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U.S.-North Korean Relations: From the Agreed Framework to the Six-party Talks*

Larry Niksch
Specialist in Asian Affairs
Congressional Research Service

U.S.-North Korean relations since the end of the Cold War have been dominated by the issue of North Korea's nuclear program, specifically by evidence and a U.S. assessment that North Korea has used its nuclear program to attempt to produce nuclear weapons. From the time of a major policy speech in Seoul by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in early 1991 to the present, successive U.S. administrations have had a priority policy objective of eliminating the nuclear program. The objective expanded after 1998 to include North Korean missiles and chemical and biological weapons. The United States has attempted three different diplomatic initiatives with this aim: the negotiations that led to the signing of the U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework in October 1994; the Perry initiative of 1999-2000; and the six-party talks of 2003-2004. The United States, with South Korea, also initiated four-party talks with North Korea, including China, over a Korean peace treaty in the 1997-1999 period.

North Korean policies have created obstacles for the United States in several ways. First, North Korea operated nuclear facilities for several years prior to the Agreed Framework and likely had produced weapons grade plutonium and even possibly one or two nuclear weapons, according to U.S. intelligence estimates. Thus, the task of eliminating the nuclear program was more complicated than just securing a dismantling of the nuclear infrastructure. Second, the closed, secretive society of North Korea allowed it to conduct clandestine nuclear activities that were not known fully to the United States. Third, North Korea conducted a skilled but manipulative negotiating strategy with the United States that limited and deferred in time its obligations to the United States or resulted in stalemated negotiations. Such a stalemated negotiation is the situation that North Korea has created in 2005 at a time when it apparently has made new advances in its nuclear program.

North Korea has sought several objectives in its relations with the United States during this period. Securing economic subsidies has been a major goal as the North Korean economy progressive declined

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in the 1990s and massive malnutrition appeared among the North Korean people. North Korea sought both food aid from the United States and U.S. approval of North Korean access to financial assistance from international financial institutions. Pyongyang also asserted that it wished diplomatic relations with the United States. There is, however, some doubts over the credibility of this stated goal, since North Korea has rejected since 1996 U.S. proposals to exchange liaison offices as a prelude to diplomatic relations. (The Agreed Framework called for liaison offices.) North Korea also has sought to preserve its options for producing and/or possessing nuclear weapons, missiles, and chemical and biological weapons. It succeeded in the Agreed Framework in deferring well into the future any accounting of the weapons grade plutonium and/or nuclear weapons, which it had produced prior to 1994. As it signed the Agreed Framework, it simultaneously began negotiations with Pakistan that led to a deal in 1996, if not before, under which Pakistan supplied North Korea with the technology and components for a secret uranium enrichment program, another way of producing nuclear weapons. North Korea also conducted secret nuclear technology cooperation with at least Iran and possibly other countries. As its missile development program grew, it sold missiles and missile technology to Pakistan (part of the 1996 deal), Iran, Syria, Libya, and Yemen.

Weaknesses in the U.S. negotiating approach with North Korea and U.S. attempts to secure an end to North Korean nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction programs have suffered from a pattern of weaknesses and limitations throughout all four negotiations between the United States and North Korea, including the current six-party talks. The first element of this pattern has been the U.S. approach to negotiations with Pyongyang. This approach is modeled on how the United States negotiates with most countries, countries that the United States considers to be normal. The United States has gone into each negotiation with North Korea with specific objectives but has made general, loosely-unstructured proposals. U.S. proposals have contained little detail and specificity on the measures to be taken by each side and have been particularly vague regarding the sequences of actions and responses by Washington and Pyongyang. Moreover, the United States has accepted *de facto* a kind of principle of equality of agendas between the United States and North Korea. North Korea has been able to establish its agenda in a lead, sometimes dominant, position in negotiations. Thus, U.S. negotiators accepted the incorporation of North Korean proposals into the negotiating agenda to produce a compromise settlement in the 1994 Agreed Framework. Even in the six-party talks, the Bush Administration has given North Korean an

open playing field to promote its proposals and agenda in the talks and gain sympathy from the other six-party governments for key elements of this agenda.

One result of this equality of agendas has been that the United States has ended up "haggling at the bazaar" with North Korea over the wording and language of each sentence, paragraph, and clause of a prospective agreement. U.S. negotiators have accepted many North Korean proposals containing words and phrases that are vague, lack specificity, and are subject to multiple, conflicting interpretations. The United States also has agreed to negotiate new, unexpected North Korean proposals and demands. The unanticipated nature of these proposals, often stated as demands, frequently changed the nature of negotiations and placed the United States further on the defensive.

