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**TITLE: North Korea's Nuclear Program and the United States
Policy of Strategic Patience**

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Executive Summary

Title: North Korea's Nuclear Program and the United States Policy of Strategic Patience

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Thesis: By outlining North Korea's nuclear and missile programs from its initial stages to its present state, this paper will show that the continued maturation of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs pose a significant threat to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, and that the United States policy of "*Strategic Patience*" with regards to North Korea's programs must be changed to reduce this threat.

Discussion: For over 60 years, North Korea has successfully developed its nuclear and missile programs for the sole purpose of ensuring regime survival. To ensure regime survival, North Korea will continue to develop its nuclear capabilities and will never abandon it, regardless of what the United States imposes upon it. Because of this, the U.S. must change its policy towards North Korea and begin working on a policy that focuses specifically on nuclear safety and security while encouraging regional dialog focusing on improving regional trust.

Conclusion: In the end, this new policy could lead to a level of trust never before seen between the United States and North Korea. That confidence could continue to grow over time, leading to the overall goal of the United States' new policy towards North Korea, which is a nuclear state that pursues nuclear safety and security, nonproliferation, and improved relations with the U.S. and the international community. It will also improve North Korea's regional security perceptions, and it may do something even greater than that for the Korean people; it may ultimately bring reunification of their homeland.

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK), has emerged as one of the most contentious foreign policy challenges for the United States (U.S.) in Asia. Because of the DPRK's negative influence in the region, the United States listed one of its top priorities in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) as "rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region to preserve peace and stability in the region."¹ The QDR explicitly identifies the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs as a major threat:

North Korea's long-range missile and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs - particularly its pursuit of nuclear weapons in contravention of its international obligations - constitutes a significant threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia and is a growing, direct threat to the United States.²

By outlining North Korea's nuclear and missile programs from its initial stages to its present state, this paper will show that the continued maturation of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs pose a significant threat to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, and that the United States policy of "*Strategic Patience*" with regards to North Korea's programs must be changed to reduce this threat.

Several historical, external, and internal factors provided motivation to the leaders of North Korea to develop a nuclear program. The main reason North Korea developed a nuclear capability was to ensure regime survival, specifically the continuance of the Kim Dynasty. Nuclear weapons provide the security measure capable of deterring future U.S. military intervention. Because of this, it is probable that North Korea will never give up its nuclear weapon and missile programs. Therefore, the United States must change its current policy towards North Korea and begin working on a policy that focuses specifically on nuclear safety

and security. The revised policy must encourage regional dialog focusing on improving regional trust.

North Korea's Motives for Developing a Nuclear Program

There were a number of factors that motivated the DPRK to establish a nuclear program. While the primary motivation was regime survival, there are also two other reasons. One reason was the establishment of Kim Il Sung's political philosophy of "self-reliance" (*Juche*) while the second reason was the "military-first policy" (*Songun*) established by Kim Jong Il. Note that, *Juche* and *Songun* are interrelated, as *Songun* was founded on the principles of *Juche*, and one cannot truly succeed without the other.

The official political philosophy of the DPRK was introduced by Kim Il Sung in 1972 and still maintains its prevalence today. *Juche* is explained by Kim Il Sung as:

Being the master of revolution and reconstruction in one's own country. This means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances.³

This political philosophy was introduced at a time when security alliances with China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were waning, causing North Korea to doubt their reliability and support in future crises. "The absence of international support reinforced the logic of self-reliance and "military first," pushing North Korea to pursue independence with respect to its nuclear weapons."⁴ It was then that North Korea decided to reduce its dependence on foreign governments and ultimately adopted *Juche*.

North Korea's military-first policy, or *Songun*, was instituted by Kim Jong Il after his father's death in 1994. *Songun* is a policy where the military is the supreme power. It is the provider to the people and the protector of the regime. It is the decision maker and the executor.

