

HOW TO COPE WITH NORTH KOREA AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS:
WHAT BUSH COULD HAVE LEARNED FROM LENIN, OSGOOD, AND
CLINTON

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Why Worry

The chief international weapons inspector, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency warned in May 2004 that the intricate web of treaties and agreements that limit the spread of nuclear weapons was weakening and could be endangered unless sweeping reforms were made in the United Nations Security Council and elsewhere. Dr. ElBaradei said that North Korea's announcement it was withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) posed one of the most significant challenges to international efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. He expressed disappointment that the UN Security Council had failed to act against North Korea given more than a decade of IAEA complaints about the country's nuclear activities. The lack of Security Council action, he said, "has not been optimum."

Richard Haas, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, where ElBaradei spoke, said the remarks by the IAEA director reflected the growing recognition that the nonproliferation system that had served the world well during the Cold War was now unraveling. "There's a consensus that something needs to be done," Haas said. "But there's not yet a consensus on what needs to be done."¹ Security experts worry especially about the spread of nuclear arms, because they appear to be more surely lethal to large numbers of people than biological, chemical, radiological, or meteorological weapons.

While the United States and USSR deployed or threatened to use nuclear arms in bold—probably irresponsible—ways on several occasions, the record shows that governments with nuclear weapons have usually acted prudently. China, which argued

¹Judith Miller, "Nuclear Monitor Sees Treaties Weakening," *The New York Times*, May 15, 2004, p. A5.

for nuclear spread before it acquired a nuclear arsenal, became a cautious supporter of nuclear arms limitation.²

The ultimate reason to oppose the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is not racist, ideological, or political. It is statistical: The more actors possess such weapons, the greater the prospect that one will be set off by accident, by a madman, or by miscalculation. Arms controllers do not assume that Americans, Russians, Chinese or any other group is inherently more responsible or ethical than Iranians or others who have demonstrated a drive to acquire WMD.

Still, some regimes and cultures do seem more aggressive than others, at least under certain conditions or in certain time periods. A government that has engaged in a wide range of terrorists acts—overt cross-border invasion, kidnapping, assassination, and attempted destruction of civilian airliners may properly be termed “rogue”—like a wild elephant, unpredictable and difficult to rein in. A government so callous that it permits millions of its own people to starve may be presumed to have little regard for human life anywhere. A government that isolates itself and its people from contacts with the world at large is probably more prone to miscalculation than one (such as Switzerland) at the center of global communications. A government that associates its survival with just one asset, nuclear weapons, may be supposed to be a difficult interlocutor in arms negotiations. Such as government has existed in North Korea since the late 1940s. Its leaders admitted in 2002 that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) had kidnapped thirteen Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s so that they would serve as language instructors for DPRK spies. Since 2002 Japan’s Prime Minister has secured the release of some but not all of those abducted.

Starting in the late 1960s, the world’s two leading nuclear powers have collaborated to sponsor and maintain a regime aimed at banning the spread of nuclear weapons. The NPT entered force in 1970 and has succeeded to a far greater extent than many observers expected. Even if North Korea has some nuclear arms, the “nuclear

² Walter C. Clemens, Jr., “China and Arms Control,” in Richard D. Burns, ed., *Encyclopedia of Arms Control and Disarmament* (3 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1993), 1, 59-74.

club” now numbers less than ten—not the dozens some feared in the 1970s. Washington and Moscow have partially disarmed but still retain enormous arsenals. London and Paris have maintained modest sized nuclear deterrents. Beijing has enlarged its force but not in a way that challenges U.S. or Russian superiority. Israel, India, and Pakistan have maintained minimum deterrents. Four states have given up their nuclear arms--South Africa, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakstan. Iraq’s facilities to make weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have been destroyed. Libya has agreed to destruction of its facilities. Iran hedges.

Awareness that North Korea was developing nuclear arms prodded the United States to take measures in the mid-1990s that many observers hoped would dissuade Pyongyang from proceeding on that path. The George W. Bush administration, 2001 to 2004, broke from course established in the Clinton years.

To evaluate U.S. policies toward North Korea and WMD in the early 21st century, this paper reviews the hard-line negotiating principles espoused by the world’s first Communist regime, the graduated reciprocity suggested by a former president of the American Psychological Association, and the hard-soft policy blend pursued by the Clinton administration. The evidence suggests that the Bush administration ignored not just the admonitions of political liberals but also the wisdom of Lenin’s realpolitik and the potential utility of Bill Clinton’s pragmatism. The upshot: The Bush White House permitted a serious danger to fester and probably helped to make it more serious.

