

THE U.S.-DPRK RELATIONS AND CONTENDING OPTIONS FOR THE NUCLEAR STANDOFF

Kim Kookshin

North Korea restarted its nuclear reactor in Yongbyon and expelled IAEA inspectors in December 2002. In coping with the North Korean challenge, the Bush administration initially devised a plan to apply an increased international diplomatic isolation and economic pressure on North Korea, called 'tailored containment.' Washington's preoccupation with a possible war against Iraq, however, has limited U.S. options in dealing with North Korea. Consequently, the U.S. stressed the primacy of diplomacy to resolve the crisis. At the six-party talks, North Korea demanded a non-aggression pact, political normalization, and economic aid in return for the dismantling of its nuclear weapon program; The U.S. urged the North to take a first step for a complete and verifiable dismantlement of its nuclear program. The six-party talks laid a foundation to maintain the dialogue momentum, but the U.S. and North Korea failed to narrow their differences. Disappointed by the Bush administration's ineffective North Korean policy, liberal and conservative intellectuals suggest their policy recommendations respectively. The divergent recommendations suggested by these intellectuals can be arranged broadly into two contending options: negotiated settlement and regime change.

In October 2002, President Bush sent an envoy to Pyongyang to reopen dialogue. At the U.S.-DPRK talks, North Korea allegedly admitted its clandestine nuclear activities in violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The following month, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) cut off fuel oil shipments promised under the Agreed Framework. In response to KEDO's decision, North Korea ejected the IAEA inspectors in December 2002 and restarted its nuclear reactor shortly thereafter. To resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis, multilateral talks were held. At the six-party talks in August 2003, North Korea demanded a non-aggression pact, political normalization, and economic aid in return for the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program; The U.S. urged the North to take the first step towards complete and verifiable dismantlement of its nuclear program. As the U.S. and North Korea failed to reconcile their differences of opinion regarding the terms of a possible resolution to the nuclear dispute, the six-party talks ended without any agreement.

Tension over the nuclear standoff was relieved slightly after Bush pledged in October 2003 to provide a written guarantee that it would not attack North Korea. In February 2004, the second round of six-party talks yielded some progress on procedural issues and laid the foundation to maintain the dialogue momentum. However, the participating nations failed to overcome major barriers to resolving the crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Although the six nations agreed to hold the third round of talks by June, the likelihood of any breakthrough still appeared slim.

The purpose of this article is to examine the U.S.-North Korea relations since the inauguration of the Bush administration with an emphasis on U.S. policy towards North Korea. This article first discusses the basic principle of the Bush administration's North Korea policy, as well as the factional problems of the Bush foreign policy team. Second, the impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S.-DPRK relations focused on the Bush doctrine. Thirdly it

takes a look at North Korea's reaction to the U.S. hard-line policy and the dual track U.S. approach to dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis. Finally, it will compare two diametrically opposite options, that is, negotiated settlement and regime change, which were suggested by liberal and conservative intellectuals, respectively. These options will be compared by analyzing their explanation of the main factors of the current nuclear standoff and policy recommendations to resolve the crisis.

The Bush Administration's Policy Towards North Korea

Early Bush Administration Policy

In January 2001, George W. Bush brought with him a new foreign policy team: Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Council Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs James Kelly. All had extensive foreign policy experience under the Reagan and first Bush administrations. The upper echelons of the Bush foreign policy team generally share a common world-view - namely, the conservative political philosophy of the Republican Party and the realist approach to international politics. The Bush team agreed that their foremost responsibility is to preserve U.S. hegemony with a strong defense posture.¹ In dealing with international agendas, however, the Bush team split into contending factions.

Powell and officials in the Department of State prefer to advance

1 Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2000, pp. 45-62; The Republican National Committee, *Republican Platform 2000: Renewing America's Purpose Together*, August 3, 2000.

foreign policy in cooperation with other governments and international institutions. For them, resorting to armed force is to be held in reserve as a final option. Rumsfeld and other officials in the Department of Defense were skeptical of multilateral diplomacy and favored a heavy emphasis on the building up of strategic military power, but the foreign policy arguments go beyond the traditional State Department-Pentagon split. Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice preferred a unilateralist foreign policy based on the belief that in a dangerous world the best way to ensure America's security is to shed the constraints imposed by allies and international institutions. Furthermore, the neo-conservative wing of the administration - Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton and Richard Perle, a member of the Defense Policy Board - advocated a more radical right wing ideology, according to which, America should actively deploy its overwhelming military, economic, and political might to remake the world in its image. As a result of the factional strife within the foreign policy team, the Bush administration has shown 'two faces' of pragmatism and hard-line unilateralism in its foreign policy from the start.²

