

Nuclear Politicking on the Korean Peninsula: *A Highly Enriched Uranium Program Coming Out of the Pandora's Box*

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Abstract

This paper intends to reveal the truth of the alleged North Korean HEUP (highly enriched uranium program) that spawned the current nuclear crisis, and has greatly affected the contemporary history of the Korean peninsula. The paper finds that what North Korea had in October 2002 was not an HEUP, and posed no serious and imminent threat to the security of the United States, thereby providing no rationale to scrap the Agreed Framework. The paper suggests that North Korea should be condemned for its stalling behavior during October 2002, but argues that if the Bush administration had been more willing to make efforts to remove whatever equipment the North had, the second nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula would not have occurred, and North Korean nuclear capabilities would not have increased as they have. Most importantly, this paper maintains, the Bold Approach, the Bush administration's version of the Perry Process, might have succeeded, thereby, bringing about a solution to the "peninsula problem" for the Koreans and the rest of the world.

Keywords: Agreed Framework, highly enriched uranium program, Nonproliferation Treaty, Pyongyang Declaration, neoconservatives, second nuclear crisis, NCND, Joseph DeTrani, The July 1 Measure, Sinuiju Special Administrative Region

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Introduction

The Cold War ended in the early 1990s, but danger remained in the Korean peninsula. The “peninsula problem” derived from years of global confrontation between major powers and client states, comprised a number of interrelated issues and questions at various levels. At the core of the problem was the nuclear weapons program that North Korea was believed to be developing. The North Korean nuclear threat was contained by the Agreed Framework (AF) of 1994 between the United States and North Korea, which was preceded by three years of on-and-off vilification, stalemates, brinkmanship, saber-rattling, threats of force, and intense negotiations. The AF was subsequently undermined by a North Korean rocket launch in August 1998. However, the two nations were able to save the framework by agreeing to what was called the Perry Process, initiated by the United States under the Bill Clinton administration. By the end of the Clinton administration, negotiations had progressed to a point, characterized by the U.S. North Korea Policy Coordinator Wendy Sherman as “tantalizingly close,” that allowed Bill Clinton to contemplate going to Pyongyang to close the deal himself (Sherman 2001; Keeny 2001).

A visit by Clinton would have served as a political turning point indicating the warmest level of relations the two nations had ever known, and would have carried existential significance for the North. The presidential trip might not have brought about a solution to the complicated peninsula problem, but it was quite clear that the summit had great potential to motivate the North to join the international community by legitimizing the Kim Jong Il regime with the further possibility of enhanced peace and stability on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia.

The Pyongyang visit by Clinton did not transpire, and time ran out for the administration (Albright 2003, 470). Under President George W. Bush the clock was turned back; the AF became a Clinton mistake, something to be voided and then abolished. The Bush administration’s strong neoconservative orientation was reinforced by U.S. victories in the Cold War and the Gulf War, while the “9/11

terror attacks” created fertile political ground for “strong-on-security” leadership. In this regard, the administration adopted “principled approach” toward North Korea and it was seen by the North Koreans as a demand for “conditional surrender.”

In October 2002, fragile U.S.-North Korea relations became worse when the United States accused North Korea of having a clandestine uranium enrichment program to produce weapons-grade fissile materials. As a result, the nuclear crisis on the peninsula resumed, this time over the issue of highly enriched uranium program (HEUP).

Multilateral nuclear talks started in 2003, but produced only limited progress. During the negotiations. Participants witnessed North Korea increasing its nuclear capabilities, conducted nuclear tests, and launched long-range rockets which had significant military and strategic implications. Not only did this threaten the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula, but seriously undermined that for the entire North East Asian region while jeopardizing institutions and agreements such as Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

That said, it needs to be noted that when the second nuclear crisis erupted in 2002, a number of North Korea watchers and strategic analysts cast doubts on U.S. evidence for HEUP in North Korea. Some expressed concern that since the intelligence of Iraq’s WMD turned out to be false, there existed an “uncomfortable parallel” with Iraq (Barry and Hosenball 2004; Gregg 2003). However, their doubts and concerns did not stop “nuclear politicking” on the peninsula.