Leninist Realpolitik

Language helps to condition thought. Russian, like German, has two words for “disarm.” One denotes coerced disarmament; the other, negotiated—a distinction missing in English and French. While many Russians revolted against the tsarist regime in 1905, Bolshevik Party leader Vladimir Lenin declared that the task of revolutionaries was to disarm [*obezorzhit*] the bourgeoisie by force. He repeated this demand during World War I—before the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917. Despite his aversion to negotiated disarmament, however, Lenin soon endorsed arms limitations with hostile parties on the borders of Soviet Russia. Starting in 1918, Soviet diplomats negotiated

demilitarized zones and other measures of what later came to be termed “arms control” with Imperial Germany and, subsequently, with the Baltic states and Poland.³

. By 1921-1922 Vladimir Lenin understood that world revolution would not materialize soon and that the Soviet Republic would have to deal with hostile capitalist neighbors for years to come. From his sickbed, Lenin instructed Soviet diplomats to promote negotiated disarmament [*razoruzhenie*] with bourgeois governments at the Genoa Economic Conference. The same directives seemed to inform Soviet diplomacy later that year at the Moscow Conference on the Limitation of Armaments and the 1922-1923 Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, where Soviet diplomats backed Turkey and sought arms limits for the Black Sea.⁴

In the realm of strategy, Lenin in 1922 remained profoundly skeptical about the prospects of negotiating meaningful disarmament until the capitalist-imperialist system was superseded by peace-loving, socialist regimes. But he saw disarmament negotiations, like war and agitation by the Communist International, as another way to advance his political objectives. At the Genoa Economic Conference he sought to promote socialism by sharpening differences between Europe’s workers and capitalist governments; and to bolster Soviet state interests by exploiting “contradictions” between the victors at Versailles, France and Great Britain, and between them and Weimar Germany. At the Moscow conference later that year, Soviet diplomats keyed their proposals to planned reductions in the size of the Red Army and exacerbated differences between Poland and the Baltic states.

³ Soviet diplomats professed not to understand fully the English meaning of “control” until the late 1960s or even the 1970s. Since the Russian *kontrol’* derives from the French *contrôle*, Soviets claimed to infer that U.S. proposals for “arms control” intended only to count, inspect, or verify arms, whereas the Americans purported to seek regulation of arms to mutual advantage. “Control,” for Washington, could include not only arms reduction but even arms increases, for purposes of stabilizing the strategic environment.

⁴ Starting in 1920, Soviet Russia had funneled arms to Turkey to help Ankara fight Greece, Great Britain, and France

As to tactics, Lenin told Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs G. V. Chicherin to “avoid biting words [*iadovitye slova*].” Lenin directed Chicherin to lift elements from the pacifist programme endorsed by some Western politicians and use it against them, so as to unmask bourgeois hypocrisy. He also allowed, however, that there was a slight chance that this diplomacy of exposure could facilitate the peaceful transformation of capitalism.⁵

Implicit in Lenin’s realpolitik were five negotiating principles:

- Regard negotiations as an instrument to achieve long-term objectives--weakening adversaries, diminishing prospects of renewed military intervention against the Soviet regime; winning de facto acceptance of Soviet Russia into the international community; and preparing the groundwork for an eventual transformation of the capitalist system into a socialist one.
- Exploit contradictions among adversary states (for example, between the Versailles victors France and Great Britain and Weimar Germany, and within those states, between the haves and have-nots).
- Avoid biting words. Explain that the Soviet regime is skeptical about the possibility of disarmament so long as capitalism endures, but indicate that we plan to give peace a chance.
- Expose hypocrisy. Use your interlocutor’s pacifist slogans against them. Address world public opinion at the same time you talk with government representatives.
- Whether or not negotiations reach an agreement on anything, do not ignore pragmatic steps that may improve security.

Evaluation: Soviet diplomacy proved too clever for its own good. In the 1920s and later Soviet diplomats often courted world opinion and kept bourgeois governments on

⁵Walter C. Clemens, Jr., “Lenin on Disarmament,” *Slavic Review*, 13, 3: (October 1964), 504-525.; Clemens, "Ideology in Soviet Disarmament Policy," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 8, 1 (March, 1964), pp. 7-22; Clemens, "Nicholas II to SALT II: Change and Continuity in East-West Diplomacy," *International Affairs* (London), 49, 3 (July, 1973), pp. 385-401.

edge. Whatever Soviet diplomats told the world, however, well informed persons knew that the Kremlin regarded its peace campaigns as tools to defend and advance Soviet state interests and, over time, to destroy and conquer the capitalist world. Moscow's espousal of disarmament and various pacifist slogans was intended to spread revolution by other means. Moscow's interlocutors perceived that Soviet diplomacy was part of a zero-sum strategy aiming to create a worldwide empire led and dominated by the Kremlin