The military is not just an institution designed to perform the function of defending the country from external hostility. Instead, it provides all of the other agencies of the government with legitimacy. All policy goals are articulated by the military and then disseminated to other organizations with specific strategic and tactical recommendations for implementation. After policies are implemented, their effectiveness will be evaluated by the military.⁵

This policy consolidated all military control under Kim Jong Il, allowing him to restructure the military, thereby preventing any possibility of a military coup d'état. *Songun* guides North Korea's political and economic life and its domestic and international policies. It is a universal belief that is deeply integrated into the lives of the North Korean people. *Songun* is the philosophy that allows North Korea to legitimize its authority to produce and maintain a nuclear weapons program.

North Korea's Nuclear Program

North Korea pursued nuclear weapons from a very early stage in its history. In the 1950s, the Soviets trained North Korean scientists on what was believed to be peaceful nuclear technology. The USSR continued this training for the next 30 years. In 1959, North Korea and the USSR signed an Intergovernmental Atomic Energy Cooperation Agreement, where the USSR agreed to conduct geographical studies of North Korea in order to identify suitable locations for the construction of a nuclear research facility. The USSR also agreed to construct a two megawatt nuclear reactor to assist North Korea in acquiring nuclear power and to train North Korean specialists to operate and maintain the facilities. The 1960s saw the construction of North Korea's first nuclear research reactor near Yongbyon. This research reactor was to become the epicenter of the country's nuclear project, and was completed and declared fully operational in 1967. North Korea then had the ability to conduct basic research and experimentation in the field of atomic energy. In the 1970s, North Korea's nuclear program focused on training, education, and research development. In 1974, North Korea joined the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), leading to international monitoring of its nuclear facilities. The IAEA is an independent organization that serves as the world's nuclear cooperation leader.

IAEA's mission is to develop nuclear standards that promote the achievement and maintenance of peaceful nuclear energy, and verify these standards through an inspection system that complies with the standards set forth in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other non-proliferation agreements, to use nuclear material and facilities only for peaceful purposes.⁶

Signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is not a prerequisite for membership in the IAEA. Becoming a member of the IAEA did not make North Korea party to the NPT; instead it made it part of an organization that enforces the rules and regulations set forth by the treaty. "The IAEA is not a party to the Treaty but is entrusted with key roles and responsibilities under it."⁷

Kim Il Sung continued to press the Chinese and the Soviets for the technical data necessary to build another nuclear reactor, but both Beijing and Moscow were hesitant in providing this information to the North, as they saw North Korea as "an unreliable, costly and scheming ally."⁸ Because North Korea was a member of the IAEA, they had access to a wealth of technical information, that included data on reactor design and construction from countries that possessed operational reactors, which would prove pivotal in its future nuclear endeavors. It was during this time that:

North Korea took note of India's 'peaceful' nuclear explosion in 1974. India's example showed how even poor nations could develop nuclear weapons from materials gathered from far and wide – in India's case, a Canadian reactor using heavy water from the United States. Like Israel, India would be treated as a de facto nuclear weapons state; North Korea wanted to follow suit.⁹

It was at this point that North Korea started to look at the possibilities of covertly creating a nuclear weapons program.

The 1980s also saw a significant expansion in North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Using designs and technological data accessed through their membership in the IAEA, North Korea completed its first nuclear reactor project at Yongbyon. The reactor was a gas-cooled, graphite-moderated nuclear reactor for plutonium production and the construction of a radiochemical laboratory used to separate plutonium from spent nuclear fuel cells, allowing North Korea to establish a full plutonium fuel cycle. The completion of this reactor was a substantial engineering accomplishment for the North.

In approximately six years, a country with no previous experience in reactor construction had acquired and assembled the requisite technologies, industrial materials and natural resources for a functioning reactor. In another three years, North Korea had also largely completed a major reprocessing facility at Yongbyon – unambiguous proof that the reactor's purpose was military, not civilian.¹⁰

"This gas-graphite-moderated reactor operated on natural uranium fuel, which, when irradiated, is an ideal source of weapons plutonium. Each core load could produce thirty kilograms of plutonium-sufficient to make five nuclear warheads."¹¹ However, because of North Korea's economic stagnation, it had to rely heavily on economic aid from the USSR. In order for Moscow to continue supplying North Korea with this much-needed economic aid, the USSR pressured the North to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In exchange, the USSR "agreed to build four nuclear power plants in North Korea, to operate the plants for five years, train DPRK technicians, supply enriched uranium, and help survey for uranium in North Korea,"¹² In 1985, North Korea signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons but refused to sign a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, an obligation it had as a party to the NPT. The NPT is subdivided into two categories non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) and nuclear weapon states (NWS). The Treaty recognizes five states as NWS: the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China; all other members are considered NNWS. Three

countries that have nuclear weapons but have never signed the NPT are Pakistan, India, and Israel.