Recently, evidence has emerged that throws serious doubts on the integrity of the Bush administration’s decision to scrap the AF for the reason related to the HEUP. The main objective of this paper is to conduct a historical investigation into the process of the nuclear politicking on the peninsula by identifying the causes of the second North Korean nuclear crisis, including political elements exogenous to the nuclear realm that nonetheless heavily influenced that process. More specifically, this paper intends to reveal the truth of the alleged HEUP that spawned the current nuclear crisis and has greatly affected the contemporary history of the Korean peninsula.

Nuclear Politicking on the Korean Peninsula

Nuclear politicking on the peninsula is in essence about the demise of the AF. That death appeared to have been caused by perverted political manipulations by both the U.S. and North Korean parties. However, this paper does not intend to determine which was more responsible for the demise of the bilateral accord, although it generates implications. Rather, it is more interested in revealing why and how such political manipulations occurred and how these distorted the future of the Korean peninsula. In order to do so, it is necessary to have a careful look at what happened in October 2002 on the peninsula and in turn requires an examination of U.S.-North Korea relations up until October 2002.

U.S.-North Korea Relations until October 2002

The Agreed Framework of 1994 ended an 18-month crisis during which North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The accord's objective was to freeze and replace North Korea's graphite-moderated nuclear power program with light water reactors less amenable to weaponizing, and the step-by-step normalization of relations between the United States and North Korea. The process of implementation of the framework was slow and impeded by the so-called Gingrich Revolution in the United States (Gregg 2003). On August 31, 1998, North Korea launched a three-stage Daepodong-1 rocket with a range of 1,500-2,000 kilometers, exacerbating the already tense bilateral relations.

In an attempt to defuse tensions and bring about a solution to the "North Korean problem," President Clinton appointed former Secretary of Defense William Perry to serve as North Korea policy coordinator, a post established by the 1999 Defense Authorization Act. Perry undertook an inter-agency review of U.S. policy toward North Korea, and began consultations with South Korea and Japan aimed at forming a unified approach to dealing with Pyongyang. In December 1999, Perry delivered the "Review of United States Policy toward

North Korea” to the President and Congress. The Perry Report was pragmatic and forward-looking in that it suggested that “U.S. policy must deal with the North Korean government as it is, not as the United States might wish it to be,” and that “the United States should initiate negotiations with the DPRK based on the concept of mutually reducing threat” (Perry 1999). The Report also suggested that “if North Korea rejects the diplomatic path, it will not be possible for the United States to pursue a new relationship with the North, and that in that case the United States would have to take other steps to assure its security and contain the threat.” The point of the Perry Process was to provide North Korea with an attractive carrot while implying a harsh stick.

North Korea accepted the U.S. offer, thereby producing two historical accords: The North-South Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000, and the U.S.-DPRK Joint Communiqué of October 12, 2000. The Joint Communiqué is particularly important in analyzing the nuclear politics of the peninsula, because it stated that the two countries were committed to implementation of the AF, and that the U.S. Secretary of State would visit North Korea in the near future to prepare for a possible visit by a U.S. President. A couple of weeks later, the U.S. Secretary of State Albright visited Pyongyang to meet with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il. The United States considered the meeting “constructive.” It believed that “North Korea would agree to a deal ending the potential threat posed to the United States by long-range missiles and nuclear arms” (Albright 2003, 469).

Although the failure to build upon the momentum derived from Albright’s meeting with Kim Jong Il at the seventh round of missile talks in Kuala Lumpur diminished hopes of a presidential trip to North Korea, Clinton was more than willing to make the trip (Albright 2003, 468). But, as said above, time was running out and the Clinton team had to depart the stage.

