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THESIS

**U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN RELATION TO
NORTH KOREA**

by

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U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN RELATION TO NORTH KOREA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the main drivers of U.S. policy toward North Korea's nuclear weapons program from 1992 until the present. The thesis has found that there were four main drivers of American policy toward North Korea during each presidential administration examined. The United States' regional allies—Japan and South Korea—have been concerned about the threats posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and they have made several attempts to negotiate the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in the conjunction with the United States. Allies' concerns about a potential conflict, however, have led them to call on the United States to show restraint in the use of military force and economic pressure toward North Korea. China's economic leverage over the DPRK and Beijing's insistence on preventing the United States from imposing harsher economic sanctions on North Korea presented challenges throughout the presidential administrations. North Korea's insistence on furthering its nuclear weapons program by continuing to defy the international order presents difficulties for the United States to achieve the goal of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. This thesis provides two future policy recommendations for the United States to engage with North Korea—adopt either an option of appeasement that centers on diplomacy or an option of pressure that relies on a combination of coercive strategies to successfully achieve the goal of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CVID	Complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles
NPT	Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty
PRC	Peoples Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions

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I. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN RELATION TO NORTH KOREA

The United States and its allies have attempted to negotiate with North Korea regarding its nuclear weapons program over the span of four U.S. presidencies with little success. In 2020, North Korea's nuclear weapons program still poses a major threat to the United States. U.S. national interest depends upon the security, liberty, and property of the American people, and North Korea's nuclear weapons program is a threat to these national interests.¹ The weapons testing conducted by North Korea poses major security risks to the U.S. troops stationed in East Asia as well as to the freedom of navigation in both the Korean peninsula and the Sea of Japan. North Korea has demonstrated that the country possesses Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) with ranges capable of reaching the United States.² To improve relations with North Korea, President Donald Trump became the first U.S. president to accept an invitation to meet with a North Korean leader in almost two decades, and he has since met twice with President Kim Jong-un to discuss nuclear disarmament of the Korean peninsula.³

However, the United States and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) negotiations regarding the North's nuclear weapons program stalled in 2019. The weapons testing conducted by the DPRK has continually increased security concerns in East Asia and has led to an increase in tensions between North Korea and the United States. U.S. policy concerning denuclearizing North Korea cycles between appeasement (carrot), and engagement (stick) based off the soft and hardline strategies employed by the DPRK.⁴ The United States appeases North Korea by offering concessions such as economic sanctions

¹ Adam Quinn, "Obama's National Security Strategy: Predicting U.S. Policy in the Context of Changing Worldviews" (Chatham House-The Royal Institute of International Affairs, January 2015), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/obamas-national-security-strategy-predicting-us-policy-context-changing-worldviews#>.

² Kelsey Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," Arms Control Association, January 2020, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>.

³ Stephen Collinson, "Trump Isn't the First U.S. President to Get a North Korean Invite. But He Is the First to Accept," CNN, March 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/09/politics/north-korea-trump-obama-bush-clinton/index.html>.

⁴ Nordin b. Abdul Ghani, "North Korea's Foreign Policy Patterns towards Major Powers: From the Cold War Era until the Post-Cold War Era," *The Journal of Defence and Security* 6, no. 2 (2015): 74–86.

relief, or financial assistance, and in return North Korea would agree to dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

This paper examined the major drivers of U.S. policy in relation to North Korea's nuclear weapons program. There are many different scholarly explanations of what drives U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea. One explanation posited by scholars is that American policy toward North Korea lacks consistency because it changes depending on each presidential administration's national security interests and focus. Another explanation given by scholars is that the economic leverage that China has over North Korea is the most important factor affecting U.S. policymakers progress in respect to halting the DPRK's nuclear weapons program because it makes the economic sanctions less effective.⁵ Other scholars point to the bilateral military alliances with South Korea and Japan, which obligates the United States to provide these allies with security and influences American policy concerning the DPRK.⁶ On the other hand, some analysts believe that North Korea's bellicose, belligerent behavior marks them as deeply radical and dangerous, therefore making it difficult to enforce American policy.⁷ This thesis determined there has been multiple drivers of U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea from the Clinton administration to the present.

A. SIGNIFICANCE

North Korea is one of the United States' most pressing security challenges because of the threat that it poses to U.S. troops and allies in the region. This is a major reason why the United States, along with the United Nations, has attempted to negotiate with North

⁵ Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," *North Korean Review* 7, no. 2 (2011): 94–101, <https://doi.org/10.3172/NKR.7.2.94>.

⁶ Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation," CRS Report No. R41259 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, July 27, 2018), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R41259.pdf>.

⁷ Danielle Chubb, "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," *Critical Studies on Security* 5, no. 3 (December 2, 2017): 317–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2017.1409560>.

Korea regarding its nuclear weapons program.⁸ North Korea began developing its nuclear weapons program around the end of the Cold War; however, they did not effectively have nuclear power capabilities until the 21st century. In July and November of 2017, North Korea began expanding its nuclear weapons program and test launched three inter-continental ballistic missiles that demonstrated ranges capable of reaching the United States.⁹

These recent developments increased the urgency of understanding the drivers of U.S. foreign policy strategy toward North Korea. The DPRK's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities not only pose a threat to the Republic of Korea, they also endanger the 28,500 U.S. troops stationed inside South Korea.¹⁰ The U.S. troops stationed in South Korea (Republic of Korea, ROK) place the country under the U.S. nuclear umbrella.¹¹ South Korea is also one of the United States most strategic economic partners in Asia and its sixth-largest trading partner.¹² After the Korean War the United States and South Korea signed a Mutual Defense Treaty that commits the United States to help South Korea defend itself from threats.¹³ The threat of North Korea's nuclear weapons program to ROK falls under the Mutual Defense Treaty, which is another reason why the United States has continued to address the issue of nuclear disarmament in North Korea.

North Korea's nuclear weapons and long-range missile launches have increased Japanese security fears about the capabilities and intentions of the regime.¹⁴ The United States relationship with Japan started upon the conclusion of World War II with the signing

⁸ Markus B. Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement: Why Trump's North Korea Policy Is Unwise, Dangerous, and Bound to Fail," *Global Affairs* 3, no. 4–5 (February 1, 2018): 365–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2017.1416791>.

⁹ Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement," 365.

¹⁰ Brock Williams, "South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional research (Washington, D.C., August 1, 2019), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10165.pdf>.

¹¹ Williams, "South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations," 1.

¹² Andres B. Schwarzenberg, "U.S. Trade with Major Trading Partners," CRS Report No. R45434 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 18, 2018), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45434.pdf>.

¹³ Williams, "South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations," 1.

¹⁴ Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., "Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress" (Washington, D.C., February 16, 2017), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33436.pdf>.

of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in 1960.¹⁵ The alliance formed from this treaty has been an anchor for the U.S. security role in East Asia and with more than 53,000 U.S. troops stationed in the region Japan falls under the United States nuclear umbrella.¹⁶ Japan is the United States fourth-largest trading partner in terms of exports and imports.¹⁷ Resolving the threat of North Korea's nuclear weapons program would aid in alleviating any fears from our Japanese ally, thereby further strengthening the United States and Japan alliance.

Another reason this thesis is significant is because it helps to understand the effectiveness of the various policy tools that the United States use to promote nuclear non-proliferation and ensure signatory countries adhere to the terms of the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT), which was signed in March of 1970.¹⁸ One tool the United States employ to those ends is issuing and enforcing economic sanctions on countries, which defy international law as defined by the United Nations. The United States also use political isolation as well as its military presence and exercises with allies as a tool for nuclear deterrence.

North Korea has a history of being able to circumnavigate the pressure of the United States economic sanctions. The DPRK regularly defies international law especially regarding nuclear proliferation. Although North Korea signed the NPT in 1985, it never really complied with the treaty and was still developing a nuclear weapons program.¹⁹ In 2003 North Korea officially withdrew from the NPT and continued to build up its nuclear weapons program.²⁰ Allowing a country to produce nuclear weapons without proper monitoring places the entire world at risk because there is no security in place preventing

¹⁵ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "U.S. Relations with Japan" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, July 17, 2018), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-japan/>.

¹⁶ Chanlett-Avery et al., "Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress" 18.

¹⁷ Schwarzenberg, "U.S. Trade with Major Trading Partners," 29.

¹⁸ Daryl Kimball, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) at a Glance," Arms Control Association, August 2012, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nptfact>.

¹⁹ Abdul Ghani, "North Korea's Foreign Policy patterns towards major Powers: From the Cold War Era until the Post-Cold War Era," 78.

²⁰ Kimball, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) at a Glance," 2.

that country from utilizing its weapons against other nations. This poses a national security risk not only to the United States and its allies but to many other countries within Asia, including China. If the North Korean problem is not resolved it may contribute to other rogue nations like Iran continuing its quest of developing a nuclear weapons program.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Presidential Administrations

Presidential administrations are one of the main proponents of U.S. policy. Although President Clinton, Bush, Obama, and President Trump have utilized the process of economic sanctions in relation to North Korea for the purpose of nuclear non-proliferation or disarmament, each administration took a different path. It is important to understand that the basic policy goal of U.S. foreign policy in respect to promoting non-proliferation in North Korea are providing our allies with security, and maintaining peace and regional stability in east Asia.²¹ However, each U.S. president has employed different strategies to achieve the goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula.

The Clinton administration took on an engagement strategy in relation to policy concerning North Korea.²² During the Clinton administration, North Korea had a secret nuclear weapons program; however, it had not yet developed a nuclear weapon. Therefore, the Clinton administration goals were to prevent the rogue nation from developing nuclear weapon capabilities. It was with this concern in mind that the Clinton administration engaged with North Korea through negotiations and successfully reached the 1994 U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework deal. The 1994 U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework deal was a bilateral deal that called for an end to North Korea nuclear development in return for U.S. economic and energy assistance.²³

²¹ William A. Boik, “Understanding the North Korea Problem: Why It Has Become the ‘Land of Lousy Options’” (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011).

²² Ralph B.A. DiMuccio and Kym-Gu Kang, “The Irony of U.S. Policy towards North Korea,” *Peace Review* 10, no. 2 (1998): 275–80.

²³ Boik, “Understanding the North Korea Problem,” 7.

North Korea nullified the 1994 Agreed Framework deal during President Bush's first term in office. During the time that the DPRK's second secret nuclear weapons program was exposed the United States was fighting the war on terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Bush administration employed a hardline policy concerning North Korea, which consisted of increased sanctions and pressure. The Bush administration felt as though the issue in North Korea moved passed the bilateral phase and into a multilateral phase and required interaction from countries in the region who considered a nuclear North Korea a threat. Therefore, in late 2003, in response to North Korea's admission of the existence of its nuclear weapons program the six-party talks begin. The six-party talks were negotiations between the United States, Japan, China, Russia, South Korea, and North Korea regarding the dismantling of the nuclear weapons program in Pyongyang.²⁴

The focus of the Obama administration foreign policy was non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in rogue nations.²⁵ The administration adopted a strategy of "strategic patience" with the goal of complete disarmament of the nuclear weapons program in North Korea.²⁶ In the beginning of the Obama administration the goal was to achieve a nuclear free world with contingencies in place for wayward countries that break the rules.²⁷ Initially, President Obama was open to the possibility of speaking with Kim Jung-Il of North Korea and resuming the Six-party talks. However, the possibility of continuing nuclear weapons discussions between the United States and North Korea became compromised when North Korea launched sequential attacks on South Korea. This attack was a determining factor for the Obama administration to put a stop to any chance of actual negotiations with North Korea until the regime could take the United States security concerns seriously.

²⁴ Juergen Kliener, "The Bush Administration and the Nuclear Challenges by North Korea," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 16, no. 2 (2005): 203–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592290590948432>.

²⁵ Christine Ahn, "More U.S. Pressure on North Korea is not the path to Denuclearization," Truthout, May 9, 2019, <https://truthout.org/articles/more-us-pressure-on-north-korea-is-not-the-path-to-denuclearization/>.

²⁶ Tanguy Struye de Swielande, "Obama's Legacy and the Way Forward," *Global Affairs* 3, no. 4–5 (September 19, 2017): 325–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2017.1377627>.

²⁷ Chubb, "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," 324.

The Trump administration developed a maximum pressure engagement strategy regarding foreign policy toward North Korea.²⁸ The strategy of maximum pressure toward North Korea consists of increasing diplomatic, economic, and military pressure against North Korea.²⁹ This new strategy comprises of the following four elements: encourage Beijing to apply pressure on North Korea, increasing economic and financial sanctions, hardening Washington's bargaining position, and building up military threat posture against Pyongyang.³⁰ Through the application of these four elements the goal is to maximize pressure on North Korea to force them into a perilous situation; both economically and financially.

2. American Allies Security

Another school of scholarship contends that the major driver of U.S. policy in relation to North Korea's nuclear weapons program is the United States support for its East Asian allies. Scholars have determined that the core regional security interests in Asia are the freedom of navigation, regional economic prosperity, and the deterrence of military threats against peace.³¹ The goal is to ensure that the sea-lanes in East Asia are always open and safe to facilitate the free flow of commerce that is essential for the United States and its allied trade partners such as Japan, and South Korea.³² United States trade with Asia constitutes approximately 40 percent of the United States total trade volume.³³ In 2017, Japan and South Korea, respectively, were the United States fourth and sixth-largest trading partners in terms of two-way exports.³⁴ The random weapons testing conducted by

²⁸ Matthew Pennington, "Trump Strategy on North Korea: Maximum Pressure and Engagement," *AP News*, April 14, 2017, <https://apnews.com/86626d21ea2b45c79457a873a747c452/Trump-strategy-on-NKorea:-%27Maximum-pressure-and-engagement%27>.

²⁹ Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement," 368.

³⁰ Liegl, 368.

³¹ Bruce W. Bennett and Booseung Chang, "Strengthening U.S.-ROK Relations in the New Administrations of the United States and South Korea," (Rand Corporation, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF364.html.

³² Bennett and Chang, "Strengthening U.S.-ROK Relations in the New Administrations," 2.

³³ Bennett and Chang, 2.

³⁴ Schwarzenberg, "U.S. Trade with Major Trading Partners," 29–31.

North Korea coupled with the country's growing nuclear weapons, and intercontinental ballistic missile arsenal threatens the flow of commerce for U.S. allies' in the region.

The United States' bargaining position with North Korea has a direct impact on South Korea and Japan. It can prove difficult trying to manage small alliances while attempting to negotiate with an adversary country like North Korea.³⁵ The bilateral alliance between the United States and Japan extends the American nuclear umbrella to Japan, and it also provides Japan security and maneuvering room when dealing with North Korea.³⁶ Since Japan has a defensive military posture they rely heavily on the bilateral treaty with the United States for defense against nuclear weapons. Japan's limited ability to deter threats creates vulnerability and as a result when there are changes in U.S. policy concerning North Korea it triggers anxiety in Tokyo about the United States strategic commitment to Japan.³⁷ Furthermore, this anxiety motivates Japan to increase its defense capabilities in support of its national security interest and prosperity. Japan has made progress to strengthen its ballistic missile defense with the Patriot Advanced Capability-3, Aegis deployed warships and the planned launching of two Aegis Ashore systems to provide additional defense against North Korea.³⁸

The United States deters the DPRK's military threats with increased military presence in the region and joint exercises with regional allies. However, increasing military pressure on the Korean peninsula only further escalates the tensions between North Korea and the United States thus complicating allied leader's efforts to engage the security issues regarding the Korean peninsula.³⁹ The Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and ROK is a central part of South Korea's defense policy.⁴⁰ Since the alliance began there

³⁵ Audrye Wong, "Managing Small Allies Amidst Patron-Adversary Rapprochement: A Tale of Two Koreas," *Asian Security*, December 10, 2018, 107-26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2018.1551883>.