In early 2001, after a review of U.S.-North Korean policy, the Bush team agreed on several conclusions: The policies of the Clinton administration towards North Korea as well as the South Korean Sunshine Policy were appeasing in orientation; The Agreed Framework fell short of exercising a binding power to deter the North from developing nuclear weapons; And the U.S.-DPRK missile deal was fraught with uncertainty. However, the Bush team was divided regarding strategy to achieve Bush's goals. The pragmatic wing, headed by Secretary of State Powell, believed Pyongyang could be induced through diplomatic

2 Bruce W. Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: The Bush Administration and the Dynamics of Choice* (Special Update) (New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 2002), p. 3.

negotiations to forego its nuclear ambitions, and favored the traditional approach of diplomacy backed by deterrence.³ By contrast, the hawkish wing, headed by Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, preferred hard-line policies and maximum terms of negotiations in spite of the danger of a diplomatic breakdown. The hardliners assumed that North Korea could be brought to its knees by profoundly increasing pressure.

On completion of his North Korean policy review, President Bush announced a reopening of dialogue with the North on June 6, 2001. Bush's proposed agenda included an 'improved implementation' of the Agreed Framework related to the North's nuclear activities, 'verifiable constraints' on its missile programs, and conventional military posture.⁴ Bush said that Washington would pursue these discussions in the context of a comprehensive approach towards the North to encourage progress towards inter-Korean reconciliation and peace on the peninsula. The final product of the review process reflected the pragmatist's view more than the conservative hard-line attitude,⁵ but President Bush's announcement implied that the U.S. would seek to revise the 1994 Agreed Framework to ensure transparency of North Korea's past nuclear activities and would demand to re-deploy North Korean forces back from the Demilitarized Zone at the U.S.-DPRK talks.

Around the time of Bush's inauguration, North Korea accused the U.S. of exaggerating the threat of North Korean missiles in order to justify the continuance of Missile Defense (MD) projects. Regarding

3 C. Kenneth Quinones, "Dualism in the Bush Administration's North Korea Policy," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2003, pp. 197-224.

4 The White House, *Statement by the President*, June 6, 2001, www.whitehouse.gov/news/release/2001/06/20010611-4.html.

5 Sebastian Harnisch, "U.S.-North Korean relations under the Bush administration: From 'slow to go' to 'no go'," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLII, No. 6, November/December 2002, pp. 867-868.

the Bush administration's announcement to resume talks, the North accused the U.S. of setting new agenda items of negotiations unilaterally, and said that the Bush administration's proposal was an attempt to disarm and stifle North Korea. From the North Korean point of view, the nuclear inspection should depend on implementation of the Agreed Framework, and the North emphasized the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea as a precondition for talks regarding its conventional weapons. Henceforth, North Korea reiterated that the Bush administration should resume a stance similar to that of the Clinton administration and should honor the Albright-Cho joint communique of October 2000 on non-hostile intent, mutual respect, and non-interference with domestic affairs, and with this, North Korea displayed little eagerness to resume dialogue with the U.S.

The U.S.-DPRK Relations After 9/11

After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, Pyongyang swiftly condemned the attacks and reiterated its opposition to terrorism in general. On November 3, North Korea pledged to sign two antiterrorism agreements, including the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, reportedly one of four conditions set by the Clinton administration last year for North Korea to be removed from the list of rogue states. However, the Bush administration's attitude towards North Korea became more negative with the intensifying war against terrorism. President Bush urged the North to submit to full International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections immediately, and made it clear that the U.S. would consider all options if the North continued to develop weapons of mass destruction.⁶

6 The White House, *President Welcomes Aid Workers Rescued from Afghanistan*, November 26, 2001, www.whitehouse.gov/news/release/2001/11/20011126-1.html.

After 9/11, Bush concurred with the neo-conservative belief that America should use its strength to change the status quo in the world. In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, Bush branded North Korea, Iran and Iraq an 'axis of evil' that armed itself with weapons of mass destruction and threatened world peace.⁷ Furthermore, he warned that the U.S. would strongly cope with the development of weapons of mass destruction by these countries. The 'axis of evil' passage was thought by some to have been drafted as an applause line, designed to dramatize the threat of weapons of mass destruction by the rogue states. However, it was not clear whether the goal of the Bush administration was to have North Korea abolish its weapons of mass destruction or bring about the collapse of the Kim Jong-il regime because Bush often displayed his personal dislike of Kim Jong-il. When he visited Seoul on February 20, 2002, President Bush expressed hope for talks with the North, but harshly criticized the Kim Jong-il regime. Bush said that he doubted that Kim represented the will of the North Korean people, implying that the U.S. would separately deal with the North Korean regime from its own people for the regime change.

In March 2002, the Los Angeles Times ran a summary of the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), a classified Pentagon contingency plan. The NPR laid out recommendations for the U.S. nuclear policy that included the development of new nuclear weapons and a list of potential targets of nuclear strikes.⁸ It singled out seven nations as possible targets of a nuclear strike: China, Russia, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya and Syria. Along with the NPR, Bush's subsequent emphasis on the potential need for preemptive action against terrorist groups and rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction led to considerable speculation about whether North Korea might be subject to attack after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.⁹

7 The White House, *President Delivers State of the Union Address*, January 29, 2002.

8 U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review (Excerpts)*, January 8, 2002, www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm.

