Abstract

North Korea's nuclear crisis is the most dangerous security threat South Korea has faced since the Korean War and is likely to serve as a turning point that can trigger a structural change in the status quo of the Korean peninsula. To the North Korean regime, nuclear weapons are a critical military element that can be used as a threat to dominate South Korea in the two countries' rivalry and as a last resort to guarantee the regime's survival and continuity.

This paper first discusses capability and strategic implications of a nuclear-armed North Korea. The paper then examines the positions of the ROK and the United States on how to view and deal with North Korea's nuclear crisis and highlights the differences of the two sides' approaches. Finally, as a main argument of this paper, it is proposed that the South Korean government should adopt a new strategic paradigm in order to bring the North Korea nuclear problem to a final conclusion.

The new approach maintains that it is time for the ROK to launch a strategy integrating coercion and inducement rather than sticking to the one-dimensional carrot–only strategy. Three strategic countermeasures and related policy options are proposed to the South Korean government. In particular, this paper emphasizes the importance of being prepared for North Korea's nuclear weapons in the military and security dimensions.
"deception" and "persistence" may be the two words that most succinctly describe the North Korean regime's psychology and strategy. Throughout its history, the North's nuclear weapon development program has been disguised by the Pyongyang regime's peaceful rhetoric of having no intention to go nuclear. North Korean authorities, of course, stubbornly exerted themselves in furtive efforts to acquire nuclear weapons via the back door. Under the banner of "having neither intention nor capability to develop nuclear weapons," guided by the late President Kim Il-Sung, this pattern of rhetorical deception on the one hand and persistent obsession to realize nuclear ambition on the other had continued until April 2003 when North Korea finally revealed that they had nuclear weapons.2

There have been several examples manifesting North Korea’s duality and dishonesty. First, by signing the Joint Denuclearization Declaration with South Korea in 1991, North Korea promised not to possess reprocessing or enrichment facilities. But the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection that was carried out just six months later found that the North had already constructed and operated a large-scale reprocessing facility—what they called a radiochemical laboratory. Indeed, the Joint Declaration was a stillborn child from the beginning.

Second, the Pakistani government’s investigation of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan and subsequent revelation of a nuclear smuggling network in early 2004 showed that there had been significant levels of nuclear cooperation between North Korea and Pakistan. During the last decade, technologies, equipments and materials related to uranium enrichment had been flown from Pakistan into North Korea. This is a clear violation of the Joint Declaration, the Geneva Agreed Framework,1

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1 Since the Geneva Agreed Framework was signed in 1994, there were numerous indications that North Korea was maintaining clandestine nuclear weapon development programs. For example, a series of high-explosive tests—about 70 times and many attempts at running a uranium enrichment program were observed during the Clinton and Kim Dae-jung administrations. Warnings were issued on North Korea’s breaking away from the various agreements. For instance, the U.S. Congress warned that “There is significant evidence that undeclared nuclear weapons development activity continues, including efforts to acquire uranium enrichment technologies and recent nuclear-related high explosive tests. This means that the United States cannot discount the possibility that North Korea could produce additional nuclear weapons outside of the constraints imposed by the 1994 Agreed Framework.” North Korea Advisory Group, Report to The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives, November 1999, p. 5, available at http://www.house.gov/international_relations/nkag/report.htm.

2 It was during the conversation with the editor-in-chief of NHK in October 1977 that Kim Il Sung first publicly expressed his intention not to develop nuclear weapons. At an interview with the president of Iwanami Shoten on Sept. 26, 1991, he declared neither intention nor capability to develop nuclear weapons. At a luncheon with the South Korean delegation for the South-North High-Level Talks on Feb. 20, 1992, Kim Il Sung stated that “We do not intend to have a nuclear confrontation with neighboring big powers and in addition, it is unimaginable to develop nuclear weapons that can wipe out Korean people.” Nodong Sinmun, Feb. 21, 1992.
and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Third, at the NPT withdrawal statement issued in January 2003, the DPRK government reasserted itself that it did not have any intention to go nuclear and invited the United States to verify their statement. About three months later, the government statement was nullified at the Beijing three-party talks when the DPRK representative Lee Gun informed to the U.S. representative James Kelly that North Korea already had nuclear weapons. Mr. Lee’s remark was the first case where a high-level North Korean authority revealed that Pyongyang possessed nuclear weapons. Since June 2003, North Koreans claimed to have a “nuclear deterrent force.”

In short, what the North Korean regime has shown to the international society as regards its nuclear ambition is indeed a historical masterpiece of ill-natured deception and unyielding persistence. Threats posed by North Koreans will be brought to an end only when such persistent deception no longer can serve as a guiding principle of their thinking and policymaking behavior.

As Dr. Khan told investigators that he saw three nuclear devices while visiting Pyongyang five years ago, it is getting more difficult to deny that North Korea has become the world’s 9th nuclear weapon state. This paper first discusses capability and strategic implications of nuclear-armed North Korea. Then it examines the positions of the ROK and the United States on how to view and deal with North Korea’s nuclear problem and highlights the differences of the two sides’ approaches. Finally, as a main argument of this paper, it is proposed that the South Korean government should adopt a new strategic paradigm in order to bring North Korea’s nuclear problem to a final conclusion. The new approach maintains that it is time for the ROK to launch a strategy integrating coercion and inducement rather than sticking to the one-dimensional carrot-only strategy. Three strategic countermeasures and related policy options are proposed to the South Korean government. In particular, this paper emphasizes the importance of being prepared for North Korea’s nuclear weapons in the military and security dimensions.