³⁶ Chanlett-Avery et al., "Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress," 12.

³⁷ Chanlett-Avery et al., 330.

³⁸ Monica Montgomery, "Japan Expands Ballistic Missile Defenses," Arms Control Association, September 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-09/news/japan-expands-ballistic-missile-defenses>.

³⁹ Chubb, "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," 317.

⁴⁰ Mats Engman, "U.S.-ROK Military Exercises: Provocation or Possibility?," Institute for Security & Development Policy, March 2018, <http://isdip.eu/publication/u-s-rok-military-exercises-provocation-possibility/>.

have been several large-scale military exercises conducted by the United States and South Korea. Militarily to prepare for a North Korean threat the United States and ROK participated in Team Spirit, which was conducted as both a carrot and stick during U.S.–DPRK negotiations.⁴¹ Recently, U.S.-ROK military exercises have been postponed for political reasons as an act of goodwill to North Korea.⁴² Even without the combined military exercises as a line of defense, South Korea still has the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and the Patriot Advanced Capability system to defend themselves from North Korea’s missile threats and provocations.⁴³ Additionally, the proximity of North Korea’s weapons arsenal could cause extreme damage to Seoul in the event of a U.S.–DPRK military conflict, and this reality has dissuaded the United States from embracing a more aggressive military strategy in respect to North Korea.⁴⁴

3. The China Factor

Other scholars highlight how the Peoples Republic of China’s (PRC) relationship with the DPRK disrupts U.S. policymakers’ efforts at halting North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.⁴⁵ The PRC share a similar strategic interest as the United States of preventing a nuclear armed North Korea and supports most economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).⁴⁶ However, Beijing is skeptical of imposing maximum pressure of increased sanctions on North Korea because of the possible economic crisis it may cause within North Korea, which could eventually lead to the

⁴¹ Robert Collins, “A Brief History of the US-ROK Combined Military Exercises,” 38 North, February 26, 2016, <https://www.38north.org/2014/02/rcollins022714/>.

⁴² Robert Burns, “Joint Exercise with American and South Korean Military Postponed in ‘Act of Goodwill’ toward North Korea,” Military Times, November 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2019/11/17/joint-exercise-with-american-and-south-korean-military-criticized-by-north-korea-postponed-in-act-of-goodwill/>.

⁴³ “THAAD on the Korean Peninsula,” Institute for Security & Development Policy, October 2017, <http://isdp.eu/publication/korea-thaad/>.

⁴⁴ Vann H. Van Diepen and Daniel Depetris, “Putting North Korea’s New Short-Range Missiles into Perspective,” 38 North, September 2019, <https://www.38north.org/2019/09/vvandiependdepetris090519/>.

⁴⁵ Nanto and Manyin, “China-North Korea Relations,” 94.

⁴⁶ Liegl, “Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement,” 370.

downfall of the country.⁴⁷ Such an event could lead to a refugee crisis, which could affect the entire region and especially Northeast China.⁴⁸

China is North Korea's largest trading partner accounting for more than 40 percent of the DPRK's trade volume.⁴⁹ The inequality of this relationship provides China with substantial leverage over North Korea.⁵⁰ Chinese leadership has three critical priorities for policy in respect to the DPRK, which have a direct impact on the United States ability to resolve the North Korean problem. William Boik states in the Letort papers, that the three priorities which affect China is "preventing the United States from dominating a unified Korea; being seen in a positive light for playing a major role in the denuclearization of the peninsula; and using the situation in North Korea to leverage the United States on other key issues of interest to the PRC."⁵¹

4. The North Korea Factor

Another strain of scholarship stresses the role of North Korea's actions in the making of U.S. policy. North Korea's foreign policy strategy encompasses three key elements: security, legitimacy, and development.⁵² To accomplish these goals North Korea uses a combination of soft and hardline strategies in relation to the United States—confrontation and engagement.⁵³ However, history has shown that whenever the United States decides to employ the hardline engagement strategy toward the DPRK the retaliation often results in a weapons demonstration. During the six-party negotiation process in 2005 a series of hardline engagement interactions coupled with hardened U.S. financial

⁴⁷ Liegl, 371.

⁴⁸ Boik, "Understanding the North Korea Problem," 31.

⁴⁹ Boik, 30.

⁵⁰ Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations,," 98.

⁵¹ Boik, "Understanding the North Korea Problem," 30.

⁵² Abdul Ghani, "North Korea's Foreign Policy Patterns towards Major Powers: From the Cold War Era until the Post-Cold War Era," 78.

⁵³ Ghani, "North Korea's Foreign Policy Patterns towards Major Powers," 74.

restrictions led to stalls within the negotiation process, this in turn led to North Korea conducting its first nuclear weapons test in 2006.⁵⁴

North Korea is considered a “hard target” regarding economic sanctions because the country is an authoritarian regime.⁵⁵ Authoritarian regimes can impose costs on their populations, which has made it harder for the United States and the United Nations to convince North Korea of nuclear disarmament through the act of sanctions alone.⁵⁶ Sanctions can serve a multitude of purposes and there are a variety of ways to pressure a country through sanctions, but it requires strict adherence to the policies developed by the country imposing the sanctions. The direct economic costs to leadership or the indirect economic costs like trade embargos are the two routes of implementing economic sanctions.⁵⁷

U.S. policy toward North Korea cycles between appeasement, and engagement—the United States appeases North Korea by offering concessions for denuclearization and engages through economic sanctions and increased military posture on the Korean peninsula. This occurred during the Leap Day Deal made in 2012—North Korean leader Kim Jung-un agreed to a temporary halt of its nuclear weapons program to receive economic aid from the United States in return.⁵⁸ Just a few months after making the Leap Day Deal in 2012 North Korea launched two satellites which resulted in the United States voiding the Leap Day deal.⁵⁹ Again in 2017 as tensions rose between the United States and North Korea there was a subsequent increase of weapons testing conducted by North Korea. Some believe that the weapons tests were two-fold to show how powerful and unrelenting North Korean leader Kim Jong-un can be, and to announce to the United States

⁵⁴ Suk Hi Kim and Semoon Chang, *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2003).

⁵⁵ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017).

⁵⁶ Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target*, 6.

⁵⁷ Haggard and Noland, 6.

⁵⁸ Chubb, A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives,” 326.

⁵⁹ Chubb, 326.

that North Korea was present and had no intentions on halting progress on its nuclear weapons development program.⁶⁰

Despite efforts by the United States, its allies, the United Nations, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—North Korea has defied, stymied, and deterred repeated efforts at dismantling its nuclear weapons program.⁶¹ North Korea is a rogue state actor, currently on the threshold of becoming a major nuclear power threat to the United States.⁶² In an attempt to restrain North Korea, President Trump met with Kim Jung-un in early 2018 and issued a joint statement saying that the United States will provide security to North Korea, and that in return North Korea will work toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.⁶³ However, as of the writing of this thesis, U.S.–DPRK negotiations have stalled and North Korea has continued violating United Nations injunctions to halt its weapons testing and development.⁶⁴

C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Changing presidential administrations national security priorities are the main driver of U.S. policy in relation to North Korea.

This hypothesis posits that shifts in U.S. policy concerning North Korea was driven primarily by the policy preferences and priorities of the elected presidents of the United States. U.S. foreign policy varies based off a variety of factors to include the president that is in office, the national interest of the United states, and the nation that the policy applies to. Throughout the span of four presidencies, each U.S. president had a different policy approach toward denuclearizing North Korea; however, there were common trends. U.S. policy in relation to North Korea during the Clinton to Trump administrations bordered between an outwardly confrontational posture and the application of appeasement

⁶⁰ Chubb, 318.

⁶¹ Jonathan D. Pollack, “No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons, and International Security,” *Adelphi Series* 50, no. 418–419 (June 2011): 13–24.

⁶² Graham Allison, “Nuclear Terrorism: Did We Beat the Odds or Change Them?,” *Prism* 7, no. 3 (2018): 2–21, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/e26470529>.

⁶³ Ahn, “More U.S. pressure on North Korea is not the path to Denuclearization,” 70.

⁶⁴ Allison, “Nuclear Terrorism Did We Beat the Odds or Change Them?,” 12.

strategies, this led to escalated tensions and inadequate resolutions, which provided Pyongyang with the maneuvering room to further develop its nuclear weapons program.⁶⁵

Hypothesis 2: The main factor shaping U.S. policy toward the DPRK is the bilateral military alliances with South Korea and Japan, which obligates the U.S. to provide them with security from North Korea.⁶⁶

There is great difficulty trying to manage small alliances while attempting to negotiate with an adversary country like North Korea.⁶⁷ The issues that U.S. policymakers face when developing policy toward North Korea is ensuring that U.S. national interest does not impede with regional allies' national interest. The United States, South Korea, and Japan seek for full denuclearization of the DPRK, and each country has worked collectively through the application of economic sanctions and diplomacy to achieve this goal. Although both Japan and South Korea have taken the preliminary steps to add both political and economic pressure on the DPRK, each country relies heavily on the United States to reach an agreement with North Korea regarding its nuclear weapons program. The frequent weapons testing conducted by North Korea and its large nuclear weapons arsenal has ignited fear in both South Korea and Japan, which in turn has increased pressure on the United States to engage in dialogue with North Korea to ensure ally security.

Hypothesis 3: The actions of the People's Republic of China are the major factor shaping U.S. policy in respect to North Korea's nuclear weapons program.⁶⁸

The PRC shares a similar strategic interest as the United States of denuclearizing North Korea.⁶⁹ China is North Korea's oldest ally and main provider of imported goods to the country. This gives the PRC more leverage over the DPRK economically than the United States. However, Beijing has been skeptical of imposing maximum pressure of

⁶⁵ Chubb, "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," 317.

⁶⁶ Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation," 1.

⁶⁷ Wong, "Managing Small Allies Amidst Patron-Adversary Rapprochement: A Tale of Two Koreas," 1.

⁶⁸ Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations", 94.

⁶⁹ Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement," 370.

increased sanctions on North Korea because of the possible crisis it may cause, which could lead to a refugee crisis that could affect the entire region and especially Northeast China.⁷⁰

Hypothesis 4: The major driver of U.S. policy concerning North Korea is Pyongyang's bellicose, and recalcitrant behavior, which makes it deeply radical and dangerous to deal with.⁷¹

There is a well-established cycle in U.S.-DPRK relations: the United States provides concessions to North Korea—North Korea agrees to the set terms of a deal and then violates the deal—the United States then imposes stricter sanctions on North Korea. The United States along with the United Nations Security Council can impose as many sanctions as possible on North Korea, but they will eventually decrease in effectiveness if the countries that impose them fail to enforce them.⁷² The United States has attempted to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program since the Clinton administration with no success, in large part due to the DPRK having no interest in following the international order.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis analyzed the major drivers of U.S. policy in relation to North Korea's nuclear weapons program from the Clinton administration until the present day. In this case study, U.S. policy concerning North Korea was the dependent variable and the independent variables are presidential administrations foreign policy philosophy, allies' interests, U.S.-China relations, and NK actions. This thesis posits four-hypothesis as the possible major drivers of U.S. policy toward North Korea and will evaluate each presidency to see which hypothesis derived from the literature were present. This overall thesis consists of the following four chapters: Chapter I provides an overview of U.S.-DPRK relations; Chapter II evaluates U.S. foreign policy concerning North Korea during the Clinton, and Bush

⁷⁰ Boik, "Understanding the North Korea Problem," 31.

⁷¹ Chubb., "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," 318.

⁷² Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, "Maximum Pressure Against North Korea, RIP," 38 North, October 7, 2019, https://www.38north.org/2019/10/skleineahlbrandt100719/?utm_source=Stimson+Center&utm_campaign=c40b5f3a18-38NDigest%2FEast+Asia%2F38+North+Digest_0905&utm_medium=email&ut.

administrations; Chapter III examines U.S. foreign policy in relation to North Korea during the Obama and Trump administrations; and the final chapter concludes with summary of findings and future policy recommendations for the U.S. government.

This thesis evaluated the following four hypotheses chronologically from the Clinton administration to the Trump administration to gain an understanding about the drivers of U.S. policy about North Korea. The first hypothesis posits that the main driver of U.S. policy toward North Korea is that the policies lack consistency because it changes depending on each presidential administration's national security interests and focus. The evidence used to support this hypothesis came from presidential biographies and the state department to provide a detailed timeline of accounts regarding DPRK policy during each administration. Other sources included each presidential administrations National Security Strategy, Congressional Research Reports, and National Defense Strategies to get an understanding of each administration's regional national security interest for North Korea during their respective terms. While reviewing the above resources the evidence highlighted were the different strategies employed with respect to North Korea to dissuade them from developing its nuclear weapons program, and the inconsistencies of these strategies during each presidential administration.

The second hypothesis suggests that the main factor shaping U.S. policy toward the DPRK is the bilateral military alliances with South Korea and Japan, which obligates the United States to provide them with security from North Korea.⁷³ The evidence utilized to support this hypothesis comprised of primary sources from the presidential administration and secondary scholarship written during the Clinton–Trump administrations to get an understanding of how U.S. national interests aligned with South Korea and Japan's national interests. Other resources that proved valuable were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROK, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to get an understanding of their security roles in U.S. policy pertaining to the DPRK. The evidence required from the above resources to support this hypothesis came from reviewing how South Korea and Japan's

⁷³ Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation," 1.

national security interests factored into U.S. policy in respect to North Korea during the Clinton to Trump administrations.

The third hypothesis postulates that the actions of the PRC, are the major factor shaping U.S. policy in relation to North Korea's nuclear weapons program.⁷⁴ The evidence necessary to support this hypothesis derived from secondary scholarship on Sino-U.S. and PRC-DPRK relations to see if China has in fact influenced U.S.-DPRK relations and hindered U.S. policy with respect to North Korea. An additional resource that will prove valuable is the Chinese Foreign Ministry's publications and press briefings. While reviewing the above resources the evidence highlighted the role that China has played toward denuclearizing North Korea, including actions that support U.S. policy goals, such as sanctions, and the six-party talks, but also actions that stymied the achievement of U.S. policy goals, such as trading with North Korea and providing it cover at the United Nations.⁷⁵

The fourth hypothesis infers that the major driver of U.S. policy concerning North Korea is Pyongyang's bellicose and recalcitrant behavior, which makes them deeply radical and dangerous to deal with.⁷⁶ The evidence required to support this hypothesis was secondary scholarship and newspapers on U.S.-DPRK interactions over the span of the Clinton, Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations to get a better understanding of how North Korean actions shape U.S. foreign policy. An additional resource included reports from the United Nations Security Council and North Korea press releases, which showed how North Korea has undermined U.S. policies that aim at nuclear disarmament, and that the DPRK consistently developed its nuclear weapons program while negotiating with the United States.

⁷⁴ Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," 95.

⁷⁵ Nanto and Manyin, 95.

⁷⁶ Chubb., "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," 318.

II. THE CLINTON AND BUSH ERA

The United States has united with allies under NATO and the United Nations Security Council to negotiate with the DPRK regarding its nuclear weapons program. The goal of U.S. foreign policy with respect to North Korea has been preventing this rogue state actor from developing nuclear weapons and advanced ballistic missile capabilities on the Korean peninsula since the end of the Cold War. North Korea like many other countries during the Cold War attempted to join the nuclear race by developing a secret nuclear weapon program and advancing its ballistic missiles program. Both the Clinton and the Bush administration attempted to make it their goal to prevent the DPRK from advancing its nuclear weapons program and capabilities from 1992–2008.

President Clinton's first term in office required him to shift from the Bush41 administration "new world order" to figure out how to properly handle the North Korean problem. Between 1990–1992 the Bush administration applied a strategy of appeasement toward Pyongyang. The appeasement strategy consisted of offering Pyongyang various incentives such as the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea in return for North Korea's compliance with inspections from the IAEA.⁷⁷ This strategy laid the foundation for President Clinton's engagement strategy in relation to North Korea.