Pyongyang reacted with outrage to President Bush's rhetoric of the 'axis of evil,' arguing that it was a declaration of war, in fact. Regarding Bush's remarks on February 20, 2002 that the U.S. would separately deal with the North Korean regime from its own people, the North expressed harsh reaction. After it was disclosed that the NPR had included North Korea on a list of possible targets for a nuclear weapons strike, North Korea threatened to reexamine its participation in the 1994 agreement. Nevertheless, the North, concerned about the hawkish stance of the U.S. after 9/11, attempted to resume dialogue with the Americans.

The White House announced on April 30, 2002 that North Korea had offered to reopen talks with the U.S. At that time, it was reported that the U.S. would send a special envoy to Pyongyang in May, but the plan was delayed because of divisions within the Bush administration over the message the special envoy would carry to Pyongyang. In the meantime, North-South Korean naval vessels clashed in the West Sea on June 29, 2002. Soon after the naval clash, however, Pyongyang took a series of positive steps at home and abroad. In July, it lifted price controls and increased wages to reform the North Korean economy. In August, it agreed to reestablish road and rail links with South Korea, and Kim Jong-il held a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi the next month.

At the Japan-North Korean summit on September 17, 2002, Kim Jong-il surprisingly confessed to and apologized for the kidnapping of at least 13 Japanese to North Korea as part of a program to assist North Korean espionage against Japan—an act the North had denied for decades.¹⁰ Kim promised Koizumi that his government would observe international agreements related to nuclear matters, including nuclear

9 The White House, *President Bush delivers Graduation Speech at West Point*, June 1, 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html.

10 Okonogi Masao, *et. al.*, "Four Views of the Pyongyang Summit," *Japan Echo*, December 2002, pp. 43-47.

inspections by UN officials, and expressed his willingness to extend Pyongyang's moratorium on missile tests beyond 2003. He also reaffirmed Pyongyang's willingness to resume dialogue with Washington. Thus, Kim Jong-il had demonstrated an accommodating attitude to Washington's demands. Nevertheless, the Bush administration's hard-line stance towards the North had not been totally alleviated.

When the North took measures to reform its economy and improved its relations with South Korea and Japan, the Bush administration geared up for the war against terrorism. On September 19, two days after the North Korea-Japan summit, President Bush submitted to the U.S. Congress a draft resolution that would grant him authority to use all means necessary to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and the next day, the White House released *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*,¹¹ which stressed that "in the past decade, North Korea has become the world's principal purveyor of ballistic missiles, and has tested increasingly capable missiles, while developing its own Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) arsenal." That means that North Korea would be included as a possible target in a U.S.-led preemptive strike.

North Korean Nuclear Crisis and Dual Strategy of the U.S.

North Korea's Brinkmanship Diplomacy

As the North-South Korean relations improved and North Korea-Japan summit talks were held, the U.S. dispatched Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, James Kelly, to Pyongyang as a special envoy from October 3 to 5, 2002. During his three-day stay

11 The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html.

in Pyongyang, the U.S. envoy discussed concerns over weapons of mass destruction, missile development, and the deployment of conventional forces along the border. Moreover, he stressed that the dialogue between North Korea and the U.S. could be resumed only if North Korea admitted to its development of nuclear weapons through an enriched uranium formula and vowed to cease any further development of such weapons. North Korea at first denied having anything to do with the development of nuclear weapons, but later admitted to possessing a uranium enrichment program, and justified its nuclear card as a self-defensive measure against an American nuclear attack.¹² Thereafter, the North asserted that it could solve the problems related to U.S. concerns over security-related matters if the U.S. would abandon its hostile policy against North Korea.

Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry said in a statement released on October 25, 2002 that the U.S. failed to comply with its part of the points laid out in the 1994 agreement, and it presented a long list of American wrongdoings: violation of the negative security assurance provision in the Agreed Framework as well as the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) by positing North Korea as a target for a preemptive nuclear attack; attempts to overthrow the regime by declaring North Korea as a part of an 'axis of evil.'¹³ However, it reiterated that North Korea would be willing to resolve security concerns if the U.S. would issue a legally binding promise of non-aggression towards the North.

North Korea may have made the shocking admission to stimulate a major breakthrough in the U.S.-DPRK dialogue, just as their acknowledgement of the Japanese kidnappings sought improvement to DPRK-Japan relations. However, the U.S. called the DPRK nuclear program a serious violation of the Agreed Framework, the NPT, its IAEA safe-

12 Richard Boucher, Spokesman, *North Korean Nuclear Program, Press Statement*, October 16, 2002, www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/14432.htm.