In fact, the Republican Party, enjoying the majority in the Congress since November 1994, was strongly opposed to the Clinton initiative. For example, right after the signing of the AF, the House Speaker Newt Gingrich began to “wave the bloody shirt immediately,”

saying, “It’s a bad agreement. We’re giving away too much.” Senator John McCain came forward and called it appeasement. Some made the analogy that “Kim Dae-jung is another Chamberlain and the United States is engaged in appeasing North Korea” (Gregg 2003). On October 29, 1999, the Republican-led “North Korea Advisory Group,” including such prominent and hawkish Republicans as Benjamin Gilman, Doug Bereuter, Christopher Cox, and Curt Weldon, submitted a report to the Speaker of the House, suggesting that “Through the provision of two light water reactors (LWRs) under the 1994 Agreed Framework, the United States, through KEDO, will provide North Korea with the capacity to produce *annually* enough fissile material for nearly 100 nuclear bombs.”¹

In 2001, the Republican Bush administration took power and showed that it had no intention to continue the policies of the previous administration in general, and the framework in particular. One incident in particular would outline the Bush administration’s stance: On March 6, 2001, at a joint press briefing with the Swedish foreign minister, Secretary of State Colin Powell said that the administration “plans to engage with North Korea to pick up where President Clinton left off. Some promising elements were left on the table and we will be examining those elements.” Powell’s remark was immediately reported by the media, and the White House held an emergency meeting. It was decided that “Powell’s remarks could be interpreted as praise of the AF as it was,” that “the AF had to be transformed into a verifiable agreement,” and therefore “Powell’s remarks had to be corrected immediately.”² Powell immediately corrected himself.

On June 6, 2001, President Bush announced the completion of his administration’s North Korea policy review and its determination that “serious discussions” with Pyongyang on a “broad agenda”

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1. U.S. House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, North Korea Advisory Group, Report to the Speaker. <http://www.shaps.hawaii.edu/security/nkag/report-1.html>.
 2. Senior U.S. administration official, interview, June 2, 2006, quoted in Funabashi (2003, 109); Mann (2004, 279).

should resume. North Korea categorically rejected the offer, calling it tantamount to a call for disarmament on its part.³ The two nations subsequently engaged in hostile verbal exchanges that increased tensions and jeopardized the AF. On September 11, 2001, a series of unprecedented terrorist attacks occurred in the United States. It was not clear what the specific consequences the 9/11 attacks would have on U.S.-North Korea relations, but it would validate “a great many of the sort of Manichean theories that people like Richard Perle and [Paul] Wolfowitz, and [William] Kristol and [Lewis] Libby had been laying out: that this is an evil world, that we are under threat” (Gregg 2003). On January 29, 2002, in his State of the Union address, Bush criticized North Korea for “arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.” He characterized North Korea, along with Iraq and Iran, as constituting an “axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.”⁴

Origin of the Second North Korean Nuclear Crisis: The Year 2002 and the HEUP

Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea has suffered greatly from its loss of communist patrons and supporters who had long provided aid to the country, including security guarantees. It also suffered the death of Kim Il Sung, “the sun of the nation,” and then from unprecedented floods in the mid-1990s. The widespread economic troubles of North Korea continued, but aid from the outside provided only temporary relief.

The year 2002 was quite significant for the North in that Pyongyang made a serious and systematic effort to reform and open up its economic system in a desperate attempt to ensure national survival. Kim Jong Il visited Shanghai in 2001, where he saw Pudong’s stunning development and praised it as a “new creation of Heaven and

3. *Korean Central News Agency* (hereafter *KCNA*), June 18, 2001.

4. George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 29, 2002.

Earth.” This seemed to be critical to the reformist decisions the North subsequently made (Park 2004). On July 1, 2002, North Korea launched what a *Washington Post* journalist called “a landmark series of free-market reforms” (Faiola 2004). For the first time in its entire history, North Korea set up “measures to improve economic administration” that it believed would bring it closer to a (global) market economy, with the intention of overhauling its economic administrative system. Specific changes included deregulation of prices, an increase in wages, and readjustment of the foreign exchange rate. What was particularly important from political and strategic perspectives was the introduction of the “family production system” in agricultural areas, reminiscent of the system implemented by China in the initial stage of its reforms, with the goal of increasing production through a series of stimulus packages.