The Clinton administration had the task of rebuilding U.S. relations with the international community upon the conclusion of the Cold War. The aftermath of the Cold War left many countries' economies weak leaving them with the task of rebuilding their own individual nations. It is important to note that North Korea lost much of its funding when the Soviet Union collapsed, and the country had to figure out a way to build a relationship with the international community to move forward out of isolation. This required the DPRK to build its relationship back up with China, Japan, and South Korea while attempting to build a relationship with the United States. Threatening to pull out of the NPT was a bargaining chip used to make the country more relevant in the international

⁷⁷ John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy Between the Bushes, 1992–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203007891>.

arena, as none of the countries in the United Nations wanted North Korea to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities.

The engagement strategy consisted of pursuing diplomatic solutions to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the Korean peninsula.⁷⁸ Though diplomacy through the act of engagement was the preferred method, there were several courses of action assessed by the Clinton administration from January 1993 and throughout the 1994 nuclear crisis. The options explored consisted of the use of diplomacy through the process of gradual escalation—potential military airstrikes on known North Korean nuclear sites, the placement of economic sanctions by the United Nations Security Council, and increased diplomatic and economic pressure from Beijing with support from Seoul and Japan. The engagement strategy eventually proved to be effective and resulted in the 1994 Agreed Framework Deal with North Korea to resolve the issues surrounding proliferation on the Korean peninsula.

Continuing the path of a nuclear free Korean peninsula was an initial goal of the George W. Bush administration when he became president in 2001. However, there were unforeseen circumstances that quickly diverted the Bush administrations attention away from resuming diplomatic relations with North Korea to continue the work of his predecessor. The attack on the United States home front that occurred in 2001 plunged both United States and the international community into crisis compelling the Bush administration to launch the war on terror. The tragedy suffered by the United States made room for North Korea to continue its journey of becoming a nuclear state. While the focus of the Bush administration and much of the world were on combating terrorism in the Middle East, North Korea began its proliferation efforts.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush labelled North Korea an axis of evil and shifted his foreign policy toward North Korea from the Clinton administration engagement strategy to a hardline and diplomacy strategy. There were always conflicting statements made by high levels of leadership within the Bush administration regarding

⁷⁸ White House, “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement” (Washington, DC: Office of the President of the United States, July 1994), <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss1994.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-121219-500>.

North Korea, and the desired end-result of preventing proliferation on the Korean peninsula was never achieved. Through the span of an eight-year term attempts by the United States to isolate North Korea by freezing them out in hopes that the regime would topple was an oversight on the Bush administration senior leadership. The mix of assertive personality types which many critics deemed “hawkish personalities” created inconsistencies in U.S. policy concerning North Korea during the Bush presidency. There were times during the negotiation process where it seemed as if the United States would achieve its goal of complete, verifiable, irreversible, and dismantling (CVID), however the moment Washington could see the light at the end of the tunnel, North Korea would find a way to stall negotiations.

During both administrations, attempting to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and trying to coerce the country into complying with IAEA inspections of its known nuclear facilities was a high priority concerning American policy regarding North Korea. Another commonality present was North Korea’s provocations which were directed at U.S. allies to try to force the United States into providing concessions to the regime with no real guarantees of halting its nuclear weapons program. Some challenges that were present during each administration was China feared the collapse of North Korea’s economy through the action of implying harsher economic sanctions. The North Korean sympathizers in Japan would provide North Korea with financial aid and this proved challenging for the Clinton administration, particularly because it negated the effectiveness of the United States unilateral sanctions against North Korea. President Bush faced the challenges of developing a cohesive strategy that all countries involved in the six-party talks could agree upon. Although South Korea feared the threat a nuclear North Korea would impose on its nations border, the country also feared the threat that would result from military action by the United States. China and South Korea did not agree with the United States strategy of pushing North Korea into isolation through the act of imposing harsher economic sanctions.

A. RISING TENSIONS

North Korea joined the NPT in 1985, and shortly after joining the NPT North Korea agreed to the terms of the 1992 Korean denuclearization declaration.⁷⁹ The Korean declaration consisted of both North Korea and South Korea agreeing not to pursue its nuclear ambitions and to follow the stipulations contained within the NPT.⁸⁰ Although North Korea entered into the above proliferation treaties the country never really complied with either agreement and was still taking steps to develop a nuclear weapons program. The lack of compliance from North Korea, and the announcement of its intentions to withdraw from the NPT lead to what would eventually become known as the 1994 nuclear crisis.

There is a clause in the NPT that require countries to allow for random inspections conducted by the IAEA. North Korea agreed in February 1993 to allow for IAEA inspectors to check their known nuclear facilities, however, March 12th, 1993, Pyongyang announced its intentions to withdraw from the NPT.⁸¹ After announcing its withdrawal from the NPT, on March 15th, North Korea blocked the IAEA inspectors from completing their required inspections.⁸² The United States could not allow for North Korea to withdraw from the NPT and it was incumbent for the Clinton administration to compel North Korea to adhere to the requirements as stipulated by the NPT. The United States along with one hundred forty countries immediately issued official statements denouncing North Korea's withdrawal and declared that the North must comply with IAEA safeguards.⁸³ The tensions between Washington and Pyongyang hit an all-time high only two months into President Clinton's first term, and the actions taken by North Korea led to chaos and confusion as many countries felt their security would be threatened if Pyongyang

⁷⁹ "Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Nuclear Threat Initiative, October 26, 2011, <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/joint-declaration-south-and-north-korea-denuclearization-korean-peninsula/>.

⁸⁰ "Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," 1.

⁸¹ Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, and Robert L. Galluci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2004).

⁸² William J. Clinton, *Bill Clinton: My Life* (New York: Random House Inc., 2004).

⁸³ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, 27.

was not checked appropriately. These fears in turn led to the first nuclear crisis between the United States and North Korea and pushed North Korea to the top of President Clinton's foreign policy list.

The events that occurred during the first year of President Clinton's term eventually led to the 1994 nuclear crisis in which the administration strongly considered war as an option of deterrence to thwart North Korea's nuclear ambitions. There was cause for concern over the blocked IAEA inspections from North Korea because the reactor that Pyongyang were studying operated on fuel rods, and the remaining fuel could be used to produce plutonium to develop nuclear weapons.⁸⁴ This sparked concern for many countries but the United States in particular because of the North's proximity to allies such as South Korea and Japan whom the United States was committed to protecting.

In March of 1993, as suspicions arose in the international community over North Korea's potential to develop a nuclear weapons program, President Clinton became determined to stop the rogue state because of the threat it posed to U.S. national security. The thought that this isolated country could potentially develop nuclear weapons and possibly sell them to the highest bidder ignited a frenzy amongst even the DPRK's strongest ally—China. The United States began to make preparations for negotiations with North Korea in April of 1993—June 1993 the United States and North Korea issued a joint statement—Pyongyang would suspend its withdrawal from the NPT, agree to the principles of a nuclear free Korean peninsula, and agree to a reunified Korea.⁸⁵ However, upon issuing this joint statement North Korea continued to evade IAEA inspections, which led to the United States combined action of coercive and diplomatic approaches and an increase in U.S. military forces in South Korea.⁸⁶

February of 1994 President Clinton put U.S. military forces on high alert in case Washington made the determination that military intervention would be the best course of action to deter North Korea. The United States shipped anti-rocket Patriot missiles back to

⁸⁴ Clinton, *Bill Clinton: My Life*, 91.

⁸⁵ Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy Between the Bushes, 1992–2000*, 118.

⁸⁶ Dumbrell, 118.

South Korea—the Pentagon began to formulate war plans and the Clinton administration considered launching airstrikes to target North Korea’s nuclear facilities.⁸⁷ Military intervention on the United States part would have potentially caused the loss of lives upwards to one million people if the DPRK decided to pre-emptively strike South Korea in response to the United States actions.⁸⁸ The back and forth actions between North Korea and the United States further increased tensions between the two countries and created ambiguity between the United States and South Korea.

B. ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

The Clinton administration decided that going to war with North Korea would not be in the best interest of the United States or its ally South Korea. Instead the administration decided to move forward with imposing economic sanctions as the means to end the nuclear crisis for the reason that the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea agreed that a war with North Korea had to be prevented at all cost. There were two options available to President Clinton regarding imposing economic sanctions, the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 (TWEA), or convincing the United Nations Security Council to invoke harsher sanctions on North Korea. The Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 authorizes the use of economic sanctions against foreign nations during the time of war or during other periods of national emergency and has been employed with respect to North Korea since the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953.⁸⁹

The nuclear issue with North Korea was a priority foreign relations problem for the Clinton administration. The United States imposed full economic sanctions on North Korea with the Treasury Department’s Foreign Assets Control Regulations, which was an act established in 1950 under TWEA.⁹⁰ However, the Clinton administration feared that the

⁸⁷ Dumbrell, 119.

⁸⁸ Patrick J. Maney, “In Search of Three Syllables: Foreign Policy, 1993–1996,” *In Bill Clinton: New Gilded Age President* (University Press of Kansas, 2016), 116–54.

⁸⁹ Michael P. Malloy, “Trading with the Enemy Act (1917),” *Encyclopedia.com*, February 2020, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/trading-enemy-act-1917>.

⁹⁰ Malloy, “Trading with the Enemy Act (1917),” 2.

sanctions imposed under TWEA may not be sufficient enough to coerce North Korea into complying with the NPT. North Korean diplomats warned the United States that their country would regard sanctions as an act of war.⁹¹ The Clinton administration felt the best approach for negotiations with North Korea would consist of trilateral talks between the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Both Japan and South Korea felt as though economic sanctions against North Korea was a measure that should be considered, however not at the risk of war.

Japan favored gradual escalation as the diplomatic approach between the United States and North Korea to resolve the conflict. The concerns that Tokyo had were about how Pyongyang might react or view economic sanctions when the country was facing dire economic challenges that stemmed from its isolation in the international arena. Yohei Kono the Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan stated that Japan would support economic sanctions against North Korea if the efforts would convince North Korea to re-join the NPT.⁹² However, Japan preferred for the United States to resolve the issue with diplomacy through negotiations with North Korea.

It was not until 1994 that Japan began to take economic sanctions against North Korea more seriously. During this time Japan was North Korea's second-largest trading partner after China.⁹³ In 1994 Japan was dealing with domestic struggles within the government making it difficult for the country to be an effective force when dealing with North Korea, this resulted in Japan relying on the United States to convince Pyongyang to comply with IAEA safeguards. Tokyo had to convince its populace to back the governments consideration to impose sanctions on North Korea. This proved difficult because of the pro-Pyongyang Koreans living in Japan that were making substantial contributions to North Korea in secret within the range of 200 to 600 million dollars per year.⁹⁴ With the formation of the Tsutomu Hata government—the Liberal Democratic

⁹¹ Maney, "In Search of Three Syllables: Foreign Policy, 1993–1996," 129.

⁹² Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, 33.

⁹³ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 194.

⁹⁴ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 195.

Party within Japan, the United States received the support that was needed from a critical ally to further push the need for harsher economic sanctions from the United Nations Security Council on North Korea.⁹⁵

South Korea had a two-step plan in mind to resolve the North Korean conflict without the bloodshed that would ensue from war. The plan consisted of Washington maintaining a dialogue with North Korea using diplomacy as the first option to resolve the conflict.⁹⁶ The second step consisted of gradual escalation of sanctions to compel North Korea to comply with the demands of the United States and suspend its withdrawal from the NPT, while allowing for inspections from the IAEA.⁹⁷ The two-step plan would only be attainable through the act of diplomacy from the United States, South Korea, and Japan. To execute this, the United States, South Korea, and Japan would have to ensure that each country's interest was aligned. In 1994 South Korea cut off its bilateral trade with North Korea to begin the necessary steps of imposing sanctions on North Korea.⁹⁸

President Clinton was adamant about repairing the United States relationship with China in hopes that Beijing would be the olive branch for U.S.–DPRK relations during the nuclear crisis. China's position remained firm throughout the nuclear crisis and thought the best option to resolve the conflict would come from diplomacy. Considering the economic state of North Korea during the early 90s after losing funding from the Soviet Union, China did not want to see the collapse of the North Korean regime. China supported the concept of gradual escalation and used it to their advantage by threatening to veto any Security Council resolutions regarding imposing harsher sanctions against North Korea.⁹⁹ Diplomacy was the consensus amongst the international community on the best option to an open dialogue between the United States and the DPRK, however eventually the dialogue stalled. With little progress made between the U.S.–DPRK negotiations, the nuclear crisis beginning to boil over. As the crisis escalated the United States, Japan, and

⁹⁵ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 196.

⁹⁶ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 33.

⁹⁷ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 33.

⁹⁸ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 197.

⁹⁹ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 33.

South Korea shared the same consensus along with China and Russia that sanctions may be the route to a peaceful solution to the nuclear crisis.¹⁰⁰

C. THE 1994 AGREED FRAMEWORK DEAL

In June 1994 former President Carter could see that the issue between the United States and North Korea required a diplomatic approach to ease the mounting tensions surrounding the crisis. President Carter volunteered to go to North Korea in an unofficial capacity to meet with Kim Il Sung as a private citizen representing the Carter center and not the United States government.¹⁰¹ President Clinton was not convinced that the trip was the best solution until Vice President Al Gore encouraged him to approve the mission. South Korean President Kim Young Sam felt as though the visit would only encourage Pyongyang and make Kim Il Sung feel as though his tactics were working.¹⁰²

President Carter sent word back to the White House after four days in North Korea stating that he reached a breakthrough with the North Korean leader who was once again prepared to allow for IAEA inspections, in return for Washington to recommence direct negotiations with Pyongyang.¹⁰³ The visit made by former President Carter opened the gateway for a four-month negotiation process between the United States and North Korea which resulted in the 1994 Agreed Framework Deal. As a result of the visit, North Korea put a halt on its nuclear weapons program and the United States removed economic sanctions from the table during the negotiation process.¹⁰⁴

On October 21, 1994, following the four-month negotiation process the United States and North Korea reached a deal known as the 1994 Agreed Framework deal in Geneva.¹⁰⁵ The deal called for North Korea to freeze its nuclear facilities with the hopes

¹⁰⁰ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 197.

¹⁰¹ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 203.

¹⁰² Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, 204.

¹⁰³ Maney, "In Search of Three Syllables: Foreign Policy, 1993–1996," 130.

¹⁰⁴ Maney, 130.

¹⁰⁵ Kim and Chang, *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea*, 43.

of the eventual termination of known nuclear facilities.¹⁰⁶ This was a big step in building trust between North Korea and the United States and an even larger step for Kim Jung-Il to move his country out of isolation within the international arena. North Korea agreed to allow for its facilities to be placed under IAEA inspections and monitoring as well as shutting down the 5-megawatt reactor, which the original plutonium had been withdrawn from.¹⁰⁷ In exchange for their compliance North Korea would receive two light-water reactors and 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil per year during the construction of the reactors.¹⁰⁸ The Korean peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) would be responsible for constructing and financing the two light-water reactors which would take approximately ten years to construct.

It appears that the engagement strategy combined with appeasement employed with respect to North Korea by the United States and regional allies contributed directly to the outcome of the 1994 Agreed Framework deal. With the help of South Korea and Japan the four-billion-dollar price tag of the two-light water reactors would be covered thus aiding diplomatic relations not only for U.S.–DPRK relations but ROK–Japan and DPRK relations as well. For American taxpayers the price tag of paying this wayward country came at a relatively low cost in receipt for safety and a piece of mind that U.S. troops stationed in South Korea and Japan would be much safer.¹⁰⁹ In the likelihood that North Korea decided to break the terms of the Agreed Framework deal the United States and allies could reconsider the possibility of applying harsher economic sanctions and would save four-billion-dollars in the process. Essentially the Agreed Framework deal was a win-win situation for the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the international community providing a peaceful solution to the 1994 nuclear crisis.