13 The National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, *East Asian Strategic Review 2003* (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 2003), pp, 40-41.

guards agreement, and the 1992 Joint North-South Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the U.S. maintained that it would not hold any further discussions with the North to normalize relations until Pyongyang took steps to dismantle its nuclear program.

North Korea's admission severely damaged the pragmatist's credibility, but consolidated the hardliners' ascent in foreign policy towards North Korea. Robert Joseph, the National Security Council (NSC) Senior Director for nonproliferation, and Bolton, the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control, assumed increasing influence over North Korean policy with the backing of Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.¹⁴ Guided by these hardliners, the U.S. increased pressure on North Korea. On November 14, KEDO decided to halt fuel oil shipments to North Korea that they had been providing under the 1994 agreement. On December 9, two Spanish warships halted a North Korean cargo vessel in the Gulf of Aden, and after boarding it, discovered a hidden cache of 15 disassembled Scud missiles, conventional warheads and rocket fuel. Upon finding the missiles, the Spaniards turned over control of the ship to the U.S. Navy. The U.S., after determining that the missiles had been legitimately ordered by the government of Yemen, allowed the ship to make its delivery.¹⁵

The hardliners might have assumed that Pyongyang would submit to their pressure, but Pyongyang became increasingly intransigent. On December 12, 2002, North Korea announced its plan to reactivate the nuclear reactor in Yongbyon to generate electricity. It removed seals and monitoring devices at the Yongbyon reactors on December 21, and over the next few days, unsealed the pond where the 8,000 spent fuel rods were stored. It expelled IAEA inspectors who were stationed in

14 Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Has a Shifting Script on N. Korea: Administration Split as New Talks Near," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2003.

15 Joseph Bermudez, "Yemen continues ballistic missile procurement programme," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 2003, pp. 28-29.

the country to monitor its compliance with international nuclear non-proliferation agreements, and then announced its withdrawal from the NPT on January 2003. North Korea claimed that its withdrawal from the NPT is a legitimate act of self-defense in order to cope with the U.S. nuclear threats and strategy of strangulation. By the end of January 2003, North Korea reactivated its 5MW nuclear reactor, and began to move 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods out of storage in an attempt to prepare them for chemical reprocessing.¹⁶

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated that North Korea probably had one or two nuclear bombs built with plutonium it had extracted from its 5MW reactor prior to the shutdown of Yongbyon in 1994. If the 5MW reactor is in full operation, North Korea can obtain 6kg of additional plutonium annually, enough for one or two nuclear weapons; The 8,000 rods, containing a total of 25-30 kg of plutonium, could be used to make four to six bombs within several months.¹⁷ U.S. intelligence agencies also estimated that North Korea's recently disclosed weapons program, with which it sought to make use of highly enriched uranium rather than plutonium, would produce enough material for a nuclear weapon within two to three years. If those nuclear facilities are allowed to fully operate, the North Korean nuclear arsenal could grow to about 10 warheads in three years, but it was not certain whether North Korea possessed all the technical expertise required to create a detonable nuclear weapon.

16 CIA, *Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions*, January 1 through June 30, 2003, www.cia.gov/cia/reports/721reports/jan_jun2003.htm.

17 Sharon A. Squassoni, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: How Soon an arsenal?" *CRS Report for Congress*, Updated July 29, 2003; Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," *CRS Report for Congress*, Updated August 27, 2003.

Multilateral Diplomatic Approach

North Korea has been pressing the U.S. with provocative actions to secure major economic and political concession in exchange for its promise to give up its nuclear weapons program. In Pyongyang's strategic calculation, the U.S. would be unable to take military action simultaneously against Iraq and North Korea, and by taking advantage of this situation, the North resorted to brinkmanship strategy. In coping with the North Korean challenge, the Bush administration initially devised a plan to apply increased international diplomatic isolation and economic pressure on North Korea called 'tailored containment.'¹⁸ Key aspects of that strategy included backing the IAEA to refer the matter to the United Nations Security Council, encouraging North Korea's neighbors to cut their economic ties with North Korea and using the U.S. military to intercept North Korean exports of missiles and other weapons technology. However, South Korea opposed the idea of economic sanctions and military threats, and it appeared that China and Russia would disallow economic sanctions against North Korea in the UN Security Council. Judging that the push for the sanctions could not produce effective results, the U.S. played down the role of economic sanctions.

Washington's preoccupation with a possible war against Iraq, as well as the uncooperative attitude of North Korea's neighboring countries, has limited U.S. options in dealing with North Korea. Consequently, the U.S. stressed the primacy of diplomacy to resolve the crisis, but rejected North Korea's demand for bilateral talks. It looked to have diplomatic efforts solve the North Korean nuclear issue in a multilateral framework, asking for support from South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. The Bush administration justified its actions on the

18 Michael R. Gordon, "North Korea faces isolation over reactors," *The New York Times*, December 29, 2002.

grounds that the North Korean nuclear issue is an international issue rather than a bilateral issue between Washington and Pyongyang, and emphasized that it needed other parties to guarantee North Korea's pledge to scrap its nuclear weapons development.