North Korea also has waged a concerted propaganda campaign as part of its negotiating strategy. North Korean propaganda has promoted its proposals as benign and peace-seeking. During the six-party talks, it increasingly influenced South Korean elite and public opinion and Chinese opinion to view North Korea's position with sympathy and view U.S. positions with greater suspicion. The United States did not appear to recognize the effectiveness of this propaganda campaign, and Washington did not introduce a U.S. counter-propaganda strategy in any of the four negotiations. This has particularly damaged the Bush administration in the six-party talks, as China, South Korea, and Russia have openly supported key North Korean positions and proposals, including Pyongyang's core reward for a freeze proposal, viz., that it should retain a peaceful nuclear program, and its repeated denials that it has a secret highly-enriched uranium program.

The end result of U.S-North Korean negotiations has been either an agreement, which defers North Korean obligations and/or settlement of certain issues well into the future and/or leaves them vague, or a stalemated negotiation that produces nothing. When the United States refused to negotiate over North Korean proposals without putting forth detailed proposals of its own, it ended up bearing some of the onus for the resulting stalemate, as occurred in the four-party talks and is now occurring in the six-party talks.

The negotiation of the Agreed Framework was dominated by the proposals that North Korea had made as early as May 1994 to visitors such as Selig Harrison: a freeze of its plutonium facilities, the U.S. provision of light water nuclear reactors, and U.S. deliveries of heavy oil until the light water reactors were completed.[1] The freeze, which contained North Korea's plutonium program, was beneficial to U.S. interests; but other provisions of the Agreed Framework were not

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beneficial and sewed the seeds of today's situation. The Clinton Administration abandoned early in the negotiations the objective of securing the removal from North Korea of the 8,000 fuel rods, which North Korea had unloaded from its operating nuclear reactor in May 1994, triggering the crisis that led to the negotiations.[2] The language of the Agreed Framework regarding the ultimate disposition of the fuel rods was deliberately vague and closer to North Korea's position. Today, North Korea has abrogated its obligations in the Agreed Framework regarding the 8,000 fuel rods, and it now claims to have reprocessed them into weapons-grade plutonium sufficient to produce four to six atomic bombs, according to experts. The goal of dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear facilities was put vaguely into the distant future under the Agreed Framework. The role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was neutered into a monitoring-only role rather than one of inspections. U.S. negotiators sought a specific reference to IAEA special inspections but accepted vague language that was subject to differing interpretations. With the IAEA checked, North Korea succeeded in breaking its obligations under the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty and its 1992 safeguards agreement with the IAE without suffering any penalties.

The U.S. negotiating agenda in the four-party talks from 1997 to 1999 was even more obtuse. The stated objective of the talks was to negotiate a Korean peace treaty. However, in the 18 months of talks, the Clinton Administration never attempted to sit down with South Korea and develop a detailed joint agenda of issues to be settled in such a peace treaty. The lack of a comprehensive agenda left the United States in a defensive position as North Korea pressed for a U.S.-North Korean bilateral peace treaty to include the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea. Again, North Korea had achieved equality, if not dominance, of its agenda. The Clinton Administration's response was to reject any negotiation over U.S. troops. The United States and South Korea never put forth logical proposals regarding the role of U.S. troops in a Korean peace settlement.[3] Most disappointing at the time, Washington and Seoul did not use the negotiations to develop joint proposals for mutual conventional force reductions and pullbacks of forces from the demilitarized zone. The failure to develop a comprehensive proposal for a peace agreement, including proposals for mutual conventional force pullbacks and reductions, later was a major factor in the contention between Presidents Bush and Kim Dae-jung in the March 2001 summit and contributed to the popular South Korean discontent with U.S. troops, which erupted in anti-American demonstrations in 2002.

Under the Perry initiative of 1999 and 2000, the Clinton Administration did develop more specific objectives and a more specific negotiating agenda over North Korea's missile program in October-December 2000. U.S. negotiators did present to the North Koreans specific requirements for a cessation of development and production of missiles, and an end to the testing of missiles, and the dismantlement of the approximately 100 Nodong missiles with a range that could hit Japan. However, negotiations did not begin until late October 2000 with the clock running out on the Clinton Administration's term of office. State Department officials had stated in October 1999, a year earlier, that a high-level North Korean envoy would arrive in Washington by the end of the month and missiles talks would immediately follow. Pyongyang's envoy did arrive in October, but it was October 2000. The reason: North Korea presented new preconditions for the visit and missile talks that caught the Clinton Administration by surprise. North Korea first demanded that the United States provide it with electricity. It then demanded that the United States remove North Korea from the list of terrorism-sponsoring countries. North Korea had changed the subject of negotiations, and its proposals dominated the agenda of talks well into the summer of 2000. The Clinton Administration's inflexible desire for the high level North Korean visit resulted in its *de facto* agreement to negotiate over these issues, another example of allowing an equality of agendas. Thus, the Administration was unable to establish a dominant position in negotiations, focusing on the missile issue. When it finally succeeded in achieving this in late 2000, it was too late. Moreover, under the Perry initiative, the Clinton Administration chose not to act for two years on the evidence it was acquiring that North Korea had a secret highly enriched uranium (HEU) program.