The absence of trust between Moscow and the West made it difficult to collaborate to contain Nazi expansion in the late 1930s. Later, mutual distrust made it difficult to contain the East-West competition in nuclear and other arms. Each side perceived a trick card in whatever proposals the other side advanced. After decades of negotiation, the first Soviet-Western arms accord dealt with a remote area, Antarctica, in 1959. The next agreement came in 1963. It banned nuclear testing except underground, a move intended to prevent more radioactive fallout injurious to all parties. No real disarmament measures took place between Moscow and Washington until the 1987 treaty requiring the destruction of intermediate-range missiles.⁶

Osgood's Approach: Graduated Reciprocity

The Cold War arms confrontation became so severe in the 1950s that some Westerners debated whether it might be better to be "red or dead." This situation led psychologist Charles E. Osgood to look for ways to avoid a stark choice between nuclear war and surrender. Noting that a pattern of action-reaction led to a rising spiral of tension, Osgood outlined a strategy and tactics to reverse the spiral.⁷ He suggested a program of graduated and reciprocal initiatives in tension-reduction—GRIT. Its key planks were these:

- To break the upward tension spiral, one side must take the initiative. It is easier for the stronger party to do so, because it can better cope with the risks..

⁶ Walter C. Clemens, Jr., *Can Russia Change? The USSR Confronts Global Interdependence* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁷ Charles Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender* (Urbana, Il.: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

- Understand that GRIT is a long-term strategy of tension-reduction. To persuade the other side of your peaceful intentions, you must announce at a high level your commitment to this strategy.
- Initiate small steps—even if just symbolic--and pledge that they will become larger if reciprocated.
- Give the other side time to respond. Understand that your initiatives may be seen as a trick.
- Do not demand absolute symmetry. The other side may not be able to meet them in kind.
- Maintain your defenses. The other side may try to deceive you by a positive response meant to persuade you to give away the store.
- If a pattern of GRIT develops, try to sustain the process and build trust. Ideally, the process will lead to a web of shared interests so strong that small incidents will not break the pattern of cooperation.
- Be on guard against monkey wrenches that can sabotage the process—disruptive incidents, planned or accidental, from within your own camp, the other side, or from third parties.

Evaluation: Tension-reducing moves similar to GRIT helped improve U.S. relations with the USSR--the 1955 Spirit of Geneva, the 1963-1964 Spirit of Moscow, the 1972-1973 détente, and the many accords reached between Moscow and the U.S. in the late 1980s-1990s. The Nixon White House and the PRC government utilized GRIT-like moves to normalize their relations in the early 1970s.

GRIT does not assume the inevitability of win-win outcomes. Not only can GRIT fail due to misunderstandings and extraneous monkey wrenches, but because one or both sides does not want better relations. Pyongyang and Seoul went through some motions of GRIT in the early 1970s, but neither side appeared to be sincere. Of course GRIT will fail if it is not really attempted. Ultimately, both sides must want to reduce tensions.⁸

⁸ Walter C. Clemens, Jr. "GRIT at Panmunjom: Conflict and Cooperation in Divided Korea," *Asian Survey*, 13, 6 (June, 1973), pp. 531-559. and Clemens, "Peace in Korea:

The Clinton Blend

North Korea in 1993-1994 became the first country to announce plans to withdraw from the NPT and from the nuclear safeguards regime administered by the IAEA. The DPRK government indicated its intention to remove fuel rods from its nuclear reactor and extract the weapons-grade plutonium—sufficient to make several nuclear weapons. Believing that North Korea might already have produced one or more atomic bombs, the Clinton administration made it a priority to eliminate the DPRK nuclear weapon capacity. To this end it used both sticks and carrots—a blend of firmness and flexibility.

For most of the Cold War the United States successfully used both firmness and flexibility to deal with the USSR and Communist China. Americans used hard power to dissuade Moscow and Beijing from actions Washington opposed and soft power to persuade them to temper their ambitions and join the free world in a web of constructive interdependence. The strategy worked. It avoided a major war; helped to tame the arms race; facilitated the demise of the Soviet system and liberal changes in Communist China.

Borrowing from its predecessors, the Clinton administration used both firmness and flexibility to push and pull Pyongyang into the October 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework to freeze and eventually dismantle its plutonium-based nuclear weapons program in return for heavy fuel oil deliveries and construction of two light-water reactors (difficult to exploit for nuclear weapons purposes).⁹ In the long run, the Clinton administration hoped—as did some in Pyongyang—that North Korea would join the community of nations, somewhat as China had done.