The Bush administration's multilateral diplomatic approach was supported by the Chinese, who shared a common interest with the U.S. in maintaining a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. To some extent, the administration has subcontracted its policy out to China.¹⁹ As China played an active role as a mediator between the U.S. and North Korea, North Korea dropped its demand for one-on-one talks with Washington, and agreed to hold three-party talks which included China.

At the three-party talks on April 23, 2003, North Korea presented its step-by-step approach to solving the nuclear issue: First, the U.S. would have to resume the supply of heavy fuel oil and continue construction on the light-water reactor project, and North Korea would pledge not to develop nuclear weapons; Second, the U.S. would have to fulfill its promise not to use nuclear weapons against the DPRK and conclude a non-aggression pact, and North Korea would cease all nuclear activity and allow inspections; And third, the U.S. would have to remove North Korea from its list of terrorist-sponsoring states and normalize relations with the North, and the North would negotiate for the complete abandonment of its nuclear program and the halting of missile technology exports. However, the U.S. could not accept a proposal in which the North would not abandon its nuclear hedge until the last moment. For its part, the U.S. repeated its position that North Korea would need to disarm completely and verifiably before Washington would consider providing it with any political and economic benefits.²⁰ The U.S. insisted that North Korea would first need to scrap

19 Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Has a Shifting Script on N. Korea: Administration Split as New Talks Near," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2003.

20 Washington File, *Powell Says Beijing Talks Show United Opposition to Nuclear Korea*, April 25, 2003, usembassy.state.gov/seoul/wwwwh41ai.html.

its nuclear weapons program. However, North Korean officials told U.S. diplomats at the three-party talks that the North possessed nuclear weapons and was making weapons-grade plutonium.²¹ After the three-party talks, the North again announced that it had completed separating plutonium from its stored fuel rods by June 30 and that weapons production had begun.

Isolation of North Korea

Ever since North Korea confessed to having a nuclear program, the hardliners in the Bush administration have been advocating coercive measures. For them, the attempt to negotiate with the North was to repeat the mistakes of the Clinton administration by rewarding the bad behavior of North Korea. They favored isolating the North, holding open the possibility of military action, rather than attempting dialogue and diplomacy. They thought that the nuclear issue would not be solved so long as the Kim Jong-il regime was in power. With the collapse of the three-party talks in April 2003, the hardliners strongly urged Bush to establish an international cooperative system with allies to impose selective sanctions as a first step of the North Korean containment policy.

On May 31, 2003, Bush suggested that the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) impedes the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction by rogue states. In addition, on June 21, the US established the PSI together with 10 other like-minded states—Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Holland, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Thereafter, the participating countries of the PSI first agreed on the principles of interdiction for the impediment of narcotics, counterfeit currency, and shipments of weapons of mass destruction.²² Then, they

21 John Feffer, *North Korea South Korea: U.S. Policy at a Time of Crisis* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), p. 12.

22 U.S. Department of State, *U.S. to Host 5th Meeting on Proliferation Security Initiative*,

conducted interdiction exercises. For the participating countries, the aim of the PSI was the obstruction of proliferation, not focusing on any particular country, but Pentagon officials pointed out that the first major PSI exercise held on September 13, 2003, was aimed at sending a sharp signal to North Korea. The long-term objective of the PSI was to create a web of counter-proliferation partnerships that would impede trade of WMD.

Meanwhile, the Department of Defense drafted a new war plan for a possible conflict with North Korea, known as Operation Plan 5030. The prewar phase of OP 5030 focused on destabilizing North Korean military forces: it would give commanders in the region authority to conduct maneuvers to drain North Korea's limited resources, strain its military and sow confusion that North Korean generals might turn against the Kim Jong-il regime.²³ However, the draft plan was not approved by the White House. While the military officials in the Department of Defense were preoccupied with Iraq, Secretary of State Powell seized an opportunity to get Bush to give ear to continuing diplomatic engagement in the six-party talks.

U.S.-DPRK in the Six-Party Talks

At the six-way talks in Beijing on August 27-29, 2003, North Korea proposed a four-step measure to solving the nuclear issue: First, the U.S. would resume fuel oil shipments and large amounts of food aid, while North Korea would declare its intention to abandon its nuclear weapons development; Second, if the U.S. signed a non-aggression treaty with North Korea and compensated the North for its energy losses, North Korea would freeze its recently reactivated nuclear facili-

December 2, 2003, www.usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/03120201.htm.