The 1994 Agreed Framework deal prevented North Korea from building a nuclear weapons program, however it did not address DPRK's missile technology. After the

¹⁰⁶ Kim and Chang, 43.

¹⁰⁷ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, 331.

¹⁰⁸ Kim and Chang, *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ Wit, Poneman, and Galluci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, 332.

signing of the Framework deal the Central Intelligence Agency reported that in 1995 Iran received four Scud transporter-erector-launchers from North Korea.¹¹⁰ Although the Clinton administration seemed to resolve the issues regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons program, interactions with the wayward country were far from over. Between 1995–1999 the United States imposed several sanctions on North Korean companies, and North Korea itself for illegal transfers of its missile technology to other rogue nations such as Iran. Additionally, to provide safeguards to the United States regarding North Korea, Congress passed the North Korea Threat Reduction Act that prevented the United States from entering into any international agreements with North Korea that would result in them obtaining nuclear materials.¹¹¹

D. PRESIDENT BUSH'S POLICY CONCERNING NORTH KOREA

At the beginning of President Bush's first term in office he called for an immediate review of the 1994 Agreed Framework Deal, a review that lasted the span of six months. During the time that the policy was under review the United States stopped all interaction with North Korea to determine the best policy option to employ concerning North Korea for the new administration. The outcome of the policy review lead to the decision from the administration for a comprehensive approach in which North Korea would take the necessary steps to repair relations with the United States.¹¹² Shortly after the Bush administration reached this conclusion the United States were attacked by terrorists, which immediately shifted the administration focus to fighting the war on terrorism. The shift in focus by the Bush administration was completely justified, however U.S.–DPRK relations became less of a priority for the United States. President Bush labelled “North Korea as an axis of evil in his 2002 State of the Union address” and later stated that “he would not certify the North's compliance with all provisions of the Agreed Framework deal.”¹¹³ The

¹¹⁰ Kim and Chang, *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea*, 44.

¹¹¹ Kim and Chang, 44.

¹¹² Boik, “Understanding the North Korea Problem,” 8.

¹¹³ Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target*, 174.

hardline approach by the Bush administration regarding North Korea led to the second nuclear crisis between the United States and DPRK during his first term.

1. North Korea's Secret Nuclear Weapons Program

The National Security Strategy published by the Bush administration in September of 2002 stated that “the United States will strengthen non-proliferation efforts to prevent rogue states from acquiring the materials, and technologies to produce weapons of mass destruction.”¹¹⁴ The NSS also spoke about North Korea's progress pertaining to its ballistic missile programs—the successful missile tests conducted while developing its own weapons of mass destruction arsenal, and how it is imperative for the United States to prevent these rogue states from using advanced weapons against the United States and its allies.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the main focus of the Bush administration foreign policy decisions throughout his first term was on combating terrorism in the Middle East to disband the Taliban in Afghanistan and disrupt the activities of Al-Qaeda cells that were operating in countries such as Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The focus on terrorism created apathy regarding North Korea amongst the senior leadership within the Bush administration and this in turn prevented the United States from developing an effective strategy in relation to North Korea.

Following the publishing of the NSS, in October of 2002, U.S. intelligence discovered that North Korea were conducting a clandestine uranium enrichment program.¹¹⁶ Once this intelligence was received the Bush administration sought to put an end to these activities immediately by pushing the country further into isolation. During a visit from Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly the regime admitted to the development of a second secret nuclear weapons program and stated that the 1994 Agreed Framework

¹¹⁴ White House, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (Washington, DC: Office of the President of the United States, September 2002), <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2002.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-121337-027>.

¹¹⁵ White House, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” 14.

¹¹⁶ Roland Hiemann, “Moving Towards Engagement,” *RUSI Journal* 152, no. 3 (June 2007): 36–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071840701470368>.

deal was nullified.¹¹⁷ Speculation surrounding the details of this interaction between Mr. Kelly and the regime were ambiguous, however the evidence presented by the Central Intelligence Agency was actionable intelligence which required the United States to begin developing a strategy to prevent North Korea from furthering its goal of a nuclear weapons program.

A series of escalatory actions had begun to take place between North Korea and the United States between 2001–2004. On October 25th, 2002, North Korea were prepared to re-open dialogue with the United States provided that the United States assured the country of nonaggression during the negotiation process.¹¹⁸ However, the Bush administration was not interested in opening a dialogue with North Korea until the country completely ceased the processing of uranium for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons. The United States refusal to appease the North Korean regime through open dialogue resulted in the DPRK reopening its Yongbyon nuclear facility followed by the ejection of the IAEA inspectors from their country.¹¹⁹ This action from North Korea resulted in the United States threatening to impose economic sanctions on North Korea to coerce the regime into complying with the existing proliferation treaties. North Korea later announced its intentions to withdraw from the NPT in January of 2003, which led to the second nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula.¹²⁰

2. Hardline and Diplomacy

The first few years of President Bush's term he approached the North Korean problem with hardline and diplomacy. The hardline position was to engage the problem with increased sanctions as a coercive measure to compel Pyongyang to stop the re-processing of highly enriched uranium for the purposes of developing nuclear capabilities. Nuclear diplomacy was only an option if North Korea would agree to uphold all existing proliferation treaties and completely cease the process of excess uranium or plutonium

¹¹⁷ Boik, "Understanding the North Korea Problem," 10.

¹¹⁸ Kliener, "The Bush Administration and the Nuclear Challenges by North Korea," 204.

¹¹⁹ Boik, "Understanding the North Korea Problem," 11.

¹²⁰ Kliener, "The Bush Administration and the Nuclear Challenges by North Korea," 204.

production. However, most of the leadership within the Bush administration had hawkish personalities and stood, ready to use military force or power to achieve their agenda or policy outcome.¹²¹ This personality approach during the Bush administration contributed to the tensions that were present within U.S.–DPRK relations and as a resulting factor North Korea continued defying the international order.

3. Economic Sanctions

Throughout the course of the Bush administration there were several sanctions placed on North Korean companies for the illegal transfer of missile materials to other rogue states such as Iran and Iraq. The United States placed sanctions on the Changgwang Sinyong Corporation in 2001 for violating the Iran Non-proliferation Act of 2000.¹²² This was the second time sanctions were imposed on the company for violating the Iran Non-proliferation Act of 2000. Imposing sanctions on the corporation for violating the Iran Non-proliferation Act proved ineffective because the United States can only impose sanctions that last for a duration of two years. In August 2002, the United States was compelled to impose additional sanctions on the Changgwang Sinyong Corporation as well as the North Korean government for transferring missile technology to Yemen.¹²³ Placing sanctions on the North Korean government and its corporations did not prevent them from continuing the transfer or receipt of missile materials and technology to or from other rogue nations.

E. THE SIX-PARTY TALKS

North Korea wanted to engage in bilateral talks with the Bush administration as they had done in the past with the Clinton administration when reaching the 1994 Agreed Framework deal. However, because of the provocations from the North Korean regime and the drastic measures it had taken of unfreezing their nuclear facilities, withdraw from the NPT, and the processing of uranium, the Bush administration felt as though multilateral talks would be the best course of action. The Chinese government urged the United States

¹²¹ Andrew Scobell, “Crouching Korea, Hidden China: Bush Administration Policy toward Pyongyang and Beijing,” *Asian Survey* 42, no. 2 (2002): 343–68, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2002.42.2.343>.

¹²² Kim and Chang, *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea*, 46.

¹²³ Kim and Chang, 47.

and DPRK to begin talks, which were to take place in Beijing in April 2003. However, in April prior to the trilateral discussion between the United States, DPRK, and China the North Korean Foreign Ministry revealed that North Korea had reprocessed more than 8,000 spent fuel rods.¹²⁴ This revelation was a setback to the international community because the spent fuel rods could be used to extract plutonium which is used to create nuclear weapons. The United States along with cooperation from other countries increased the pressure on North Korea to compel them into multilateral talks with the United States, North Korea, China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia. These talks would eventually become known as the six-party talks for non-proliferation on the Korean peninsula, with the first round taking place in August of 2003.

The United States thought the best way to achieve the goal of non-proliferation regarding North Korea would be through regime change by forcing the country into further isolation. During an interview by President Bush in late 2002 he stated that toppling the regime would be the preferred course of action.¹²⁵ The goal of the Bush administration was CVID of the DPRK's nuclear weapons program through the process of isolation. Later Secretary Powell stated that a military course of action to achieve the desired results of non-proliferation on the peninsula was still an option and that the United States could not reward North Korea's wayward behavior.¹²⁶ However, the consequences of military action on the United States part would have been catastrophic for allies in the region and troops stationed in Japan and South Korea. After President Bush's statement, North Korea feared that the United States would turn its aggression on the country to topple the regime and wanted to avoid the actions that occurred in Iraq by all costs and were adamant that the United States enter negotiations with a nonaggression promise.

China, always fearful of the potential consequences of a regime collapse in North Korea, continued to favor a diplomatic and gradual approach. Therefore, the route that China preferred to pursue was to decrease pressure by offering economic concessions to

¹²⁴ Kliener, "The Bush Administration and the Nuclear Challenges by North Korea," 215.

¹²⁵ Kliener, 215.

¹²⁶ Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

North Korea and providing the regime with a security guarantee from the United States.¹²⁷ China's interest regarding North Korea consisted on a strategy of deep engagement in a market-oriented direction to strengthen North Korea's economy by increasing trade with the North to build the country.¹²⁸

South Korea wanted to initiate a step-by-step process with North Korea to resolve the issue of proliferation on the peninsula. President Kim Dae-jung created a Sunshine policy to employ with respect to North Korea which consisted of three principles: peaceful solutions on the Korean peninsula, no attempts of a unified Korea, and improved inter-Korean relations.¹²⁹ This policy conflicted with the Bush administration hardline and diplomacy strategy regarding North Korea and created conflicting interest between the two ally's policy approach. The principles of the Sunshine policy went against the isolation approach that the United States administration was pushing for during the six-party talks and Kim Dae-jung expressed that the ROK would rather deal with a nuclear North Korea than a collapsed North Korea.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, during the six-party talks Japan sided with the United States strategy while China and South Korea disagreed with the United States strategy of isolation. In the first round of talks, the United States entered negotiations with a long list of demands for North Korea but did not provide any concessions as an incentive to urge North Korea to meet the demands. The conflicting interests between the participants of the six-party talks made it difficult to achieve the desired results of a nuclear free peninsula. In 2004, during the six-party talks Pakistan admitted to transferring nuclear technology to North Korea and Iran, and as a result the six party talks postponed after only three rounds of negotiations.¹³¹ The six-party talks recommenced in 2005 with approximately one year of nonactivity

¹²⁷ Kliener, "The Bush Administration and the Nuclear Challenges by North Korea," 218.

¹²⁸ Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target*, 76.

¹²⁹ Norman D. Levin and Yong-Sup Han, "The Sunshine Policy: Principles and Main Activities," *In Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002), 23–31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1555capp.9>.

¹³⁰ Kliener, "The Bush Administration and the Nuclear Challenges by North Korea," 218.

¹³¹ Kliener, 206.

regarding convincing North Korea to abandon its goal of nuclear weapons development. There were a series of incidents that occurred during the timeframe leading up to the recommencement of the six-party talks to include the series of missile tests conducted by North Korea.¹³²

The fourth round of talks occurred in July of 2005, followed by a fifth round of talks in September 2005 in which an official statement was made by both the United States and North Korea. North Korea agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons program in return for security guarantees and economic assistance from the United States.¹³³ To provide more context, the joint statement announced that North Korea would essentially abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, return to the NPT and enforce IAEA safeguards, and in return the United States agreed not to invade North Korea, while the remaining participants agreed to the recommencement of the light water reactors promised during the Agreed Framework deal.¹³⁴

Problems soon arose with the official statement once the United States had begun to target North Korea's illicit economic activities. October 21, 2005, the U.S. treasury department announced the decision to place sanctions on eight North Korean entities for their involvement in the illegal transfer and the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, biological weapons, and related delivery vehicles.¹³⁵ This action by the U.S. government led to North Korea walking away from the six-party talks and voiding the joint statement made in September. North Korea wanted the United States to lift the sanctions that the Treasury Department placed on the eight entities, however the United States refused to lift the sanctions because the activities were deemed unlawful. The result of this confrontation was North Korea conducting its first nuclear weapons test in October of 2006.¹³⁶ Although, the test was unsuccessful it grasped the attention of the UN Security Council which resulted in the implementation of Resolution 1718.

¹³² Kim and Chang, *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea*, 51.

¹³³ Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target*, 19.

¹³⁴ Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," 13.

¹³⁵ Davenport., 13.

¹³⁶ Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target*, 19.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1718 called for several requirements from North Korea to include refraining from further nuclear tests, re-joining the NPT, suspending all ballistic missile testing, CVID, and immediate return to the six-party talks.¹³⁷ To convince North Korea to enforce the above provisions there were sanctions applied with the purpose of preventing the DPRK from having the ability to further the advancement of its weapons program. As part of this resolution member states of the UN Security Council were prohibited from aiding North Korea in its pursuit of acquiring illegal weaponry materials.”¹³⁸

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 was the only UNSCR adopted and enforced on North Korea during the Bush presidency. Many of the sanctions applied by the United States regarding North Korea were bilateral sanctions imposed on corporations for the illegal sale and transfers of missile technology to other rogue nations. There were also sanctions applied on the North Korean government for illicit activities pertaining to the transfer, sale, and receipt of illegal missile technologies. In many instances, whenever the U.S. government-imposed sanctions on North Korean entities or the government it only escalated North Korea’s actions further. The back and forth provocations by both North Korea and the United States only exacerbated the negotiation process during the six-party talks.

In 2008, the six-party talks were still in progress however North Korea was still participating in the act of separating plutonium. On June 26, 2008, North Korea revealed to China—the chairman of the six party talks that they have separated a total of 30 kilograms of plutonium, of which 2 kilograms was used to conduct its 2006 nuclear test.¹³⁹ It became abundantly clear to the Bush administration that despite the ongoing negotiation process North Korea could not be trusted. Therefore, on June 26, 2008, President Bush

¹³⁷ Kelsey Davenport, “UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea,” Arms Control Association, April 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/UN-Security-Council-Resolutions-on-North-Korea>.

¹³⁸ Davenport, “UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea,” 2.

¹³⁹ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 17.

signed Executive Order 13466 to further deal with the persistent threat on the Korean peninsula. The following is an excerpt from the Executive Order that was signed:

I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, find that the current existence and risk of the proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean peninsula constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat. I further find that, as we deal with that threat through multilateral diplomacy, it is necessary to continue certain restrictions with respect to North Korea that would otherwise be lifted pursuant to a forthcoming proclamation that will terminate the exercise of authorities under the Trading With the Enemy Act (50 U.S.C. App. 1 et seq.) (TWEA) with respect to North Korea.¹⁴⁰

This statement made it clear that North Korea remained a threat to the United States' national security interests despite the progress that the six-party talks were attempting to make to denuclearize the peninsula. It also manifested the realization that despite the negotiation process the Bush administration had come to realize that North Korea was not serious about negotiations and it was a necessary precaution to maintain certain restrictions regarding the regime.

F. CONCLUSION

This chapter review of American policy concerning North Korea's nuclear weapons development from 1992–2008, shows that for each presidency evaluated there were multiple drivers of U.S. policy. During President Clinton's term in office from 1992–2000 one of the main drivers for developing policy in relation to North Korea was China's influence over North Korea which made it difficult to effectively impose harsher sanctions. An additional driver was the bilateral military alliances with Japan and South Korea and convincing them to support the application of harsher economic sanctions. Although both Japan and South Korea agreed that economic sanctions would be the preferred route, each did not want the risk of starting a war with North Korea. The last driver was North Korea consistently declining to comply with IAEA safeguards and this in turn drove the United States to lean harder on Pyongyang.