Nuclear-Armed North Korea

North Korea’s Nuclear Capability

It is a conventional wisdom that North Korea has possessed multiple nuclear warheads especially after the new nuclear crisis erupted in October 2002. In the early 1990s, North Korea was believed to have acquired enough plutonium for one or two primitive nuclear devices. North Korea’s continuously carried out high-explosive tests until 2002, allegedly reprocessing about 8,000 spent fuel rods in 2003 and maintained the furtive military cooperation with Pakistan that was revealed in 2004, all of which indicate that the North’s nuclear capability is well beyond the assessment of the early 1990s.

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The exact number of nuclear warheads North Korea possesses as of 2004 is at variance from four to nine. For example, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London estimated 4–8 warheads while the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) in Wash-
ingston calculated a maximum of 8–9 warheads. In detail, the IISS estimated that North Korea had extracted 7–12.5 kilograms of plutonium before the IAEA inspection started in May 1992 and extracted 17.5–27 kilograms of plutonium by reprocessing the 8,000 spent fuel rods.

North Korea’s highly enriched uranium (HEU) program is generally believed to be inferior to the plutonium program in that there is no evidence that the North constructed large-scale HEU facilities comparable to the Yongbyon nuclear complex. But there are indications that Pyongyang might have gotten a high level of technology cooperation from abroad. If North Korea had received middle level enriched uranium as Iran is suspected to have from Russia, the North could produce weapon-grade HEU in a short period of time with only a few dozen centrifuges.

The Pakistani government’s investigation of Dr. Khan’s nuclear proliferation network is a credible way of getting access to North Korea’s nuclear intention and capability. More than a dozen visits by Dr. Khan to North Korea show, in themselves, that he stands at the center of a decade-long clandestine nuclear cooperation between the two countries and is a strong patron for the North’s nuclear weapon development program. Dr. Khan’s confession that he saw three nuclear devices in North Korea is a powerful indication that nuclear-armed North Korea is an undeniable reality.

Dr. Khan also made important remarks on North Korea’s HEU program. According to the report, he made it clear that Pakistan provided North Korea with centrifuge designs, a small number of centrifuges and a list of items and equipments that are necessary for establishing a large scale HEU program. This is contrary to the North Korean position on the HEU affair. They have flatly denied the existence of an HEU program. Dr. Khan’s revelation about the HEU program is another sheer manifestation that the North Korean regime has played deceitful tricks on the international community.

One point that did not draw much attention in the report on the investigation of Dr. Khan is that Pakistan began to provide information regarding North Korea’s nuclear capability in classified briefings to nations within reach of North Korea’s missiles [emphasis added]. This suggests the Pakistani government’s belief or at least concerns that the North already possesses nuclear-tipped missiles or is able to do so in the near future. The information hitherto opened to the public regarding Pakistani-North Korean nuclear connection is very limited, like the tip of an iceberg. As more information comes out of the investigation, stronger evidence will be accumulated about nuclear-armed North Korea.

There exist differences of opinion and even confusion over North Korea’s nuclear capability. Gathering information without access to the core human group and/or the physical locations of North Korea’s nuclear program can be problematic and can contain uncertainties. As regards the interpretation and analysis of the collected information, there have been many differences even within a government, not to mention among the concerned countries. The significance of Dr. Khan’s confession is that it is weighty evidence coming from a technically competitive authority close to the core group of the program. In this respect, Dr. Khan’s remarks will make significant contributions to removing uncertainties about North Korea’s nuclear capability. It will also lead to promoting international cooperation on putting pressure on North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program.


11 For example, when Siegfried Hecker, the former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, visited Pyongyang in January 2004, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan stated that North Korea had no HEU program and had chosen the plutonium path as a deterrent. He also argued that the North had no facilities, equipment or scientists dedicated to an HEU program. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearings on Visit to the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center in North Korea, presented by Siegfried Hecker, Senior Fellow, The Los Alamos National Laboratory, University of California, Jan. 21, 2004, p. 10. North Korea did not retreat from this position on the HEU program at the third round of the six-party talks in late June 2004.
It is often said that nuclear weapons are not militarily usable but only have some political value, especially in case of a small nuclear weapon state like North Korea. But the question of whether nuclear weapons will or will not be used should be answered in a specific context. A small nuclear power obviously will be very cautious in exercising its nuclear option vis-à-vis a big nuclear power because the latter’s nuclear retaliation can easily wipe out the former. It is hardly possible for a small nuclear weapon state to use nuclear weapons against a big nuclear power even in the dire circumstances when its own survival is at stake. Thus, it is reasonable to say that North Korea will not be able to use nuclear weapons against the United States in fear of massive retaliation by means of nuclear and/or conventional weapons.

However, in North-South Korean relations, North Korea might feel free to intimidate or attack South Korea with nuclear weapons. As a faithful observer of the Joint Denuclearization Declaration, South Korea is a non-nuclear weapon state. Sustaining the non-nuclear policy is one of the indispensable conditions for South Korea to acquire much-needed international assistance and collaboration before and after the peaceful unification. South Korea is officially under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. This means that if attacked by Pyongyang, Washington will exercise full options including possible use of nuclear weapons to defend Seoul. But South Koreans’ confidence in the American nuclear umbrella has been diminishing. The credibility of the nuclear umbrella itself has long been questioned throughout the history of extended deterrence. Recent acrimony between the United States and the ROK also reflects the declining confidence in the bilateral security alliance in general and the nuclear umbrella in particular. Under the circumstances, North Korea is much less likely to worry about nuclear retaliation from the United States in defense of South Korea and thus, can fully enjoy its freedom to take advantage of nuclear-related options ranging from threat manipulation to actual use.