The Clinton team blended elements of coercion and persuasion:

Lessons from Cold War Détentes?" *Journal of East Asian Affairs*. 27, 2: (Fall/Winter 2003), pp. 258-290

⁹Scott Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999).

- In 1993-1994 the United States moved additional armed forces into a position where they could attack North Korea's nuclear facilities. It deployed more Patriot missiles, Bradley fighting vehicles, and helicopters to protect the South.¹⁰
- But Washington also showed its willingness to explore negotiated alternatives to surgical strikes and war. America's official ("Track I") diplomacy built on the unofficial ("Track II") efforts of the Reverend Billy Graham, scholar Selig Harrison, and former president Jimmy Carter, each of whom with DPRK leader Kim Il Sung. When Carter phoned Washington from Pyongyang with the outline of what might be a deal in 1994, the White House conveyed its willingness to follow up with negotiations between officials of both sides.¹¹
- Washington was flexible on most aspects of these official talks--the venue, the negotiation procedure, the ultimate form of the accord. Instead of a treaty, Washington and Pyongyang in an "Agreed Framework" signed in Geneva in October 1994."¹²
- The framework built on asymmetries: Each side had a different set of obligations.
- Sequencing of obligations reduced risks for each side. : The framework called for immediate and longer-term actions by each side that would be continued and expanded over time as each side demonstrated that it had fulfilled its part of the bargain.. As the entire process materialized, the DPRK would open its doors to more extensive IAEA inspection and take on further arms control obligations. As this happened, the United States would reduce barriers to trade and technology transfers, and both sides would move toward diplomatic representation.

¹⁰Robert L. Gallucci, lecture and discussion at Boston University, April 7, 1997.

¹¹Barry K. Gills, "Prospects for Peace and Stability in Northeast Asia: The Korean Conflict," *Conflict Studies* 278. (London: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, February 1995).

¹²For an account by the U.S. participants, see Joel S. Wit, Daniel P. Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci, . *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

- Investing for peace. The deal would cost some \$5 billion—a price that Washington would share with its partners. The Korean Peninsula Energy and Development Organization (KEDO), set up to implement parts of the Agreed Framework, included Japan, the ROK, and the European Atomic Energy Community.

The Clinton team tried to expand the dialogue with North Korea to include missiles. In October 2000 the DPRK Deputy Minister of Defense, Vice Marshal Jo Myong Rok, visited Washington and renewed an invitation for the U.S. president to visit Pyongyang, where, said Jo, “We will be able to find a solution to all problems.” Clinton did not go but Secretary of State Madeleine Albright went to Pyongyang, where her rapport with Kim Jong Il was better than many observers had expected.¹³ Indeed, the two sides seemed close to an agreement that would commit Pyongyang not to export missiles and not to develop its incipient three-stage ICBM. Clinton considered a trip to Pyongyang to wrap up the deal but, with little time remaining in his presidency, chose instead to attempt brokering peace between Israel and Palestinians.

Evaluation. These policies avoided war and opened the way to a gradual normalization of relations with North Korea. Outlays of \$5 billion, spread over time and shared with others in KEDO, was a lot cheaper than war or missile defense. South Korea welcomed activities that could open the door to greater commerce with the North.

Still, the Agreed Framework had several basic flaws. It required the DPRK to “can” and store its spent nuclear fuel, but did not require the North (like Ukraine and Kazakstan) to give up its nuclear components entirely. It also permitted North Korea to delay its return to the NPT by more than five years.¹⁴ It focused on one known plant that could produce plutonium for nuclear weapons but did not cover the rest of the country. This permitted the North Koreans to violate the spirit if not the letter of the 1994 accord by secretly constructing a gas centrifuge facility that could produce enough enriched

¹³ See Madeleine Albright, *Madame Secretary* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), pp. 459-472.

¹⁴ Scott Snyder, “The First Last Time: Lessons From the Last Korean Nuclear Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs* 83, 4 (July/August 2004), pp. :144-148.

uranium to manufacture one or two nuclear bombs a year. Whatever the limitations of this arrangement, however, its U.S. architects saw it as the least bad option available.¹⁵

Much broader and deeper criticisms of the Clinton policy to North Korea were made in 1999 by a panel chaired by a former and future official in Republican administrations, Richard Armitage. It found the Clinton policy to be fragmented. “Each component of policy--implementing the Agreed Framework, four-party peace talks, missile talks, food aid, POW-MIA talks--operates largely on its own track without any larger strategy or focus on how the separate pieces fit together. In the absence of a comprehensive policy, North Korea has held the initiative, with Washington responding as Pyongyang acts as demandeur.”¹⁶

The Armitage report recommended closer coordination between the U.S. executive branch and Congress and between Washington and its key Asian partners to cultivate a stronger military and diplomatic posture. Since Washington (already in 1999) suspected that North Korea was developing nuclear production at sites not covered by the 1994 accord, Armitage suggested that the U.S. “note that suspect sites are covered in the ‘confidential minute’ to the Agreed Framework.” There should be “a credible mechanism to increase on-going transparency of the present site--but not be limited to that site. The United States should make it clear in a unilateral statement that the comprehensive package encompasses any suspect site in North Korea.”