To support and finance the economic reform, on September 12, 2002, North Korea announced the establishment of the Sinuiju Special Administrative Region. This was intended to induce some much-needed foreign investment and technology to prop up its moribund economy. Excluding foreign policy matters, Sinuiju would be run as a completely autonomous region with its own legislative, administrative, and judicial branches, and a “minister” acting as the top administrator. By removing the need to work through the central government’s red tape, Pyongyang was hoping to guarantee maximum flexibility and freedom for doing business in Sinuiju.

Besides these “significant”⁵ reform programs, North Korea’s efforts were also evident in its handling of foreign relations. One example was Kim Jong Il’s agonizing apology to Japan offered in the North Korea-Japan summit meeting on September 17, 2002. Koizumi quoted Kim as acknowledging Pyongyang’s responsibility and offer-

5. Most economists in the United States assessed the reforms as being modest at best and not fundamental changes in the economic system. But, what was significant was that the North had become more risk-taking than ever before. From the perspective of Kim Jong Il, it could be a bold, risky adventure given that it was unprecedented in the North and that it might cause the regime collapse.

ing an apology for the abductions of Japanese nationals.⁶ An apology of any kind by “the headquarters of the revolution” has been extremely rare in the history of North Korea. An apology to a former colonial master was inconceivable from the North’s point of view. There could be no better evidence of North Korea’s desperation.

Fortunately for North Korea, its version of reform/opening-up policy in 2002 was launched in a favorable external environment. The Chinese President Jiang Zemin made his first visit to North Korea in 11 years in September of 2001, at the invitation of Kim Jong Il, who visited China in 2000 and 2001. On August 23, 2002, Kim Jong Il visited the far eastern region of Russia, where he had a summit with President Vladimir Putin to discuss bilateral economic and strategic cooperation. On September 17, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited Pyongyang and held talks with Kim Jong Il to “resolve the various issues between Japan and North Korea and to normalize diplomatic relations.”⁷ On September 18, 2002, reflecting the improvement in inter-Korean relations since the 2000 North-South summit, there were ground-breaking ceremonies for the reconnection of rail and road links across the border, connecting what had been severed for the last five decades. On September 23, 2002, heads of ten Asian and fifteen European nations adopted the ASEM Copenhagen Political Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsula, “reaffirming their support for the peaceful process of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation.” The leaders welcomed “the progress recently made towards realizing a number of projects for inter-Korean cooperation” and noted that the re-establishment of the railway links could eventually lead to a Trans-Eurasian railway (the “Iron Silk Road”). This link would have “positive effects on the region-to-region exchanges.”⁸ They also “underlined the importance of the full implementation of

6. “No Resolution to Kidnapping Issue, No Normalization,” *Mainichi Shimbun*, October 6, 2002; Johnston (2004).

7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/index.html.

8. Chairman’s Statement, Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 4), Copenhagen, September 23-24, 2002.

the 1994 Agreed Framework.” And, they welcomed the visit of Japan’s prime minister to the DPRK and appreciated the top level dialogue for the solution of issues between them as well as issues of international security concern.⁹

Thus, the year 2002 was significant for North Korea in its attempt to secure national survival. It was also momentous for countries in Northeast Asia as they broke away from the Cold War security structure. However, the United States seemed worried lest the rapid and far-reaching change in Northeast Asian strategic dynamics swerve from the course the United States had set up and intended to sustain. There were a number of specific concerns: First, from the U.S. standpoint, the change in Northeast Asia had the potential to change the existing “hub-and-spoke” alliance network in the region that had long served as a cornerstone of U.S. global security strategy. Secondly, it had implications for the missile defense system to which the Bush administration was strongly committed. To some key members of the Bush security team, it was a “religion.”¹⁰ They believed that the United States would not be safe without a missile defense system. The military-industrial complex also had a role to play in it. If North Korea no longer posed a threat, the argument for the system would have lost much of its justification and persuasive power. Third, there was concern that a rapid increase in regional cooperation might diminish U.S. influence in the region. The United States was quite concerned about the East Asia Economic Caucus in the early 1990s and the Asian Monetary Fund in the late 1990s, neither of which the United States was invited to participate in. Fourth, probably the most relevant to the neocons in the Bush administration, North Korea was believed to have been breaking the terms of the AF. To them, it was not appropriate to stand back and watch North Korea reach out to its neighboring countries.