In the operational dimension, assuming that a conventional conflict occurs between the two sides, North Korea can carry out a nuclear test aimed at crushing South Korea’s will to fight. Pyongyang can also use a nuclear weapon in the middle of the conflict to change the course of the war in its favor. That is, for North Korea, the nuclear weapon is an ultimate military means that can overwhelm South Korea militarily. It should be noted that the first and the only historic occasion where nuclear weapons were used was when the United States, a nuclear weapon state, used them against Japan, a non-nuclear weapon state.

In the psychological dimension, nuclear weapons will provide highly important benefits to the North Korean military. The very possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea will push the North Korean military leadership, being aware of how ill-prepared its military is to any nuclear-related conflict, will be haunted by a possible nuclear use or threat of use by North Korea. Such worries will not be confined to the upper-level military hierarchy and will expand to the rank and file, even to the general public. This will eventually have great influences on the ROK military’s morale, its will to fight, operational strategies and tactics. What if a nuclear weapon actually explodes immediately before or in the midst of a military conflict? It is quite possible that the responses would be a nationwide panic, frustration and loss of will to fight, and subsequent defeat. If North Korea launches a limited but carefully designed military campaign—for example, invading Baekryong island in the West Sea that is a key strategic point or occupying the capital and its metropolitan area by a combination of guerilla warfare and blitz-type operation—and explodes a nuclear weapon to demonstrate nuclear capability, then a strong voice might be raised in South Korea that there is no choice except succumbing to North Korea’s nuclear capability and accepting the new status quo.

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12 For example, Kissinger observed that “once the Soviet Union acquired the capacity to threaten the United States with direct nuclear retaliation, the American pledge to launch an all-out nuclear war on behalf of Europe was bound increasingly to lose its sense—and so would the [NATO] alliance’s defense strategy . . . .” Henry Kissinger, “Strategy and the Atlantic alliance,” Survival, Vol. 24 (1982), p. 195.
Positions of South Korea and the United States

**South Korea**

The National Security Council of President Roh Moo-hyun issued a comprehensive report on the nation’s security strategy in March 2004—the first of its kind in South Korea’s policymaking history. The title of the National Security Strategy (NSS) report is “Peace, Prosperity and National Security.” The report begins with the following phrase:

[the Roh administration] started in the midst of significant security concerns due to the revival of North Korea’s nuclear problem. North Korea’s nuclear problem has emerged as the biggest threat to our national security and as a critical issue that can thwart peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

The beginning of the Roh administration’s NSS report gives a clue to how burdensome North Korea’s nuclear problem has been for the administration’s policymaking personnel. From the start, the Roh administration has stipulated three principles regarding the problem:

- North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons will not be tolerated;
- North Korea’s nuclear problem should be resolved peacefully; and
- South Korea must play an active role in settling the problem.

The Roh administration appears to agree in principle but disagree in specifics with the Bush administration’s strategy to resolve North Korea’s nuclear problem. During President Roh’s visit to Washington in May 2003, the two Presidents reconfirmed that “they will not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea.” They also stated “their strong commitment to work for the ‘complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement (CVID)’ of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program through peaceful means based on international cooperation.” The importance of complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear program was reemphasized in the bilateral summit talk during the APEC Summit Meeting in October 2003.

Contrary to the outward agreement, there have existed differences between the two sides on specific steps to induce North Korea to give up nuclear ambitions and on alternative approaches in case diplomatic efforts bear no fruit. While South Korea sticks to a peaceful resolution through dialogue as the only viable option, even the Democrats as well as the Republicans in the United States believe that a military option should not be excluded. South Korea’s non-participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is a clear case illustrating the difference between the two sides at the tactical level. It was even reported that South Korea quoted North Korea’s strong negative reaction to ask the United States to change the “CVID” terminology. The discrepancy is succinctly summarized as the following: “While the United States struggles to ascertain whether North Korea is crossing an invisible line concerning its nuclear activities, South Korea struggles to keep the peace on the peninsula.”

Regarding North Korea’s nuclear capability, President Roh said that it was not yet a substantial threat; that North Korean remark of...
The United States

The Bush administration has taken a different approach from South Korea to resolve the nuclear crisis. Under the strong will not to repeat the bad precedence of bartering North Korea’s compliance with carrots, the United States has put more importance on “principles and norms” rather than “making a deal.” And it has called on the North to sincerely follow what it promised to the international community. Washington also appears unsatisfied with Seoul’s attitudes that it has taken no concrete actions to make Pyongyang give up nuclear ambitions while saying that nuclear-armed North Korea cannot be tolerated. The Bush administration also argues that North Korea should accept a rigid inspection system, probably comparable to what has been done in Iraq by the Iraq Survey Group.

These positions and views were combined into a guiding principle to bring about an ultimate resolution to North Korea’s nuclear crisis. The acronym of the principle is CVID (complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement). The word “complete” is meant not to repeat the mistake of the Agreed Framework that stopped short of achieving complete transparency of the North’s nuclear history and complete dismantlement of its nuclear capability and infrastructure. John Bolton confirmed that the highly enriched uranium program as well as the plutonium program should be eliminated to attain the goal of complete dismantlement. Regarding the HEU program, North Korea has said that it is willing to discuss technical matters if the United States presents related evidence. On the other hand, it is the U.S. position that the

possessing nuclear weapons at the Beijing three party talks was their negotiating tactic; and that the situations became stable since the multilateral talks began. President Roh also questioned American assertions that North Korea may already possess nuclear weapons by saying that “I don’t think it is well-grounded information. There is no clear evidence they have nuclear weapons.” He further stated that it was an official view to date that South Korea’s intelligence communities do not have assuring evidence to confirm this [North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons].

