’s strong negative conviction framed the early conflict with North Korea, and reinforced his belief in “a duty to free people,” with “moral mission” (Woodward, 2002). Bush quickly revealed what he termed his ‘allergic reaction’ to Clinton’s Agreed Framework and engagement policy toward North Korea, adopting instead the *ABC* policy ethos and a strong antipathy toward entering into direct talks with the DPRK. His refusal of bilateral contact with Pyongyang was strengthened

by speculation concerning the ‘imminent collapse the Kim regime’ – speculation which has continued for over two decades. Furthermore, in an interview with Bob Woodward of *the Washington Post* on August 20, 2002, Bush stated that his intention had been to overthrow the Kim regime, but that “he cancelled his argument of the regime change after understanding the enormous cost of South Korea if North Korea were to collapse” (Pritchard, p. 53). Perhaps Bush did not recognize that the US would be entrapped if it could not stabilize its military victory in the face of insurgency, disorder, and political divisions in the North after a change. The president’s philosophy was not inaccurate, but “it was an inadequate basis for formulating policy” (p. 53). Significantly, however, his perception of North Korea stemmed from his lack of knowledge on foreign policy due to his lifetime domestic career. “Bush did not show knowledge or gravitas in foreign policy, he even did not know the name of the then Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien” (Moens, 2007, p. 253). Later, “foreign observers concluded that Bush would rely on his advisor, given his apparent lack of understanding of foreign issues” (p. 253). His ignorance of foreign policy and the shortcomings of his philosophy were revealed in his inconsistency and the collapse of the negotiation process during the last six years of his presidency.

Second, inside the administration, President Bush’s personal dispositions were assumed to be derived largely from his advisors’ attitude and political skill; a number of cabinet members played a key role in manipulation the image of North Korea in the American imagination and influence in Washington’s negotiation stance. It is well known that “Bush’s foreign policy has been plagued by a wide ranging battle over foreign policy among a coalition” (Martin, C., p. 83). In particular, three men, Vice President Cheney,

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security and later U.N. ambassador John Bolton, were known as the Cabal of the Neoconservative; these people were actively involved in developing North Korea policy and discussion, both officially and behind the scenes (Pritchard, pp. 49-52; Martin, C., pp. 83-87). The group advocated a policy of regime change through pressure and isolation to achieve US security objectives and repudiated a repudiation of South Korea's sunshine policy as well as rejection of Clinton's engagement approach. Hardliners were severely against accepting a freeze as a step toward dismantlement, and even against interpreting the Joint Statement issued during the fourth round of the Six-Party talks on September 19, 2005 (Martin, C., pp. 84-85).

Their rigid stance toward Pyongyang, which included a general opposition to conducting bilateral talks with the North due to the concern that it would somehow "reward" the North Koreans, resulted in miserable failure. At the same time, another group, the pragmatists or moderates, who were located in the State of Department and National Security Council, had expected to pick up where the Clinton administration had left off; they supported renewed negotiation with Pyongyang. "Their influence was visible most clearly in the September 2005 Joint Statement and again in the February 2007 Beijing agreement" (p. 84).

Lastly, throughout the Bush presidency, the US Republican Congress continued to be an influential player in dictating North Korea policies: setting aside their effectiveness or ineffectiveness, the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act and the End Dictatorship and Assist Democracy Act of 2005 were designated to coerce or repress the DPRK's domestic politics. Congress' hardline approach served the administration well in

negotiations by tying the administration's hands when it came to pressure to make concessions. Congressional gains in 2002 strengthened the administration's hand as it confronted the new crisis in Korea, and further strengthened the influence of the skeptics of engagement. However, the stunning Democratic election victory in 2006 was expected to significantly bolster support for a policy closer to Clinton's engagement approach, which had formerly been eschewed by the Republican congress (Martin, C., pp. 87-89).