¹⁴⁰ George W. Bush, "Continuing Certain Restrictions with Respect to North Korea and North Korean Nationals," *Federal Register* 73, no. 125 (June 27, 2008): 2.

The main drivers which influenced the Bush administration policy in relation to North Korea during 2000–2008 were the lack of consistency between the Clinton and Bush administration policy concerning North Korea. The drastic switch from the engagement strategy to the hardline strategy lacked diplomacy options and instead met the North Korean problem with increased sanctions and coercive measures. North Korea's belligerent posture to the international arena throughout the negotiation process also made it difficult to affect the desired outcome of a nuclear free Korean peninsula. The bilateral military alliances with Japan and South Korea obligate the United States to provide security to these allies. North Korea's threatening posture to Japan and South Korea is what drove the United States to consider military action as an option. China preferred bilateral negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang over imposing harsher economic sanctions, which made it difficult for the United States to employ harsher UNSCR restrictions.

There were also common trends that transpired during both the Clinton and Bush administration regarding American policy concerning North Korea. During both administrations China opposed the imposition of harsher economic sanctions on North Korea for fear that it may collapse the regime, and for fear of the impact it would have on China's economy. This driver although present during both administrations, weighed more heavily during the Bush administration because an element of the hardline strategy required imposing harsher economic sanctions to further isolate North Korea from the international community. Another trend was North Korea's disinterest to follow the international order and adhere to the restrictions imposed on the country through economic sanctions. This driver was of equal weight for both administrations because it required the administrations to shift U.S. policy approach to counter North Korea's behavior. Throughout both administrations, Pyongyang continued its provocations with respect to the United States allies to try to force the United States into providing concessions to the regime with no real guarantees of halting its nuclear weapons program.

Chapter III will examine the main drivers of U.S. foreign policy in relation to North Korea from 2008 until the present. It will present a chronological overview of U.S. policy and actions that were taking regarding North Korea while analyzing the outcome and effectiveness of policy choices during President Obama and President Trump's terms in

office. The four drivers of U.S. policy explored comprise of inconsistent policy choices implemented during each presidential administration, China's influence over North Korea, the bilateral military alliances with South Korea and Japan, and North Korea's belligerent posture to the international order. While reviewing the four potential drivers of U.S. policy in relation to denuclearizing North Korea during this timeframe, the goal will be to determine which, if not all, of the four had explanatory power over effecting U.S. policy concerning North Korea.

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III. THE OBAMA AND TRUMP ADMINISTRATIONS

Nuclear weapons and ballistic missile testing conducted by North Korea increased rapidly from 2008 until the present—resulting in 7 nuclear tests and several ballistic missile test conducted during this timeframe.¹⁴¹ There were two attacks carried out in 2010 by North Korea on South Korea—one on the South Korean Cheonan that claimed the lives of 46 sailors, and the second on an artillery barrage against South Korean Marines that killed four and left many others wounded.¹⁴² In 2017, North Korea launched a series of inter-continental ballistic missile tests which indicated ranges that could reach the United States.¹⁴³ North Korea conducted several short-range and long-range ballistic missile tests in the beginning of President Trump's term, as well as its sixth nuclear weapons test in response to President Trump's maximum pressure strategy regarding North Korea.¹⁴⁴ From 2008 until the present North Korea's nuclear weapons program evolved rapidly and currently remains a problem to U.S. national security interests' in East Asia.

Similar to the Bush administration, the focus of the Obama administration foreign policy in relation to North Korea was non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.¹⁴⁵ However, in 2008, the Obama administration shifted from President Bush's hardline and diplomacy strategy regarding North Korea to a strategy of strategic patience.¹⁴⁶ Strategic patience consisted of the application of gradually escalating nonviolent means of coercion, mainly by implementing sanctions to convince the North Korean leader to come to the negotiation table.¹⁴⁷ The strategic patience policy was applied on North Korea with a diplomatic approach in the beginning of President Obama's first term. However, following the North

¹⁴¹ Davenport, "UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea," 3.

¹⁴² Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 59.

¹⁴³ Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement," 367.

¹⁴⁴ Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," 27.

¹⁴⁵ Ahn, "More U.S. Pressure on North Korea Is Not the Path to Denuclearization," 68.

¹⁴⁶ Ahn, 70.

¹⁴⁷ Van Jackson, "The Rebalance, Entrapment Fear, and Collapsism: The Origins of Obama's North Korea Policy," *Asian Perspective* 43, no. 4 (2019): 593–619.

Korean attacks on South Korea in 2010, the administration applied strategic patience in a confrontational manner through increased military exercises and harsher economic sanctions. In 2011, the Obama administration policy for North Korea reverted to diplomacy after former President Carter made a humanitarian visit to Pyongyang. This unofficial visit led to bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang and resulted in the 2012 Leap Day Deal. China challenged the United States ability to effectively impose harsh sanctions, by bargaining with the United States to decrease the security measures in the UNSCR's that were adopted toward North Korea to better serve the country's own national interest.¹⁴⁸

North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons testing continued to threaten regional stability for U.S. security interest in East Asia during the early stages of President Trump's term in office. President Trump shifted from President Obama's strategic patience to a strategy of maximum pressure regarding policy directed at North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The strategy of maximum pressure that the Trump administration adopted with reference to North Korea consists of increasing diplomatic, economic, and military pressure against North Korea.¹⁴⁹ There have been challenges during President Trump's term thus far to include the increased weapons testing conducted by North Korea throughout 2017, which almost led to a war between the United States and DPRK. Additionally, the multiple hostile tweets and official statements made by President Trump that were directed at Kim Jung-un led to heightened hostility between Washington and Pyongyang in the beginning stages of his presidency. There were also challenges presented by the increased threats to Japan and South Korea that have been posed by North Korea's increased weapons testing.

A. OBAMA'S PRAGUE PLEDGE

During President Obama's campaign for U.S. presidency he made his stance on nuclear weapons very clear with the belief that nuclear weapons were inhumane military

¹⁴⁸ Xiaohe Cheng, "North Korea's Third Nuclear Test and Its Impact on Sino-North Korean Relations," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2013): 23–46.

¹⁴⁹ Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement," 368.

devices that were a result of “Cold War thinking.”¹⁵⁰ His main goal was to reduce the United States Cold War nuclear weapons arsenal and promote the NPT to further the goal of nuclear non-proliferation. He outlined the damage that could be done by nuclear powers and the ramifications of what could happen if nuclear weapons fell into the hands of rogue states or terrorist organizations. President Obama felt that the United States was a great power that had to lead by example, but it would take the entire international community to enforce non-proliferation.

President Obama’s Prague pledge speech was delivered on April 5, 2009, just hours after North Korea broke international law by testing a rocket that could be used for long-range missiles.¹⁵¹ President Obama addressed the weapon test by North Korea during his speech stating that “rules must be binding—violations must be punished, and words must mean something.”¹⁵² This was a call to the international community to stand up and address the North Korean problem as a united front, while reiterating that these provocations are not just a United States problem but an international problem. President Obama also stated that “North Korea needed to understand that the path to security and respect would not come from illegal acts of intimidation.”¹⁵³ The key issues addressed in the Prague speech, as they pertain to nuclear non-proliferation became the basis for the Obama administration policy of strategic patience concerning North Korea. The UN Security Council responded to the illegal rocket launch conducted by North Korea by placing stricter punitive measures on North Korea as an extension of UNSCR 1718.¹⁵⁴ Following the expansion of security measures incorporated by the UNSC, North Korea pulled out of the six-party talks. As North Korea continued its wayward path of defying international order and disregarding Security Council resolutions by participating in the

¹⁵⁰ Aiden Warren, *The Obama Administration’s Nuclear Weapon Strategy: The Promises of Prague* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁵¹ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 17.

¹⁵² Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Barack Obama In Prague As Delivered” (Washington, DC: White House, April 5, 2009), Whitehouse Archives, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>.

¹⁵³ Obama, “Remarks by President Barack Obama In Prague As Delivered,” 1.

¹⁵⁴ Davenport, “UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea,” 18.

illegal acquiring of nuclear materials, the United States continued its course of implementing coercive measures.

B. ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DIPLOMACY

President Obama's strategic patience strategy had similarities to President Bush's hardline diplomacy strategy employed in relation to North Korea because both strategies relied on imposing harsher economic sanctions to push North Korea further into international isolation. President Bush and President Obama issued several statements of non-hostility to North Korea throughout their presidential terms. However, their efforts of diplomacy regarding North Korea consisted of disengagement through economic sanctions. The difference that existed between President Bush's hardline strategy and President Obama's strategic patience policy regarding North Korea is the timeframe that the policies were applied with relation to North Korea's weapons development phase. During President Bush's term in office the North was trying to build a nuclear weapon program, whereas during President Obama's term in office the North had successfully developed nuclear weapons, and its nuclear weapons program has continued to grow rapidly.

North Korea's provocations in 2009 plunged the world into an international crisis, as the illicit activities by the rogue state continued to increase hostilities amongst U.S. regional allies. President Obama issued several official statements assuring the United States non-aggression with reference to North Korea in early 2009 even after the DPRK conducted its second nuclear weapons test in an act of defiance to the international order. In May of 2009, North Korea conducted its second nuclear weapons test, which was a clear indication to the United States and the countries within the UNSC that North Korea was determined to become a nuclear state. UNSCR 1874 was adopted on June 12, 2009, in response to the nuclear test conducted by North Korea and increased the security measures of imports/exports of arms to/from the DPRK.¹⁵⁵ On June 16, 2009, in a joint press release between the United States and ROK, President Obama stated the following:

¹⁵⁵ Sarah Heintz, Michael Shurkin, and King Mallory, *DPRK Sanctions: Countering DPRK Proliferation Activities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.7249/TL332>.

So, I want to be clear that there is another path available to North Korea—a path that leads to peace and economic opportunity for the people of North Korea, including full integration into the community of nations. That destination can only be reached through peaceful negotiations that achieve the full and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.¹⁵⁶

President Obama's remarks of non-hostility regarding North Korea despite its many attempts to test his ability as President of the United States is a demonstration of the intent behind his strategic patience policy. However, the above statement regardless of the intentions behind it, fell on deaf ears as North Korea continued to escalate its behavior.

Increased pressure placed on North Korea through the application of strategic patience—diplomacy and coercion—was met by Pyongyang's authoritarian regime increasing tensions and an overarching determination to continually defy the international order. Pyongyang continued with their mission of separating plutonium for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons and continued its act of intimidating U.S. regional allies' with their many weapons test and military demonstrations. In early 2010, it had become abundantly clear that engagement through diplomacy was not a viable option to deal with the North Korean problem, despite the many attempts made by Washington to engage with Pyongyang through bilateral talks. The Obama administration attempt of diplomacy with reference to North Korea consisted of imposing sanctions to coerce the regime into continuing the six-party talks, while engaging with China, South Korea, and Japan to encourage them to pursue a diplomatic approach as well. The relationship between the United States and North Korea during this time consisted of the back and forth actions of increased pressure through sanctions by the United States and further provocations by North Korea.

There were two attacks carried out in 2010 by North Korea on South Korea, which almost led to a declaration of war on the DPRK from the ROK. The first attack was a torpedo that was fired from a North Korean submarine on the South Korean Cheonan that

¹⁵⁶ Victor D. Cha, "What Do They Really Want: Obama's North Korea Conundrum," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (September 23, 2009): 119–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636600903224837>.

claimed the lives of 46 sailors.¹⁵⁷ The second attack from North Korea was an artillery barrage against South Korean Marines that killed four and left many others wounded.¹⁵⁸ These heinous acts of violence infuriated South Korea, and almost led to a second Korean War. The United States intervened and convinced South Korea to conduct a multi-national investigation to ensure that they correctly identify the culprit behind the attack before starting a war that would involve the United States.

The length of time required to accurately investigate the first attack carried out by North Korea on South Korea aided the United States in preventing a war on the peninsula and precluded South Korea from retaliating on North Korea, because too much time had passed. However, when North Korea launched its second attack on South Korea, President Lee was determined to strike back at North Korea. South Korea immediately scrambled fighter aircraft to target North Korean artillery positions in response to the attack on Yeonpyeong-do.¹⁵⁹ It had become readily apparent to the Obama administration that preventing South Korea from starting a war with the North would become a necessary task and priority for U.S. policymakers.

The two acts of aggression on North Korea's part on South Korea in 2010 redirected U.S. policy concerning North Korea in a more confrontational direction, which strained bilateral negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang.¹⁶⁰ There were disagreements between the United States and South Korea in determining a way forward to decrease hostilities with North Korea. Although, the United States and South Korean policy in respect to North Korea had some inconsistencies, the Obama administration showed their support to South Korea by increasing military exercises in the region. In February of 2011, in response to joint U.S.-ROK military exercises North Korea threatened to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 59.

¹⁵⁸ Jackson, 59.

¹⁵⁹ Jackson, 61.

¹⁶⁰ Jackson, 64.

¹⁶¹ Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," 19.

C. ENGAGEMENT THROUGH STRATEGIC PATIENCE

The acts of hostility by South Korean President Lee became a key driver of U.S. policy with reference to North Korea in 2010. To uphold the U.S.–ROK alliance and reassure South Korea of the extended nuclear umbrella as delineated in the Mutual Defense Treaty the Obama administration had to revise their policy approach of engagement in relation to North Korea. The price that came from preventing South Korea from dragging the United States into an unwanted war was shifting from the diplomacy aspect of strategic patience to a more hardline confrontational strategy by increasing economic sanctions and U.S. military presence in the region.¹⁶² This shift in policy direction by President Obama threatened the bilateral talks that were occurring between Washington and Pyongyang because they were perceived as an act of hostility by the DPRK.

The Obama administration policy of strategic patience hinged on the utilization of economic sanctions, diplomacy, military presence, and UN Security Council resolutions to engage the issues of proliferation on the Korean peninsula. On April 18, 2011, President Obama implemented Executive Order 13570 to prohibit certain transactions regarding North Korea, further expanding the national emergency declared on North Korea, to ensure that UNSCRs were being enforced to the upmost extent.¹⁶³ Following the signing of the new executive order, on April 2011, China proposed a three-step plan to decrease ROK–DPRK hostilities and continue the path of denuclearization on the peninsula. This three-step plan consisted of beginning bilateral talks between North Korea and South Korea—bilateral talks between North Korea and the United States, followed by resuming the six-party talks.¹⁶⁴ The Obama administration made it clear that inter-Korean dialogue with the goal of satisfying South Korea would be the first crucial step to recommencing six-party talks.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*,” 62.

¹⁶³ Barack Obama, “Executive Order 13570—Prohibiting Certain Transactions with Respect to North Korea” (White House, April 18, 2011), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/04/18/executive-order-13570-prohibiting-certain-transactions-respect-north-kor>.

¹⁶⁴ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.–North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 20.

¹⁶⁵ Victor D. Cha, “US-Korean Relations: Under the Shadow of 2010,” *Comparative Connections* 13, no. 1 (May 2011): 43–51.

1. The Leap Day Deal

The United States returned to diplomacy in 2011 when former President Jimmy Carter joined by ambassador Robert King visited Pyongyang to discuss human rights issues with North Korea.¹⁶⁶ Bilateral talks between the United States and DPRK which were coined as “high level talks,” eventually led to the “food for freeze” agreement that was later named the 2012 Leap Day Deal.¹⁶⁷ The initial negotiations that led to the food for freeze were conducted between Kim Jung-il and the Obama administration, however in December 2011 Kim Jung-il passed away and was succeeded by his son Kim Jung-un.¹⁶⁸ The regime change that occurred in North Korea left U.S. policymakers unsure of whether the “food for freeze” would be upheld by Pyongyang.

Bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea proved successful after the round of meetings that took place in Beijing between February 23–24, which resulted in the Leap Day Deal of 2012.¹⁶⁹ Kim Jung-un continued the bilateral talks with the United States, and on February 29, 2012, released parallel statements with the United States regarding the outcome of the high level talks.¹⁷⁰ The terms of the Leap Day Deal consisted of the United States providing humanitarian assistance and making a non-aggression pledge to North Korea, while North Korea agreed to reaffirm its commitment of the 2005 Joint Statement and refrain from weapons testing or reprocessing plutonium at its nuclear facilities.¹⁷¹ It appears that the diplomatic approach of engaging with North Korea through bilateral talks had been successful in building a road to reconvening the six-party talks.

2. End of Talks: Collapse of the 2012 Leap Day Deal

The parallel statements released by the United States and North Korea that led to the 2012 Leap Day Deal had conflicting remarks that would eventually lead to the collapse

¹⁶⁶ Warren, *The Obama Administration’s Nuclear Weapon Strategy: The Promises of Prague*, 150.

¹⁶⁷ Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea*, 202.

¹⁶⁸ Warren, *The Obama Administration’s Nuclear Weapon Strategy: The Promises of Prague*, 151.

¹⁶⁹ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 20.

¹⁷⁰ Warren, *The Obama Administration’s Nuclear Weapon Strategy: The Promises of Prague*, 150.

¹⁷¹ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 65.

of the deal just months later. North Korea and the United States could not reach an agreement on whether satellite launches would be considered a missile test under the stipulations of the agreement. U.S. officials said that satellite vehicle launches (SVLs) were considered missile tests under the agreement and later stated that they made this clause abundantly clear to the North Korea Foreign Ministry.¹⁷² During Kim Jung-il's time as North Korea's leader, while bilateral talks were occurring, the DPRK pre-scheduled a satellite launch in honor of Kim Il Sung's 100th birthday celebration between April 12–16th of 2012.¹⁷³ North Korea never acknowledged the provisions of the Leap Day Deal that precluded SVLs from being conducted publicly, which essentially meant that the provision was never officially recognized.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, Kim Jung-un the successor of Kim Jung-il decided to move forward with the pre-scheduled launches regardless of the costs. On March 16, 2012, Pyongyang announced their intentions to launch the SVL in honor of the 100th birthday celebration of Kim Il Sung's, and this announcement came at the expense of the Leap Day Deal.¹⁷⁵

April 13, 2012, the White House made an official statement that the United States would no longer be honoring the shipment of 240,000 tons of food aid to the impoverished nation as stipulated in the Leap Day Deal.¹⁷⁶ President Obama issued a statement in support of suspending humanitarian aid to the country as follows:

They make all these investments, tens of millions of dollars, in rockets that don't work at a time when their people are starving, literally, and so what we intend to do is work with the international community to further isolate North Korea—obviously any opportunity for us to provide them food aid was contingent on them abiding by international rules and international norms. So, we will continue to keep the pressure on them, and they will continue to isolate themselves until they take a different path.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Jackson, 66.

¹⁷³ Jackson, 66.

¹⁷⁴ Jackson, 67.

¹⁷⁵ John Delury, "The Disappointments of Disengagement: Assessing Obama's North Korea Policy," *Asian Perspective* 37, no. 2 (April 2013): 149–82.

¹⁷⁶ Warren, *The Obama Administration's Nuclear Weapon Strategy: The Promises of Prague*, 151.

¹⁷⁷ Ken Dilanian, "North Korea's Failed Missile May Foreshadow Nuclear Test," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2012, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-xpm-2012-apr-13-la-fg-us-norkor-20120414-story.html>.

Eventually, talks stalled in 2012 with presidential elections occurring in both the United States and South Korea, strategic patience led to inactivity concerning actively engaging with North Korea through diplomacy. The remainder of 2012 U.S. policy concerning North Korea consisted of a dual-track approach of using both sanctions and coercive measures within the realm of the strategic patience policy.¹⁷⁸

D. RISING NUCLEAR STATE

With the goal of becoming a nuclear power state, North Korea continued its pursuit of developing nuclear power technologies. The looming threat that nuclear weapons posed to allies within the East Asia region eventually became a very possible threat to the United States homeland as North Korea was furthering its missile technology to develop second strike nuclear capabilities. Along with developing second strike capabilities, Pyongyang were also developing miniaturized warheads that could deliver nuclear charges via ballistic missiles with the goal of extending its weapons delivery range to reach the United States. Though many of the weapons test conducted by the DPRK were deemed unsuccessful, with each failed missile test came the opportunity to refine their missile technology and the pace of their weapons program grew exponentially.

North Korea began their quest of developing the KN-08 in 2011—a ballistic missile that was capable of using a solid-fuel propeller and later held a military parade in 2012 to unveil a model of the KN-08.¹⁷⁹ The KN-08 if successfully developed would present itself as one of North Korea’s most successful developments, as it would provide the country with second nuclear strike capabilities. The advanced technological improvements with the KN-08 combined with Pyongyang’s advances pertaining to short-range and long-range ballistic missiles created an imbalance on the peninsula. In a meeting between President Obama and Xi Jinping, President Obama expressed his concerns with Pyongyang’s progress regarding the development of these newfound technologies stating that “North

¹⁷⁸ Delury, “The Disappointments of Disengagement: Assessing Obama’s North Korea Policy,” 176.

¹⁷⁹ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 70.

Korea's weapons program was a threat to the United States like Taiwan was a threat to China".¹⁸⁰

1. China's Position

North Korea's insistence on defying the international order through the act of continuing the path of nuclear weapon testing and development created a frenzy amongst the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China. Pyongyang conducted both an SVL test and its second nuclear weapons test only one month apart between December 2012 and February 2013.¹⁸¹ Various media outlets in China condemned the provocative acts by North Korea and insisted that the upper leadership of the administration correct the wayward actions of North Korea. China as North Korea's longest ally and largest trading partner was criticized by their citizens for its failure to tame the rogue state. President Xi Jinping made a vague statement about North Korea's provocative activities indicating that China did not agree with the actions of Kim Jung-un.

In the past, China had done their best to protect North Korea from falling further into international isolation by preventing the UNSC from imposing harsher sanctions in fear that it may lead to a collapse of the DPRK's economy. However, with the escalating actions that transpired after the third nuclear weapons test by North Korea, China showed its support to the UNSC by agreeing to all the terms posed in UNSCR 2094, and took the necessary steps at implementing all measures within the resolution.¹⁸² UN Security Council Resolution 2094 implemented measures which targeted North Korean entities, and applied secondary sanctions on any country that aided North Korea during its nuclear weapons pursuit.¹⁸³ Any violation by North Korea of the UNSCR's that were implemented deteriorated Sino-DPRK relations compelling China to take additional measures to enforce the stipulations within the UNSCR's.

¹⁸⁰ Jackson, 71.

¹⁸¹ Jackson, 72–73.

¹⁸² Cheng, "North Korea's Third Nuclear Test and Its Impact on Sino-North Korean Relations," 39.

¹⁸³ Heintz, Shurkin, and Mallory, *DPRK Sanctions: Countering DPRK Proliferation Activities*, 13.

2. A Declining U.S. Policy: Strategic Patience on its Final Stretch

China declared a “red-line” regarding North Korea in 2014, but this declaration did nothing at halting the rogue regime from its pursuit of furthering the advancement of its nuclear program.¹⁸⁴ Once the United States pursued a more confrontational policy of strategic patience regarding North Korea by imposing harsher economic sanctions with the goal of further isolating the country, North Korea’s provocations continued to ramp up. In 2015 and 2016, President Obama issued two additional Executive Orders declaring a national emergency toward North Korea’s weapons program bringing the total number of Executive Orders signed during his terms up to four.¹⁸⁵

As progress of non-proliferation on the Korean peninsula began to stall, there were Obama administration officials like Kurt Campbell—an Assistant Secretary of State and architect of Asia strategy that acknowledged strategic patience was not producing the desired results.¹⁸⁶ The amount of UNSCR’s, bilateral economic sanctions, and Executive Orders placed on North Korea nearly doubled during President Obama’s terms in office with little effect at halting North Korea’s weapons program. In 2015, President Obama stated, “there aren’t that many sanctions left—Our capacity to effect changes in North Korea is somewhat limited.”¹⁸⁷ For the remainder of the Obama administration North Korea continued its ballistic and nuclear weapons testing regardless of the amount of sanctions imposed on the country, and these provocations carried over into the Trump administration with tensions reaching a record high during President Trump’s first year in office.

¹⁸⁴ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 24.

¹⁸⁵ Donald J. Trump, “Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to North Korea,” National Security and Defense (2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/continuation-national-emergency-respect-north-korea/>.

¹⁸⁶ Jackson, “The Rebalance, Entrapment Fear, and Collapsism: The Origins of Obama’s North Korea Policy,” 596.

¹⁸⁷ Jackson, 596.

E. MAXIMUM PRESSURE: THE TRUMP ERA

When President Trump assumed the office of presidency in 2017, he inherited a nuclear North Korea as a result of decades of ineffective U.S. policies employed concerning the North's nuclear weapons program. From President Clinton's engagement policy to President Bush's hardline and diplomacy to President Obama's strategic patience policy, there were times when it appeared that the strategies were effective; however, the United States did not achieve its goal of a denuclearized Korean peninsula. President Trump wanted to take a different approach with U.S. policy in relation to North Korea therefore, his administration adopted a foreign policy of maximum pressure regarding North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile program. This new strategy consists of the following four elements: encouraging Beijing to apply pressure on the DPRK, increasing economic and financial sanctions, hardening Washington's bargaining position, and a build-up of military threat posture against Pyongyang.¹⁸⁸ Through the application of these four elements the goal is to maximize pressure on the DPRK to force them into a perilous situation, economically and militarily, while engaging with the country on a diplomatic front through summit meetings.

Increased pressure from the United States led to increased tensions between the United States and North Korea which reached a record high during 2017, and the United States found itself yet again on the brink of war with the rogue state. In January 2017, President Trump responded to a threat from North Korea that it would be deploying an ICBM declaring "it won't happen."¹⁸⁹ However, in February 2017 North Korea tested a new ballistic missile—the Pukguksong-2, that flew approximately 500 kilometers.¹⁹⁰ It is not uncommon for North Korea to welcome the new United States President into office by conducting a weapons test as a way to determine how the administration will respond to these provocations. The significant difference for President Trump is the fact that North

¹⁸⁸ Liegl, "Maximum Pressure—Deferred Engagement," 368.

¹⁸⁹ Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Cascading Chaos in Nuclear Northeast Asia," *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 26, 2018): 97–113.

¹⁹⁰ Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," 22.

Korea possess a nuclear arsenal, which is a major difference than his predecessor faced in the early stages of his administration.

1. On the Brink

The events that transpired between the United States and North Korea were less diplomatic and more confrontational than any of the former U.S. administrations combined. In the past, the United States faced the possibility of war with North Korea during the 1994 nuclear crisis that occurred during President Clinton's administration as well as the second nuclear crisis faced during the Bush administration in the early 2000s. The back and forth tit for tat that occurred between President Trump and Kim Jung-un had the United States on the brink of war with North Korea in 2017. In the initial months following President Trump's inauguration, his administration conducted a comprehensive review of American policy regarding North Korean and continued with the Obama administration strategic patience policy until adopting the maximum pressure strategy.¹⁹¹

During the timeframe that the Trump administration was developing its policy strategy for North Korea, South Korean leadership were facing domestic challenges that presented problems regarding U.S.-ROK relations. However, once the domestic problems were resolved President Trump and South Korea's interim President Hwang Kyo-ahn agreed that the best way to enforce policy concerning North Korea would be on a unified front, responding to North Korean provocations firmly and jointly.¹⁹² The United States increased its military presence on the Korean peninsula and conducted annual joint military exercises with South Korea. The actions carried out by the United States were by design to ramp up the pressure on North Korea as part of the maximum pressure strategy regardless of the outcome.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson made an official visit to Japan and South Korea to give regional allies an update on the administration North Korean policy review and reiterated the strength required within the alliance to invoke a stronger policy of CVID to

¹⁹¹ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 97.

¹⁹² Jackson, 97.

denuclearize North Korea.¹⁹³ Throughout the course of the official visits made by U.S. diplomats in the beginning of the Trump administration, U.S. officials made it clear that addressing the issue of nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula was a top U.S. policy concern. U.S. State Department Officials noted during a press briefing that “all options were on the table” for achieving CVID regarding North Korea.¹⁹⁴

Unbothered by the various UNSCR’s that were already adopted in respect to North Korea which placed harsher economic restrictions on the country, North Korea continued to ramp up provocations in 2017. There were four ballistic missiles launched in March by North Korea, which flew 1,000 kilometers and landed in the Japanese Economic Exclusive Zone, off the coast of Japan, and two unsuccessful tests conducted in April.¹⁹⁵ The ballistic missile tests conducted by North Korea sparked an outrage within the Trump administration as things had begun to heat up militarily. After the failed test that were conducted in April the United States decided to deploy the USS Carl Vinson to the Korean peninsula as a coercive deterrent measure. The USS Carl Vinson joined the guided missile submarine USS Michigan and immediately began joint military exercises with South Korea in the Sea of Japan.¹⁹⁶

In continuance of applying coercive measures on North Korea, the United States deployed THAAD to South Korea with the first launchers becoming operational in May 2017.¹⁹⁷ The decision to deploy THAAD to the Korean peninsula was made during the Obama administration as a security measure for South Korea. THAAD is an anti-ballistic missile defense system that can destroy incoming missiles through collision, with a range of 200 kilometers capable of reaching 150 kilometers in altitude.¹⁹⁸ North Korea perceived

¹⁹³ Jackson, 101.

¹⁹⁴ Jackson, 101.

¹⁹⁵ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 22.

¹⁹⁶ Patrick Knox, “Battle Stations U.S. Warship Sails within ‘Striking Distance’ of North Korea as Donald Trump Prepares ‘Show of Force’ after Kim Jong Un’s Failed Ballistic Missile Test,” *The Sun*, April 29, 2017, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3443226/north-korea-missile-test-donald-trump-response-aircraft-carrier-war-threat-kim-jong-un/>.

¹⁹⁷ “THAAD on the Korean Peninsula,” Institute for Security & Development Policy, 1.

¹⁹⁸ “THAAD on the Korean Peninsula,” Institute for Security & Development Policy, 1.

the deployment of THAAD and the U.S.–ROK joint military exercises as a threat to the security of their nation. Throughout the history of U.S.–DPRK interactions, whenever the U.S.–ROK conducts routine military exercises, North Korea would respond with threats or weapons demonstrations. This time was no different, as North Korea conducted a Hwasong-12 missile test in May with a range of 4,800 kilometers following U.S.–ROK joint military exercises.¹⁹⁹ The ballistic missile tests conducted by North Korea were occurring simultaneously with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s visit to Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing to discuss U.S. policy implementation with respect to North Korea. Upon the conclusion of Secretary Tillerson’s visit to China he issued the following statement “cooperate with China to pressure North Korea when you can, and pressure China, in turn, to pressure the North when you must.”²⁰⁰

2. 2017 UN Security Council Resolutions

The United States responded to the weapons testing conducted in March, April, and May, by placing sanctions on North Korean entities known for supporting North Korea’s weapons program. North Korea tested its Hwasong-14 ballistic missile in July of 2017, and on July 28 tested an intercontinental ballistic missile that indicated ranges capable of striking the United States mainland.²⁰¹ As a response to the continued weapons testing, and increased provocations directed at the United States’ regional allies from North Korea, the United Nations adopted four additional Security Council Resolutions in 2017. President Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping reached an agreement at a summit meeting in April 2017 in which China agreed to cooperate with the United States and increase security measures regarding sanctions against North Korea.²⁰² However, following the July ICBM

¹⁹⁹ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.–North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 22.