It is not known to what extent the Roh administration’s threat perception of North Korea’s nuclear capability has changed since the early days of his administration. At least, the Roh administration may have come to acknowledge the substance of North Korea’s nuclear capability. The NSS report clearly recognized the seriousness of the issue and the North’s nuclear capability has continued to expand since early 2003. Of course, to recognize the fact that North Korea possesses nuclear weapons is one thing and to assign much seriousness to the fact and to put that into the threat calculation can be quite another. Keeping in mind that it is still valid to accept dialogue as the only method to resolve the nuclear crisis and to object to any behavior that can increase military tension, the Roh administration appears to firmly believe that the North Korean regime will eventually give up nuclear weapons if enough rewards are provided.

23 At the joint press conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Roh remarked that compared to six months ago, the crisis situation was subdued and the stability was enhanced very much. Office of the President, Republic of Korea, July 20, 2003, available at http://www.cwd.go.kr
provision of evidence about the HEU program, which is much easier to hide than the plutonium program, only helps North Korea’s concealment activities.28

The wording of “verifiable” is based on the Bush administration’s deep-seated mistrust of North Korea and manifests its will to set up a reliable verification mechanism to effectively monitor the North’s compliance behavior. By “irreversible,” it is meant to eradicate all human, material and technical infrastructures for nuclear development programs and in consequence, making it impossible for such programs to revive in the North Korean territories. According to John Bolton, irreversible dismantlement attains its goal when North Korea abandons both its so-called “civil” and “peaceful” nuclear programs as well as military programs and permits the removal of all critical components.29

It is partly because of the lessons in Iraq that the United States is trying to root out North Korea’s nuclear capability by means of the CVID principle. The United Nation’s total ban on weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—nuclear, chemical and biological weapons—and rigid inspections in the 1990s had made the Hussein regime to virtually give up developing such weapons. This is one reason why the coalition forces have had difficulties in finding the evidence of Iraq’s WMD program. The missile was excluded from this total ban and the development of missiles with up to 150 kilometers range was allowed. But the Hussein regime abused this limited freedom to try to acquire medium range missiles from countries like North Korea.30 Thus, the essence of the CVID is to thwart any chance, however small it is, for the North Korean regime to play a dangerous nuclear game again. The United States concluded that it was an important achievement for the CVID principle to be accepted by all the participants at the second round of the six party talks, except North Korea.31

Meanwhile, in the midst of the presidential election campaign, President Bush’s North Korea policy has been one of the main issues attacked by the Democrats. Criticizing the Bush administration’s North Korea policy as failed efforts, John Kerry elaborated his broad North Korea policy guidelines by presenting the following points:32

- To focus solely on North Korea’s nuclear program fails to address the reasons why Kim Jong Il wants nuclear weapons and enables him to engage in nuclear brinkmanship and blackmail;
- To negotiate a comprehensive agreement that addresses the full range of issues—nuclear, chemical and missile programs, conventional force deployment, drug running and human rights—as well as North Korea’s concerns about security and economic development;
- To relax sanctions and provide technical assistance incrementally, according to Pyongyang’s dismantling its nuclear program and reducing conventional forces and reforming its economy;
- To sign an agreement that is verifiable and phased, to check the North Koreans’ compliance at every step and to stop the clock if they fail to comply; and
- This approach will signal allies that the United States is prepared to go the last mile to resolve this crisis peacefully, and will strengthen the U.S. to undertake a military option if diplomacy fails.

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29 The Bush Administration’s Nonproliferation Policy: Successes and Future Challenges.


Integrating Coercion and Inducement: A New Paradigm for an Effective North Korea Strategy

The North Korean nuclear problem is a grave security threat to the Korean peninsula as well as an important challenge to the international nonproliferation regime. While internationalization of the problem is inevitable, it is important for South Korea to realize the seriousness of the problem and prevent North Korea from keeping nuclear weapons.

Since the eruption of the new nuclear crisis in October 2002, the Roh administration has maintained the position of “peaceful resolution of North Korea’s nuclear problem through dialogue” and has consistently demanded that the DPRK should renounce nuclear ambitions and live up to the international obligations. However, the problem has been exacerbated rather than moderated since the North’s nuclear capability has apparently expanded and new evidence about North Korea’s nuclear weapon programs have been found. It becomes clear that the Kim Jong Il regime does not listen to the Roh administration at least regarding the nuclear issue. In view of the serious challenges posed by nuclear-armed North Korea, it is time for the ROK government to have a comprehensive review of the existent North Korea strategy. Seoul needs to investigate whether there have been problems or errors in basic assumptions, frameworks and decision-making processes in its North Korea strategy in general and approaches to resolve the nuclear problem in particular.

A new paradigm of the Roh administration’s effective North Korea strategy should be to integrate coercion and inducement, that is, to use parallel carrots and sticks. At an inter-state negotiation, carrots and sticks are neither controversial nor conflicting but are proper means to enhance a country’s bargaining power. Coercion and inducement are the bargaining assets that can be utilized complementarily to achieve objectives. In particular, it is a simple truth that success of any negotiation, not to mention of negotiating sensitive security issues, largely depends on a nation’s strength. Negotiation should be carried out in a position of strength and rich economic wealth (basis of inducement) and strong military power (basis of coercion) are valuable bargaining assets. It is noteworthy what Vaclav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic, argued: “Decisiveness, perseverance and negotiations from a position of strength are the only things that Kim Jong Il and those like him understand.”