Though the Armitage panel demanded a tougher approach to Pyongyang, it called also for a “quid pro quo: Accelerating the process of resolving site questions, and the issue of IAEA compliance, could likely require a U.S. commitment to expedite the construction of the two light-water reactors, and negotiation of a United States-North Korean nuclear cooperation agreement.”

In 2002 the United States asserted and Pyongyang admitted that it had indeed built a uranium-enrichment facility not governed by the 1994 agreement. The North demanded that all IAEA monitoring devices be removed from the heavy water reactors at Yongbyon

¹⁵Wit *et al.*, *Going Critical*.

¹⁶ Richard L. Armitage, “A Comprehensive Approach to North Korea,” *Strategic Forum* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, March 1999), Number 159.

and Taechon. It instructed all IAEA inspectors to depart. Rather than conceal its activities, Pyongyang now endeavored to demonstrate that it was manufacturing nuclear bombs. Both Pyongyang and then Washington declared the 1994 agreed framework void. What had gone wrong?

The Armitage panel did not explicitly recognize what must have loomed as a bitter reality for North Korea. Work on the two light-water reactors to be built by the U.S. and its partners had barely started in 1999. Ground was not broken until 2002. Indeed, even in 2002—six years after the 1994 accord, the KEDO web site could show little more than an artist's rendering of the two reactors and photos of discharge channels and a pumping station. Why the delay? Pyongyang may have suspected that the United States and its partners were stalling, hoping that the DPRK regime would collapse. But North Korea had also contributed to the delays. It had demanded exorbitantly high pay for workers on the reactors. For a time it resisted any major role for the ROK in constructing the reactors. It added demands that the U.S. link the reactors to a broad electrical grid.

In each concerned country there was domestic resistance: Critics within the U.S. Congress said that Clinton was giving away the store. Congress funded the oil deliveries to North Korea with great reluctance. Within the DPRK, it is likely that some officials did not want to surrender North Korea's major ace on the world stage. Kim Jong Il told Albright in 2000 that some DPRK military and foreign officials resisted any concessions to the United States. .

Another problem was that the ROK "Sunshine Policy," initiated in the late 1990s, failed to demand that Pyongyang reciprocate South Korean concessions. This policy, backed by under-the-table payments to Kim Jong Il, encouraged Pyongyang to believe it could manipulate business and domestic political interests in the South. The Sunshine policy also aggravated tensions between conciliatory and hard-line tendencies within the ROK and between Seoul and Washington.

Whatever its reasons, North Korea had kept its options open by developing a clandestine facility to enrich uranium.

Bush and the Axis of Evil

In 2001 the Bush team broke off the negotiations with Pyongyang that the Clinton team put on hold in late 2000. In 2002 President Bush denounced the DPRK as part of an axis of evil. Later that year, a U.S. envoy to Pyongyang confronted DPRK negotiators with evidence that North Korea had cheated on the

. spirit if not the letter of the October 1994 Agreed Framework. U.S. spokesmen also reminded the world that Pyongyang maintained a million-man army and may have diverted food aid to this fighting force even as much of the population went hungry.

If talks were to be held regarding North Korea's nuclear programs, Washington wanted them to be multilateral, while Pyongyang demanded bilateral negotiations with U.S. representatives. Overcoming DPRK resistance, however, Beijing brokered several rounds of six-party talks in 2003 and 2004. These meetings led to somewhat hopeful evaluations by some participants but generally negative assessments by DPRK officials.

Evaluation: What are the lessons that George W. Bush's foreign affairs team could learn from Lenin, Osgood, and Clinton? First, all three urged the importance of long-term strategy that identified and ranked priorities. The Bush administration failed to deal with the DPRK and its WMD as a serious, long-term problem for U.S. foreign policy. The Bush White House employed neither firmness nor flexibility in dealing with the most dangerous state, regime, and leader on today's world stage—North Korea. How could it be in America's best interests to delay action to bring back North Korea into the non-nuclear fold? Any rational assessment would rank the DPRK's proximity to WMD as a greater threat to U.S. interests in the early 21st century than the Saddam Hussein regime, where war, sanctions, and international inspection in the 1990s had largely destroyed or immobilized Iraq's WMD programs. Earlier generations of U.S. diplomats had focused on achieving arms controls because of their potential practical benefits—reducing the costs of defense, making war less likely, limiting its damage if war occurred.