Persistent U.S. Assumptions of a North Korean Collapse

The second element in the pattern of U.S. policy weaknesses and limitations relates to the assumptions held by U.S. policymakers regarding North Korea. A coterie of Clinton Administration officials in the 1994-1996 period and an influential group of Bush Administration officials today believe that the North Korean regime of Kim Jong-il is close to collapse. Clinton Administration officials justified the limitations in the Agreed Framework cited above by asserting that the Pyongyang regime would collapse before the flaws in the accord produced future problems. In 1995 and 1996, there appeared a kind of collapse "mania" in U.S. officialdom. American officials openly speculated about or predicted collapse.[4] Within the Bush Administration, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is most closely

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associated with the assumption of a near-term North Korean collapse. This view clearly has affected the recommendations of Rumsfeld and others who have advocated a passive strategy in the six-party talks, waiting for North Korea to self-destruct diplomatically and collapse politically and economically.

The Clinton Administration never formulated a U.S. strategy to help bring about the North Korean collapse they speculated about. By 1996, the Administration appeared to have changed its mind about the desirability of collapse and instituted massive U.S. food aid to North Korea through the United Nations. Administration officials also speculated that North Korea might move toward reforms in the near future as an outgrowth of the Agreed Framework. However, the Clinton Administration never formulated an economic strategy to encourage economic reforms, despite North Korea's obvious economic vulnerability. In announcing the Perry initiative in 1999, former Secretary of Defense William Perry specifically rejected a strategy to promote economic reforms; Perry argued that U.S. strategy should focus entirely on the nuclear and missile issues.[5]

The Bush Administration has a stated strategy to bring heavy pressure to bear on North Korea, enough to create a regime collapse. It is embodied in the Administration's Proliferation Security Initiative, which aims to form a multilateral coalition of nations that would curtail North Korea's overseas sales of missiles and drugs through diplomacy and interdiction. The Proliferation Security Initiative has had some success in shutting off North Korea's missile markets in Libya and Pakistan and possibly other countries. However, it is doubtful whether it will constrict North Korea's foreign exchange earnings enough to provoke a crisis within the North Korean elite. North Korea's big Iranian missile market remains open, and the same appears to be the case with Syria. China and South Korea continue to subsidize North Korea financially and economically. Moreover, the Bush Administration appears to be extremely reluctant to employ the PSI fully against North Korea. This has become apparent in the Administration's passive response to the negative strategy toward the six-party talks that North Korea initiated in July 2004 and that resulted in a virtual collapse of the talks by the spring of 2005. In short, collapse of the Pyongyang regime remains an uncertain and probably distant prospect and thus a dubious assumption for any U.S. strategy toward North Korea.

The U.S. Preference for Buying Time or Drift

A third element of weakness in U.S. policy has been the avoidance of using negotiations, coupled with pressure, to force North

Korea to make fundamental policy choices, either to abandon weapons of mass destruction and end military threats toward South Korea and the United States or to continue to build up WMDs and the related negative activities associated with them. A basic justification for this avoidance has been that the alternative could produce a military crisis on the Korean peninsula. If it were totally clear that North Korea would not give up its WMDs, then the United States would have little choice than to institute sanctions and other forms of pressure on North Korea in order to isolate Pyongyang. The result could be a heightened danger of war. In the years after the signing of the Agreed Framework, an often-heard justification of the accord was that the only realistic alternative to the Agreed Framework was war. Another justification was that an avoidance of diplomatic confrontation would buy time for the United States until North Korea collapsed or reformed.

With the Bush Administration, the justification seems to be that North Korea is only a mid-level priority in the Administration's overall foreign policy. The Middle East clearly has a higher priority followed by Russia. Even on the narrower issue of nuclear proliferation, it became clear in 2005 that the Bush Administration regarded Iran's nuclear program as a greater threat and thus a higher priority than the North Korean nuclear program. Regardless of the justification, the result has been drift in U.S. policy in the years from the Agreed Framework to the diplomatic stalemate of 2005. The downside of policy drift has been that North Korea used the time to advance its missile program into the development of long-range missiles, develop a major missile export base with countries like Iran and Pakistan, initiate and accelerate the secret uranium enrichment program, and advance plutonium reprocessing and probably the output of plutonium bombs in 2003 and 2004. Perhaps the greatest symbol of policy drift was the unwillingness of both the Clinton and Bush administrations to confront North Korea over the uranium enrichment program from the end of 1998 until October 2002, even though U.S. intelligence agencies knew of the program during that nearly-four year period.