Concerns exist that the use of sticks might provoke North Korea to take aggressive actions and thus increase tension on the Korean peninsula. While it is important to shy away from fostering unnecessary conflicts, it should be noted that North Korea’s nuclear problem is, in itself, a serious military challenge and thus, a grave security threat to South Korea and its people. To take proper countermeasures in response to the other side’s military threat is a normal self-defense measure and should not be blamed for adding to the already provoked tension. Giving up an important part of South Korea’s bargaining leverage—on the pretext of not inciting North Korea—will cripple South Korea’s national strategy and thus, cannot constitute a proper policy-making behavior.

33 For instance, it was pointed out that the current operating mechanism of the National Security Council (NSC) had problems and President Roh should exercise his leadership to reform the NSC for efficient management of the organization. JoongAng Ilbo, Feb. 21, 2004.
34 That this new paradigm will be useful in resolving the pending nuclear crisis was confirmed by experiences of the U.S. negotiators of the Agreed Framework. Proposing the integration of carrots and sticks into a strategy of coercive diplomacy as a lesson learned from their early experiences, they argue that “If offered only carrots, the North Koreans will conclude that the other side is more desperate for a deal than they are and will likely continue on a path of defiance and increasing negotiating demands.” See Joel Wit, Daniel Poneman and Robert Gallucci, “Seven lessons for dealing with today’s North Korea nuclear crisis,” Arms Control Today, Vol. 34, No. 3 (April 2004), pp. 19–22.
35 William Perry, former Secretary of Defense and North Korea policy coordinator during the Clinton administration, also emphasized the importance of combining both positive and coercive dimensions of a North Korea policy. He stated that “For negotiations to have a chance of success, they would need to have a positive dimension, making it clear to North Korea that forgoing nuclear weapons could lead it to a safe and positive future. But they would also need a negative or coercive dimension, both to induce North Korea to take the right path and to give us and our allies more credible options if diplomacy should fail.” William Perry, “It’s either nukes or negotiation,” Washington Post, July 23, 2003, p. A23.
Of course, there exists a range of options in applying sticks to North Korea. An all-out war would be the most extreme and the least feasible option. But it is obvious that a country’s national security strategy should consider and be prepared for all possible contingencies.\textsuperscript{38} There are numerous options for providing carrots as well. Various measures can be forged in terms of scopes and degrees in many areas such as economic assistances, diplomatic relations and security assurances, etc. This paper proposes three strategic countermeasures to be taken by South Korea in response to nuclear-armed North Korea. The first two are coercive countermeasures and the third is a positive one.

\textit{Military Preparation for North Korea’s Nuclear Threat}

Since the new nuclear crisis emerged in October 2002, the South Korean military has virtually taken no action, which is quite improper. To say the least, the ROK military should have taken some action when North Korean authorities revealed their possession of nuclear weapons in April 2003 or when the Pakistani government informed South Korea of the result of its investigation of Dr. Khan in spring 2004. The ROK military should have reaffirmed the principle not to tolerate nuclear-armed North Korea; issued warnings to North Koreans not to take any hostile action; and prepared itself against possible use of nuclear weapons by the DPRK.

Though overdue, the Roh administration should take the following

\textsuperscript{37} The concern in South Korean society that coercive measures against North Korea might cause a military conflict and add difficulties to resolving North Korea’s nuclear crisis peacefully is partly due to the reality that idealistic pacifism or a false sense of security is widespread in South Korean society. A necessary condition of peace is that a nation possesses the power and will to defend itself and government branches perform their assumed duties sincerely. Using sticks against North Korea’s nuclear problem is comparable to applying law enforcement to a behavior disrupting social order.

\textsuperscript{38} For example, a report from the Carnegie Endowment advised the United States to be prepared for the possibility that North Korea will not abandon its nuclear capability by reinforcing diplomatic and military capabilities to enhance deterrence and stability on the Korean peninsula. George Perkovich \textit{et al.}, \textit{Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security} (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2004), p. 85.

\textit{Passive Defensive Measures}

Since nuclear-armed North Korea created radical changes in South Korea’s security environment, the South’s national defense strategy and operational planning need be completely reviewed and the entire military posture should be overhauled to meet the new and unfamiliar security challenge. Up until now, the “nuclear” element has been missing in the ROK’s military strategy. The option of developing nuclear weapons on its own has been discarded in South Korea’s national strategy. There has never existed a “nuclear protection” program—the defensive efforts against a nuclear attack from real and/or potential enemy forces. While under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, unlike Western Europe during the Cold War, South Korea has not been given a role or a say in the decision of using nuclear weapons, which has remained solely the U.S. government’s right.

Since denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is one of the critical elements of South Korea’s national security strategy, choosing a nuclear weapon option as a countermeasure against North Korea’s nuclear weapons is not suitable politically and diplomatically. It is also technically not feasible because the technical infrastructure to go nuclear is at present non-existent in South Korea. Although the North Korean regime does not refrain from gratifying its desire for nuclear weapons and causing international security concerns, South Korea should confirm and stick to its non-nuclear policy. There are sufficient reasons why the ROK should allay the international community’s concern that even Seoul might one day divert itself to clandestine nuclear weapon development activities. South Korea’s non-nuclear policy is a necessary condition to draw international support and assistance for peaceful unification and nation building on the Korean peninsula.\textsuperscript{39}

Accordingly, South Korea’s military preparedness against nuclear-
armed North Korea should focus on passive defensive measures in the first place. The ROK military must find out possible delivery means and transportation routes of the North’s nuclear devices and prevent them from being penetrated. In this process, changes in military postures and operational planning are indispensable. All military personnel should receive proper education about North Korea’s nuclear weapon capability. A military-wide defensive training program should be launched and necessary equipments be purchased for the purpose of nuclear protection. International cooperation would be important with the countries with rich experience in this field such as the United States, Russia and Sweden.