Whether or not the Bush team had read Lenin, it too seemed to be highly skeptical about negotiations for arms control. Washington chose instead to exploit negotiations—or their absence—for political objectives. As Lenin urged Soviet representatives to do in 1922, U.S. representatives in 2001-2004 sought to expose the other side's hypocrisy and double-dealing, that is, Pyongyang's clandestine uranium enrichment and its repudiation

of the NPT and other accords. As Lenin advised, the Bush White House also played on contradictions between other players. It underscored differences between Pyongyang and its major foreign supporters in Beijing and Moscow. The Bush administration was able to bring China and Russia into a virtual united front with the U.S., the ROK, and Japan in opposing North Korea's weapons program.

Even though Lenin doubted the outcome of arms negotiations, however, he urged his diplomats to avoid "biting words." From the Bush White House came a four-year cascade of biting words toward North Korea and any other party that dared disagree with U.S. policy—from "old Europe" to the Republic of Korea.¹⁷ This torrent of abuse foreclosed hope of a negotiated solution to North Korea's nuclear programs. Their extreme language would do more than ruffle feathers anywhere. Applied to a regime that is both proud and insecure, and located in a "high context" culture where "face" is important, these biting words probably cut to the quick¹⁸. Unlikely to topple the regime, they probably steeled its distrust and dislike of the United States and its determination to go against whatever Washington wanted.

The insults directed toward the North were so severe that, when the DPRK agreed to meet with U.S. and other countries in six-party talks in August 2003, Pyongyangt declared its unwillingness to talk with the principal State Department official responsible for arms control, John Bolton, who had called Kim Jong Il a "tyrannical rogue" (after which Pyongyang to brand him "human scum").¹⁹

¹⁷ Charles Freeman, a retired U.S. ambassador, said on June 16, 2004 that the Bush administration has yet to articulate how it plans to depart from Iraq, and said the situation is "complicated by insults to our allies, the indifference to the views of partners in the region, and the general disdain for the United Nations and international organizations that the administration still finds difficult to conceal."

¹⁸ Stephen W. Linton, "Approach and Style in Negotiating with the D.P.R.K." unpublished 7-page essay, presented at the Center for Korean Research, Columbia University, New York, April 6, 1995.

¹⁹ Peter Slevin, "Arms Control Hard-Liner Won't Attend Sessions on N. Korea," *Washington Post*, . August 13, 2003, p. A20.

Far from initiating a sequence of graduated moves to reduce tensions, as Osgood suggested, the Bush administration never announced that it pursued a long-term strategy to live in peace with the DPRK. It undertook no unilateral initiatives to reduce tensions. Instead, it seemed to take pleasure in confirming that the 1994 agreement was void. Instead of symbolic gestures with a positive or hopeful content, it labeled North Korea one of three states in an axis of evil. It offered no inducements to Pyongyang to change its ways in directions the United States could welcome. Offering almost nothing positive to the North, Washington expected, requested, and got almost nothing positive in return.

To be sure, after two years of sparring, Washington and Pyongyang did reach a pragmatic compromise between the U.S. demand for six-party talks and Pyongyang's insistence on direct talks with the U.S. alone. When China mediated and used its good offices to set up six-party talks in 2003 and again in 2004, North Korean and U.S. representatives spent many hours in bilateral conversations while the other delegations waited. Before, during, and after these talks, Pyongyang demanded security assurances from the United States. But the Bush team refused to reaffirm even the declaration of "no hostile intent" made by each side when the DPRK Deputy Defense Minister visited Washington in October 2004. This was also a constructive compromise—a midway point between the North's demand for a nonaggression pact and the traditional U.S. position that the UN Charter already bans aggression. If the Bush team had wanted a deal with Pyongyang, it could have affirmed the no hostile intent principle or found some other formula to assuage DPRK anxieties.

On balance, the U.S. government talked and acted in ways that reduced the chances of a negotiated accord with Pyongyang. Branding the Kim Jong Il regime as duplicitous and isolating it in the court of world public opinion did not encourage Pyongyang to sign away its nuclear option.. An accord would be more likely if the United States had offered the DPRK security assurances, symbols of acceptance, and solid prospects to join the world economy—a return to the essential spirit of 1994. .