²⁰⁰ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 103.

²⁰¹ Gi-Wook Shin and Rennie J. Moon, “North Korea in 2018: Kim’s Summit Diplomacy,” *Asian Survey* 59, no. 1 (2019): 35–43.

²⁰² Haggard and Noland, *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea*, xvi.

test conducted by North Korea, President Trump criticized China via twitter stating that “China is doing nothing for us with regard to North Korea.”²⁰³

A component of the Trump administration maximum pressure campaign is to lean harder on Beijing because of the economic leverage that China has over North Korea. Although President Trump criticized China in April 2017, China backed the harder sanctions implemented on North Korea in late 2017. The first major UNSCR imposed during the Trump administration was resolution 2371 in response to North Korea's July 28th ICBM test and made effective on August 5, 2017.²⁰⁴ The resolution imposed a ban on North Korea's coal, iron, iron ore, lead, lead ore and seafood exports, as well as prohibited new or expanded joint ventures.²⁰⁵ China used the harsher sanctions imposed on North Korea as a tool to convince North Korea to act accordingly with Sino-DPRK common interests of adhering to the international order.²⁰⁶ The vicious cycle between the United States and the DPRK had begun and with each test conducted economic sanctions were enforced on North Korea. The remaining UNSCRs adopted in 2017 were 2375 and 2397 which placed restrictions on refined petroleum products, banned natural gas liquids to the DPRK, and imposed bans on the export of textiles.²⁰⁷

F. WAR WITH WORDS

As the pressure increased on North Korea through the application of UNSCRs, President Trump used the social media website Twitter as a forum to express his viewpoints to his constituents regarding North Korea's actions. There were several demeaning exchanges of words between President Trump and Kim Jung-un in 2017, but things did not begin to heat up until after the July ICBM test was conducted by North Korea. President Trump announced in August that he would “unleash fire and fury against North Korea if

²⁰³ Covell Meyskens, “Chinese Views of the Nuclear Endgame in North Korea,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 26, no. 5–6 (October 10, 2019): 499–517.

²⁰⁴ Heintz, Shurkin, and Mallory, *DPRK Sanctions: Countering DPRK Proliferation Activities.*, 10.

²⁰⁵ Heintz, Shurkin, and Mallory, 10.

²⁰⁶ Meyskens, “Chinese Views of the Nuclear Endgame in North Korea,” 506.

²⁰⁷ Heintz, Shurkin, and Mallory, 8–9.

they threatened the United States”.²⁰⁸ The comments made by President Trump was an indication that the United States was prepared to fight “fire with fire.” Later, President Trump, while speaking at the United Nations in September 2017 “vowed to totally destroy North Korea” if they threatened the United States.²⁰⁹

The hostility that transpired between Washington and Pyongyang appeared to have no known end date in 2017. President Trump tweeted in October 2017, that Secretary of State Tillerson was “wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man.”²¹⁰ Kim Jung-un responded to the negative comments made by President Trump calling him a “mentally deranged dotard” with the threat that he would “turn Washington, the stronghold of the American imperialist and the nest of evil, and its followers, into a sea of fire”.²¹¹ Amidst the hostile remarks made by President Trump and the continued incitements by North Korea, President Trump often times sang his praises respecting Kim Jung-un giving admiration to his ability to lead a country at such a young age.

1. Diplomatic Approach: Summit Meetings

As President Trump’s derogatory tweets continued, the North Korean leader shifted his approach and delivered his annual New Year’s speech in January 2018 in which he expressed his willingness for reconciliation with South Korea to minimize the possible bloodshed that could occur during the 2018 Olympics if the U.S.–ROK joint military exercises continued.²¹² South Korean President Moon wanted to improve inter-Korean relations therefore he maximized on the opportunity to accomplish his objective after hearing Kim Jung-un’s New Year speech. Most leaders would have perceived the message delivered by Kim Jung-un as a threat, however President Moon saw it as an opportunity at diplomacy. President Trump, however perceived the comments made in the speech

²⁰⁸ Debs and Monteiro, “Cascading Chaos in Nuclear Northeast Asia,” 102.

²⁰⁹ Debs and Monteiro, 102.

²¹⁰ Debs and Monteiro, 102.

²¹¹ Oriana S. Mastro, “Conflict and Chaos on the Korean Peninsula: Can China’s Military Help Secure North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons?,” *International Security* 43, no. 2 (November 7, 2018): 84–116.

²¹² Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 170.

regarding the United States as a threat from Kim Jung-un, and in response to this perceived threat President Trump tweeted the following statement:

North Korean Leader Kim Jung-un stated that the ‘Nuclear button is on his desk at all times.’ Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please tell him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!²¹³

In the past, many of President Trump’s constituents supported the comments that he tweeted regarding North Korea and Kim Jung-un however, in response to the above tweet most people expressed disappointment, and considered the statement unpresidential.²¹⁴ The statements made by President Trump throughout 2017, however, likely, may have contributed to the summit meetings that soon followed in 2018.

South Korean President Moon had already begun the steps of repairing relations with North Korea to guide the two countries into a more civilized and diplomatic direction. Following the New Year speech made by the North Korean leader, South Korea proposed high level talks with North Korea, and invited Kim Jung-un to the Olympic games being held in South Korea.²¹⁵ The Trump administration stood firm on its maximum pressure strategy concerning North Korea and were hesitant to change the United States posture regarding the regime. Nevertheless, dialogue between the North and South continued thus making it harder for the United States to implement its maximum pressure policy effectively. With the threat of preventive military action by the United States at North Korea, and the belief that South Korea should shape the future of the Korean Peninsula, President Moon worked to facilitate the summit meetings between President Trump and Kim Jung-un.²¹⁶

President Trump announced that there would be a summit meeting between him and Kim Jung-un making him the first United States president to accept an invitation for a

²¹³ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 169.

²¹⁴ Jackson, 169.

²¹⁵ Jackson, 171.

²¹⁶ Williams, “South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations,” 1.

one on one meeting with a North Korean leader in almost two decades.²¹⁷ This announcement brought hope to the international community as well as U.S. regional allies about the possibility of developing a peaceful solution to the escalatory actions that occurred throughout 2017. The first summit meeting held in June 2018, resulted in President Trump and Kim Jung-un signing a vague agreement to work together to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.²¹⁸ The ideas stipulated in the agreement as summarized were improved U.S.–DPRK and inter-Korean relations.²¹⁹ Each leader also agreed to move forward with Nuclear diplomacy and conduct further summits in the future.

Although the June 2018 summit meeting was a positive step forward to improve U.S.–DPRK relations and denuclearize the Korean peninsula, the statement did not address North Korea’s ballistic missile program. Nonetheless, there was still progress made regarding denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which would go a long way to decreasing the threat North Korea poses to U.S. national security. Following the summit meeting President Trump announced the suspension of U.S.–ROK annual military exercises calling them “war games, and provocative” in nature.²²⁰ Kim Jung-un showed good faith as North Korea began dismantling a missile engine test site in July 2018.²²¹ History in a significant context was being made between the United States and North Korea like the world had never before seen throughout the past decades of U.S.–DPRK relations.

²¹⁷ Collinson, “Trump Isn’t the First U.S. President to Get a North Korean Invite. But He’s the First to Accept,” 1.

²¹⁸ Michael Collins and Jackson, “Everything You Should Know about the Trump-Kim Summit in Vietnam,” USA Today, February 26, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/02/26/trump-kim-summit-everything-you-should-know-vietnam/2920422002/>.

²¹⁹ Donald J. Trump and Kim Jung-un, “Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit” (2018), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-statement-president-donald-j-trump-united-states-america-chairman-kim-jong-un-democratic-peoples-republic-korea-singapore-summit/>.

²²⁰ Chanlett-Avery et al., “North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation,” 5.

²²¹ Mastro, “Conflict and Chaos on the Korean Peninsula: Can China’s Military Help Secure North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons?,” 85.

Keeping with the promise of continued diplomatic relations, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang in early July 2018 and met with Kim Yong Chol to implement steps moving forward for diplomatic relations between Washington and Pyongyang.²²² Shortly after the meeting occurred, North Korea denounced the United States for making a unilateral approach regarding denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and felt the demands were one-sided.²²³ Although North Korea ceased testing ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons as an act of goodwill throughout the negotiation process, there was evidence that suggested they were still conducting illicit activities. *The Diplomat* revealed information pertaining to a secret North Korean clandestine uranium enrichment site in July 2018, and this information was backed by a United States government source.²²⁴ As a result of the lack of progress on North Korea's behalf to dismantle its nuclear weapons program which was stipulated in the agreement following the Trump-Kim summit, the United States declined to continue further discussions with North Korea.

Formal negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang withered away for the remainder of 2018, as the focus shifted to the next Trump-Kim summit, which was to take place in 2019. Meanwhile, South Korea and North Korea continued to develop their diplomatic relationship throughout 2018, taking strides to repair inter-Korean relations through high level talks, which led to the North-South presidential summit.²²⁵ The Hanoi summit took place in February of 2019, between President Trump and Kim Jung-un, but yielded no conclusive results. The meeting was scheduled to last two days between the 25–27th, however the meeting ended early as each party were unable to resolve differences over the scope of denuclearization measures and U.S. concessions.²²⁶ Following the abrupt

²²² Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 32.

²²³ Mastro, “Conflict and Chaos on the Korean Peninsula,” 85.

²²⁴ Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” 32.

²²⁵ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 173.

²²⁶ Mark E. Manyin et al., “The February 2019 Trump-Kim Hanoi Summit,” CRS Report No. IN11067 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 26, 2019), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IN11067.pdf>.

end of the Hanoi summit, the United States and North Korea reported that both parties parted amicably, and will continue to move forward with productive dialogues.²²⁷

2. The Decline of Maximum Pressure

After nearly a one-year hiatus from weapons testing, North Korea began conducting weapons test in May of 2019, however, President Trump did not consider the weapons testing to be a breach of trust by Kim Jung-un, and insisted that he maintained a positive relationship with Kim Jung-un.²²⁸ Tensions between Washington and Pyongyang decreased throughout 2018 and early 2019, as the Trump administration felt they were making progress in relation to denuclearizing the Korean peninsula. President Trump and Kim Jung-un had held several summit meetings to negotiate the disarmament of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and although the Hanoi summit ended without a formal agreement being met, follow-on discussions were set to take place. President Trump and Kim Jung-un met in the Demilitarized Zone between South Korea and North Korea in June 2019 and agreed to continue negotiations within the weeks that followed the meeting.²²⁹

U.S.-DPRK negotiations regarding the North's nuclear weapons program had begun to stall out in 2019. The promises that were delivered as a result of Trump-Kim interactions regarding continued negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang were essentially non-existent following the last meeting inside the Demilitarized Zone. As mentioned above President Trump did not consider the short-range missile tests that were conducted in early 2019 by North Korea as an act of defiance against the international order however, North Korea had begun to test submarine launched missiles and this warranted a different response. In early October 2019, North Korea demonstrated the ability to launch submarine ballistic missiles. This test launch was followed by another demonstration in late October of two projectiles that landed in the Sea of Japan just outside of Japan's

²²⁷ Manyin et al., "The February 2019 Trump-Kim Hanoi Summit," 1.

²²⁸ Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," 33.

²²⁹ Davenport, 33.

Economic Exclusive Zone and east of South Korea.²³⁰ The test has raised security concerns in both South Korea and Japan about the rising capabilities of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, causing both countries to increase readiness and monitoring for further weapons testing by the DPRK.²³¹

Inactivity between the Trump administration and North Korea regarding the continuance of negotiations resulted in Kim Jung-un giving the United States an end of year deadline in 2019 to re-commence negotiations with North Korea and make right by the concessions that were discussed during the first summit meeting.²³² However the United States never agreed to an end of year deadline with North Korea, and the stipulations contained within the first agreement following the Trump-Kim summit were vague throughout. North Korea decided to discontinue talks with the United States in 2019, because the UNSC did not provide the country with sanction relief as proposed by China and Russia. To maintain peace in East Asia, as an act of good faith to North Korea, the United States agreed to a temporarily halt of the U.S.-ROK military exercises in 2019.²³³ As of writing this thesis there has been no significant progress made regarding denuclearizing the Korean peninsula—North Korea believes that the United States are using stall tactics to keep them engaged in dialogue—the United States and the rest of the World are dealing with the outbreak of the corona virus—North Korea has continued with its weapons development, and there has been little progress made to further the negotiation process.

²³⁰ “North Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles into the Sea of Japan,” BBC News, October 31, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50246065?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/ckgj73ey2ymt/north-korea-missile-tests&link_location=live-reporting-story.

²³¹ “North Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles into the Sea of Japan, 1.”

²³² Grace Shao, “North Korea Could Gift the U.S. a Long-Range Missile for Christmas, MIT Professor Says,” *CNBC*, December 18, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/18/north-korea-may-gift-us-a-long-missile-for-christmas-professor-says.html>.

²³³ Engman, “U.S.-ROK Military Exercises: Provocation or Possibility?,” 1.

G. CONCLUSION

This chapter review of U.S. policy in relation to North Korea from 2008 until the present highlighted the challenges that both President Obama and President Trump encountered during their terms. The Obama administration applied strategic patience by gradually escalating nonviolent means of coercion, through the implementation of economic sanctions to achieve the goal of CVID. The strategic patience policy applied in relation to North Korea in the beginning of the Obama administration was employed tactfully. However, the escalated acts of aggression that occurred between the ROK and DPRK drove President Obama to shift the U.S. policy of strategic patience from a diplomatic posture to a confrontational posture, and this inhibited U.S. policy progress. The main drivers that influenced U.S. policy was North Korea's insistence for the United States to provide the country with economic sanction relief and concessions, which was done so with a threatening posture to the United States' regional allies. The threatening posture that was directed at Japan and South Korea, combined with North Korea's continued defiance of UNSCR's drove U.S. policy direction. China showed support to the Obama administration by supporting UNSCRs imposed on North Korea but did their best to prevent the United States from crippling the DPRK's economy by diluting the restrictions contained within the resolutions.

President Trump's maximum pressure strategy had the United States on the brink of a nuclear war with North Korea throughout the first year of his term. The back and forth actions between Washington and Pyongyang reached an all-time high throughout 2017 and did not begin to subside until mid-2018. The assertive personality of President Trump and the rhetoric he directed at Kim Jung-un via the social media platform twitter was reciprocated by Kim Jung-un, which further escalated the issues between Washington and Pyongyang. While the interactions transpired between President Trump and Kim Jung-un, North Korea increased its weapons testing and belligerent posture. These provocations drove the United States to increase unilateral and bilateral economic sanctions as well as increasing U.S. military presence within the region. North Korea's recalcitrant behavior led China to support the harsher economic sanctions imposed on North Korea as part of the maximum pressure strategy. This was the first time in three decades that China gave

the United States its full support without any resistance regarding imposing harsher sanctions on North Korea. However, things took an extreme turn in 2018 with Kim Jung-un's New Year speech, which opened the door to inter-Korean diplomacy. This turn in events inspired the President of South Korea to bridge the gap between the United States and North Korea and led to the various Trump-Kim summit meetings. The interactions that occurred between the United States and North Korea were historical in context but led to little concrete changes. At present, North Korea is still developing its nuclear weapons program along with other weapons of mass destruction.

The common trend present during the Obama and Trump administration were the surge in weapons testing by North Korea which allowed for the country to boost its nuclear weapons capabilities. Although this trend was present during each administration the largest rise in Pyongyang's' weapons arsenal occurred during the Obama administration. This driver although present during both administrations, weighed more heavily during President Trump's first year in office as indicated by the increased hostility between Washington and Pyongyang. However, North Korea achieved the goal of striking the United States mainland in 2017 during the Trump administration. An additional trend that was present for the duration of the Obama administration which was also present for the period of both the Clinton and Bush administrations was China's resistance to imposing harsher sanctions on North Korea. This common driver ended with the Trump administration maximum pressure strategy because China has given the United States its full support and has imposed harsher economic sanctions on North Korea as well.

