

A Nuclear North Korea?
Why? How?
What to do?

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For
Korea: Past and Present Teacher Workshop

University of Minnesota
April 20, 2007

The Issue

Since the Mid-1980's, North Korea has begun to develop Nuclear Weapons. In 1994, President Clinton reached an agreement to freeze nuclear production. In 2002, President Bush declared that North Korea is a member of the "axis of evil." North Korea resumed building its nuclear arsenal.

Annotated Chronology:

1950-1953. During the Korean War, the United States military prepared for the use of nuclear weapons in Korea.

1954. Secretary of State Dulles offered the French two nuclear weapons to bomb the communists in Northern Vietnam. After the Korean War, The United States military had access to nuclear weapons in case of a continuation of a war with North Korea.

1975. America withdrew its nuclear weapons from Taiwan, the Republic of China.

1978. America discovered that Taiwan was building its own bomb. The U.S. State Department forced Taiwan to end its research and production plans.

1986. North Korea produced plutonium in a reactor.

1991. After the Gulf War, the United States sent a secret mission to North Korea to show them videos of the American destruction of the Iraqi army and defenses. The Americans wanted North Korea to cease its threat to South Korea. It also engaged in talks with North Korea to end its nuclear program. The unintended consequence was to make North Korea paranoid.

1992. North Korea had made enough weapons-grade plutonium to produce on to two bombs.

1993. North Korea announced it would leave the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

1994. President Clinton pushed the UN Security Council to consider sanctions. North Korea's spokesman proclaimed that sanctions would trigger war. The Pentagon drew up plans to send 50,000 troops, 400 combat jets, 50 ships, apache helicopters, and multiple launch rockets to South Korea. According to his generals, President Clinton was prepared to launch an air strike on the North Korean reaction—even if it led to war. Meanwhile, Clinton sent former President Jimmy Carter to Pyongyang to negotiate with Kim Il-sung, the leader of North Korea.

In October of 1994 the U.S. and North Korea signed a formal accord: "The Agreed Framework." North Korea would renew its commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, lock up the fuel rods, dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities, and allow the UN inspectors back into North Korea to monitor the nuclear facility. The U.S. agreed to provide two light water nuclear reactors for electricity, a supply of fuel oil, and pledge not to invade North Korea. This plan was primarily financed by the U.S. with other contributions from Japan and South Korea. The deal also included an agreement to move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.

However, neither the U.S. Senate nor North Korea would make the financial commitment. The reactors were not funded and normalization did not occur. A military incursion by North Korea into South Korea resulted in Seoul's suspension of energy assistance. Pyongyang secretly began to import Pakistani centrifuges.

1998. North Korea tests a medium-range missile.

1999. Pyongyang agrees to long-range missile moratorium.

2000. Secretary of State Madeline Albright visited Pyongyang and negotiated an agreement with Kim Jong-il. Yet the end of President Clinton's administration was mired in problems and there was no follow-up.

2001. Secretary of State Colin Powell says the administration will follow Clinton's policies. However, on the next day (March 7, 2001) President Bush declares that he will change the relationship and not follow former President Clinton. Soon afterward, President Bush met with Kim Dae-jung, President of South Korea.

Brief Biography of Kim Dae-jung: Born in 1925, Kim Dae-jung was one of the greatest leaders of South Korea, as well as a great human rights leader and democratic legislator. Under South Korea's martial law, he had been accused of treason. He escaped South Korea for America, and then fled to Tokyo. In Tokyo he was abducted by South Korean agents and secretly brought back to Seoul for execution. Due to American intervention, he was held under house arrest. Then in 1979, he was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. However, the U.S. again intervened, and he was

permitted to travel to the U.S. for health reasons. He returned to South Korea in the late 1980's when martial law had ended. In 1997, he was elected President of South Korea.