The Bush administration talked of "pre-empting" the capacity of foreign foes that might attack America. But if Washington intended to destroy Kim Jong Il's regime and its weapons of mass destruction, a great deal of force would be required—with huge risks for South Korea and others that might be caught in the turmoil. Of course this would be a

“preventive war” rather than a “pre-emptive” strike, because the latter applies only to an imminent attack—not something that might materialize months or years in the future.

While talking a tough line toward North Korea, however, the Bush administration denied itself the potential lever of military threat, used so effectively by Clinton in 1993-1994. When Pyongyang told the IAEA to get out in late 2002, the Bush team had almost no stick and almost no carrots with which to engage North Korea. These self-inflicted limitations were as unnecessary as unwise. Even before invading Iraq, the Bush administration repeatedly declared that it did not plan to use force to resolve the Korean impasse. Once engaged in Iraq, America had few resources to initiate military action against North Korea. In 2004 one-third of U.S. troops in South Korea were transferred to Iraq. Most of the remaining force were to be redeployed from near the DMZ to south of Seoul—further from harm’s way.²⁰

But the Bush team has repeatedly stated that it does not seek war but plans rather to resolve the issues of WMD by negotiation.

Weakening U.S. leverage still further, the Bush team did little to prevent South Korea from conducting a policy so soft that it invited abuse by Pyongyang. Instead of collaborating in a healthy balance of negative and positive inducements, or a “tough cop-nice cop” team effort, Washington and Seoul went off in virtually opposite directions. Not surprisingly, Pyongyang chose to ignore Washington’s empty threats and milk Seoul’s nearly unconditional generosity.

Reasons for and Consequences of the Bush Policy

Analysts must be cautious about demanding a rational explanation for every policy or identifying a conspiracy where fatigue or bureaucratic bungling provides an adequate explanation. Still, Washington’s words and deeds suggested that the Bush team did not want and rather sought to prevent a new or renewed understanding with the North. The Bush policy to North Korea displayed elements of an approach/avoidance syndrome, but emphasized features that would avoid a settlement of issues in dispute.

²⁰ “American forces in South Korea: The end of an era?” *Strategic Comments* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), 8, 5 (July 2003), pp.1-2.

Why? The most reasonable explanation for this negative approach to Pyongyang was that the Bush team wanted to build a national missile defense (NMD) come hell or high water—even if it could not stop an enemy attack, and even if its existence encouraged China and Russia to enlarge or otherwise improve their capacity to destroy the United States. A possible nuclear threat from North Korea offered virtually the only justification for the Bush administration to proceed with deployment of an NMD for the United States and for some of its allies. While assurances signed by Kim Jong Il offered a weak reed for security, an NMD could provide substantial political, economic, and military benefits. Politically, it would please factions within the Republican Party still devoted to the “astrodome” dream promised by President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative. Many Republicans wanted a Fortress America regardless of the security dilemma that U.S. actions might generate for others. Indeed, many Americans trusted more in the feasibility of a technological “fix” based on U.S. scientific leadership than in international agreements for mutual gain. Many voters in the 2004 elections might respond favorably to claims that the Bush team had already deployed a working national defense.

Economically, outlays for missile defense would benefit Raytheon and other units in the military-industrial complex engaged in building the NMD. These outlays would amount to some \$10 billion a year in 2004 and 2005 but would ultimately exceed \$100 billion. For the tiny town of Delta Junction, Alaska, the program would bring in infrastructure improvements valued at more than \$25 million a year. The economic payoffs to Alaska, of course, will be trivial compared to damage to its environment, but some U.S. politicians see Alaska, as the Soviet Kremlin did Kazakstan, as a convenient test site and dumping ground for dangerous products.

There was an outside chance that military gains from NMD could also be substantial. While justified as a response to the North Korean threat, the system might in time be perfected so that it helped neutralize the ICBM threat from China and perhaps even the Russian Federation. Thus, the NMD could be a key link in a larger program aimed at securing U.S. global hegemony for decades to come.

The hoped-for political advantages of NMD were plausible but unsure. Stalwart Republicans did not need encouragement and most voters had long believed the U.S.

already possessed a strong NMD.²¹ Net economic and strategic gains were even less likely. More revenue for the military-industrial complex would do little to help the overall economy—the more so as government outlays and tax cuts were already generating a huge fiscal imbalance. And most scientists doubted that a NMD could ever become effective against a sophisticated foe able to deploy decoys and chaff with its ICBMs. To add to the irrationality of the ABM deployment, the entire system depended on a network of subsystems, many of which had never “worked” in isolation much less as an integrated network—not even in peacetime, and certainly not in a crisis or war.. Not only was all this tremendously costly but probably offered a dangerous illusion of safety.