The early 1990s brought the fall of the USSR, North Korea's ally and an important nuclear superpower capable of keeping the U.S. at bay. The fall of the USSR also reinforced the North Korean political philosophy of *Juche*. With a failing economy, an enormous military expenditure, high foreign debt, and no ally with a credible nuclear threat to deter a U.S. attack, North Korea moved forward with its nuclear program. As part of President George H. W. Bush's unilateral disarmament initiative in September 1991, all U.S. nuclear weapons were removed from the Korean Peninsula. The United States hoped that this would persuade North Korea to allow IAEA inspectors into the country to conduct detailed inspections of their nuclear facilities.

Once again, North Korea decided to make an effort to de-escalate the pressure from the international community. In December 1991, North Korea and South Korea signed the Treaty of Reconciliation and Nonaggression.¹³ Seoul and Pyongyang agreed to stop hostile relations and cooperate in security measures as a first step toward reunification. This was quickly followed by the Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula where the two Koreas agreed not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons.¹⁴ The joint declaration also mandated both Koreas to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes and to forgo the possession of nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities. The joint declaration was signed in February 1992 "in order to eliminate the danger of nuclear war through the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, to create conditions and an environment favorable to peace and the peaceful unification of Korea, and thus to contribute to the peace and security of Asia and the world."¹⁵

Things seemed to be moving in the right direction. Under economic and political pressure, many speculated that North Korea was ending its nuclear aspirations.¹⁶ The international community now waited to see if North Korea was serious about abiding by the NPT and allowing inspections. The answer came a year later. In 1993, the IAEA demanded special inspections of two sites suspected of storing nuclear waste; North Korea refused the inspections which was a direct violation of the rules and regulations set forth under the NPT. North Korea then threatened to withdraw from the NPT citing Article X provisions, which states:

Each Party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country. It shall give notice of such withdrawal to all other Parties to the Treaty and to the United Nations Security Council three months in advance. Such notice shall include a statement of the extraordinary events it regards as having jeopardized its supreme interests.¹⁷

However, prior to North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT, the United States negotiated an agreement that hoped to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, an agreement known as the Agreed Framework.¹⁸

The Agreed Framework

In 1994, the United States and the DPRK signed an agreement known as the Agreed Framework, which was designed to end the dispute over North Korea's nuclear program. The Agreed Framework specifically obligated North Korea to cease its nuclear program by freezing and dismantling the 5-megawatt reactor and plutonium processing plant at Yongbyon it also required North Korea to remain a full member of the NPT, thereby complying with its safeguard requirements, and permit IAEA inspectors to conduct inspections of all nuclear facilities and waste sites. By signing the Agreed Framework, North Korea also agreed to engage diplomatically with South Korea to take steps toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In exchange for North Korea's actions, the U.S. committed to taking steps towards

normalizing economic and political ties by reducing trade and investment barriers and also by looking into opening liaison offices with the hope of one day achieving full diplomatic relations. The United States was obligated to provide two 1,000 megawatt light-water reactor (LWR) power plants and 500,000 tons of heavy-fuel oil per year. In order to fund and supply the reactors and the heavy-fuel oil, the U.S. established and organized the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).¹⁹ KEDO was created to implement all terms of the Agreed Framework and to designate responsibility to its members with regards to financing and supplying North Korea with the two LWRs.

The turn of the century saw North Korea violate the spirit of the Agreed Framework by starting its Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) program and conducting its first ever underground nuclear test.