In 2000, President Dae-Jung met with Kim Jong-Il in Pyongyang. This was the fruit of his so-called "Sunshine Policy." President Dae-Jung wanted to work in a peaceful way for reconciliation with North Korea. After the meeting he established economic and social contacts with North Korea. They included the reunion of families after 50 years of separation. Over 15% of the population in South Korea had relatives in North Korea. In recognition of his work for peace and human rights, as well as his initiative in peaceful programs for reconciliation with North Korea, President Kim Dae-Jung received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000.

President Kim Dae-Jung's meeting with President Bush in 2001 was a disaster. Bush distrusted Kim Dae-Jung and according to one State Department official, Bush viewed President Dae-Jung with contempt. President Bush even publicly criticized President Dae-Jung for his Sunshine Policy.. President Bush did not want a re-unification or a diplomatic acceptance of North Korea. President Bush believed that the isolation of North Korea would result in its self-destruction. Many of his advisors predicted that North Korea would fall from its own weight within 1-2 years. President Bush did not want to negotiate with Kim Jong-Il, and even claimed to "loathe" him. In the next presidential election in South Korea, President Bush supported the President Dae-Jung's opponent, who opposed attempts at reconciliation with North Korea. However, new President Roh Moo Hyn, a populist who was pro-Sunshine but anti-American, won instead.

2002. Relations with South Korea were further soured during President Bush's State of the Union address when he tagged North Korea as a member of the "axis of evil." The result in South Korea was the widespread belief that President Bush wanted to start a war. In October 2002, President Bush announced that the U.S. was withdrawing from the 1994 Agreed Framework. All economic and trade relations with North Korea were halted.

2003. North Korea withdrew from the non-proliferation treaty. It became public that the North Koreans had processed uranium, restored fuel rods, and kicks out the UN inspectors. When North Korea had begun to work on a bomb during the Clinton administration, the Pentagon prepared for war. When a similar threat was posed by North Korea in 2003, President Bush was too busy with Iraq to respond.

2004. The United States attempted to form a united front of China, Russia, South Korea, and Japan against North Korea. North Korea's official position was that it wanted to negotiate with the United States, resume economic relations, discuss recognition, and have America declare that it would not attack North Korea.

2005. Analysts claimed that North Korea had the capacity to produce many more atomic weapons and may have already produced two. In September 2005, North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for an incentives package. America responded

by placing sanctions on a bank that provided financial support to the North Korean Government. Talks and any possible agreement collapsed.

2006. North Korea is believed to have enough enriched uranium to produce 4-13 nuclear bombs. North Korea began to test its missiles. On October 3, 2006, Kim Jong Il announces that North Korea plans to test nuclear weapons. According to North Korea, this test was necessary to “bolster its nuclear deterrent as a self-defense measure.”

2007. On February 13, 2007, America and North Korea reach an agreement. The United States agreed to unfreeze North Korea’s banking accounts. As of April, the account is available to North Korea. The next step is for Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program. North Korea wants to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. However, President Bush does not want to develop a formal relationship with North Korea. To create an embassy in Pyongyang, Congress would need to give its approval which would require a discussion of President Bush’s Korean and Chinese policies, as well.

Diplomatic Interests of Other Countries

- *Russia* wants a strong North Korea to be a wedge to South Korea and a buffer against China.
- *China* wants a dependent North Korea which will provide a buffer to South Korea. China also has its eye on incorporating some parts of Korea into Chinese territory. Therefore, it does not want North Korea to collapse.
- *South Korea* is divided. Some want immediate unification, but some want a very slow unification. Rapid unification would be financially and even politically disastrous for South Korea. However, all Koreans see themselves as Koreans first and members of South or North Korea second.
- *Japan* is afraid of North Korea’s possible aggression against both South Korea and Japan. Japan also wants restitution from North Korea for the kidnapping of Japanese citizens and other anti-Japanese violence. Japan is in the process of changing its constitution so it can develop its own military force.
- *North Korea* wants to gain security and protection—diplomatically, economically, and financially. It wants to do this without changing its political structure or political system.