U.S.-South Korean Divisions

The United States concentration on weapons of mass destruction in U.S. policy toward North Korea also resulted in a decline in cooperation with South Korea in overall policies toward Pyongyang. In negotiating the Agreed Framework bilaterally with North Korea, the Clinton Administration violated a long-standing U.S. policy of not negotiating directly with North Korea without South Korean participation. The Administration patched up the situation by securing

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South Korean membership in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the organization formed to implement the obligations imposed on the United States by the Agreed Framework. Presidents Clinton and Kim Young-sam also jointly proposed four-party talks in April 1996. Washington and Seoul appeared to coordinate diplomacy successfully during the negotiations; however, their strategy laid new seeds of future divisions. Most importantly, they did not develop jointly a blueprint of issues to be resolved with North Korea prior to the conclusion of a peace agreement. This would come back to haunt them when Kim Dae-jung sought to revive the peace treaty issue when he visited Washington in March 2001, and President Bush and other U.S. officials voiced skepticism toward any such attempt. Both the United States and South Korea rejected North Korea's demand at the four-party talks for a total American military withdrawal from South Korea. They went further, however, in rejecting even a discussion of the issue with the North Koreans. At the time, the author had the opportunity to ask a key State Department official what was the thinking in the Department and the Clinton Administration concerning the issue of U.S. troops. His answer indicated the issue had not been a serious concern. Within months after the demise of the four-party talks in early 1999, the Rand Corporation conducted an extensive poll of South Korean attitudes toward the United States and national security issues generally. That poll found over 40 percent of South Koreans favored a reduction of U.S. forces in South Korea. Other polls in 2000 showed a similar shift in South Korean sentiment. The failure of the United States and South Korea to take any initiative with North Korea on U.S. troops, especially the unwillingness to make proposals for mutual reductions of conventional forces and pullbacks from the demilitarized zone, helped to create a perception among South Koreans of U.S. inflexibility regarding American forces in South Korea. The seeds of this reaction emerged three years later in the form of massive anti-American demonstrations in Seoul after American military personnel accidentally killed two Korean schoolgirls.

The roughly simultaneous formulations of the Clinton Administration's Perry initiative and Kim Dae-jung's sunshine policy created the concept of a division of labor in dealing with North Korea. Both administrations embraced the concept. Under it, the United States dealt with North Korea on nuclear and missile issues, while South Korea concentrated on inter-Korean issues and economic aid to North Korea other than food aid. South Korea also claimed exclusive jurisdiction over the issue of conventional force reductions, thus further lessening any possibility of a U.S.-South Korean joint initiative toward

North Korea. Tensions arose between the Clinton and Kim Dae-jung administrations over President Kim's agenda at the June 2000 North-South summit and over the U.S. response to North Korea's demand that the Clinton Administration remove Pyongyang from the U.S. list of terrorist-sponsoring states and allow it access to financial subsidies from international financial institutions. There was no effort by the United States and South Korea to coordinate economic aid strategy toward North Korea. Instead, South Korea went its own way, and the result was disastrous: partly secret Hyundai cash payments of over $1 billion to Kim Jong-il, which he appears to have used during 1999-2001 to finance accelerated overseas procurements of components for his secret uranium enrichment program and to expand his purchases of foreign luxury goods, which he distributed to a wide swath of officialdom to buy their loyalty.

These growing disputes widened South Korean public dissatisfaction with the United States especially after the Bush Administration took office. Kim Dae-jung's attempts to engage with North Korea contrasted with the Bush Administration's unwillingness to negotiate with Pyongyang. South Koreans grew increasingly skeptical of President Bush's repeated renunciations of the sunshine policy. Bush Administration officials increasingly perceived Kim Dae-jung as soft on North Korea. Kim's successor, Roh Moo-hyun, ran his election campaign on a platform openly critical of U.S. policy toward North Korea. Despite attempts by South Korea's Foreign Ministry to coordinate diplomatic strategy with the Bush administration in 2004, President Roh stuck to an agenda critical of the United States and sympathetic to North Korea's positions in the six-party talks. President Roh's speeches in Los Angeles and Europe in November strongly contained these themes. As a result, South Korean influence with the Bush Administration declined considerably in early 2005. This made more difficult any coordinated diplomatic measures in the face of North Korea's acceleration of its strategy in February-March 2005 to create a long-term stalemate in the six-party talks and nuclear diplomacy.

Bush Administration Strategy: Sound Bite Rhetoric Masks a Passive Strategy.