Acquiring fissile material, highly enriched uranium (HEU), is the key hurdle in nuclear weapons development. Producing this material is technically challenging; in comparison, many experts believe weaponization to be relatively easy. North Korea has industrial-scale uranium mining and plants for milling, refining and converting uranium; it also has a fuel fabrication plant, a nuclear reactor, and a reprocessing plant - in short, everything needed to produce HEU.²⁰

North Korea appears to have mastered the engineering requirements of HEU production and has taken steps toward weaponization. It has also acquired two dozen centrifuges to enhance the uranium enrichment program it has in place to develop nuclear weapons.²¹ A.Q. Khan, the head of Pakistan's nuclear program, provided North Korea with the centrifuges and measuring equipment that would permit enrichment. Khan Research Laboratory engineers also provided centrifuge control equipment, centrifuge designs, instruction manuals, essential training, and even produced centrifuge-related software for the North Koreans. Overall, North Korea received an impressive starter kit from Khan and his colleagues.²² North Korea remains committed to

improving the capabilities of its nuclear weapons program, thereby threatening U.S. forces, its close allies, and its partners.

Breakdown of the Agreed Framework

In 2002, the Agreed Framework broke down when KEDO suspended construction on the two light-water nuclear reactors in North Korea and cut off the shipments of heavy-fuel oil that was promised under the 1994 agreement. The suspension occurred after U.S. intelligence services concluded that North Korea had procured material for their HEU program. In response to the suspensions levied on them by KEDO and the U.S., North Korea expelled the IAEA inspectors, withdrew from the NPT, and announced that it would build a nuclear deterrent unless the United States changed its hostile policy towards it. The DPRK explained its withdrawal from the NPT in the following manner:

To cope with the grave situation where our state security and national sovereignty are being threatened due to the United States and forces following the United States and the US tyrannical nuclear crushing policy toward the DPRK, the DPRK Government took an important measure to immediately withdraw from the NPT.²³

With the breakdown of the Agreed Framework and tensions rising, China recommended an initiative to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue. This effort became known as the Six-Party Talks.

Six-Party Talks

The Six-Party Talks were held in Beijing in August 2003 and involved China, North Korea, Russia, the United States, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Japan with the aim of negotiating the end of North Korea's nuclear program. The resulting September 2005 joint statement was believed to have been a breakthrough in negotiations between the United States and North Korea.²⁴ The agreement stated that North Korea would abandon all its nuclear weapons and its nuclear programs, return to the NPT, and take steps to normalize its relations

with the U.S., Japan, and the ROK. The U.S. issued a pledge of nonaggression towards North Korea, stating that it had no intention to attack or invade North Korea with nuclear or conventional weapons. The U.S. and South Korea agreed to assist North Korea in meeting its energy needs in lieu of its nuclear reactors, the U.S. and South Korea also affirmed that there were no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

The Six Parties agreed to hold the fifth round of the Six-Party Talks in Beijing in early November 2005.²⁵ Talks stalled in November when North Korea stated that it would not begin dismantling its nuclear facilities unless it was given a light-water nuclear reactor. This change was due to North Korea's anger towards the U.S. freezing North Korean financial assets at the Macao-based Banco Delta Asia (BDA) bank.²⁶ The U.S. Treasury Department set the restrictions due to the suspicion that the money in the accounts, approximately \$24 million, had been acquired through illegal North Korea activities which would include money-laundering and counterfeiting of U.S. currency.²⁷ North Korea was infuriated by the sanctions levied on the BDA because the sanctions denied its leadership access to its financial assets. Kim Jong Il reportedly expressed concern to China that prolonged U.S. economic sanctions could lead to his government's collapse, proving the significance of the restrictions.²⁸ The U.S. saw these sanctions as the perfect solution, targeting the North Korean leadership rather than its people.

The Six-Party Talk negotiations were deadlocked through 2006. The DPRK vowed that it would not resume talks until the financial restrictions on the BDA had been lifted. Throughout 2006, North Korea conducted a series of ballistic missile tests, defying the international community and violating previous agreements, most recently the September 2005 joint statement of the Six-Party Talks. With Chinese and Russian approval, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1695 on 15 July 2006, condemning the DPRK's recent test-

firing of a series of missiles and demanding that North Korea suspend all ballistic missile-related activity and reinstate its moratorium on missile launches.²⁹ Resolution 1695 also required all member states to prevent further transfer of materials and technology to North Korea for use in its missile and nuclear weapon programs. North Korea's response was instantaneous declaring the resolution

An 'extremely hostile act of the United States' and an infringement on DPRK sovereignty, it declared that we will have no option but to take stronger physical actions... [to] strengthen its self-defensive war deterrent by all means and methods now that the situation has reached the worst phase.³⁰

In October 2006, North Korea made good on its threat and successfully carried out its first nuclear test. Foreign analysts estimated its yield at 1kiloton (kt), compared with the 20kt yield of the bomb dropped on Nagasaki in 1945. However, the technical results were not as significant as the strategic consequences: North Korea defied both allies and advisories by clearly breaching the nuclear divide.

After the nuclear test, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1718 on 14 October 2006. The Resolution imposed weapons and financial sanctions demanding that North Korea eliminate all its nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and ballistic missiles. It also called for it to return immediately to multilateral talks on the issue.³¹ At this point, the Six-Party Talks looked to be a complete failure. However, North Korea agreed to return to the Six-Party Talks in 2007, resulting in another joint statement declaring the ultimate goal of the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. North Korea also agreed to return to the NPT. In return, the agreement gave North Korea a million tons of heavy fuel oil and a commitment from the U.S. to lift the sanctions on the BDA, if the North closed and dismantled the Yongbyon facility and provided full disclosure of all its nuclear activities. North Korea complied, dismantled the Yongbyon facility and destroyed its cooling tower in June 2008.

In October 2008, the United States removed North Korea from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list that lifted the restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance, the ban on defense exports and sales and other miscellaneous financial constraints. The lifting of these restrictions was an enormous step towards improving relations between the two countries. However, by the end of 2008, relations deteriorated when North Korea barred IAEA nuclear inspectors from the country and restarted its nuclear program. In 2009, North Korea walked out of the Six-Party Talks. The same year, North Korea carried out its second nuclear test that had an estimated yield of 4.6kt, meeting the projected yield of 4.0kt. Shortly after the second test, North Korea made it abundantly clear that its nuclear capabilities were not negotiable.

[We] have never requested anyone to recognize our status as a nuclear weapons state nor have we entertained any idea of getting it recognized...our strengthening of the nuclear deterrent is an irrefutable exercise of our independent right and sovereignty for the defense of our dignity, system, and safety of the nation...our nuclear deterrent had nothing to do with someone's recognition of it, and if it discourages the aggressors from provoking us randomly, its purposes are well served.³²

The UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1874 on 12 June 2009, which expanded the current sanctions against North Korea and introduced additional sanctions to prevent the acquisition of technology and materials needed for its nuclear weapon and missile programs, to conduct more robust monitoring and inspections of shipments leaving the country, cease all weapons exports from North Korea, and deny any acknowledgement of North Korea's claimed nuclear standing outside the NPT.³³ One year later, North Korea revealed its new uranium enrichment facility.

In February 2012, Kim Jong Un announced that he would suspend uranium enrichment and put a moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests and allow IAEA inspectors to monitor the suspension in exchange for food and aid from the United States.³⁴ The moratorium did not last long, in April 2012, North Korea conducted a satellite launch. Though unsuccessful,

this launch violated its moratorium on long-range missile tests. In December, North Korea again conducted a satellite launch, however, this time the launch was successful solidifying its long-range missile capabilities. This launch was followed by North Korea's third, and most powerful, nuclear test in February 2013 and alleged to have doubled the yield from the 2009 nuclear test.³⁵ North Korea continues to defy UN resolutions, prompting Russia and China to step up their efforts to reconvene the talks. Russia's and China's interests in resuming Six-Party Talks are to have a more stable and predictable neighbor and to see a multiparty security and cooperation system emerge in Northeast Asia.³⁶ However, the United States, South Korea, and Japan remain reluctant to resume negotiations, insisting that North Korea must first honor past commitments to dismantle its program before continuing any negotiations.

North Korea's Missile Program

It was during the 1960s that North Korea made the decision to pursue a ballistic missile production capability. During this time, the Soviet Union provided free rockets over ground (FROGs), surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), and coastal defense anti-ship missiles, which exposed North Korean engineers to basic technologies for rocket propulsion, guidance, and related missile systems.³⁷ North Korea's missile program gained traction in September 1971 when it signed a wide-ranging military agreement with China for the acquisition, development, and production of ballistic missiles and other weapon systems such as surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and anti-ship missiles.³⁸ The agreement included acquisition of Chinese missiles, transfer of Chinese missile research-and-development technology, and training of North Korean personnel within China.³⁹

The 1980s brought about the development of the No Dong Medium-Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM), which is a road-mobile, liquid propellant, ballistic missile designed to strike

population centers. North Korea's missile program continued to break new ground in the 1990s. In 1993, North Korea conducted a successful test flight of the No Dong MRBM. The successful flight test motivated North Korean engineers to begin working on the Taepo Dong-1 (TD-1) Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) which they completed and successfully flight tested in 1998. The turn of the century saw North Korea's missile program develop the Musudan road-mobile IRBM, the Taepo Dong-2 (TD-2) Intercontinental-Ballistic Missile (ICBM), and the Unha-3 Space Launch Vehicle (SLV). This commitment demonstrated North Korea's ability to target U.S. forces, its close allies, and its partners that maintain close security relationships.

North Korea's missile program has expanded significantly over the years and now has several hundred short-range Scud-class and medium-range No Dong-class ballistic missiles capable of reaching South Korea and Japan while carrying a simple nuclear warhead. North Korea also has a large number of intermediate-range Musudan-class ballistic missiles capable of launching direct strikes into South Korea, Japan, and Guam. It also has the Taepo Dong 2-class ballistic missile that has the strategic capability to deliver a nuclear weapon sized payload against the continental United States.⁴⁰ North Korea continues to develop the KN08, which is its intercontinental ballistic missile, but to date, there is no evidence to suggest that these missiles are fully operational. Finally, North Korea also has the Unha-3, a long-range rocket or Space Launch Vehicle (SLV), designed for peaceful scientific purposes and used to launch satellites into orbit. However, long-range rockets are identical to long-range missiles. The technology is the same. If North Korea has the technology and capability to launch a satellite into orbit, it also has the technology and capability to launch an intercontinental ballistic missile.

U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy

The primary mission of the United States' antiproliferation policy is to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by any state or non-state actor and to prevent the spread of nuclear weapon capabilities and technologies to additional states or non-state actors. In his April 2009 speech in Prague, President Barack Obama highlighted 21st century nuclear dangers, declaring that to overcome these grave and growing threats, the United States will "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."⁴¹ President Obama also said that until that goal is reached, the U.S. will maintain a "safe, secure, and effective arsenal both to deter potential adversaries and to assure U.S. allies and other security partners that they can count on America's security commitments."⁴² In order to meet these goals and to avoid a more dangerous nuclear era, the U.S. must significantly reduce the role that nuclear weapons play in its security strategies. If not, it will lack the political legitimacy needed to persuade other nations from acquiring or further developing their nuclear arsenals.

The United States should embrace this goal of a "world free of nuclear weapons" as a vital contribution to preventing more nations, and eventually terrorists, from acquiring nuclear weapons.⁴³ If the U.S. wants to be taken seriously as an advocate of nuclear non-proliferation, it should be consistent. The U.S. hypocrisy has served as the chief proliferation catalyst by allowing aspiring third world states to legitimize their drive for nuclear weapons. The U.S. loses credibility when it condemns North Korea and levies sanctions on it for conducting missile launches and nuclear tests. At the same time, it remains silent when its friends in India and Israel, both of which possess nuclear weapon programs operating outside the NPT, conduct the same tests.⁴⁴

U.S. Policy on North Korea

The United States policy, with regards to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, is to prevent the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to prevent a nuclear attack on the United States or its allies. There are two ways to accomplish these goals. The first way is through negotiations to shape North Korea's behavior or encourage measures that will weaken the regime and ultimately lead to its collapse. The second way is through economic sanctions and hostile threats towards the DPRK. As we have seen since the end of the Cold War, neither one of these has been very successful. Negotiations have taken place, and while some progress has happened, the mutual distrust between North Korea and the United States have rendered the negotiations unproductive. Even when North Korea agrees to return to the negotiating table, the United States refuses to negotiate directly with North Korea until it takes steps towards dismantling its nuclear program and relinquishing its WMD.

The current United States policy regarding North Korea's nuclear programs is one of "strategic patience," a policy that suggests the United States could afford to wait for North Korea to make its decision to denuclearize.⁴⁵ The major problem with a policy of strategic patience is that the U.S. cannot denuclearize the Korean peninsula while it refrains from negotiations and North Korean centrifuges continue to spin.⁴⁶ To U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific region, strategic patience looks suspiciously like disengagement or inaction on the part of the U.S., even though the U.S. remains committed to placing sanctions on North Korea until it demonstrates positive, constructive behavior and a genuine willingness to negotiate.⁴⁷ However, based on past actions, the more sanctions imposed by the U.S., the more North Korea enhances and diversifies its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile technology.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has attempted to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear program to no avail, and a policy of strategic patience will not fix this problem. The U.S. needs to remember that the whole reason North Korea started its nuclear program was to ensure regime survival. Because of this, North Korea will never give up its nuclear weapons program. “No country that undertook a covert nuclear program and then tested a weapon has ever relinquished its capabilities.”⁴⁸ In December 2003, the U.S. pressured Libya to abandon its nuclear weapons program and relinquish its weapons of mass destruction and long-range ballistic missiles. North Korea believes that the reason the Libyan government was overthrown and its leadership was ousted was because it dismantled its nuclear weapons program, making it vulnerable to military intervention by the U.S., thereby reinforcing the North’s refusal to end its nuclear weapons program.

The Libyan crisis is teaching the international community a grave lesson in the eyes of the North Korean leadership, Libya took the economic bait, foolishly disarmed themselves, and once they were defenseless, were mercilessly punished by the West. Proving that North Korea’s “songun” ideology of a powerful military was “proper in a thousand ways” and the only guarantor of peace on the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁹

It’s time for the United States to change its policy of strategic patience towards North Korea. U.S. disengagement from talks with North Korea contributes to instability in the region. Strategic patience is no longer a viable policy option. Political ingenuity and vision must replace passivity, immediately.

Recommendations and Conclusions

How should the international community best manage the reality of a nuclear North Korea? North Korea could be asked to make nonproliferation commitments in exchange for acceptance of its nuclear weapons status in much the same way that the United States has accepted the nuclear status of India, Pakistan, and Israel. Even though none of these countries

are seen as nuclear weapons states (NWS) in the eyes of the NPT, they are acknowledged by the international community as having nuclear weapons. By accepting North Korea's nuclear weapons status, the international community could begin to take steps towards negotiating a nuclear agreement with North Korea. For example, in October 2008, the United States and India signed a nuclear deal known as the Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of India Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, better known as the 123 Agreement.⁵⁰ The significance of the 123 Agreement is immense.

In addition to reversing 34 years of U.S. policy opposing nuclear cooperation with India - a nuclear weapons state that continues to refuse to sign the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - the deal wins acceptance for India's *de facto* nuclear weapons state status at the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the international cartel that controls trade in nuclear weapons, fuel, and technology. That recognition will finally allow India to take part in international nuclear commerce and its scientists to participate in international nuclear research activities.⁵¹

This agreement took decades to negotiate and was based largely on India's "good non-proliferation record."⁵² The United States, along with the international community, should strive to reach this type of deal with North Korea. It is important to understand that the process will take decades to negotiate, and the task will be long and arduous. The venue for these negotiations could initially start with the Six-Party Talks. The "new" Six-Party Talks should focus, not just on North Korea's nuclear program, but on larger regional security issues. These negotiations are critical to maintaining peace and security throughout the region and need to be conducted through a multilateral, multi-pronged strategy combining diplomacy and international support. These alliances and partnerships will be essential in promoting the stability, security, peace, and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region for the next hundred years.

The United States policy on North Korea must change. To date, the U.S. is no closer to denuclearizing North Korea than it was sixty years ago and is probably worse off now.

Therefore, the U.S. policy needs to stop focusing on denuclearization, and concentrate on a world with a nuclear-armed North Korea. If the United States is serious about “rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region to preserve peace and stability in the region,”⁵³ then it must do what it takes to make North Korea part of that plan. Below are some recommendations that could assist the United States in implementing a new policy towards North Korea. This new policy should focus more on mentoring North Korea in order to achieve success. First, the United States must immediately abandon its hostile policy towards North Korea; it must also give up its "strategic patience" policy along with its no-negotiation policy unless North Korea honors past commitments. To begin to move forward, the U.S. needs to start negotiations immediately. It should not wait for the same set of preconditions that it has waited on for decades, which is the “complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement” of North Korea’s nuclear program, which would just delay negotiations. The United States can begin to earn the trust of North Korea by offering to turn the 1953 Korean War armistice into a peace treaty, formally putting an end to the Korean War. Next, the United States should open up diplomatic ties by offering North Korea full diplomatic recognition, which would include the opening of a U.S. embassy in Pyongyang and eventually opening a North Korean embassy in Washington. This updated policy towards North Korea should be a confidence-building measure. It should allow North Korea to make decisions without forcing them to focus immediately on giving up their nuclear weapons.

There is no easy road ahead when it comes to dealing with North Korea and its nuclear weapons program, but at least there is still a road that can eventually lead to a successful end. It will be an arduous task for those involved, but one that is necessary to ensure peace and security in the region. The United States must ensure its allies and partners throughout the world, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, that it will not retreat from its commitment to protect and

defend, nor will it allow North Korea to break the rules without being held accountable. The international community needs to understand that this is a means to an end when it comes to resolving the issues that have plagued the United States, its allies, and its partners in the Asia-Pacific region for decades.

The United States has nothing to lose in taking this new approach towards North Korea, but it does have a lot to gain. A couple of situations could occur upon implementing the new policy. If North Korea accepted these proposals and signed a formal peace treaty ending the Korean War and allowed the United States to open an embassy in Pyongyang, this could lead to having a positive relationship with the North Korean leadership making them feel safe and secure and not threatened by the nuclear might of the United States. With North Korea not feeling threatened, the North Korean leadership may be willing to negotiate an agreement with the U.S. and its international partners. An agreement could take years to negotiate, however with negotiations the U.S. and the international community could move towards an understanding with North Korea that it has never had before.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, if North Korea accepted the proposals, but like previous agreements decides to renege, the United States is still better off than it is now. By offering these proposals, the U.S. has shown the international community that it is serious about bringing peace and stability to the Asia-Pacific region and that it went out of its way to bring a peaceful end to North Korea's nuclear weapons program. These proposals would also make it easier for the United States to gain support from the international community if it were necessary to place more restrictive sanctions on North Korea due to its aggressive actions.

The most favorable outcome, however, would be "a reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, a standing down of Kim Jong Un on the nuclear issue, a DPRK commitment to cease

proliferation activities to Syria, Iran, and other buyers, an enormous improvement in U.S.-North Korea relations, and a general relaxation of tensions in the region."⁵⁴ If North Korea agreed to abide by the rules and regulations set forth in the NPT and signed a safeguards agreement with IAEA, it would lead to better relations with the U.S., and tensions would decrease on the Korean Peninsula and in the region. With all of those actions complete, the U.S. and the international community could get to the point where it would accept North Korea as a nuclear state, as it does with India, Pakistan, and Israel. In the end, this new policy could lead to a level of trust never before seen between the United States and North Korea. That confidence could continue to grow over time, leading to the overall goal of the United States' new policy towards North Korea, which is a nuclear state that pursues nuclear safety and security, nonproliferation, and improved relations with the U.S. and the international community. It will also improve North Korea's regional security perceptions, and it may do something even greater than that for the Korean people; it may ultimately bring reunification of their homeland.

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