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IV. CONCLUSION

U.S. policy employed regarding North Korea from 1992 until the present day consisted of engagement, hardline diplomacy, strategic patience, and maximum pressure, each with the goal of preventing North Korea from advancing its nuclear technologies. However, the United States' attempts ultimately failed to prevent North Korea from advancing its nuclear weapons program, which is evidenced by the nuclear arsenal that North Korea currently possesses. This thesis evaluated four potential drivers of U.S. policy in relation to North Korea from the Clinton administration to the Trump administration to determine which drivers had more influence on executing U.S. policy objectives of a nuclear free North Korea. The four explanations of drivers were the lack of consistency depending on each presidential administration's national security interests, China's economic leverage over North Korea, the United States' bilateral military alliances with South Korea and Japan, and North Korea's provocations and disregard for international order.

A review of U.S. foreign policy concerning North Korea from the Clinton administration to the Trump administration (1992–2020) presented multiple drivers of U.S. policy for each presidential administration. For nearly three decades the way that the United States has engaged with North Korea regarding its nuclear weapons program is through a series of economic sanctions to inhibit the DPRK's ability to acquire material and technology to expand its nuclear weapons program. These economic sanctions were implemented to place financial strain on North Korea to achieve the goal of non-nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula. Throughout the timeframe evaluated each presidential administration imposed a combination of unilateral and bilateral sanctions on North Korean entities and on the country itself to coerce North Korea from pursuing nuclear proliferation, as well as increased military presence within the region, annual U.S.–ROK exercises, and military exercises with Japan.

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Clinton administration faced the challenge of preventing North Korea from withdrawing from the NPT in 1993 to start a nuclear weapons program. Intelligence proved that North Korea had developed a secret nuclear weapons program and were actively reprocessing uranium from spent fuel rods, which led to the 1994 nuclear crisis.²³⁴ There were multiple drivers of policy that impeded American policy with respect to North Korea during President Clinton's term in office from 1992–2000. The first driver was China's influence over North Korea which made it difficult to effectively impose harsher sanctions on North Korea for fear of an economic downfall. The second driver was South Korea and Japan made it difficult to accomplish U.S. policy objectives by refusing to back harsh sanctions for fear that it may lead to war. Japan feared the retaliation that may occur from North Korea if the UNSC enforced harsher economic sanctions and South Korea wanted a diplomatic approach versus coercion through sanctions. There were many North Korean sympathizers within Japan that provided North Korea with financial aid which directly impacted the effectiveness of sanctions. The last driver of American policy in relation to North Korea was North Korea's confrontational posture regarding the international order. The country wanted concessions and security guarantees from the United States to prevent North Korea from withdrawing from the NPT and comply with IAEA inspections. In response to the above drivers, the Clinton administration chose to pursue bilateral negotiations to prevent a war between the United States and North Korea and this diplomatic approach is what led to the 1994 Agreed Framework deal.

The Bush administration was confronted with the same challenge as the Clinton administration, which was to prevent North Korea from withdrawing from the NPT. There were several drivers that hampered the Bush administration North Korean policy, which prevented the goal of achieving CVID. President Bush labelled "North Korea as an axis of evil in his 2002 State of the Union address" and later stated that "he would not certify the North's compliance with all provisions of the Agreed Framework deal," as a result of

²³⁴ Roland Hiemann, "Moving Towards Engagement," 36.

North Korea's illicit activities.²³⁵ The drastic switch from the Clinton administration engagement strategy to the Bush administration hardline strategy lacked policy consistency concerning North Korea because it required a harder stance and consisted of increased sanctions and coercive measures versus diplomacy. North Korea's belligerent posture to the international order combined with their dissatisfaction with the lack of attention and concessions they were getting from the United States resulted in their withdrawal from the NPT in 2003. This decision also made it difficult to affect the desired outcome of a nuclear free Korean peninsula. An additional driver of U.S. policy was China's lack of support for the United States decision to impose harsher economic sanctions on North Korea. North Korea's threatening posture to Japan and South Korea is what drove the United States to considering military action as a policy option because of the bilateral military alliances that obligate the United States to provide security to these allies.

The Obama administration was encountered with the initial task of convincing North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions; however, after North Korea conducted its second underground nuclear weapons test the United States was again faced with the pressing challenge of denuclearizing North Korea. There were three drivers of American policy regarding North Korea for the period of the Obama administration. The first driver was North Korea's threatening posture toward the United States regional allies'—Japan and South Korea, and its continual defiance of UNSCRs by continuing its illicit activities. Another driver was North Korea's acts of aggression carried out against South Korea in 2010, which resulted in the loss of life of military members. These acts of aggression led to increased tensions between the North and the South and intensified regional instability. This was an additional driver of U.S. policy during this time because of South Korea's anger over North Korea's actions. Therefore, the United States was faced with preventing South Korea from launching a counterattack on the DPRK. The Obama administration was forced to abandon the bilateral negotiations that were ongoing between Washington and Pyongyang and shift U.S. policy in relation to North Korea from one of diplomacy to a

²³⁵ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea*, 174.

more confrontational approach. The final driver of U.S. policy was China's insistence on watering-down the security resolutions to avoid the economic fallout of North Korea. Although China supported the many UNSCR's that were imposed on North Korea during the Obama administration more so than his predecessors, China insisted on preventing the Obama administration from imposing too harsh sanctions on North Korea.

President Trump was met with the difficulty of denuclearizing and preventing North Korea from achieving the nuclear capabilities to strike the United States mainland. During 2017, tensions between Washington and Pyongyang reached an all-time high and led to a dramatic increase in weapons demonstrations from North Korea. The maximum pressure strategy that was employed in respect to North Korea increased economic sanctions on the country and military presence within the region. The Trump administration skipped the diplomatic step and immediately led with a confrontational approach in strategy concerning North Korea. Throughout 2017 there was an escalation of the "war with words" between President Trump and Kim Jung-un which had the United States on the brink of war with North Korea. This resulted in the back and forth actions between Washington and Pyongyang of increased sanctions followed by the provocative actions of increased weapons testing. North Korea's unruly behavior led China to support harsher economic sanctions imposed on North Korea as part of the maximum pressure strategy.

However, in January 2018, Kim Jung-un delivered his annual New Year's speech which appeared to take on a diplomatic tone.²³⁶ This speech opened the doorway to inter-Korean relations between North Korea and South Korea, which led to the Trump-Kim summit meetings that followed. It is not completely clear why the North Korean leader decided to change his strategy from a confrontational stance to a diplomatic approach, but many speculate that the sudden switch in North Korea's behavior occurred because the country achieved their goal of second-strike capability. Whatever the cause for the sudden switch in North Korean behavior it led to the Trump administration changing its approach to a more diplomatic stance. Tensions between Washington and Pyongyang declined

²³⁶ Oriana S. Mastro, "Conflict and Chaos on the Korean Peninsula: Can China's Military Help Secure North Korea's Nuclear Weapons?," 85.

throughout 2018 well into 2019 because of the summit meetings that were occurring between President Trump and Kim Jung-un. As of late the United States has not succeeded in denuclearizing North Korea, and negotiations have been stalled since the Hanoi summit, which occurred in 2019.

While conducting American policy review from the Clinton administration until the present there were some trends that remained consistent throughout the different administrations. The first trend was North Korea's confrontational posture during each administration, which was used to grasp the United States attention and coerce the United States into providing them with concessions. Although this approach did not work favorably for North Korea regarding U.S. policy strategies that were employed from 1992 until the present, the consistent provocations did drive U.S. policy toward North Korea. Another trend that was present was China's insistence on preventing the U.S. from imposing too harsh sanctions on North Korea. The final trend present was U.S. allies' security concerns pertaining to North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Out of the four explanations of drivers regarding U.S. policy in relation to North Korea each played an important role in policy, however, the drivers that weighed the heaviest throughout each administration was China's leverage over the DPRK and addressing U.S. regional allies' security concerns regarding North Korea. Though the findings show that intervention from Beijing regarding U.S.-DPRK relations has worked favorably for the United States in the past, Beijing's insistence on preventing the United States from imposing harsh restrictions on North Korea stymied U.S. policy in east Asia. China has always favored a diplomatic approach to U.S. policy concerning North Korea instead of a confrontational approach, and studies have shown that Beijing has been a major factor in terms of negotiating with North Korea, which is evidenced by the Agreed Framework and Leap Day deals.

U.S. policymakers recognize the security dilemmas on the Korean peninsula, and when entering into dealings regarding the DPRK, regional allies' security and the safety of U.S. troops are often at the forefront of negotiations.²³⁷ Japan and South Korea have been

²³⁷ Chubb, "A Nuclear North Korea and the Limitations of U.S. Security Perspectives," 317.

under the constant pressure of feeling threatened by North Korea's actions and insistence on evolving its weapons capabilities, which has been a consistent cause of concern for U.S. policy toward North Korea. The studies have shown that whenever there is an increase in North Korea's provocations toward U.S. allies', the United States responds by applying coercive measures toward North Korea, which voids out diplomacy. The United States then turns to the UNSC to invoke resolutions or harsher security measures to existing resolutions on North Korea for defying the international order. Typically, China would insist on preventing the United States from imposing too harsh sanctions on North Korea for fear of an economic collapse, therefore Beijing would enter into dialogue with the United States to further its agenda of a diplomatic solution.

The best combination of factors that contributed to successful outcomes regarding U.S. policy toward North Korea have been achieved by pressuring China into intervening or through multilateral diplomacy consisting of the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China. The best timeframe for the United States to prevent the North Korean problem occurred during the Clinton and Bush administrations because North Korea had not yet developed its nuclear arsenal. Of equal importance is that this combination of factors was applied during the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations and contributed to the 1994 Agreed Framework, the 2005 joint statement, and the 2012 Leap Day deal. The Clinton administration's diplomatic approach led to the 1994 Agreed Framework deal and was arguably the best deal brokered between Washington and Pyongyang, which if upheld during the Bush administration would have probably prevented North Korea from pursuing its nuclear ambitions. Although the agreement was short lived, the 2005 joint statement was reached through the multilateral negotiations that were coined the six-party talks. Furthermore, during the Obama administration multilateral talks between the United States, South Korea, and North Korea is what contributed to the outcome of the 2012 Leap Day deal. These cases are an indication that the deals brokered between the United States and North Korea were reached through joint interaction between the United States, its allies', and China.

B. FUTURE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis examined American policy regarding North Korea over the span of three decades and evaluated the various strategies applied by each presidential administration while analyzing the factors that drove U.S. policy. The policy review exhibited several challenges present during each administration which contributed to the execution of U.S. policy concerning North Korea. The North Korea conundrum has prevented U.S. policymaker efforts as well as the global nuclear non-proliferation regime efforts of enforcing the NPT. The United States policy in relation to denuclearizing North Korea has cycled between appeasement (carrot), and engagement (stick) based off the soft and hardline strategies employed by the DPRK.²³⁸ In the past, the United States has appeased North Korea by offering concessions such as economic sanctions relief, or financial assistance, and in return North Korea would make promises of dismantling its weapons program. The stick refers to the coercive measures that the United States would employ concerning North Korea such as increased economic sanctions, military exercises, and more military presence within the region. Based off this assessment there are two possible recommendations for the United States to engage with North Korea in the future—an option of appeasement that centers on diplomacy or an option of pressure that relies on a combination of coercive strategies.

Secretary Tillerson stated that the United States must “cooperate with China to pressure North Korea when we can, and pressure China, in turn, to pressure the North when we must.”²³⁹ The first option of engaging with North Korea through nuclear diplomacy would consist of the United States, China, South Korea, and Japan working together in conjunction to compel North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons program. This strategy would center around providing North Korea with suitable concessions, economic sanction relief from the UNSC, and security guarantees from the United States. These methods have been employed by the United States in the past however, they have not been employed in unification with China, Japan, and South Korea, nor have they been employed

²³⁸ Abdul Ghani, “North Korea’s Foreign Policy patterns towards major Powers: From the Cold War Era until the Post-Cold War Era,” 80.

²³⁹ Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, 103.

to the full extent. The current relationship that President Trump has developed with Kim Jung-un places the United States in the unique position of increased bargaining power with the regime. If the United States were to concert a small portion of effort with respect to continuing negotiations with North Korea the United States may be able to achieve its goal of CVID.

The process of engaging with North Korea through nuclear diplomacy would consist of four steps. The first action would be resuming six-party talks and clearly discussing the definition of CVID to ensure that there is not any ambiguity regarding the terms of the agreement. The second phase would be to gradually lift unilateral U.S. sanctions against the DPRK, and multilateral UNSCRs on North Korea. The third move is to discontinue the annual U.S.–ROK and U.S.–Japan military exercises within the Korean peninsula indefinitely as an act of good will. This is a critical step because it would provide North Korea with security assurance from the United States. The final phase of this plan is to provide North Korea with assistance to build up its economic infrastructure through financial aid and humanitarian assistance.

In return for the concessions provided to North Korea, Pyongyang would dismantle its nuclear weapons program, turn over nuclear material to the IAEA, and agree to re-sign the NPT and uphold the safeguards as stipulated by agreeing to random inspections of known nuclear facilities. Although this would be a costly plan for all members required to provide the finances to appease North Korea, this plan would also have an impact on North Korea because its security will depend on the United States upholding the terms of the agreement. The United States will not be able to use this agreement as a bargaining chip to thwart other illicit activities conducted by North Korea unless it is stipulated within the agreement.

The second option of applying pressure to China to convince North Korea would consist of a confrontational posture and will require the United States, South Korea, Japan, and U.S. allied members of the UNSC to exert influence of the full extent possible. This plan may be met with resistance from China because it would consist of imposing secondary sanctions on China. It may also provoke North Korea to retaliate in response to the coercive methods that the United States will be required to employ. It will also go

against one of China's core national interest of a stabilized Korean peninsula and an economically prosperous North Korea. However, if the goal of the United States remains to achieve CVID from North Korea, then coercing North Korea via the application of pressure on China to intervene may be the viable option.

The coercive strategies that will be employed are much like the Trump administration maximum pressure strategy but would be applied gradually. The first phase will consist of imposing maximum unilateral sanctions on the North Korean regime by the United States. The second phase implemented will involve South Korea and Japan imposing harsher sanctions on North Korea. Japan is North Korea's second-largest trading partner, therefore Japan ceasing bilateral trade with North Korea will likely impact North Korea's economy. The third and fourth phases will occur simultaneously and comprise of imposing secondary sanctions on any country that conducts business with North Korea—including China, and redeploying tactical nuclear weapons back to South Korea, while increasing U.S. military exercises and presence within the region. The purpose behind this option is to push North Korea further into international isolation, by maximizing on China's fears by inciting an economic downfall in Pyongyang to provoke Beijing into intervening with the North Korean problem.

Either option presented above could potentially be an executable option to protect U.S. national security interests in East Asia. However, to ensure that U.S. national interest does not conflict with regional allies' national interests, option one would alleviate any security concerns from South Korea, and Japan that may arise from the threat of war that option two could lead to. The pattern that was present throughout the administrations evaluated in this thesis was regional allies feared the threat that would transpire from North Korea if the United States actions provoked a war on the Korean peninsula. Option one will probably come under scrutiny by critics because it hinges on the United States providing concessions to North Korea despite its wayward actions and behavior. On the other hand, option two will be met with scrutiny by China, because it may ignite an economic crisis in North Korea—with catastrophic consequences. These concerns must be evaluated by U.S. policymakers to determine which of the above options would be the preferable course of action to achieve the goal of a nuclear free Korean peninsula.

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