The United States was investing far more in this ABM system than in efforts to keep North Korea outside the nuclear camp. The bill for two nuclear reactors and stop-gap oil supplies negotiated by the Clinton administration with the DPRK in 1994 was expected to approximate \$5 billion, much of which would be paid for by Japan and South Korea. But research and testing the ABM system already cost far more than this amount each year, while deployment and operation would be many times more expensive than development costs.

To proceed with the NMD the Bush team had abrogated what many observers saw as the fundamental platform of international security, the ABM treaty. The abrogation by the president without consulting Congress probably violated the U.S. Constitution.²² Some thirty members of the House of Representatives sued the President on this issue. The ABM treaty text permitted abrogation under specified conditions, but

²¹This was the finding of surveys conducted by Boston University students nearly every year from the late 1970s to 2003. The surveys tapped every socio-economic group, every professional interest, every age group from 18 to 80s, and every region. The less their education, the more respondents trusted that their government already had an effective NMD. But even professors of political science, unless they specialized in security affairs, tended to believe that the U.S. could shoot down at least 200 of 1,000 incoming ICBMs.

²² Peter Weiss, “The President, the Constitution, and the ABM Treaty,” Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, February 8, 2002
<http://www.tni.org/archives/weiss/president.htm>

the Bush team did not explain how those conditions had been met.. Thus, the abrogation probably violated the U.S. Constitution as well as international law. Bush's action was condemned not just by Moscow and Beijing but also by many U.S. NATO allies, fearful of any steps that might rock the boat with Russia.

If America's NMD did now some potential to intercept ICBMS, it could trigger dangerous countermoves by China and others unwilling to endure U.S. dictation. Beijing as well as Moscow would probably upgrade their penetration capabilities. Not only would a U.S. missile defense increase America's tensions with China and Russia but it could also make war with them, if push came to shove, more destructive. North Korea's neighbors worried about the dangers for regional and world security if the DPRK became a nuclear power. But the threat of an American NMD deployment pushed China and Russia together again. Indeed, they shared with North Korea the fear that their own deterrent might be downgraded if the America's missile defenses actually did their job.

The fact that Bush's unilateralist ways alienated most of humanity added credibility to the DPRK claim that it needed a nuclear deterrent against a grave menace.²³ Pyongyang also stepped up its efforts to woo public opinion on Korean reunification. North and South Korea agreed in June 2004 to stop propaganda broadcasts along their border and to take steps to avoid clashes along the DMZ and in disputed areas of the high seas, but they made no moves to reduce troops and arms; nor did they sign a peace treaty or take any action on the North's WMD.²⁴ Far from helping Bush to maintain a cordon

²³ KCNA (2003). "DPRK Says 'Defensive Nature' of Nuclear Deterrent 'Will Remain Unchanged'," Pyongyang KCNA in English 0307 GMT 1 Sep 2003. Foreign Broadcast Information Service FBIS-EAS-2003-0901

²⁴ The tank traps, gun emplacements and minefields remained in place, with no sign of an imminent political solution to their conflict. Only a few hours after the agreement was signed, two North Korean navy patrol boats crossed into waters controlled by South Korea off the west coast, while chasing Chinese fishing boats poaching in the area, and retreated when South Korean warships approached, said Seoul's Defense Ministry. But North Korea's state-run news agency claimed, however, that three South Korean

sanitaire around the DPRK, Japan in 2004 moved toward investing in North Korea. Also in June 2004, China openly challenged the United States to provide evidence that the North had indeed opened a second production line for nuclear weapons

Thus, the Bush approach to the DPRK had no positive outcomes except for designers and manufacturers of missile defense. U.S. policy to North Korea was part of a more general pattern in foreign policy that alienated friends and inspired enemies, sapping American influence abroad and weakening U.S. security and adding to the federal deficit.²⁵ . If nothing else, the Bush administration should have learned to avoid “biting words.” While Americans saw North Korea as unpredictable and dangerous, peoples on the world scene perceived the United States—not as a sharp sighted, adroit, and powerful eagle, but as a clumsy rogue elephant.

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warships had infiltrated its waters and two South Korean jet fighters threatened its fishing boats as part of the South's alleged efforts to exercise jurisdiction in the area.

²⁵The Bush administration's foreign policy in Iraq and elsewhere had been a "disaster," and President Bush should not be re-elected, a group of former diplomats and military leaders declared on June 16, 2004. The group, called Diplomats and Military Commanders for Change, held a news conference to explain why its members felt "the need for a major change in the direction of our foreign policy," and underscore that their concerns were bipartisan.