²³ Bruce B. Auster and Kevin Whitelaw, "Upping the Ante for Kim Jong il," *U.S. News & World Report*, July 21, 2003.

ties and allow outside nuclear inspections; Third, North Korea would resolve international concerns about its missile programs while the U.S. and Japan would normalize relations with North Korean communists; And finally, North Korea would dismantle its nuclear weapons program if the U.S. completed construction of the two light-water reactors that had been built under the Agreed Framework. The North emphasized that it would be willing to abolish its nuclear program completely if the U.S. accepted its proposal for simultaneous actions of the package deal,²⁴ but the U.S. insisted that the North would first need to show its commitment to a complete, irreversible and verifiable elimination of its nuclear program. As North Korea and the U.S. engaged in a tug-of-war over which one of them would act first in settling their dispute, the first round of six-party talks ended without any tangible result.

The other four nations in the six-party talks shared the U.S. determination to keep the Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons, but were concerned about the possible effects of the U.S. preemptive strategy. Their common position was neither nuclear weapons nor war on the Korean peninsula. South Korea insisted that a war should be avoided at any cost. Although Japan introduced more rigorous inspections of shipping to and from North Korea, it was reluctant to go much further. China wanted to see North Korea give up its nuclear weapons and the U.S. guarantee Kim Jong-Il regime survival and forgo North Korean containment policy. Russia tended to take a position similar to that of China.

As the four other nations would not cooperate unless the U.S. exhausted diplomatic solutions, the Bush administration began to soften its hard-line stance. On the occasion of the Bangkok summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in October 2003,

24 *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)*, Keynote Speeches Made at the Six-way Talks, August 29, 2003, www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm.

President Bush proposed that the U.S. would guarantee Pyongyang's security in the multilateral context in return for the termination of its nuclear program.²⁵ North Korea at first rebuffed the U.S. offer by saying that the proposal was not even worth considering. Under increasing pressure from neighboring countries to respond positively to Washington's overture, however, the North announced that it was willing to consider the proposal. As the North dropped the longtime demand for a formal bilateral non-aggression treaty with the US, the crucial issue for the six-party talks to make progress seemed to be the principle of simultaneous action. However, Washington remained firm that Pyongyang would first have to make progress in scrapping its nuclear facilities.

After the first round of six-party talks, China intensified its diplomatic efforts to open a second round of talks. On October 30, talks with the head of China's legislature, Wu Bangguo, Kim Jong-il agreed in principle to restart the six-party talks. Thereafter, North Korea offered to freeze its nuclear weapons activities on two conditions: The U.S. remove North Korea from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, and provide the North with fuel and economic aid. Recalcitrant as ever, Washington reaffirmed its stance that the North would have to dismantle, not freeze, its nuclear program before receiving any rewards. There could be numerous sub-steps between a freeze and dismantling in terms of inspections and verifications. Once having accepted the North Korea's proposal, Washington reasoned that the U.S. would be obliged to give economic aid for each step taken by North Korea.

When Muammar Gaddafi announced the decision to abandon his weapons of mass destruction program and to open his nuclear sites to IAEA inspectors on December 19, five days after U.S. troops captured

25 Mike Allen and Glenn Kessler, "Bush Says Pact With N. Korea Possible: Security Guarantee Linked to Steps on Nuclear Programs," *The Washington Post*, October 21, 2003.

former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Bush, in a clear reference to North Korea, said that he hoped other leaders would follow in the example of Libya's action. It is expected that the capture of Hussein and Gaddafi's decision to abandon weapons of mass destruction may strengthen the hardliners' position in the Bush administration. On the other hand, Kim Jong-Il may decide to pursue nuclear armament even more desperately so as to avoid Hussein's fate. Indeed, North Korea repeated the statement that the war in Iraq proved its case for acquiring a tremendous deterrent to invasion.

At the second round of the six-party talks from 25 to 28 of February 2004, the six nations expressed their commitment to a nuclear weapons-free Korean peninsula, and to resolving the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect and consultation on an equal basis; they agreed to hold a third round of the six-party talks in Beijing no later than the end of the second quarter of 2004; They agreed to set up a working group in preparation for the plenary session.²⁶ However, prospects for a peaceful resolution at the third round of the six-party talks seem dim because of deeply rooted U.S.-DPRK mutual distrust.

Uncertain Future and Contending Options

Pyongyang says that it will freeze nuclear activities if Washington provides free oil shipments, lifts economic sanctions and removes North Korea from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, but the real intention of North Korea is not clear: Is the nuclear threat a negotiating tactic or do they really want to go nuclear?²⁷ Moreover, the Bush

26 Ryu Jin, "6 Nations to Meet Again by June," *The Korea Times*, March 1, 2004.

27 Alexandre Mansourov, "The Hermit Mouse Roars: North Korea," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Summer 2003, pp. 88-95; Ted Galen Carpenter, "Living with the Unthinkable: How to Coexist with a Nuclear North Korea," *The*

administration's North Korea policy is still confused: While the officials in the Department of State emphasize diplomatic solutions to the North Korean nuclear issue, hard-liners advocate a regime change as their goal. Disappointed by the Bush administration's ineffective North Korean policy, as well as its ambiguous goals, liberal and conservative intellectuals are suggesting their policy recommendations in response. They have taken quite different views in interpreting the origin of the current nuclear standoff and have suggested opposite methods for resolving it. The divergent recommendations suggested by these intellectuals can be arranged broadly into two contending options: negotiated settlement and regime change.