The Bush Administration adopted a policy toward North Korea that appeared outwardly to be considerably different from that of the Clinton Administration. There was one clear substantive difference. The Clinton Administration had put substance into the Perry initiative in its last three months in issuing to North Korea specific requirements for Pyongyang to meet in order to conclude a missile deal with the United States. Despite the Administration's

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unwillingness to confront North Korea over its uranium enrichment program, it seemed to have altered its previous approach to negotiations, at least on missiles. Proposals were more detailed, tighter. The Administration seemed to be moving away from a "equality of agendas." Faulty assumptions and temporizing rationales seemed to have less influence. Nevertheless, it was too little, too late, as time ran out for the Clinton Administration which left office in January 2001.

The Bush Administration made a decision immediately after taking office to abandon the Perry initiative. It did away with the position of special adviser for North Korean issues, which Dr. Perry and Wendy Sherman had held since 1998 (a position that Republicans in Congress had urged Clinton to create). This left policy decisions fragmented amidst several factions during the Administration's first term. The key factions were Vice President Dick Cheney and his advisers, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his advisers, Undersecretary of State John Bolton and his arms control staff, and the Asianists in the State Department led by Deputy Secretary of State Rich Armitage and Assistant Secretary of States for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, James Kelly. The Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Bolton factions reportedly had similar views on U.S. strategy toward North Korea. They reportedly opposed negotiations with North Korea, favored the issuance of demands for unilateral North Korean concessions on military issues, and advocated an overall U.S. strategy of isolating North Korea. Their views were reinforced by President Bush's profound distrust, publicly stated, of North Korea and its leader-Kim Jong-il.

These views clearly influenced the Administration to adopt a strategy of refusing negotiations with North Korea and demanding unilateral concessions from Pyongyang on military issues. The Administration made no serious attempt to hold high-level meetings with North Korea until the late spring of 2002. Even that attempt envisaged a single meeting, a dispatch of Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly to Pyongyang. The Administration was motivated in large part by the need to appease Japan and South Korea, which were urging Washington to send Kelly to Pyongyang. Despite the surprising outcome of the Kelly visit in October 2002, the revelations of the uranium enrichment program, the real purpose of Kelly's mission was to sideline future diplomacy toward North Korea, at least until the brewing crisis with Iraq was settled. The Administration believed that North Korea would deny totally Kelly's accusation that it had a uranium enrichment program. The visit thus would end in stalemate, and future diplomacy would be suspended.

The Administration also adopted tough, public rhetoric in its strategy. Administration officials constantly demanded that North Korea unilaterally dismantle its weapons of mass destruction and unilaterally withdraw its conventional forces from the demilitarized zone. President Bush accelerated this rhetorical strategy with his axis of evil pronouncement in his 2002 State of the Union address. The President and other Administration officials began to denounce Kim Jong-il publicly for starving his people. Administration officials indicated that they felt no need to offer North Korea specific reciprocal measures in response to positive actions by Pyongyang. Vague references to a bold initiative were as far as the Administration would go until June 2004. At the six-party meeting in June, the Administration, under heavy pressure from South Korea and China, issued its first substantive proposal. Dramatic and aggressive-sounding slogans like "axis of evil" and denunciations of Kim Jong-il easily gained coverage by the U.S. and foreign media, which the Bush Administration undoubtedly intended. Underneath the surface, however, key motives of the Bush Administration contained similarities with those of its predecessor. The Bush strategy offered only general policy objectives but no detailed, comprehensive settlement proposals. The June 2004 proposal set forth a basic settlement outline and basic principles for a settlement but lacked details of U.S. requirements for North Korea, such as verification, and the types of reciprocal benefits North Korea would receive. Eschewing diplomacy was another form of policy drift or buying time. We know, too, that key Administration officials have argued that active diplomacy is unnecessary, that North Korea is headed for collapse. However, a basic difference between the two administrations seems to be that Bush Administration officials possess a genuine fear that if they negotiate with North Korea, Pyongyang will out-negotiate Washington. Before taking office, Bush Administration officials voiced the view that North Korea had bested the Clinton Administration in negotiations. They charged that the Clinton Administration had resorted to buying meetings with North Korea by providing Pyongyang with bountiful food aid at key points in diplomatic dealings. They entered office apparently vowing that they would not fall into such a trap.