This shift in legislative power factors had the potential to influence the direction of US policy toward North Korea in terms of constraints and preferences, while also producing a more independent streak. In a word, Bush could not "afford to ignore domestic politics—at home or abroad—when contemplating foreign policy choices" (Milner, 1997, p. 261) on the nuclear issue. Ultimately, the tensions among negotiation participants at Level I, together with the changing cast of characters in the executive branch and the shift of congressional power at Level II, resulted in a failure of the DPRK policy. These discords at both levels escalated the security anxiety of Pyongyang in terms of military and economic security, and forced the North to adopt brinkmanship tactics. In dealing with North Korea at the negotiation table, Bush belatedly realized the fact that "power in international politics sprang not just from one's material resources" (p. 259). In addition, he had to realize that the dynamics among Beijing, Moscow, and Seoul meant that these parties would consistently oppose the US's military strike option.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Bush himself lacked knowledge of international and foreign issues both before and after taking the presidency. His negative perception regarding the North and his failure to coordinate with the supporting parties increased the anxiety of the North Koreans; consequently, Pyongyang failed to expect much advantage

in the multilateral process and refused to continue to participate until the nuclear test had been conducted. By the time Bush's diplomatic strategy for isolating and oppressing the DPRK had begun to work, the threat perception of the North had deteriorated further; in this context, the nuclear test was seen by Pyongyang as a necessary threat balance against Bush's hostile policy toward their regime. Pyongyang has long and repeatedly argued that the buildup of its nuclear deterrent force stems from the US's pre-emptive military attack in spite of the US's repeated rhetoric of the attack; however, Bush's 2002 'axis of evil' and 'regime collapse' rhetoric against Pyongyang, together with the US invasion of and subsequent stalemate in Iraq, might well have contributed to Kim Jong- Il's decision to accelerate the 2006 nuclear test.

From the perspective of the American hardliners, North Korea's two shocking military demonstrations did nothing more than offer proof for their longstanding belief that the path of negotiation was fruitless; unfortunately for the hardline administration, however, it soon became clear that the US was incapable of implementing military and economic sanctions without full support from China, Russia, and the ROK, even after Pyongyang's possession of nuclear weapons became an undeniable fact. In particular, the pattern of Pyongyang's behavior made it clear to the US policy-makers in the Bush administration that North Korea would not yield in response to outside pressures, even from its Chinese ally. Instead, the Kim's regime was taking its own way and strengthening its self-defence capability by developing nuclear weapons.

The North's nuclear demonstration was a calculated balance threat in response to the Bush administration's massive military and economic threats, egged on by the failure of coordination within the Six-Party talks at Level I. This demonstration had three main

effects: it silenced all outside conjecture regarding Pyongyang's nuclear capabilities, it demonstrated North Korea's strong desire for self-reliance, and it made clear to everyone in the international community the limit, of the PRC and ROK's control and leverage over Pyongyang's recalcitrant brinkmanship diplomacy. From the beginning, the Bush administration wanted to oppress North Korea, prevent the Kim regime from possessing nuclear weapons, change 'the evil regime' with a possible pre-emptive military strike, and finally collapse the DPRK. The stance of Bush's unilateral policy demonstrated that power alone does not always achieve results, and that much depends on the relationships between the parties in the negotiations, their commitment to process, and their expectation of benefit (Buszynski, 2013, p.186).

B. Another Path Shift

The nuclear test revealed the vulnerability of American power, and threw the US into the undesirable position of dealing with nuclear-armed North Korea; future talks would have to focus on managing the North's nuclear weapons, rather than hindering their nuclear development program. In the wake of the nuclear demonstration, the US had to shift "from their previous demand for up-front disablement of the North's nuclear program to a freeze, which was a considerable concession to the North" (Buszynski, pp. 129-130). The first shift in this direction took place during the trilateral meetings between Hill, Kim Gye Gwan, and Chinese officials over November 28-29 in preparation for the upcoming talks in Beijing. In detail, "the Americans offered to work toward the lifting of financial sanctions, willingness to offer a written security guarantee and economic aid if the North accepted the freeze and allowed inspections by the IAEA" (p. 130). These concessions

were a clear embarrassment to the Bush administration, which had up to this point consistently refused to, “reward bad behavior.” The third session of the fifth round of the Six-Party talks, held on February 8-13, 2007, led to a compromise agreement, entitled “Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement,” composed of two action phases (Joo & Kwak, pp. 4-5; Buszynski, pp. 129-130).