Negotiated Settlement

Liberal intellectuals in the U.S. and South Korea, former officials of the Clinton administration, Congressmen of the Democratic Party, as well as pragmatists in the Bush administration advocate engagement policy and peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis. They generally share an opinion on the causes of the problem and methods for the resolution of the nuclear crisis, but express slightly different evaluations on the specific issues and policy recommendations.

Liberal intellectuals indicate the early Bush administration's hostile neglect as the primary cause of the current nuclear standoff. The Bush team, instead of following through on the Clinton's administration's missile deal, turned a soluble North Korean problem into a major crisis by radically changing the terms of engagement by insisting that North Korea immediately cease its nuclear activities and by severely limiting diplomatic engagement as well as any talk of possible incentives to Pyongyang.²⁸ After 9/11, Bush made Pyongyang suspicious of his

National Interest, No. 74, Winter 2003/4, pp. 92-98.

28 Chung-In Moon and Jong-Yun Bae, "The Bush Doctrine and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2003, pp. 9-45.

intentions by declaring North Korea a part of an axis of evil. In addition to the harsh rhetoric, the new security strategy of the U.S., which emphasized the preemptive strike and regime change, created fears in North Korea that it might be the next U.S. target, and liberals maintain that the tough negotiating position of the U.S. in the six-party talks made the North undertake a series of brinkmanship measures including the admission of possession of nuclear bombs.

For the liberals, coercive diplomacy of the U.S. is unlikely to change North Korea's intransigent attitude, and the PSI efforts to isolate and contain the North would not bring about the collapse of the Kim Jong-il regime because the North Korean people are well accustomed to hardship under the Juche system.²⁹ Outside pressure on North Korea will rather enhance the regime's internal cohesiveness. Surgical strikes to the North Korean nuclear facilities are undesirable and infeasible, in that a military strike would mean a significant risk of provoking an all-out war on the peninsula. Although liberals disfavor military options, a discernable gap of perception exists between progressive-liberals and moderate-liberals on use of the military option. South Korean intellectuals and progress-liberal intellectuals in the U.S. emphasize that a second Korean War should be avoided at any cost. Yet, some moderate liberals do not totally rule out the military option. In the case of diplomatic failure, O'Hanlon and Mochizuki maintain that the U.S. should be determined to go to war.³⁰ For them, the risk of a second Korean War is no greater than the risk of allowing North Korea to develop, and possibly sell or even use, dozens of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, they reiterate that coercive options should be kept as last resorts until all other alternatives for peaceful resolution have been exhausted.

The liberals, in general, maintain that there is a good reason to think

29 Han-Shik Park and Kyung-Ae Park, "U.S. lacks options in crisis with Pyongyang," *Jane's Intelligence Reviews*, April 2003, pp. 38-39.

30 Michael O'Hanlon and Mike Mochizuki, *Crisis on the Korean Peninsula* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), pp. 92-93.

that grand bargaining could succeed based on the history of negotiations with North Korea. The negotiation of the 1994 Agreed Framework showed that North Korea was willing to trade away substantial nuclear capability for a package of benefits that included an alternative source of energy and the hope of gradual diplomatic engagement and economic recovery. And, North Korea urgently needs international political engagement and economic assistance to ensure survival of the Kim Jong-il regime. According to the liberals, threats from the U.S. are real and pressing for North Korea, but Pyongyang's threat is a negotiating tactic: if the U.S. removes its nuclear threats, Pyongyang would be willing to give up nuclear arms and missiles. There is no reason for the U.S. to not accept North Korea's demand for security assurance. If the U.S. ends economic sanctions, removes North Korea's name from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and opens up diplomatic relations, according to the liberals, North Korea would give up its efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction and would more seriously consider the reform path.³¹

Resolving Nuclear Issue through Regime Change

Conservative intellectuals in the U.S., especially neo-conservatives, Congressmen of the Republican Party, as well as hardliners in the Bush administration suggest isolation, containment, and regime change as the only viable alternative to a negotiated settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue. They generally share the view that the ultimate goal of U.S. policy should be the removal of the Kim Jong-il regime. Given the difficulty of the preemptive strike, however, they differ on the depth of U.S. commitment to coercive measures.

31 Selig S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Damjan de Krnjevic-Miskovic, *North Korea and Non-proliferation: A conversation with Selig Harrison*, January 28, 2004, www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol2Issue9/vol2issue9harrison.html.