In short, the tough public rhetoric created a façade of an assertive and even aggressive policy. South Koreans especially reacted to the rhetoric by expressing fears that the Bush Administration planned to attack North Korea militarily. The rhetoric thus fit the definition of sound bites in the U.S. political lexicon. Sound bites are statements issued by U.S. politicians that are designed to gain the attention of the media and are intended to create public perceptions of

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an issue or situation that are advantageous to the politician but not necessarily in accord with reality. The reality that this sound bite diplomacy masked regarding the Bush Administration policy toward North Korea was passive and hid the fact that the Administration accorded North Korea only a mid-level priority in its overall foreign policy. The Middle East, Pakistan, and Afghanistan clearly occupied higher priorities after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack and as preparations began for the invasion of Iraq. The continuing insurgency in Iraq, the emergence of the Iranian nuclear program, and new disputes with Russia kept North Korea in that position of mid-level priority. By 2005, it was clear that the Administration viewed the Iranian nuclear program as a bigger threat and perhaps a better diplomatic opportunity than the North Korean nuclear program. However, the Administration resorted to a new round of aggressive-sounding rhetoric in early 2005, including President Bush's denunciations of Kim Jong-il in his April 28, 2005 news conference. Sound-bite diplomacy continued to mask a continued, passive strategy.

The Six-party Talks: U.S. Offensive, North Korean Recovery

The revelations, starting with press leaks, of the uranium enrichment program in October 2002 did force the Bush Administration into a more active diplomacy than it had envisaged. However, despite the meetings with North Korea and other concerned governments and despite the communiqués issued with South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia, the Administration's strategy has contained many of the elements of the pre-Kelly mission strategy. True, the Administration moved to end the Agreed Framework by bringing about a suspension of heavy oil shipments in late 2002 and the light water nuclear reactors project in late 2003. However, the Agreed Framework already was on shaky ground at the end of the Clinton Administration. The Clinton Administration appeared to have a case of the "slows" when it came to constructing the light water reactors in North Korea. In early 2001, Robert Gallucci, who had negotiated the Agreed Framework, and Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth, stated that the Agreed Framework needed revisions. Clinton Administration officials were aware of the secret HEU program, which President Clinton had hinted at in his certification to Congress on North Korea policy in March 2000. The Bush Administration also proposed negotiations but a six-party negotiation involving South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia rather than a bilateral U.S.-North Korean negotiation, which the new Administration firmly rejected. The Administration also adopted a position in the six-party talks that it would not put forward any detailed settlement proposals until North Korea accepted complete, verifiable,

irreversible dismantlement of all nuclear programs (CVID). It asserted after issuing the June 2004 proposal that it would propose details after North Korea had accepted total dismantlement. U.S. negotiators were carefully scripted on what they could say directly to the North Koreans.

The Administration's strategy contained another version of buying time. The strategy of not negotiating was based on an assumption that by waiting, Kim Jong-il's provocations and obnoxious behavior at the six-party talks would alienate all concerned governments and turn them into allies of the United States in isolating North Korea. This, in turn, would hasten the collapse of the Kim Jong-il regime. China was viewed as a key player in helping the Administration accomplish the isolation of North Korea. *The New York Times* of April 24, 2003, reported that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had circulated a memorandum proposing that the United States ally with China to isolate and bring about a collapse of North Korea.

For a good part of 2003, the Administration's strategy seemed to be working. North Korea appeared to be headed towards the status of an isolated international pariah through its brazen actions in reopening its plutonium nuclear facilities, reprocessing nuclear reactor spent fuel, expelling IAEA monitors of the facilities and spent fuel, withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and issuing threats to build and proliferate nuclear weapons and materials. The United States issued communiqués with other concerned nations criticizing North Korea's actions and demanding that North Korea abide by the nuclear treaties and agreements it had once signed but subsequently broken. China took the lead in organizing the multilateral talks that the Bush Administration had proposed. In May 2003, the Bush Administration proposed and began to organize nations into a Proliferation Security Initiative aimed at cutting off North Korea's lucrative exports of missiles and illegal drugs. The Administration's diplomatic momentum was captured by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in its feature article of September 11, 2003, "Ganging Up on Pyongyang." Two Administration officials were quoted. One asserted that "It's worse now for North Korea than it has been, this isolation." Another was more blunt, "We're letting them dig their own grave."

Nevertheless, North Korea's position never was as weak as Administration officials apparently believed. By the beginning of 2004, North Korea was in a stronger position with regard to its nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) programs: stronger in terms of advances in these programs. Moreover, Pyongyang had made a surprising diplomatic recovery in relation to the United States. This

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diplomatic gain was especially surprising, given North Korea's seeming isolation and the optimism expressed by U.S. officials.