The Bush administration decided to put a brake on this unwanted dynamism. When Special Envoy James Kelly stopped in Seoul on his

9. Wendy Sherman, interview, October 25, 2001.

10. Wendy Sherman, interview, October 25, 2001.

way to Pyongyang, he secretly informed the Kim Dae-jung administration's security team that he would raise the HEU issue in Pyongyang. However, Kelly's body language was "stiff as he literally read the talking points to Lim Dong-won and others in the meeting, although Kelly and Lim usually had lunch together to freely exchange views and notes when Kelly had visited Seoul before" (Funabashi 2007, 94). The U.S. delegation consisted of eight members, including Mary Tighe, the acting deputy assistant secretary of defense, and Michael Dunn, an Air Force major general and deputy director of strategic operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

On October 4, 2002, James Kelly visited Pyongyang to meet the North's representatives and informed them that the United States was aware of a clandestine program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. Twelve days later, the United States announced that the North had admitted to having such a program. The U.S. State Department spokesman stated:

The U.S. delegation advised the North Koreans that we had recently acquired information that indicates that North Korea has a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of the Agreed Framework and other agreements. North Korean officials acknowledged that they have such a program. The North Koreans attempted to blame the United States and said that they considered the Agreed Framework nullified. Assistant Secretary Kelly pointed out that North Korea had been embarked on this program for several years.¹¹

North Korea responded to the U.S. announcement rather forcefully, but with some degree of ambiguity. On October 25, the North Korean Foreign Ministry stated that "the U.S. envoy accused the DPRK of violating the Agreed Framework without presenting any evidence and that he was like a thief turns on the master with a club." It continued to argue that the United States intentionally misinterpreted its mes-

11. Press Statement, Richard Baucher, Spokesman, Washington, D.C., October 16, 2002.

sage, which should have been read:

The DPRK was entitled to possess not only nuclear weapons but any type of weapon more powerful than that so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the United States.¹²

The North Korean Foreign Ministry neither confirmed nor denied (NCND) its possession of a highly enriched uranium program, which spawned speculation that the North wanted to use the putative uranium enriched program as a bargaining chip (Funabashi 2003, 95; Gregg 2003). The two parties engaged in hostile verbal exchanges. As for the future of the AF, North Korea said, "It's hanging by a thread" (Gregg 2003). That thread was cut on November 15, when KEDO announced its suspension of heavy-fuel oil deliveries to North Korea. In response to this, North Korea restarted its one functional reactor and reopened the other nuclear facilities that had been frozen under the AF. It also removed the seals and monitoring equipment from its nuclear facilities. Subsequently denouncing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as unfair, the North expelled IAEA inspectors and withdrew from the NPT. The AF effectively came to an end.

Searching for the Truth about the HEUP

As stated above, the U.S. announcement that North Korea admitted to possessing a secret HEUP caused a chain of actions that collapsed the AF, thereby creating a second nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula. To find out the truth about this program is crucial, because it may not only provide a clue to the solution of the whole nuclear problem, but also has tremendous political and moral implications for both nations. As far as the United States is concerned, if it turns out that the Bush administration exaggerated and/or distorted the

12. KCNA, October 25, 2002. North Korea said later that it had [more] powerful weapons, including single-hearted unity (KCNA, August 29, 2003).

information in question to serve its political purposes, the Obama administration will easily reap great political benefit by acknowledging the wrongdoings committed by the Republican administration. It can simultaneously show Americans and others that the Democratic Obama administration is honest and courageous, deserving respect and admiration. The United States may be able to restore its moral leadership, one of the national objectives under President Obama. The truth-finding process will focus on whether the HEUP that the Bush administration accused North Korea of having and secretly developing for military purposes in October 2002 was serious and threatening enough to nullify the AF.