Reintroduce U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons to the Korean Peninsula

As an active defensive measure, U.S. tactical nuclear weapons should be reintroduced on the peninsula. A nuclear deterrent force present on South Korean territories is a symbolically and strategically important measure to enhance credibility of the ROK-U.S. combined deterrence. U.S. tactical nuclear weapons were removed from the Korean peninsula after the senior President Bush’s announcement to withdraw those weapons deployed abroad in 1991. The subsequent nuclear-free South Korea was an important background to make North Korea sign the Joint Denuclearization Declaration in the same year. As a result, the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea was an important carrot to induce North Korea to give up nuclear ambitions.

North Korea’s secret maintenance of the HEU program, restart of reprocessing activities, withdrawal from the NPT and avowal of having a nuclear deterrent capability are all clear and serious violations of the Joint Declaration. This means that the basis of providing the carrot—removal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons—disappeared. Therefore, it is necessary and desirable to reintroduce temporarily a small scale of tactical nuclear weapons, probably a few dozens, to the peninsula until North Korea’s nuclear weapon capability is completely eliminated. When the other side breaks promises, withdrawing carrots that were provided on condition of his/her keeping promises is equivalent to exercising a tit-for-tat strategy. The tit-for-tat strategy has proven to be an effective negotiating strategy to draw the other side’s cooperation rather than a reckless confrontational scheme.40

It has been said that the United States might allow Japan to have nuclear weapons as a countermeasure to nuclear–armed North Korea or that Washington used such an argument to prod Beijing into exerting more pressures on Pyongyang. Japan’s nuclear weapon in excuse of nuclear–armed North Korea is a more ominous outcome than North Korea’s nuclear weapon and should be prevented from happening. China and Russia would not object to the temporary reintroduction of small-scale U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to the peninsula, viewing it as a far better option than nuclear–armed Japan.

In December 2002, the Minister of National Defense Lee Jun revealed that the ROK military made a contingent planning to strike North Korea in case of the North’s possessing nuclear weapons. At a hearing of the National Defense Committee of the South Korean National Assembly, he said that “While not confirmed whether North Korea succeeded in developing tactical nuclear weapons, I fully understand the possibility that North Koreans might use the weapons to attack South Korea if they acquire them.”41 From his remark, it is not clear whether either himself or the ROK military had seriously in mind a preemptive strike option. Since South Korea’s top military priority must be to prevent North Korea from using nuclear weapons in the first place, the ROK military must be strongly enticed to launch a preemptive strike to strategic targets in North Korea if tension increases. In this regard, a modest number of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on the peninsula will make great contributions in bringing about stability as well as enhanced security.

Resuming the Team Spirit Exercise

The third option for military preparedness and the second active defensive measure is to resume the Team Spirit military exercise that has stopped since 1992. Stopping the Team Spirit exercise was a carrot given to North Korea on condition that the North sign the IAEA Safeguards Agreement and accept the IAEA full-scope safeguards inspection.

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tion. North Korea’s expelling of permanent inspectors from the Yongbyon nuclear complex in December 2002 and its refusal to accept the IAEA inspection mean that the very condition of stopping the Team Spirit exercise no longer exists.

Resuming the Team Spirit military exercise will provide North Koreans with an important lesson that carrots will be withdrawn if they do not keep their promises. There is a view that the Team Spirit exercise is not necessary because other ROK-U.S. military exercises are being held regularly. But it is important to recover the name of “Team Spirit military exercise” in terms of establishing a firm negotiating principle and demonstrating resolve vis-à-vis North Korea. A new Team Spirit exercise can focus on special trainings against North Korea’s use of nuclear weapons.

Reinforcing the ROK-U.S. Military Partnership

The fourth option for military preparedness, as an overarching policy direction, is to reinforce the ROK-U.S. military partnership in general. Seoul and Washington should be no more sacrificed by Pyongyang’s deliberate tactics trying to drive a wedge between the two. The Roh and Bush administrations should do their best to shy away from behaviors that can produce any misleading signal that serious differences exist between the two sides.

In this regard, the Bush administration’s decision to withdraw some of the U.S. forces in Korea without proper regard for military threats posed by North Korea is somewhat disappointing. The disturbing situation in Iraq and the Global Defense Posture Review (GPR) were put forward by the United States as two main rationales to justify the partial reduction of the U.S. forces on the peninsula. Putting security aspects in perspective, North Korea’s nuclear crisis poses much more serious challenges to the international community than the Iraqi situation. The IAEA Secretary General Mohamed ElBaradei recently defined North Korea’s nuclear problem as the number one international security concern.  

Two high–ranking officials during the senior Bush administration proposed the wisdom of linkage between North Korea’s nuclear capability and the U.S. military posture on the peninsula. As Brent Scowcroft and Arnold Kanter argued, “We can press the case that if the North Koreans are serious about putting those [nuclear and missile] programs on hold, we would reciprocate with respect to our military forces in and around the Korean peninsula.”