The reopening of the plutonium installations at Yongbyon illustrated overall advances in North Korea's WMD programs in 2003. The extent of these advances is uncertain. And North Korean secrecy presented major problems for U.S. intelligence agencies. However, intelligence officials and Bush Administration leaders have indicated that a number of these programs have advanced. The reopening of the Yongbyon facilities led to a North Korean claim that it had reprocessed 8,000 nuclear reactor fuel rods into weapons-grade plutonium. The claim escalated in early 2005 to strong North Korean assertions that Pyongyang had nuclear weapons. After the six-party meeting in February 2004, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly acknowledged that it was quite possible that North Korea had processed all 8,000 fuel rods. The Central Intelligence Agency also informed the U.S. Congress in August 2003 that North Korea had completed the design and triggering mechanism of atomic bombs without having to conduct a nuclear test. When asked if North Korea produced plutonium or nuclear weapons in 2003, a senior Administration official replied: "I would mean both. But I can't be specific because I don't think we know the quantities."[6] Potentially more disturbing, the CIA reported to the Japanese Government in mid-2003 that North Korea was close to developing nuclear warheads that it could mount on its missiles.[7] The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee in April 2005 that North Korea had the capability to develop nuclear warheads. (Some analysts believe that Pakistan's warhead technology was part of the North Korean-Pakistani deal.)

The state of North Korea's uranium enrichment program was an even bigger mystery to the U.S. intelligence community. Information indicated that North Korea had accelerated its overseas procurements of materials and components for a uranium enrichment infrastructure in 1999, 2000 and 2001. U.S. intelligence estimates reportedly varied in estimating when North Korea would be able to produce an atomic bomb through uranium enrichment. Estimates varied from late 2004 to 2006;[8] but they agreed that North Korea was advancing this program.

The same was true of North Korea's missile program. U.S. intelligence estimates in the summer of 2003 cited a new intermediate North Korean ballistic missile with a longer range and greater accuracy than the Nodong model that North Korea began deploying after 1993. The new missile is believed capable of striking Okinawa, the site of major American military bases, and Guam, the home of over 100,000

Americans and key American military facilities. These new estimates also cite advances in North Korea's program to produce a long-range, intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. west coast.[9]

Diplomatically, the status of the six-party talks at the beginning of 2004 was very different from the scenarios previously laid out by the Bush Administration. North Korea had established a strong position in the talks. It was succeeding in advancing its negotiating proposals despite their vagueness, likely hidden agenda, and demands for sweeping U.S. concessions. Its demand for a non-aggression guarantee from the United States stood at the top of the negotiating agenda of the talks. The Bush Administration was offering North Korea a security guarantee, albeit a multilateral one; but it would include a guarantee against a U.S. conventional attack as well as a nuclear attack. It would take effect when North Korea committed to or provided benchmarks to a dismantling of its nuclear programs. In contrast, in the 1994 Agreed Framework, the Clinton Administration promised a guarantee against a U.S. nuclear attack (not a conventional one) after North Korea had dismantled its nuclear programs. North Korea also was making progress in placing its December 2003 proposal of a nuclear freeze at the top of the negotiating agenda. China and South Korea spoke favorably of the proposal, and they reacted favorable to another North Korean proposal issued at the six-party meeting in February 2004: that North Korea keep a peaceful, civilian nuclear industry. North Korea was receiving increased financial aid ($50 million reported in October 2003), fuel, and food from China and significant food aid and likely secret financial aid from South Korea.[10]

What accounts for this surprising North Korean success? Part of it was the result of a North Korean negotiating strategy that played upon the commitment of other governments to the six-party talks and a propaganda campaign that portrayed Pyongyang's proposals as benign and peace-seeking. After each of the Beijing meetings in April and August 2003, North Korea criticized the meetings, criticized the U.S. position at the meetings, criticized Japan, and warned that it saw no usefulness in the meetings and likely would not participate in another. Other governments, especially China and South Korea, reacted with apprehension to these warnings, fearing that the talks would collapse; Chinese diplomacy went into high gear to keep the talks alive. The Bush Administration, the author of multilateral talks, also expressed concern. Then, after issuing repeated warnings, North Korea made new proposals or gave priority to older proposals. After the April meeting, North Korea hammered away on its proposal for a North Korea-U.S. non-aggression pact or formal U.S. security guarantee. In December

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2003, in the aftermath of the second Beijing meeting, North Korea proposed a freeze of its plutonium nuclear program. North Korean propaganda turned the Bush Administration's tough rhetoric against itself by asserting that such a non-aggression pact was necessary to prevent the United States from staging a unilateral attack on North Korea, similar to the U.S. attack on Iraq. Pyongyang's propaganda organs contended that a freeze, coupled with substantial U.S. concessions, was a logical first stage in a settlement process. North Korea warned that a U.S. rejection of these proposals would give Pyongyang no choice but to strengthen its nuclear deterrent.[11]