The conservative intellectuals argue that the North's weapons pose the immediate challenges to international security. Combined with its long-range missiles, North Korea's nuclear weapons could inflict devastation at long distances, even on the U.S. For the conservatives, the current nuclear crisis was set off by North Korea's secret nuclear-weapons program in violation of the Agreed Framework. Since breaking the agreements, North Korea has vehemently proclaimed that the U.S. has been planning to attack and has therefore demanded a guarantee of security from the U.S. However, according to the conservatives, North Korea is already a nuclear power.³² They take the North Korean diplomats' allegations seriously such as the one according to which North Korea will take a measure to open its nuclear deterrent to the public when the appropriate time comes. If North Korea is able to possess five to six nuclear bombs rather than one or two, according to the conservatives, it would obtain a formidable strategic deterrence against U.S. military forces as some nuclear weapons will survive preemptive strikes and thereby allowing a DPRK second strike.

The conservatives emphasize that North Korea is not a credible negotiation partner: Any new agreement with the North Koreans must begin by acknowledging that North Korea cannot be trusted to honor its promise. In any case, the conservatives believe that the North Koreans would not agree anytime soon to abolishing their weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. From the perspective of the conservatives, North Korea's emphasis on the step-by-step simultaneous actions derives from its calculated tactics to protract negotiations while producing more nuclear weapons. Even if the U.S. accepts the principle of simultaneous action, the negotiations over practical details would be long and difficult. Particularly, the nuclear inspection task would be formidable. In order to confidently accept that North Korea

32 Henry S. Rowen, "Kim Jong Il Must Go," *Policy Review*, No. 121, October & November 2003, pp. 3-16.

has really eliminated its nuclear program, the IAEA inspectors must be allowed to go anywhere at anytime, and must be allowed to remove North Korean nuclear scientists and their families to neutral territories and interview them there. However, North Korea is not a sufficiently open country to allow thorough verification. Thus, a diplomatic settlement resulting in permanent and irreversible denuclearization is an exceedingly unlikely prospect.³³

The conservatives emphasize coercive measures in dealing with North Korea. Perle suggests a three-stage approach to topple the Kim Jong-il regime: Decisive action would begin with a comprehensive air and naval blockade of North Korea; Next, accelerating redeployment of our ground troops on the Korean Peninsula; And third, developing detailed plans for a preemptive strike against North Korea's nuclear facilities.³⁴ He assumes that a credible buildup to an American strike will persuade the Chinese to increase pressure on North Korea to replace Kim Jong-il by a North Korean communist who is more subservient to China. Given the risks associated with the preemptive strike, which would eventually escalate to a full-scale war on the Korean peninsula, some conservatives are shifting their focus to the human rights problems in North Korea, rather than costly military attacks.

Rowen suggests a serious human rights campaign to bring down Kim's regime. According to Rowen, if China agrees not to return North Korean refugees in China, and if South Korea agrees to accept more of them, there will be a massive exodus of North Koreans like that which took place in East Germany.³⁵ And, he expects that if conditions become worse enough, members of the North Korean elite might act

33 Nicholas Eberstadt, *Diplomatic Fantasyland: The illusion of a Negotiated Solution to the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0342_Eberstadt.html.

34 Richard Perle and David Frum, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 103-104.

35 Rowen, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

out against Kim Jong-il. Thus, conservatives suggest hostile neglect to topple the Kim Jong-il regime.

For the conservatives, the only and surest way by which the U.S. would feel security with North Korea is a North Korean regime change, but they acknowledge the limits and risks of unilateral U.S. actions to force a regime change in the North. Therefore, they emphasize the importance of the Chinese role in replacing the Kim Jong-il regime.³⁶ Nevertheless, it is not clear whether China would support the U.S. in removing Kim Jong-il from power. Those options suggested by the conservatives are based on purely hypothetical assumptions that the Chinese would be enthusiastic in joining with the U.S. to create a new regime in North Korea, if the U.S. would allow it to be a pro-Chinese communist regime.

President Bush reportedly somewhat favors the coercive strategy recommended by the conservatives, but he does not want to stir up another controversial issue in the campaign for the upcoming presidential election. Therefore, the Bush administration emphasizes the diplomatic resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue through six-party talks. If negotiations stall without producing tangible results even after his reelection, however, the U.S. would likely take the North Korean issue to the UN Security Council to adopt a sanctions resolution against North Korea.

If a candidate from the Democratic Party were to win the presidential election, the U.S. would take a more flexible and practical attitude towards North Korea. That means a new Democratic administration would show some degree of compromise in dealing with the nuclear issue by accepting the North Korea's proposal of a package solution with simultaneous action, and it would pick up the missile deal where

36 Stephen F. Morris, "Averting the Unthinkable," *The National Interest*, No. 74, Winter 2003/4, pp. 106-107.

the Clinton team left off. Although the U.S. would adopt specific step-by-step measures to solve the North Korean issue, it would never give up its demand that North Korea abandon its nuclear program completely and undergo thorough verification. Therefore, in the case of future U.S.- DPRK talks, the issue of verification would be the main issue of contention.