The GPR planners’ desire to implement a first phase of restructuring armed forces before the end of the first term of Bush presidency cannot outweigh the possible security repercussion and subsequent weakness in the ROK-U.S. deterrent posture. Such a haste withdrawal would also send North Koreans a wrong signal that could incite their desire for unification by force. The GPR planners should pay attention to William Perry’s following remark after the new nuclear crisis began:

A few years ago, I thought we were on a resolution of our principal problem with North Korea, which is its nuclear weapons program... Had that trend continued, I think a major realignment of our military forces would have been in order. Now we are in a new nuclear crisis, and I myself would be reluctant to do anything that could be considered to be weakening our deterrence at this time.

The American force reduction from abroad has become a contending issue in the U.S. presidential election. On August 16, 2004, President Bush announced the recall of as many as 70,000 troops from bases in Europe and Asia during the next decade as part of a global rearrangement of forces with an aim of making the military more agile. Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry assailed President Bush’s plan and called the realignment a potential threat to national security. Having in mind the danger posed by the North Korean nuclear crisis, he elaborated his objection as follows:

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For example, why are we unilaterally withdrawing 12,000 troops from the Korean peninsula at the very time we are negotiating with North Korea—a country that really has nuclear weapons? As Senator John McCain said, “I’m particularly concerned about moving troops out of South Korea when North Korea has probably never been more dangerous than any time since the end of the Korean War.” This is clearly the wrong signal to send at the wrong time.

**Join and Actively Participate in the PSI**

South Korea should join as a core member of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) that was first introduced by President Bush during his trip to Europe in May 2003. Not being just a political rhetoric or a diplomatic campaign, the PSI is a coercive strategy to prevent rogue regimes and terrorist groups from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and financial sources for such purposes. The PSI officially started on June 12, 2003 when eleven core members gathered in Madrid, Spain to discuss ways to implement the initiative nationally and internationally. As part of the PSI, in September 2003, Australia, Britain, Japan and the United States carried out the first joint military exercise in the Coral Sea off Australia to train for the interception of ships to and from nations suspected of having illegal weapons programs.

According to John Bolton, the objective of the PSI is not just to prevent the spread of WMD but also to eliminate or “roll back” such weapons from rogue states and terrorist groups. While pursuing diplomatic dialogue, the PSI is willing to deploy more robust tactics such as economic sanctions, interdiction and seizure, and even preemptive strike where required. The PSI calls for international community to take aggressive measures to root out existent and potential capabilities to develop and spread WMD from countries like North Korea. Thus, the basic concept of the PSI conforms to the principle of CVID regarding North Korea’s nuclear capability.

Although the original motivation was to ban the proliferation of WMD, the PSI regards rogue states’ illegal activities such as drug trafficking, money counterfeiting and laundering as major financial sources to support their WMD programs. John Bolton argued that “As we close off proliferation networks, we inevitably will intercept criminal activity and overlapping smuggling rings.” Although the PSI does not designate a specific target country, there are many incidents indicating that North Korea will be an important target of the PSI. For example, in April 2003, Australian special force seized a North Korean freighter called *Pong Su* that allegedly delivered US$50 million in heroin.

There are several reasons why South Korea should play an active role in the PSI. First, the PSI is a policy option that is in accord with a new paradigm for South Korea’s North Korea strategy—integrating coercion and inducement. While maintaining North-South Korean dialogues, humanitarian aids and the six party talks, South Korea should exert coercive efforts by taking part in various activities organized by the PSI. Such a combination of carrots and sticks is expected to help bring North Korea’s nuclear problem to a complete resolution at an earlier time.

Second, South Korea’s core membership in the PSI will reassure the international community that the ROK shares a common view with the international society about the importance of North Korea’s nuclear threat and takes the same path to resolve the problem. To take a rigid approach with an internationally accepted yardstick toward nuclear-armed North Korea should be an indispensable part of South Korea’s available at http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_0818.html.

47 The 11 core members are Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Spain and the United States. In June 2004, Russia joined PSI as a new core member.


50 Ibid.
foreign and security policy to attain and solidify its credibility in the world.

Third, the PSI is the only international regime which all major Western nations have joined while South Korea has not. It is worried that Seoul’s exclusion from the PSI will damage the nation’s image and credibility. Failure to get access to sensitive information exchanged among the core members will be an important loss of opportunity as well. Disregarding the PSI also violates South Korea’s major foreign and security policy principle—promoting disarmament and nonproliferation.

Fourth, South Korea’s non-participation in the PSI will not be of benefit to filling the gap in the U.S.-ROK relations. The Bush administration might think that the Roh administration does not care much about Washington’s concerns over banning the proliferation of WMD. The United States might misinterpret South Korea’s non-participation as a signal that Seoul attaches greater importance on the relations with Pyongyang than with Washington.

Finally, in order to prepare for contingencies on the peninsula that may be triggered by the PSI, South Korea’s participation is essential. South Korea should raise its voice properly in the decision-making process as a core member of the PSI and prevent any measure that can cause unnecessary tension on the peninsula.

Initiative of the Korean Peninsula Cooperative Threat Reduction Programs

If North Korea makes clear its will to eliminate military threats to South Korea and to dismantle WMD as a first step, the Roh administration could provide a comprehensive and well-designed system of carrots, incomparable to all the aid by the previous administrations. For this purpose, the U.S. cooperative threat reduction (CTR) programs to dismantle WMD in the Soviet Union and convert other military capabilities for peaceful uses where possible can be a good example.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a top U.S. security concern was to safeguard the Soviet nuclear weapons deployed in the four Republics—Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine—and to prevent nuclear weapons, materials, equipments, and scientists from flowing out of the Republics. Based on the initiative of Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, the U.S. Congress established the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Programs in November 1991. The programs focus on four key objectives:

- Destroy nuclear, chemical, and other weapons of mass destruction;
- Transport, store, disable and safeguard these weapons in connection with their destruction;
- Establish verifiable safeguards against the proliferation of these weapons, their components, and weapons-usable materials; and
- Prevent the diversion of scientific expertise that could contribute to weapons programs in other nations.