Other governments, apprehensive over the future of the talks, sought to react positively to North Korea's proposals in order to persuade North Korea to agree to another six-party meeting. China, South Korea, and Russia all came out in favor of a security guarantee for North Korea, and they pressured the Bush Administration to offer a guarantee. Bush acceded to China's overtures in October 2003. Beijing and Seoul also spoke positively regarding North Korea's nuclear freeze proposal. China reportedly was considering offering a freeze proposal of its own. Public and elite opinion in South Korea and China reacted favorably to North Korea's proposals, clearly influenced by North Korean propaganda. The Bush Administration wavered on the freeze proposal. It rejected the proposal in December 2003, asserting the U.S. position that North Korea must commit first to a complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantling of its nuclear programs. In early January 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell responded to a new version of the proposal but one not different in content by describing it as a positive development but then issuing a clarification two days later.

North Korea, too, was able to exploit weaknesses in the U.S. strategy. The first was the lack of a comprehensive U.S. negotiating proposal for a settlement with North Korea The absence of a detailed, comprehensive, and balanced U.S. settlement proposal gave the Bush Administration little opportunity to establish the U.S. negotiating agenda in the dominant position in the six-party talks. A negotiating agenda dominated by a U.S. comprehensive settlement proposal would confront North Korea without having to respond to the United States and make a clear policy choice between continuing its present policies and altering policies toward abandoning WMDs and fundamentally improving relations with the United States and other countries. In the absence of this, North Korea was able to push its proposals forward relatively unhindered. Without it, North Korea's proposals stood uncontested as the only detailed solutions offered in the talks. Without

it, too, South Korea, China, and Russia displayed growing unhappiness with the U.S. position at the talks.

At the six-party talks in February 2004, a proposal with some details was put on the table by South Korea rather than the United States. South Korea's proposal called for a clear commitment by Pyongyang to the dismantlement of its nuclear programs and a U.S. pledge of a security guarantee. The first substantive phase of this process would be a freeze of all North Korean nuclear programs (including the HEU program), verification of such a freeze, and South Korean provision of energy to North Korea. The final stage would involve early action toward dismantlement and broader reciprocal responses from the United States and other nations. The South Korean definition of a nuclear freeze was much more comprehensive than North Korea's definition. The Bush Administration and Japan tacitly supported the proposal. China and Russia did not endorse it fully, but they did offer to help South Korea supply energy to North Korea.

The Administration's heavy reliance on China also contributed to the defensive position it found itself in at the start of 2004. Both the so-called engagers and the anti-negotiation bloc saw China as essential to their objectives. China would influence North Korea to accede to U.S. diplomatic terms, or China would join the United States in applying heavy sanctions against North Korea that would bring down the regime. President Bush spoke glowingly of China's cooperation whenever he issued public pronouncements on North Korea. This optimism was influenced by several Chinese actions. China supported the U.S. proposal for multilateral talks and worked hard to arrange the Beijing meetings. China joined the United States and other governments in calling for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. China reportedly cut off oil shipments to North Korea for several days in March, which U.S. analysts interpreted as a sign of Beijing's displeasure with Pyongyang. Members of China's influential think tanks issued statements proposing that China re-evaluate its longstanding alliance with and support of North Korea.

Nevertheless, even as these actions occurred, China began to display a tilt toward North Korea on substantive issues between North Korea and the United States. China quickly endorsed the proposal of a U.S. security guarantee, arguing that the United States needed to address North Korea's legitimate security concerns. Chinese pressure was the key factor in President Bush's offer of a security guarantee to North Korea at the Bangkok APEC summit in October 2003.[12] China also made clear in April 2003 that it would oppose any U.S. move to take the North Korean problem to the United Nations' Security Council. Chinese officials also indicated during this early period that

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China favored a settlement that would restore key elements of the Agreed Framework. This indication came to fruition in China's November 2003 proposal of a draft statement by the six parties, its favorable response to North Korea's nuclear freeze proposal, and its expression of skepticism over the existence of a North Korean HEU program in January 2004. By this time, Chinese think tank criticism of North Korea had been ended for several months. Chinese Communist Party newspapers such as *Xinhua* praised North Korea for its flexibility in the talks and called on the United States to offer meaningful concessions.[13] Of major importance, China voiced criticism of the Proliferation Security Initiative soon after its proclamation and warned the United States against a policy of pressure against North Korea. China carried these positions into the six-party talks of February 2004, and Beijing quickly endorsed North Korea's proposal at the talks: that North Korea be allowed to keep a civilian nuclear power industry.

There is no doubt that China's stance reflected growing frustration with the Bush Administration's unwillingness to lay comprehensive proposals on the negotiating table. Still, U.S. policy had not obtained an answer to a fundamental question: What does China really want to see as an outcome to the diplomatic process? