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NEGATING NORTH KOREA'S NUKES
THE POLITICAL USE OF MILITARY POWER

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NEGATING NORTH KOREA'S NUKES:
THE POLITICAL USE OF MILITARY POWER

The violence and logic components of conflict resolution are totally interdependent -- they cannot be applied in isolation. Today we see that logic would have the North Koreans voluntarily give up their nuclear program to reap the economic benefits that would accrue to their people. (However,) we know that Kim Il Sung (was) no stranger to violence, and we dare not rely on logic alone in dealing with the North Koreans.¹

Admiral Charles R. Larson, USN

Commander in Chief U S Pacific Command (1991-1994)

The evident effort of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to obtain nuclear weapons is one of the most significant challenges to U S national security today. The issue came to a head over North Korea's March 1993 announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). In October 1994, a basis for resolution was accepted by the U S and North Korea in their Agreed Framework. The Framework commits North Korea to remain an NPT party and provides a means for ensuring that it does not acquire nuclear weapons. The purpose of this paper is to consider measures taken by the U S roughly from 1992 to 1994 designed to achieve its objectives regarding North Korea's nuclear efforts -- nonproliferation, avoidance of war, and assurance of allies. The focus of the analysis will be on Washington's use of military power to reach these objectives, though it will also be important to consider the other instruments of power used by the U S in this process. The paper will demonstrate that the political use of military power, in conjunction with the other instruments, was essential to the accomplishment of U S objectives. Specifically, U S military power was necessary to blunt North Korean military options, making U S economic sanctions credible and giving Pyongyang an incentive to accept a negotiated solution. The military instrument was

generally not used as a means of directly influencing North Korean negotiating behavior, with the major exception of the use of the Team Spirit exercise as a bargaining chip

While the U S -DPRK agreement is only a "framework" for resolving the problem and is regarded by some observers as unlikely actually to do so, it has already accomplished some U.S objectives and offers a good opportunity to reach others. This paper will not argue the extent to which the framework actually attains U S objectives but will largely assume that it represents some measure of success, although the jury is still out on this question. The analysis of the U.S strategy to address the North Korean nuclear issue will consider 1) the context for the issue, 2) U S political objectives, 3) U S military objectives, and 4) the means brought to bear to accomplish those objectives, not only those military but also those non-military². This analysis will then be used as the basis to consider lessons learned from the North Korean crisis and the negotiations leading to the Agreed Framework.

THE CONTEXT. NORTH KOREA AND THE BOMB

The North Korean nuclear issue dates to the 1950s, when the U S considered using atomic weapons during the Korean War. After the war, the U S deployed tactical nuclear weapons in the Republic of Korea (ROK) and indicated that it would retain the option of using nuclear weapons if necessary to stop any further North Korean military aggression³. As a consequence, Pyongyang decided as early as the 1950s to seek its own nuclear weapons capability, a quest undertaken clandestinely and largely indigenously. Nonetheless, in 1985 the DPRK yielded to international pressure by agreeing to sign the NPT, though it refused to sign a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) -- as required by the Treaty -- until 1992. At the same time, according to some experts, U S intelligence indicated

that North Korea was pursuing measures strongly suggestive of a nuclear weapons program, in spite of its NPT status⁴

These developments occurred in the context of a fundamental shift in the international political system. In late 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved -- and along with it the bipolar system that had featured international politics for nearly 50 years. This change had at least two major impacts on the North Korean nuclear situation. First, foreign political support for North Korea outside of China was largely eliminated. The new Russian Republic placed much greater emphasis on the economic dimension of foreign relations than had the Soviet Union, and as a result Russia placed high priority on good relations with Japan and South Korea -- if necessary at the expense of its relations with North Korea. The Soviet Union had already established diplomatic relations with the ROK in 1990 (without waiting for the U.S. or Japan to recognize North Korea), and Russia terminated its military alliance with the DPRK in February 1993. Moreover, the United States, North Korea's chief adversary beyond its rival to the south, was left as the world's only superpower. The U.S. was now in a better position to force its views on the DPRK, enhancing the characteristic paranoia and truculence of the latter.

A second major effect of the end of the Cold War was that, lacking the superpower rivalry and its attendant risks of global nuclear war, the United States and much of the international community came to regard nuclear proliferation as one of the most serious -- if not the most serious -- security threat of the post-Cold War world. Even China, the DPRK's only remaining friend of any importance, opposed North Korean acquisition of nuclear weapons, though Beijing's willingness to press the DPRK was limited. This development increased both international pressure on North Korea to fulfill its obligations under the NPT and the willingness of other states to take measures to compel Pyongyang to do so.

At the inter-Korean level, after four decades of intense hostility and sporadic diplomatic contacts, North-South relations underwent a thaw in 1991. This development occurred in the context of U.S. and South Korean efforts to persuade North Korea to complete its IAEA safeguards agreement, including the announcement that the annual Team Spirit exercise -- which the DPRK always regarded as having a uniquely nuclear emphasis and thus particularly objectionable -- would not take place in 1992. At the end of 1991, part of the thaw involved the signing of the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which included an NPT-type commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons, as well as agreement not to acquire reprocessing or uranium enrichment facilities. Unfortunately, this agreement soon became the basis for renewed recriminations, as the two sides could not reach agreement on a regime to verify compliance with the Declaration, and relations were soon frozen again. At the same time, South Korean economic superiority was putting it in a position of being able to defend against numerically superior North Korean military forces by investing a only small percentage of its GNP, though some American observers felt the ROK needed to do more to defend itself.

The last key element in the context for the North Korean nuclear issue was the DPRK's domestic circumstances. The "Great Leader" Kim Il-Sung, who was the only leader the country had known and whose status among his people was god-like, was growing quite old. This situation suggested the possibility of a difficult succession, and the erratic behavior of his son and chosen successor, Kim Jong-Il, was not encouraging. A related problem, suggests Paul Bracken, was the fact that the North Korean military was so subservient to the Kims that it was largely unwilling to inform them of any negative consequences of military actions they were considering.⁵ Yet, according to Bracken, the uncoordinated DPRK command system would not

permit real political control in a military conflict. These and other factors made it very hard to predict North Korean decisions on when and how to use force.

Finally, the already weak and isolated North Korean economy was falling apart. The Soviet Union began to require payment for oil in hard currency and at market prices in the late 1980s, and the effect on the North Korean economy was devastating. In 1992, even China -- the DPRK's other major oil supplier -- began to require payment in hard currency rather than barter, as had been common between the two.⁶ North Korea had almost no foreign currency reserves by 1993, and its GNP fell by nearly 4 percent in 1990 and 5 percent in both 1991 and 1992.⁷ Reports that the DPRK's capability to feed its people was deteriorating were beginning to appear. In spite of its philosophy of self-reliance, this severe economic plight made North Korea unusually vulnerable to economic sanctions.

The foregoing suggests some possible North Korean motivations for seeking nuclear weapons: deterrence of U.S. and South Korean conventional attack and/or nuclear use, diplomatic and negotiating leverage, compensation for international political isolation, a source of greater status and legitimacy, and the ultimate insurance policy for the survival of the regime.

U.S. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Nonproliferation

The ambiguity surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapons efforts required the U.S. to adopt somewhat conditional objectives. Ideally, the U.S. would prevent North Korea from obtaining nuclear weapons at all. However, in the event that the DPRK had already done so, the U.S. had to think in terms of preventing the acquisition of additional nuclear weapons and rolling back the program by eliminating those weapons already produced. This question is at the heart of a critical philosophical debate about nonproliferation that would be renewed with vigor in the

North Korean case is it enough to cap a proliferator's nuclear program, or should we pay the extra price to eliminate all nuclear weapon activities? The seriousness of the nonproliferation objective is reinforced by the possibility that North Korean acquisition of nuclear weapons could compel South Korea and/or Japan to follow suit, with the attendant grave geopolitical implications. The objective has two levels: upholding the integrity of the international nonproliferation regime, and dealing with the specific question of North Korea and the bomb.

Avoiding War

Concern about the likely devastating effects on the South Korean people and territory and on U.S. military forces in Korea made avoiding a war on the peninsula a U.S. political objective. This objective required the U.S. 1) to avoid initiating the use of military force, 2) to deter North Korean resort to force, 3) and to reassure South Korea that the DPRK was deterred. There was a great deal of public discussion about the possibility of destroying North Korea's nuclear program in a preemptive strike, and North Korea could not be sure that it would not be attempted.⁸ Secretary of Defense William Perry has said that the U.S. did not rule out the option of a preemptive strike.⁹

However, according to testimony before the Congress, in 1993 the Commander of U.S. Forces in Korea, General Robert W. Riscassi, did conclude that such a strike was not militarily feasible for four reasons: 1) the U.S. would not be able to destroy all of the nuclear program, 2) the result might be the spread of fallout to South Korea and Japan, 3) the North Koreans would undoubtedly retaliate, thereby precipitating a second Korean war, and 4) the casualties in such a conflict would be massive.¹⁰ In particular, the South Korean capital of Seoul, a mere 30 miles from the DMZ, was expected to suffer massive damage in any renewed Korean war. Such damage would be dramatically increased and could be extended to Japan if North Korea had in

fact produced any nuclear weapons and decided to use them. Air Force and intelligence community agencies were reported to have concluded that a military strike against the DPRK nuclear complex at Yongbyon "had a relatively low chance of success because so much of the complex is hidden in hillsides or underground."¹¹ Given these circumstances, the U.S. emphasis was on deterring the use of North Korean military power.

Assurance of U.S. Allies

The crisis was made particularly acute by the geographical proximity of U.S. allies Japan and South Korea. The ROK obviously had the most to lose, and Japan's concerns were growing as a result of increasing DPRK capabilities to strike Japanese territory with ballistic missiles, as well as Tokyo's nightmare scenario of a united Korea in possession of nuclear weapons. It was important for U.S. political and security interests to assure these allies that North Korean nuclear capabilities would be minimized through means that, for reasons given above, did not unduly risk conflict. This objective was important to ensure the stability of the region and avoid giving either ally an incentive to reconsider its own nuclear weapon options. Furthermore, the U.S. sought solutions that would increase the opportunity for North-South political dialogue and ultimate reunification, which appears to be the only means fully to resolve the nuclear problem. For these reasons, the Agreed Framework calls for North-South dialogue and for implementation of the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization.

It is important to note the tensions among these political objectives. Pressuring North Korea to give up its nuclear options would risk its lashing out militarily and thus the confidence of Japan and South Korea in U.S. leadership. On the other hand, failure to compel North Korea to fulfill its NPT obligations would undermine the international nonproliferation regime and conceivably lead Seoul and Tokyo to pursue nuclear weapons themselves. Moreover, inadequate

attention to military readiness would call into question U S resolve to deter North Korea and defend against any DPRK use of force. Reconciling these tensions required a difficult balancing act that involved eliminating North Korea's military options and inducing it to compromise on the nuclear program.

U.S. MILITARY OBJECTIVES

Deterrence

Having largely ruled out a preemptive strike, the primary U S military objective was deterring North Korean use of military force, conventional and -- should North Korea have already obtained nuclear weapons -- nuclear. Essentially, none of the U.S. political objectives could be achieved unless North Korea was deterred from taking military action. As discussed in greater detail below, deterrence was necessary to enable the U S to negotiate an arrangement that accomplishes its nonproliferation objectives. In the words of a 1994 special report of the U S Institute of Peace "Essential to an effective negotiating position is the maintenance of a credible U S /South Korean military deterrent, including maintenance of a prudent readiness posture."¹² Deterrence was also needed, by definition, to prevent North Korean nuclear aggression, as well as to reassure our allies that the U S was addressing their interests in nonproliferation and stability.

President Bill Clinton made the nuclear dimension of this military objective clear in a July 9, 1993, NBC television interview. "We would overwhelmingly retaliate if [the North Koreans] were to ever use, to develop and use nuclear weapons. It would mean the end of their country as they know it."¹³ In spite of the U S withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea, the U.S. ability to strike North Korea with nuclear weapons, either from aircraft based outside the peninsula or from the continental U S, was not in question.

The objective of conventional deterrence involved a trickier balance of having enough capability and the stated intention to deter, while avoiding actions that could provoke a DPRK attack. Some observers argued that not enough was being done to deter North Korean aggression, particularly given its threat to resort to military force if UN economic sanctions were imposed. Representative James A. Leach wrote of "a concern that inadequate attention has been paid to our bolstering our deterrent posture in South Korea and to reemphasizing the commitment of the U.S. to defend our treaty allies in Northeast Asia."¹⁴ On the other hand, North Korea threatened to respond with force to unspecified U.S. and South Korean military measures, complicating U.S. planning. The risk of provoking a conflict caused the U.S. to avoid certain military measures, though significant efforts were made to bolster the deterrent.

Defense

The second military objective was to be able to defend South Korea (and Japan, if necessary) should deterrence fail. Robert J. Art explains the theoretical difference between deterrence and defense:

Deterrence and defense are alike in that both are intended to protect the state or its closest allies from physical attacks. The purpose of both is dissuasion -- persuading others not to undertake actions harmful to oneself. Defense dissuades by presenting an unvanquishable military force. Deterrence dissuades by presenting the certainty of retaliatory devastation.¹⁵

A key U.S. military objective was thus to demonstrate to North Korea that use of force would not only invite great destruction on its territory -- for example, the President's statement about nuclear use -- but that it would not succeed in achieving any of its objectives. The continuing U.S. military presence in South Korea, the growth of South Korean military

capabilities, and the additional force deployments and readiness measures undertaken as a result of the nuclear crisis were all designed with both of these purposes in mind

Show of Force

A third military objective, meant for the purpose of serving the political objectives of nonproliferation and assurance, was to demonstrate force enhancements and readiness measures in order to gain leverage in negotiations with North Korea on the nuclear program. As with the political objectives, it is important to note the tension between this objective and deterrence, and the consequent need to balance action with restraint. Unlike deterrence and defense, this military objective sought to help compel Pyongyang to stop certain objectionable behavior (e.g., seeking nuclear weapons) and to begin certain desirable behavior (e.g., permitting inspections, dismantling the graphite-based nuclear program)

As suggested by Thomas Schelling in his book Arms and Influence, “compellence” is much more difficult to attain than deterrence.¹⁶ Since a key political objective was avoiding war, the use of military force directly to compel North Korea to accept our nonproliferation objectives (or to solve the problem without the need for negotiations) was largely out of the question. On the other hand, public discussion of striking the DPRK's nuclear facilities combined with U.S. capabilities for actually doing so may have had an effect on North Korean behavior. However, given obvious concerns about the risks of another Korean war, military power would largely have to be used indirectly as part of the overall effort to compel Pyongyang to accommodate our objectives, an effort that also utilized diplomatic and economic instruments.

THE NON-MILITARY MEANS

Three basic options for meeting U S objectives emerged a negotiated settlement, economic sanctions, and use of military power We will examine the first two in this section, the third in the next

Diplomacy

A negotiated settlement was preferred by most observers, as it would minimize the risks of war and increase the likelihood of a productive North-South dialogue The U S. had already experienced some success in addressing the nuclear issue through the use of diplomacy.

Combined with the September 1991 U S announcement of the worldwide withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons (implicitly including those in South Korea) and the suspension of Team Spirit 1992, the January 1992 meeting between Undersecretary of State Arnold Kanter and Kim Yong Sun, International Affairs Secretary of the Workers Party of the DPRK, smoothed the way for North Korea's decision to sign its IAEA safeguards agreement and allow the commencement of inspections in 1992 ¹⁷

However, North Korea's duplicity in fulfilling these commitments called into question whether any such solution would be reliable After signing the safeguards agreement, Pyongyang refused special inspections requested by the IAEA to reconcile inconsistencies between North Korean declarations about their activities and the information gained by the Agency during its initial inspections The significance of special inspections was that they would enable the IAEA to acquire information on the DPRK's past nuclear activities, which was the only way to determine whether they had enough plutonium to build a nuclear weapon In March 1993, under pressure to permit the special inspections of two undeclared facilities, North Korea

announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT. In June 1993, the U S and North Korea began the negotiations to resolve the problem that ultimately led to the Agreed Framework

Economic Sanctions

Throughout 1993 and into 1994, criticism of the diplomatic option mounted as North Korea continued to resist special inspections and began to refuse even regular inspections of declared facilities. In February 1994, Kathleen C. Bailey, former Assistant Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency testified before a House subcommittee "The United States has negotiated with Pyongyang for months with no resultant change in North Korea's behavior. This policy amounts to appeasement and it has got to stop."¹⁸ This kind of concern led primarily to increased calls for a harder line in the form of international economic sanctions. In forcing North Korea to pay a price for its nuclear defiance, a price that could be lifted once Pyongyang complied with its nonproliferation obligations, sanctions offered a compelling threat short of military action. Moreover, vulnerabilities in the DPRK economy suggested that sanctions could have a real impact if they cut off the flow of oil and hard currency. The severity of North Korea's economic plight meant that sanctions might force tough tradeoffs between expenditures on nuclear and conventional military forces.

However, as they often do, such sanctions carried a price for those imposing them as well. In particular, China -- now North Korea's main source of oil -- would have to abandon its needy friend, and Japan would have to prevent the flow of remittances to North Korea from Koreans living in Japan, which was regarded by Tokyo as politically risky. China's reluctance was the main obstacle to the imposition of U.N. sanctions. Another argument against sanctions was that, whatever price they imposed on North Korea, they were likely to do little directly to address the nuclear problem and might even cause Pyongyang to accelerate its work on nuclear

weapons. Finally, North Korea repeatedly threatened that it would regard sanctions as an act of war and would respond violently, if it deemed necessary

While they were never imposed, the threat of U.N sanctions may still have had an effect Michael Mazarr suggests that "the threat of economic and political sanctions -- as the background to a compelling offer of benefits -- can help create an environment in which a proliferant sees accommodation as a useful route "¹⁹ Indeed, calls for such sanctions were widespread, and they did appear to be the only option for the international community beyond negotiations, which appeared futile for many months In 1994 sanctions were in fact being drafted at the U N , and the prospect of a cutoff of oil and hard currency, as well as virtually all other economic intercourse, must have been daunting even to the isolated and autarkic regime in North Korea

Later in 1994, Pyongyang accepted a framework for resolving the nuclear issue that met many international concerns, including a commitment to give up virtually all activities relevant to nuclear weapons, in spite of its many incentives to retain its nuclear weapon option The head of the U.S delegation that negotiated the Agreed Framework, Ambassador Robert Gallucci, believes that the threat of sanctions was indeed a key factor in motivating North Korea to accept an agreement satisfactory to the U.S., suggesting that North Korea no longer had confidence that China would veto any sanctions in the U N Security Council ²⁰ Gallucci pointed out that this threat was strongest in June 1994, just as former President Jimmy Carter's visit to Pyongyang led to the DPRK agreement to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for the resumption of negotiations, suggesting a connection between the two This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that two of the main carrots granted North Korea in the Agreed Framework (the provision of nuclear power reactors and heavy oil) involve economic resources, suggesting that economic

considerations were central in North Korea's weighing of the costs and benefits of accommodation

THE MILITARY MEANS

North Korea's threat to use force if sanctions were adopted appears to have been a factor in persuading the international community not to impose sanctions. Why, then, would the threat of sanctions have been successful? The argument here is that military measures taken by the U S and South Korea to ensure that the military objectives of deterrence and defense could be met in effect eliminated the North Korean option of using military force. By threatening to use force, the DPRK may have helped prevent sanctions because one U S political objective was to avoid war. At the same time, by shoring up the defense of South Korea, the U S may have convinced Pyongyang that it could never successfully carry out its threat. This meant that sanctions might eventually be applied, because the international community would recognize that North's military threats were hollow. In particular, the confidence of Japan and South Korea, two key players in any sanctions effort and those most likely to suffer if North Korea carried out its threats, was being bolstered.

The Need to Take Military Measures

Both North Korea's capabilities and apparent intentions lent credibility to its threats to use force. In the fall of 1993, as the risk of war began to heighten, the DPRK had active military forces of 1.27 million, nearly twice the combined total of U S and ROK forces.²¹ 100,000 of these were North Korean special forces, many of whose mission was to infiltrate the ROK to attack key assets such as ports, airfields, bridges, and communications centers.²² Its equipment included 4200 tanks (over twice the allied total), 2500 armored personnel carriers, and 9080 artillery pieces and multiple rocket launchers (also over twice the allied total). In assessing the

threat, considerable emphasis was given to the DPRK's growing surface-to-surface missile (SSM) capabilities. Reportedly, 10-15 Scuds were being produced a month.²³ In addition, North Korea was developing longer range missiles capable of striking Japan.²⁴ South Korea had only a handful of SSMs, and the U.S. none in country. North Korea's air force of 80 bombers, 730 fighters, and 605 transport aircraft also substantially exceeded allied totals, though they could not be expected to prevent the allies from eventually gaining air superiority in a war. The significant DPRK numerical advantages were partially offset by the qualitative advantages of allied equipment, and North Korean training was sharply limited by constraints on resources, such as oil.

However, even more menacing than the DPRK quantitative advantages was the fact that roughly 65-70 percent of North Korea's forces are deployed within 60 miles of the North-South Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and postured offensively.²⁵ Long-range artillery deployed forward, as well as SSMs, were capable of striking Seoul. North Korea was known to possess chemical weapons, which could be used in attacks on troops or civilian centers. In addition, the forward deployment of this massive force meant that U.S.-ROK forces would have only 24 to 76 hours of warning of an attack.²⁶ Furthermore, the DPRK had a penchant for placing the entire nation on alert during political crises, such as during Team Spirit in March 1993. This alert included declaring a state of "near-war" with the U.S., blackouts in Pyongyang, and civil defense exercises and military drills for work units and even children, in addition to other measures such as banning visas to foreigners and jamming foreign radio broadcasts.²⁷ In January 1994, when tensions over IAEA inspections were high, the North Korean military was again placed on alert and 300 anti-aircraft guns were deployed around the Yongbyon nuclear facility.²⁸

Two conclusions seem reasonable from a net assessment of military capabilities in Korea in 1993 and early 1994. First, the situation was highly unstable, as close to a hair-trigger for major war as anywhere on earth. Second, while North Korea was unlikely to prevail in an invasion, given the allied qualitative advantages and the U.S. reinforcements that would be forthcoming, damage to South Korea would be severe, especially in Seoul and its urbanized corridor extending north.²⁹

North Korea's intentions are notoriously difficult to ascertain. As Paul Bracken reminds us, its decisions about the use of military force were highly unpredictable. However, the DPRK's frequently bellicose words indicate that it had every intention to resort to war if pressed beyond a point on the nuclear issue. When the crisis over special inspections that led to NPT withdrawal was reaching its first peak in February 1993, the North Korean official newspaper Rodon Shinum threatened that "if a special inspection or sanctions are forced upon us and the inviolable soil of our country is infringed upon by big powers, it would result in plunging the whole land of the North and South into the holocaust of a war."³⁰ When tensions over inspections were rising again in early 1994, President Kim Il Sung said that "pressure or threat will have no effect on us. Such an attempt may invite catastrophe, far from finding a solution to the problem."³¹ And as North-South talks broke down in March 1994, the North Korean delegate exclaimed that if the U.S. and ROK pressured his country on the nuclear issue, "Seoul will turn into a sea of fire."³²

It would be natural to discount this harsh rhetoric as standard North Korean bluster. To some extent of course, this is precisely what the words represented. After all, one of North Korea's objectives was to ensure that special inspections and sanctions were not imposed. However, careful and responsible observers were unwilling to dismiss the threats as mere

bluffing In April 1993, General Rumsfeld told a congressional committee that North Korea might launch an attack "as an uncontrollable consequence of total desperation or internal instability"³³ The following January, General James Clapper, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, testified that "North Korea will remain the most critical military threat to the U S through the middle part of the 1990s" and that "the North continues to plan for a military option"³⁴

The same month, Senators Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn told a press conference in Tokyo that it was time to begin preparing Americans and others for possible North Korean reactions to economic sanctions Lugar pointed out that the North Koreans have said that "they are not going to stand by for even mild (economic) measures That implies a degree of danger that we all ought to understand"³⁵ The South Korean Defense Minister, Rhee Byoung-tae, also seemed persuaded of the seriousness of the North Korean threats "We anticipate a high possibility of military provocation by North Korea through 1994 and 1995"³⁶ The Minister also reported that North Korean war readiness in June 1994 was the highest it had been since 1990³⁷

Military Measures Taken or Considered

Given North Korean military threats and capabilities, U S leaders decided that prudence required action to bolster the allied military posture During 1993 and especially 1994, allied forces were enhanced in several ways that contributed to deterrence and defense, though concern about the possibility of provoking the North into war called for a careful balancing act Too much use of the military instrument could provoke a war, too little could give the North Koreans the confidence that they could carry out their threats and thus undermine the credibility of economic sanctions

Thus, while U S troops in South Korea had been reduced from 44,000 in 1990 to about 37,000 at the end of 1992, plans for further withdrawals were deferred because of the nuclear situation³⁸ During the crisis over Team Spirit and NPT withdrawal in March 1993, the ROK considered asking the U S to retain in South Korea after Team Spirit ended some of the thousands of additional troops participating in the exercise, but this option was later rejected in hopes of defusing tensions³⁹ Visiting Seoul in July, President Clinton told the South Koreans that "our troops will stay here as long as the Korean people want and need us," and this commitment was reiterated to ROK President Kim Young-sam in Washington in November.⁴⁰ In 1994, the President sent President Kim a letter indicating that the U.S would consider a North Korean attack on South Korea to be an attack on the U S⁴¹

Planning to strengthen the U S -ROK deterrent became more serious in late 1993, as calls for sanctions increased in response to DPRK unwillingness to permit either special or regular inspections of its nuclear facilities In December, The New York Times reported "conflicting Pentagon assessments about whether American and South Korean forces in the region would be able to withstand a North Korean attack " The Times indicated that General Gary Luck, the new Commander of U S Forces in Korea, was preparing "flexible deterrent options" and that, in the event of sanctions, the U S would seek "to strike a balance between strengthening American forces in the region and avoiding measures that might provoke the North Koreans "⁴²

Among the options considered to address the North Korean nuclear crisis were. 1) expediting existing plans to deploy Patriot air defense missiles to counter the Scud threat; 2) following through with plans to introduce Apache heavy attack helicopters into the ROK, 3) deploying advanced counter-artillery radars, 4) increasing U S air and ground force levels, including deployment of F-117s and long-range bombers to the region, 5) moving new munitions

and spare parts into the ROK, including those for F-15Es and F-117s, 6) moving an aircraft carrier closer to Korea and/or stationing a second one in the region, 7) deploying additional support personnel to the ROK in order to facilitate combat force deployments in the event of conflict, 8) increasing the alert status of American forces, 9) increasing intelligence assets, including satellite surveillance, dedicated to collection against North Korea, and 10) holding the annual Team Spirit exercise⁴³ As 1994 proceeded, these options were divided into those actually taken to enhance deterrence and those that would have been taken in the event that sanctions were imposed The latter were further divided into categories calibrated to the toughness of proposed international sanctions against the DPRK

Measures Taken Among the options that were taken in 1994 to bolster deterrence of North Korea were the deployments of Patriots and Apaches to the ROK, both of which had been previously planned as part of efforts to modernize American forces⁴⁴ Interest in bringing Patriots to the ROK had increased as a result of its role in defending against Iraqi Scud attacks during the Gulf War Concerns about the North Korean missile threat led the U.S in January 1994 to announce the plan to deploy a Patriot antimissile battalion to South Korea to defend airfields and seaports It was reported that this battalion would operate the most modern version of the Patriot, which "contains improved computer software for tracking and guiding interceptor missiles to incoming ballistic missiles," drawing on technology developed in the Strategic Defense Initiative⁴⁵ The military significance of the Patriots is that they could protect airfields and ports, thereby denying the DPRK its strategy of preempting with missiles as a means of hindering the allied objectives of gaining air superiority and reinforcements

The desire to avoid provoking the DPRK to become either more unreasonable in negotiations or more aggressive militarily led U S and ROK spokesmen to emphasize the

defensive nature of this plan and the fact that it had been made in the late 1980s. However, there were hints in both Washington and Seoul that the expedited Patriot deployment was regarded as a means of pressuring the North Koreans to yield on inspections issues.⁴⁶ The North Korean reaction was predictably harsh, calling the plan an "unpardonable, grave military challenge" that would "increase the danger of war."⁴⁷ The deployment was delayed in February owing to ROK anxieties about the DPRK reaction, but when the North Koreans blocked important inspection activities in March and sanctions began once again to seem likely, President Clinton announced that the Patriots would be deployed. Another example of the careful balancing act was that the Patriots were sent by sea, rather than by air, in order "to avoid a sense of crisis."⁴⁸

The U.S. also decided to carry out plans to replace Cobra attack helicopters with two battalions of more modern Apaches in March 1994. To prevent the North Koreans from reacting until they were in a ready status, the Apaches were deployed to Korea under unusually stealthy procedures.⁴⁹ Rather than being rotated out of the ROK, as would have been normal procedure, some Cobras were kept in South Korea as a means of bolstering U.S. capabilities. In addition, advanced counter-artillery radars were deployed to the ROK.⁵⁰ U.S. Air Force capabilities were enhanced with the movement of additional munitions and spare parts to the ROK. This measure was taken in order to permit such aircraft as F-117s and F-15Es, which in the event of war would be brought in from outside of Korea, to go into combat more rapidly upon arrival.⁵¹

Another option that was exercised was the positioning of two aircraft carriers in the vicinity of the Korean peninsula for a good portion of 1994. The USS Independence of the Seventh Fleet is based in Japan. It has taken part in Team Spirit and frequently been available for Korean contingencies, as it was in the first half of 1994 (it was in dry docks later in the year). In spite of plans for the Independence to participate in exercises off Hawaii in June, officials

were reported to have considered keeping it west of Midway Island to be available for duty in Korea if necessary⁵² Another report indicated that the Independence was ordered to remain within a week's sailing time of Korea⁵³ In addition, a battle group including the USS Kitty Hawk of the Fifth Fleet, which had been sailing from the Persian Gulf to the U S West Coast, was diverted to the north Pacific for the better part of 1994 as a means of showing the flag⁵⁴

In general, alert levels were increased during this period, although operations in the Demilitarized Zone were reduced to minimize the chance of incidents Another option that was exercised was an increase in intelligence gathering in Korea In January CIA Director James Woolsey visited Seoul, and an ROK official informed the press that a U S intelligence support team had been sent to South Korea⁵⁵ In June, Assistant Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter indicated in a speech that the U S was "significantly increasing our intelligence assets" in the Korean peninsula⁵⁶

Measures Not Taken. Other possible actions were not taken because they were considered unnecessary and/or overly provocative Some of these options would have been exercised only if stringent international sanctions against North Korea had been adopted Air and ground force troop levels were not increased, and F-15Es and F-117s were not deployed to the ROK However, it is conceivable that the fact that these were known to be options may have contributed to deterrence Team Spirit was not conducted in 1994, though as discussed below, that decision was related as much to the negotiating situation as to military readiness. Other options were not reported publicly but may have been considered, such as increasing exercise activities other than Team Spirit, deploying AWACS, maritime prepositioning ships, and hospital ships, and conducting special operations activities⁵⁷

Even if the relatively modest measures that were taken did not significantly change the military balance on the peninsula, in the minds of the North Koreans they probably raised the price of carrying out their military threats and thus reduced the chance that they would actually do so. This effect on their perceptions in turn forced them to take the threat of sanctions seriously. Ambassador Gallucci thinks that the military measures taken were significant in persuading the DPRK to seek a negotiated settlement, suggesting that they were among the key factors that "conditioned the atmosphere for the talks." He suggested that even those actions not taken had an effect, in that the North Koreans expected that the U S would make further military preparations in the absence of a deal. In general, Gallucci believes that the outcome of the North Korean nuclear issue demonstrates that diplomacy can be enhanced if the military posture that backs it up is strong.⁵⁸

THE QUASI-MILITARY MEANS

While these steps, as well as the ultimate deterrent of U S strategic nuclear weapons, served as sticks that convinced North Korea that it really had no military options, other measures offered carrots to North Korea for good behavior. These political-military, or "quasi-military," measures included the Team Spirit exercise, the withdrawal of U S nuclear weapons from South Korea, and a U S assurance not to use nuclear weapons against North Korea. Quasi-military measures will be defined as those that are inherently military in nature but that can be utilized in more of a political fashion, given that they also have an inherently political element or that their military significance has diminished.

The process of using quasi-military means to address the nuclear issue began with the cancellation of Team Spirit 1992 and the withdrawal of U S nuclear weapons from South Korea. The credibility of using tactical nuclear weapons, particularly in densely populated areas such as

Europe and Korea, had been in doubt for decades, and the 1991 decision to remove them from ground and sea forces worldwide was largely a recognition of this reality. Nevertheless, the heavily political dimension of nuclear weapons would make this decision a useful one in gaining bargaining leverage with North Korea. President George Bush announced the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in September 1991, but the U.S. maintained its "neither confirm nor deny" policy and thus did not explicitly state whether nuclear weapons were being removed from the ROK. However, in December ROK President Roh Tae Woo announced that no U.S. nuclear weapons were based in South Korea, and the U.S. State Department concurred with the statement.⁵⁹

The principal quasi-military instrument was the annual Team Spirit exercise, which became an integral part of U.S. negotiating strategy. Several factors made Team Spirit an ideal bargaining chip. The DPRK had long railed against this exercise as a drill for offensive military action against North Korea, including the use of nuclear weapons. This made its cancellation valuable to the DPRK, at least for perceptual reasons. Moreover, over the years Team Spirit became less essential to U.S.-ROK military readiness, as other exercises with lower visibility came to replace some of its functions. Among these were the Ulchi Focus Lens command post exercise, the Foal Eagle rear area exercise, and the Reception, Staging Onward Movement and Integration (RSOI) exercise. Given the substantial costs of Team Spirit, which at its peak involved nearly 200,000 U.S. and ROK troops, these smaller exercises were developed in part as a means of maintaining readiness at a lower cost. Finally, the fact that Team Spirit had been held annually and could be scheduled or canceled as necessary made it useful as leverage in negotiations.

Thus, in 1992 Team Spirit became essentially a bargaining chip -- either by holding it as a means of pressuring the DPRK that could be traded away as a reward for good behavior, or by canceling it as an inducement to elicit such behavior. This meant that the exercise was scheduled or suspended, held or not held, depending mostly on the negotiating situation. Given the stakes involved in the crisis and the fact that Team Spirit is a combined exercise, this process sometimes led to frictions within the U S bureaucracy or in coordinating with the ROK. Nevertheless, Team Spirit was increasingly regarded as unnecessary for military readiness. In late 1991, the U S deferred to the ROK's preference to cancel Team Spirit as a reward to the North Koreans for signing the North-South Denuclearization agreement in December 1991 and an incentive for signing the safeguards agreement, which was completed in January 1992.

However, in talks on implementing the North-South agreement in 1992, the North showed little willingness to accept bilateral inspections and demanded the right to inspect U S military bases in South Korea. This in turn led the ROK to ask the U S to hold Team Spirit in March 1993 as a means of pressuring North Korea that could be traded away at the right price. Immediately after Team Spirit was completed in March, in an effort to forestall North Korean NPT withdrawal, the U S and the ROK began speaking publicly about downgrading or canceling the exercise for 1994, as well as providing North Korea with U S security guarantees and permitting it to inspect military bases in the south.⁶⁰

In June 1993, the North Korea did agree to suspend its NPT withdrawal in exchange for a U S assurance not to use nuclear weapons against North Korea, but a commitment not to hold Team Spirit was not included in the deal, nor did the DPRK agree to special inspections. Given the failure to resolve the inspections impasse, which was soon to be worsened by Pyongyang's obstruction of regular inspections on the grounds that North Korea was no longer subject to full

NPT obligations, the U S and ROK continued to say, at least publicly, that they might hold Team Spirit in 1994, while holding out the possibility of canceling it in exchange for DPRK agreement to regular inspections

It was becoming even more clear that the U S was viewing Team Spirit as a bargaining chip. A U S official told The New York Times in November 1993 that "the general consensus is that Team Spirit is not part of our (military) planning, so the question is, how does it figure into our diplomatic efforts?"⁶¹ In January 1994, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin explicitly called Team Spirit a "bargaining chip" the future of which depended on progress in the nuclear negotiations.⁶² The North Koreans also proclaimed their recognition that Team Spirit was now no more than a bargaining chip, though they seemed prepared to pay a price to have it canceled.⁶³ In 1994, the Team Spirit-for-regular inspections bargain became a routine part of the negotiations. From January to March, in response to the fits and starts of the negotiations and inspections, the exercise was suspended, rescheduled, suspended again, and finally deferred until the fall, pending negotiating progress. Once the high-level talks that finally led to the Agreed Framework were resumed in July, Team Spirit became part of the larger package deal that emerged in the final settlement. The U S and the ROK finally announced cancellation of Team Spirit 1994 just after the signing of the Agreed Framework.⁶⁴

SUMMARY

The North Korean case demonstrates how diplomatic, economic, and military instruments of power can be integrated in a political-military strategy designed to address a significant threat to U S and international security. This experience also shows how important it is to balance military action and restraint in such a crisis.

Specifically, this analysis suggests that the political use of military power was necessary to persuade North Korea to accept the concessions it made in the October 1994 Agreed Framework, thereby enabling the U S to achieve its political objectives. While, for the most part, military power was not used directly to compel North Korean accommodation, the deterrence and defense it provided was necessary to make the compellent threat of economic sanctions real. Isolated and economically powerless, North Korea's only means of responding to the prospect of sanctions was to threaten to go to war. However, judicious military measures taken by the U S and South Korea reduced North Korea's perception that it could successfully use military force in response to sanctions. In turn, sanctions were needed to make diplomacy work. North Korea had powerful incentives to hunker down with its growing nuclear program, and the prospect of even greater isolation, including the elimination of its sources of oil and hard currency, appears to have contributed significantly in persuading it to give up its nuclear option.

In addition, certain quasi-military measures taken by the U S may also have more directly helped turn the tide in North Korea's decision to accept a negotiated solution. Without detracting from the deterrent, such measures as withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the ROK, nuclear assurances to North Korea, and cancellation of Team Spirit provided carrots for good DPRK behavior. These measures cost the U S very little politically or militarily but, along with the U S agreement to support North Korea's request for nuclear power reactors and willingness to improve political relations with the DPRK, helped the U S to obtain a deal that accomplishes its political objectives.

Indeed, all three U S political objectives were achieved in this case. First, North Korea will stay in the NPT and be subject to IAEA inspections, eventually including special inspections and the dismantling of its existing graphite-based nuclear program, thus serving the objective of

nonproliferation. Second, the muted use of military power, carefully balancing enhancements to our deterrent with abstaining from measures that might have provoked the unpredictable DPRK, avoided a military conflict. Finally, accomplishment of the first two objectives and the enhanced evidence of U.S. commitment to their security provided clear assurances to the key allies in the region, the ROK and Japan, which in turn contributed to nonproliferation by reducing any perception on the part of these allies that they might need nuclear weapons.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Agreed Framework will take years to implement and cannot yet be regarded as a clear-cut success, but what lessons might be drawn for other potential cases of proliferation from the North Korean experience?

Contrary to some criticism of the precedent set by the Agreed Framework, it is unlikely that a comparable price for nonproliferation will have to be paid in the foreseeable future. The question of precedent has become a subject of considerable controversy. A number of observers have argued that, by allowing a state to trade the fulfillment of grave commitments that it has already voluntarily undertaken in exchange for major political and economic benefits, U.S. policy sets a bad precedent for nonproliferation in other places. This argument has merit, given the potential for a country like Iran to emulate the DPRK example. It is notable that Iran has complained about how it has been treated in the nuclear area compared to North Korea.⁶⁵

However, the unique nature of the North Korean situation ameliorates the risks of this precedent. Most importantly, as has been pointed out by the Clinton administration and others, no other country of proliferation concern currently has a nuclear program like that of the DPRK. With its graphite-based reactors and reprocessing capabilities, the DPRK program is well designed to obtain plutonium for nuclear weapons, which makes it vital for nonproliferation.

reasons to eliminate the program, even at the cost of providing it with light-water reactors. Of the countries with undeclared nuclear weapon capabilities or intentions, only India, Israel, and Pakistan are in a position to produce weapons-grade nuclear material. But in these cases, it is really too late to prevent the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability.

The other nuclear programs of greatest concern -- those of Iran, Iraq, and Libya -- are so rudimentary that replacing them with new nuclear facilities in a North Korea-type deal would be a net nonproliferation loss and is very unlikely to be acceptable to the international community. Thus, the fear of a bad precedent needs to take account of the fact that in the real world there may be little chance that the precedent could be followed in the near term.

Should another country of proliferation concern obtain a new capability to produce weapons-grade material, as North Korea may have done in the early 1990s, the example of a strategy combining diplomatic, economic, and military instruments to create incentives to abjure nuclear weapons would be useful to consider. Both Michael Mazarr and William Berry, authors of key works on the North Korean nuclear issue, have suggested that if such a strategy worked in a situation as difficult as that of the DPRK, it is likely to work elsewhere.⁶⁶ The circumstances of other proliferators will vary, but the successful strategy for dealing with North Korea is certainly worth careful study.

Indeed, the precedent set by the strategy to deal with North Korea has some rather positive aspects. The DPRK has demonstrated that some countries' desire to undermine the international status quo may be so strong that they will seek nuclear weapons in spite of being an NPT party and that these countries are not likely to accept a negotiated settlement without a significant compellent threat, such as international economic sanctions or use of military force. Iraq has already shown itself to be such a country, Iran and Libya are other likely candidates.

The experience with the DPRK indicates that even the threat of economic sanctions can have a major impact on such a country, though it is possible that the threat would have an effect only if the proliferator is in dire economic circumstances, such as those of North Korea. Like North Korea, the unpredictability and militancy of these states make it desirable that the "compellence" not come in the form of a military threat or attack. The likelihood of their lashing out in desperation seems too high. On the other hand, the DPRK example shows that prudent military measures may be needed to back up diplomacy and threats of sanctions.

Quasi-military instruments may occasionally have political utility, including as bargaining chips. The relative importance of the carrots and sticks used to influence North Korean behavior is difficult to assess. North Korea's motivations are nearly opaque, but the tenacity of its effort to hold onto its nuclear weapon option suggests that both carrots and sticks were needed. In any event, the use of quasi-military means to obtain negotiating leverage with North Korea may also be applicable to other situations. It is difficult to know whether such measures as canceling U.S. military exercises or providing security assurances would lead to meaningful nonproliferation concessions from other potential proliferators, though our policies should keep these possibilities in mind.

Indeed, the use of Team Spirit in dealing with the DPRK may suggest that other redundant capabilities or readiness measures may be useful as bargaining chips, as were the obsolete Jupiter missiles in Turkey that became part of the negotiations during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. In the latter case, the U.S. ability to exploit the missiles was an accident, since President Kennedy's orders to remove the missiles had not yet been carried out. Perhaps the U.S. should more consciously plan to utilize obsolete or redundant assets like Team Spirit or Jupiter missiles for negotiating leverage, although such an approach would clearly have cost

implications. In addition, the leverage gained from seeking to create bargaining chips may not be worth the bureaucratic or intra-alliance controversies created by such efforts. These problems suggest that future opportunities of this sort will probably have to be exploited as they arise, as they were in both the Jupiter and Team Spirit cases, rather than actually being planned. Furthermore, in the end, the most useful inducements are likely to be more purely political and economic in nature (e.g., diplomatic recognition, economic assistance).

Finally, the most important lesson from the experience with North Korea about the political use of military power is that it may be necessary to deter and defend against a heavily armed proliferator threatening military aggression to resist international nonproliferation pressures. The possibility that such a country will already be in a position to use nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction and the need to protect against such use through military measures are the key issues addressed by counterproliferation policy. The North Korean case suggests that military force may be useful in less direct ways to help persuade a proliferator not to seek nuclear weapons in the first place, or to stop whatever efforts it may have under way. The key point is to remove the option that such a country might have to resort to force to achieve its objectives, thereby confronting it with a choice of seeking a negotiated settlement or accepting the consequences of any sanctions that might be applied.

ENDNOTES

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