In the first action phase, the North would commit to shutting down the Yongbyun reactor and to accepting the IAEA inspectors within 60 days (that is, by April 14, 2007), in return for receiving an initial shipment of 50,000 tons of heavy oil. In the second phase, the North would submit a list of its nuclear programs and irreversibly disable and seal the Yongbyun reactor and receive the rest of the promised 950,000 tons of fuel oil. Most importantly, Washington and Pyongyang would initiate bilateral talks and move toward full diplomatic relations, while the US would begin the process of removing the North from the list of countries supporting terrorism. In particular, “Bush gave the North the best possible deal under the Six-Party talk frame and had made concessions that no one would have predicted” (P. 158). Bush no longer insisted that Pyongyang must abandon its nuclear programs first, but made concessions by accepting North Korea’s demands – suspension of its Yongbyun nuclear facilities and unfreezing of the North Korean bank accounts at the BDA in Macao (Joo & Kwak, p. 6).

The agreement between the US and DPRK was a stunning reversal of the Bush administration’s previous six years of hardline policy, in which America had pledged not to deal with Pyongyang or to be involved in another Agreed Framework, which it had attacked so virulently (Buszynski, p. 143). The shift to this concession policy would not have been possible before the nuclear test, nor was it predicted from many under the

same administration. “These concessions were, for sure, an embarrassment to the Bush administration after it had insisted on the elimination of the nuclear program as a precondition before anything else could be negotiated” (p. 130). Let us consider how the first nuclear weapons test affected Pyongyang’s security and bargaining leverage.

- *First, did the nuclear test stabilize the North’s integrity and demonstrate that it could provide a balance to the threat of a possible US military attack?*

Two factors should be considered in this regard. First, President Bush and his policy advisors had never held back from making harsh remarks against the DPRK as well as Kim’s regime, using phrases like “regime change,” “pre-emptive military attack object,” “nuclear weapons use,” “the outpost of tyranny,” and “axis of evil,” from the inception of the presidency and throughout the Six-Party talk process. In addition to this open declaration of hostility, various legislative acts, including PSI (2003), the Human Right Acts (2004), and most of all, the BDA initiative (2005) were deliberately introduced as critical security and economic threats to paralyze Pyongyang. In light of Washington’s intransigent and hostile policy, Pyongyang took what it saw as the last resort – the ultimate bargaining chip – and justified its possession of nuclear weapons through the nuclear demonstration in 2006.

Second, Pyongyang had suggested to Washington that it would return to the Six-Party talks in exchange for a direct bilateral discussion of the BDA issue, but the US refused this demand, repeating its insistence on Pyongyang’s unconditional return to the talks. US envoy Hill declared that the BDA issue would only be dealt with within the context of the Six-Party talks, and would not be discussed directly between the US and the DPRK. The BDA issue was of crucial relevance for Pyongyang, and at the same time, the dropping of

the financial sanctions might indicate that the DPRK that Washington was willing to shift its hostile policy. However, it should be emphasized that the Bush administration stopped using the threatening “pre-emptive military attack and regime change” following the nuclear test. Basically, what Washington was seeking through the talks was Pyongyang’s “unconditional surrender” under the witness of other parties. However, North Korea’s successful nuclear testing during the talks made such a scenario impossible, and forced Washington to recognize that it could not take any military actions by itself in the face North Korea’s nuclear armament.

- *Second, did the nuclear test work as a bargaining chip to force the Bush administration to revisit the engagement policy and drop its hostile stance?*

Throughout the duration of the Six-Party talks, right up until the 2006 test, the Bush administration maintained a notably hawkish policy, continuing turning turn down Pyongyang’s demand for direct negotiation on nuclear and other issues. The joint statement issued on September 19, 2005, showed a minor concession to flexibility on Washington’s part, but nevertheless reinforced the US’s commitment to the CVID principle of the nuclear abandonment issue. However, the financial sanctions imposed by the US on the BDA accounts deepened Pyongyang’s sense of threat and instability despite the US’s insistence that the nuclear program and the financial sanctions were to be regarded as separate issues. The Kim regime saw the financial sanctions as a measure of economic oppression. In light of this stance, it seems likely that Pyongyang decided at this juncture to shift to brinkmanship and crisis escalation tactics.

In the deadlock following the nuclear tests, the US, together with other concerned nations, pressed ahead with the UN resolution to impose sanctions on Pyongyang;

however, the administration made a strategic decision to offer a specific, costly concession to the DPRK in light of the grave nuclear threat (Martin, C., p. 75).

During a bilateral meeting with Pyongyang in Berlin in January 2007, Washington yielded a series of concessions, including a willingness to contribute to some front-loaded energy assistance, a pledge to “begin the process of removing the designation of the DPRK as a state-sponsor of terrorism,” and a commitment to “advance the process” of removing economic sanctions and to initiate bilateral talks on other outstanding issues including diplomatic relations (p. 76).

Furthermore, Pyongyang also received agreement that bilateral diplomatic contact with the United States would be reinitiated at the lightest level with the scheduling of a ministerial conference to review progress since the end of the Clinton administration. The Berlin conference marked an important turning point in the US’s sustained policy of “no rewards bad behavior,” and effectively invalidated the preceding six years of hawkish policy. The reversal of policy was an astounding move for the Bush administration, which, prior to the nuclear test, had vowed not to negotiate with North Korea. The stunning shift was due to the “embroilment in Iraq and Afghanistan together with a public swing against the Republicans in the Congressional elections of November 2006 and with the resignation of several neoconservatives in the administration” (Buszynski, p. 133). The shifting axis of the power in American internal politics at Level II led to the US dropping its previous insistence on disablement of Pyongyang and produced a series of concessions toward the Kim regime.

- *Lastly, how did the test ultimately influence the security environment of the Northeast Asian region?*

North Korea's nuclear test in 2006 fundamentally changed the security environment in the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia, since it marked the emergence of the actual possession of nuclear bombs by one of the "axis of evil" states. After six years of failure of coercive diplomacy, the Bush administration's stated goal of halting Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program failed to achieve non-proliferation in East Asia, and as a result, the region is less safe now than it was in the beginning of 2001. American's nuclear policy in East Asia had to shift to focus on management of nuclear weapons, since prevention of the North's nuclear development program was no longer an option.

With the emergence of a nuclear-armed North Korea, the ROK, Japan, and Taiwan were effectively taken as nuclear hostages. Such a development has dramatically increased the likelihood that these countries will consider their own nuclear armament, despite American reassurances of security commitment. For the South Korean psyche, Bush presidency's failure to achieve nuclear non-proliferation in East Asia has resulted in a dramatic loss of US credibility, and has left the American alliance with the ROK in a worse shape than ever before. In the decades leading up to North Korea's nuclear testing, both ROK presidents Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun had consistently pursued engagement policies toward Pyongyang, and liberal political leaders had made every effort to promote the democracy of South Korea to their Northern neighbors. Ironically, however, they were led to severe strains by the Bush administration. Both ROK administrations shared the desire for the co-prosperity and unification with Pyongyang, despite the North's sometime-status as an arch-enemy of the South. In the "spread of democracy" rhetoric embraced in Bush's second term, both Bush and Kim had to reflect policy coordination on the North Korean issue; however, the two

alliance leaders were in such serious conflict that they refused to work together. The tensions and discord over North Korean policy with the Bush administration inspired the cognition of South Korean people to reconsider the dependability of their supposed ally in pursuing inter-Korean relations.

The US had been a close key ally of the ROK since the Korean War; however, the Bush administration's far-distant strategic priorities regarding North Korean policy forced the South to be reluctant to increase pressure on North Korea. "Even in the wake of Pyongyang's nuclear test, South Korea continues to attach a relatively higher priority to preserving stability on the Korean peninsula than the United States does" (Kaseda, 2007, p. 118). The second inter-summit between Roh and Kim in October 2007 disclosed that South Korea was ready to be tolerant even the issue of nuclear provocation, because of the perception of the North's security concerns. For neighboring states, China, Russia, and Japan, the nuclear test revealed the difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of achieving a sufficiently coordinated international strategy for complete denuclearization by peaceful means. Both China and Russia preferred peace to denuclearization of the North, and wanted to keep North Korea as a strategic security buffer zone under Kim's regime. The two states together sought a 'Cold Peace' with the nuclear-armed North Korea, offering an increase of US power and influence across their own borders. Japan, on the other hand, maintained its close ties with the US before and after the nuclear test, both out of concern for the proximity of the military threat of Pyongyang, and because it did not want to see an increase of the Sino-Russia influence in the region. Under these circumstances, the nuclear test seems to have set in stone the 'security contraposition' already present in the East Asia.

The outcome of North Korea's nuclear issue effectively demonstrated the limitations of coercive foreign policy of a sole superpower through sanctions and oppression. In retrospect, it appears that policy consistency would have been a more effective strategy for enticing denuclearization in the North. The actions of the Bush administration, including the fundamental change of policy it endorsed within domestic politics, worsened the security environment in East Asia, and revealed the impotence of the muscular power. To deal with rogue states like North Korea, even a superpower must be dependent on solid domestic support as well as negotiation support from its international partners. The discord of internal politics and the US government's un-willingness to resolve the nuclear issue hindered the driving force of the Bush administration, and these considerations made the other parties even more determined to avoid the prospect of conflict in the Korean peninsula and press their own agendas, which did not match those of the US. Bush's Pyongyang policy clearly shows that a superpower's belligerent intentions did no more than invite balancing behaviors from weaker states, as illustrated by North Korea's nuclear reaction. Unfortunately, the US administration ignored this basic lesson (Buszynski, p. 19), and as a result, Washington had to face a much more demanding situation, a nuclear-armed North regime. In retrospect, Bush wasted a remarkable amount of time before returning, ultimately, to where Clinton had left off.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

What empirical results can we draw on to conclude this thesis? In this final chapter, I will address two primary findings: first, the 2006 North Korean nuclear test was successful in extracting a bilateral bargaining mechanism from the United State, but it failed to accomplish its ultimate aims, such as diplomatic normalization with Washington and the acquisition of foreign economic aid. Therefore, the test achieved only partial success, at best. Furthermore, there remains no straightforward solution in sight to resolve the ongoing nuclear problem; rather, without a dramatic increase in strategic cooperation between Washington and Pyongyang, the nuclear stalemate may stretch out over the next decade.

The Bush administration, which initially attempted to use its overwhelming power to force the submissive abandonment of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, belatedly realized that military threat and economic sanctions could not achieve the desired result. In short, American's denuclearization policy toward the DPRK over the last two decades thoroughly failed in spite of both soft and hardline policy. The DPRK has successfully acquired nuclear weapons despite the unfavorable external environment, insecurity and the long-time threat of a pre-emptive strike by the sole super power. However, despite this marginal success, the North has remained politically isolated and its relationship with the international society has worsened in the wake of the nuclear testing. As well, the security environment of the Northeast Asian region has become more strained, as the reality of a nuclear-armed North Korea with increases the likelihood of continued nuclear proliferation among the Northeast Asian nations. The series of bilateral negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang that took place in the immediate wake of the 2006

nuclear test brought forward a meaningful deal, but has led to further stalemate and subsequent nuclear testing, in 2009 and 2013, under the Obama administration; the nuclear deadlock has shown no indication of resolution for the foreseeable future. Since taking office in 2009, the Obama administration has adopted a policy of “strategic patience,” and has refused to resume negotiations with Pyongyang until the Kim leadership shows willingness to abandon its nuclear power. In other words, the current administration refuses to repeat the previous administration’s decision to effectively reward “Pyongyang’s usual tactics – first make a crisis, then escalate tensions, and finally extract payments and concessions for the restoration of the status quo” (Lankov, p. 157). Accordingly, Washington’s present stance is a passive one: the Obama administration plans to wait until the North first discloses willingness to commit to denuclearization, and until then, they maintain that Pyongyang is better to be forgotten and left alone (p. 210). With this half-hearted approach to the problem, it seems completely impossible that the Obama administration will enter into direct negotiations with Pyongyang anytime in the near future.

According to many analysts, the present US strategy has failed, since it has accomplished nothing other than to give the North time to improve its nuclear and missile arsenal. The last twenty years’ keynote policy of the US toward Pyongyang has been to inhibit nuclear weapons possession, but it is now evident that Pyongyang will never abandon its nuclear possession, no matter the severity of the sanctions that are imposed against its regime. It is extremely unlikely that the North will accept the US’s demand for pre-dismantlement, now that it has achieved the chief status of a ‘nuclear-armed state.’

The North has recently pursued concessions from the US on the promise that it would not drive its nuclear weapons program further ahead, but would maintain its current stockpile as a means of protection for the Kim family regime. The chances of the US accepting such a request in the current domestic political environment are slim, however. As already disclosed, under the Bush administration, the US's North Korean policy had been forced to refrain from any pre-emptive attack on Pyongyang's nuclear facilities due to strong resistance from China and South Korea. The current focus of Obama's foreign policy is containment of the new rising giant, China; in the current political atmosphere, therefore, it has become increasingly difficult to receive China's leverage against the North regime. On the contrary, it is the relationships with Beijing and Pyongyang that has become much stronger compared to the previous Six-Party talk period.

What, then, can be done to resolve the chronic nuclear problem? Above all, it is essential that Washington recognize "a nuclear North Korea status" and refrain from any attempt at urging a 'regime collapse' in Pyongyang as long as no more nuclear tests are conducted. North Korea, in reality, has no fully trustworthy allies. That was why the North has persistently demanded a nonaggression pact with the United States over the past decades. In order for both sides to achieve their demands, each party needs to conquer the "distrust dilemma" through consistent civilian exchange programs; the power to put forward and resolve these initiatives lies ultimately with the United States. Under the power-oriented world politics, Pyongyang is incapable of exerting leverage or power to resolve the issue, and thus must resort to ongoing crisis escalation and brinkmanship to coerce Washington's stubborn stance. In the meantime, South Korea, together with the neighboring countries, remains exposed to unstable nuclear tension.

In retrospect, the opportunity for peaceful discussion between the US and the DPRK peaked during the Clinton period in 2000, with the exchange of visits by high-level politicians including then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Cho Myong-rok, Kim Jong-Il's most trusted general. The reciprocal visits materialized due to bridge of trust that had been built between the nations' leaders. At the same time, Kim Dae Jung's sunshine policy in South Korea lowered expectations of immediate reciprocal reactions from the North, calling for "give first and take later" (Kim, Y., p. 171). The former ROK President held as his primary goal a decrease in the possibility of military conflict between the two Koreas. This proactive engagement by the South elicited a positive response from the North, and led to the first inter-Korean summit since the end of the Korean War. Following the summit, both Koreas saw a series of economic, cultural, and humanitarian exchanges and cooperation. Thanks to improved relations with the South, Kim Jong-Il was able to gain economic concessions from the ROK, and sought a diplomatic normalization with the Clinton administration with the assistance of President Kim Dae Jung. The seeming success of this overture was reached at the announcement of President Clinton's plans for a visit to North Korea, although the visit did not take place since a deepening of the Palestinian-Israeli problem distracted American international interests.

These events which took place during the Clinton era illustrate that diplomatic initiatives by the Obama administration do have the potential to induce corresponding actions from North Korea, which would consolidate trust buildup over time. An accumulation of mutual credibility would greatly facilitate efforts for "simultaneous actions" in terms of the nonaggression pact and, eventually, complete-dismantlement of

the nuclear weapons program. At the same time, for such a strategy to work, Pyongyang would need to continually convey its benign intentions to America and international society through dialogue and patient diplomacy.

Ultimately, the Obama administration must decide what to do about Pyongyang, and stand on the side of either regime collapse or regime transformation. The regime collapse scenario, as attempted under the Bush administration, has been proven to be too risky; it is clear that further momentum in this direction could easily invite military confrontation in the Korean peninsula. Regime transformation, on the other hand, requires long-term patience and subtlety on the part of the US and its allies, along with an understanding that, today's nuclear problems are not likely to be resolved easily or quickly, whatever the future. Nevertheless, there are no other alternatives in sight if the peace and stability of Northeast Asia, and particularly the Korean peninsula, are to be advanced. In closing, I hope that a new peace and security strategy can be found by sifting through and learning from the achievements and failures of the past two decades' of America's North Korean nuclear policy.

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