When the State Department issued a statement on October 16, 2002 that “we had recently acquired information that indicates that North Korea has a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons,” it did not present evidence that justified its claims. However, the next month, the CIA provided Congress with an unclassified document that contained a more specific assessment:

The United States has been suspicious that North Korea has been working on uranium enrichment for several years. However, we did not obtain clear evidence indicating the North had begun constructing a centrifuge facility until recently. We assessed that North Korea embarked on the effort to develop a centrifuge-based uranium enrichment program about two years ago.

- Last year the North began seeking centrifuge-related materials in large quantities. It also obtained equipment suitable for use in uranium feed and withdrawal systems.
- We recently learned that the North is constructing a plant that could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year when fully operational—which could be as soon as mid-decade.¹³

The CIA document was clearer about the information that the U.S.

13. <http://www.gwu.edu/%7EEnsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB87/nk22.pdf>.

government claimed to possess, but it was still full of ambiguous, presumptive, and speculative statements. For example, it indicated that North Korea “embarked” on the effort, and “began” seeking materials, and obtained “equipment.” It seems difficult for anyone to argue that this is definitive and compelling evidence that justifies the Bush administration’s decision to scrap the AF.

By contrast, there is much circumstantial evidence supporting that whatever the North had in October 2002 was not a “program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons, or HEUP,” as claimed by the U.S. State Department at that time. Right before the Kelly delegation’s visit to North Korea in October 2002, the governments of both South Korea and Japan were briefed on the North’s HEUP. On August 28, the U.S. Under Secretary of State John Bolton mentioned the HEUP to the South Korean foreign minister, and on the same day, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage briefed the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi on the issue. On October 2, Kelly himself briefed the South Korean government.

None of these efforts by the United States deterred its two key allies in Northeast Asia from pursuing active engagement with the North. It seems plausible to suggest that if the North Korean threat was perceived as serious at the time of their briefings, the allies would have never done as they had in September and early October of 2002. One can argue that Koizumi had too much invested in the trip to cancel it on hearing about the HEUP. However, it seems more reasonable to suggest that if he found the information on HEUP serious, he would immediately have to change his course to avoid conflict with the United States and heavy criticism from his Japanese constituents. The political costs would be much higher than any benefits his trip might bring him. Moreover, it was a South Korean intelligence organization that provided the United States with the information in the first place.¹⁴

Probably, a more direct and important piece of proof that what North Korea might have had was not an HEUP is that, in late 2004,

14. Former senior official of the Korean government, interview, June 20, 2003.

the Bush administration decided not to use the words HEU program, preferring, instead, the term “uranium enrichment” program.¹⁵ The United States decided to drop the crucial “H” out of HEUP. Low-enriched uranium is fuel for nuclear reactors.

The Bush administration has long refused to respond to calls for the presentation of evidence, even though it claimed to have “a wealth of clear and compelling evidence” about North Korea’s uranium enrichment program.¹⁶ In late 2004, the administration confirmed that it had passed to China “classified packets” of data intended to convince the Chinese that the North had two weapons programs under way (Sanger 2004). One senior White House official suggested that “the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Koreans have no doubt about the diversity of the North Korean program.”¹⁷ In early 2005, Mitchell Reiss, the director of the Office of Policy Planning at the State Department, wrote that “the United States has shared information with all of its partners in the six-party talks concerning North Korea’s uranium-enrichment program” (Reiss and Gallucci 2005).

However, these officials’ remarks did not seem to be backed by fact. For example, Li Zhaoxing, then Chinese foreign minister, expressed doubt about the quality of American intelligence on North Korea’s uranium program. When asked by a journalist to describe China’s understanding of North Korea’s nuclear program on March 6, 2005, he answered pointedly and sarcastically:

Concerning whether North Korea already has nuclear weapons or anything about the question of uranium enrichment, I think that here you may know more than I do. Or to put it another way, I definitely don’t know any more than you do (Kahn 2005).