For example, in order to keep nuclear experts, technologies and materials from flowing out abroad, scientific research centers were established to hire nuclear scientists and technicians. In 1992, the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) opened in Moscow and as of November 2000, about 30,000 scientists from 400 research institutes in the four Republics were working on 1,156 projects at the cost US$316 million. In 1995, the Science and Technology Center of Ukraine (STCU) was established and as of the middle of 2000, around 6,700 scientists were participating in 290 projects and US$42 million were expended.

In the field of dismantling nuclear capability, the CTR programs have made significant achievements. By the end of 2000, U.S. Department of Defense had deactivated 5,288 missile warheads, destroyed 419 long-range nuclear missiles and 367 silos, eliminated 81 bombers, 292 submarine missile launchers and 174 submarine missiles, and sealed 194 nuclear test holes and sites. U.S. Department of Energy decided to buy 500 metric tons of highly enriched uranium, an equivalent of
capability at an early stage of implementation. While the KEDO project failed to ascertain whether North Korea gave up all the nuclear capability, the KCTR programs aim at assuring the international community that North Korea renounces its intention as well as capability to pursue WMD. Third, as in the U.S. CTR programs, the KCTR programs will be initiated by the ROK National Assembly and have South Korea play a major role in the process. Of course, the KCTR programs will be multilateral in nature and practice by inviting as many hopeful countries as possible to join the programs. The KCTR programs could cover a lion’s share of the expenses necessary for dismantling North Korea’s WMD capability. It is also feasible that they can become a component of a multilateral agreement based on the six-party talks.

Conclusion

Since the new nuclear crisis began in October 2002, South Korea has maintained a firm principle to resolve North Korea’s nuclear problem peacefully through dialogue. However, North Korea has paid little attention to South Korean demands in nuclear matters and has been obsessed with direct talks with the United States. It seems that South Korea’s security is being pushed to the brink by North Korea’s brinkmanship strategy. Key to any national policy is reality and flexibility. So it is important to constantly check whether a policy is appropriate to solve a pending problem and to make changes if necessary.

The debate on whether North Korea possesses nuclear weapons or not cannot and should not be a focus of contention in South Korea’s domestic politics any more. The very fact that North Korea’s nuclear program remained hidden, the KCTR programs should achieve complete transparency on North Korea’s WMD

25,000 warheads, and convert them to low enriched uranium that can be used as commercial fuel in nuclear reactors. As of 2001, the CTR programs had spent about US$ six billion.54

Based on the lessons and experiences of the U.S. CTR programs, South Korea could take an initiative to launch the Korean peninsula Cooperative Threat Reduction (KCTR) programs. The focus of the KCTR programs will be to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, its delivery means and other major military threats of North Korea and to covert infrastructures and human resources to peaceful purposes where possible.55 The KCTR programs can be linked with a comprehensive plan to recover North Korean economy—the Korean peninsula Marshall Plan. According to the several dismantlement phases, carrots of the KCTR programs and economic assistances based on the Marshall Plan would be systematically linked and provided to North Korea.

An essential condition of South Korea’s assistance to North Korea has been contingent on coordinating Seoul’s number one security objective of freeing itself from North Korean military threats with its provision of various aids to Pyongyang. A major reason why the Kim Dae-jung administration’s sunshine policy is under criticism is that his North Korea policy paid little attention to the importance of this linkage.

The KCTR programs are different from the Korean peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project as well. First, the KCTR programs are more comprehensive in terms of areas to be covered and objectives to be attained. While the KEDO project deals with the nuclear issue only, the KCTR programs will involve nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and their delivery systems in the first place and major conventional military threats at the later stage. Second, while the KEDO project had proceeded even if important uncertainties of North Korea’s nuclear program remained hidden, the KCTR programs should achieve complete transparency on North Korea’s WMD


55 At the third round of the six-party talks, one of the five compensation measures the United States proposed to North Korea in return for the North’s nuclear freeze was to reeducate scientists and engineers and to provide technical and financial assistance for nuclear dismantlement, which can be a major component of the KCTR programs. JoongAng Ilbo, Jul. 12, 2004.
The ultimate resolution of North Korea’s nuclear crisis can be attained only when nuclear weapons and infrastructures are completely dismantled under a thorough verification mechanism. The whole process will take many years, depending on North Korea’s cooperation. Until the nuclear-weapon-free status in North Korea is visibly confirmed, South Korean government’s North Korea policy should be based on the fact that North Korea is a nuclear weapon state. A national strategy omitting the fact of nuclear-armed North Korea contains a danger of bringing about too much security risks to South Korea. While rebuilding a collapsed economy is relatively easy, security cannot and should not allow for an inch of mistake because too much are at stake.

The North Korean regime has pursued nuclear weapon development while South Korea has hailed the sunshine policy and the peace and prosperity policy as fostering the mood of goodwill and reducing tension and rivalry. Kim Jong II smiled and shook hands with South Korean President publicly while developing nuclear weapons secretly. It is time for the Roh administration to completely reassess and overhaul its North Korea strategy. Dialogue and peace are not the only virtues. Vigilance and prudence are and will remain the wisdom that should be held until the Korean peninsula is unified on South Korea’s terms.