South Korea was not convinced either. Lim Jongsuk, a member of the Korean National Assembly asked whether the United States shared

15. Senior State Department official, interview, November 18, 2004.

16. State Department Daily Press Briefing, December 10, 2004.

17. FDCH Political Transcripts, November 20, 2004.

the information on HEUP with the Korean government. The Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon did not answer this question. Instead, he maintained that since North Korea had admitted to the existence of HEU program in North Korea, they, not the United States, had the burden of proof.¹⁸

More recently, there has emerged critical evidence that throws serious doubt on the integrity of the Bush administration's decision to scrap the AF, based on the information it claimed to have regarding North Korean HEUP. On February 27, 2007, at a hearing of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, Joseph DeTrani, the mission manager for North Korea with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, told Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island:

Senator Reed: Do you have any further indication of whether that program has progressed in the last six years, one; or two, the evidence, the credibility of the evidence that we had initially suggesting they had a program rather than aspirations?

DeTrani: Sir, we had high confidence. The assessment was with high confidence that, indeed, they were making acquisitions necessary for, if you will, a production-scale program. And we still have confidence that the program is in existence—at the mid-confidence level, yes, sir, absolutely.¹⁹

Under the intelligence agencies' own definitions, mid-confidence level "means the information is interpreted in various ways, we have alternative views" or it is "not fully corroborated" (Sanger and Broad 2007). On February 28, 2009, Christopher Hill, the chief American negotiator with North Korea, testified at the House Foreign Affairs Committee that "if we determine that there is a program, it's got to go."²⁰ This stance was far more "tentative" than the stance the Bush

18. National Assembly Records (Proceedings), 245th Session, February 17, 2004.

19. Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "Current and Future Worldwide Threats to the National Security of the United States," February 27, 2007.

20. Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, "North Korea, the February 13 Agreement," February 28, 2007.

administration has taken about the program up until then (Sanger and Broad 2007).

The Bush administration has left the stage. The newly inaugurated Obama administration seems convinced that the Bush administration's 2002 decision was politically engineered. On February 15, 2009, in a slap at her predecessors, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made it clear she believes that the Bush administration's decision to walk away from the AF helped create the current crisis over North Korea's stash of nuclear weapons (Kessler 2009). She also emphasized that "there is a debate within the intelligence community as to exactly the extent of the highly-enriched-uranium program" (Kessler 2009). It is highly likely that the Obama administration will investigate the cause of the second nuclear crisis on the peninsula and that the conclusion will support that it might not have occurred absent political manipulations by the Bush administration.

Conclusion

It is now clear that what North Korea had in October 2002 was not an HEUP. In fact, many analysts have suggested that what the North seemed to have or attempted to have in October 2002 was a pilot program for uranium enrichment (Park 2003). It thus posed no serious and imminent threat to the security of the United States. Of course, North Korea should be condemned for its acquisition of the enrichment equipment and stalling behavior during October 2002. However, if the Bush administration had been more willing to make efforts to remove whatever equipment the North had, rather than concluding that the North Korea had HEUP, the second nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula would not have occurred and North Korean nuclear capabilities would not have increased as they have. Most importantly, the Bold Approach, the Bush administration's version of the Perry Process, might have succeeded, thereby, bringing about a solution to the "peninsula problem" for the Koreans and the rest of the world. The Bush administration chose not to take that direction.

In the summer of 1983, U.S. Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger visited China. He was pleasantly surprised by Deng Xiaoping when he proposed “a meeting in Beijing between the South and North Koreans, with the United States in attendance.” The U.S. embassy in China sent off a “cable saying that, only to discover that Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Paul Wolfowitz had edited this comment out of the conversation, alleging that he hadn’t heard any such thing.” According to Charles Freeman, deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, Wolfowitz “denied adamantly that it had been said and accused us of having put words in Deng’s mouth.” During George Shultz’s visit to China with President Reagan in the spring of 1984, the Chinese again raised the issue of meetings with South Korea, the United States, and North Korea. Shultz agreed, talking to Art Hummel, the then U.S. ambassador to China. Between Beijing and Shultz’s arrival in Seoul, Wolfowitz again reversed this.²¹

It has been said that history does not repeat itself except in the minds of those who do not know history. In reverse, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. The “Wolfowitz’s trick” and the second nuclear crisis clearly indicate the dangers of forgetting past history, only to be forced to repeat it again later.

21. Interview with Charles W. Freeman excerpted from Tucker (2001). <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB87/nk03.pdf>.

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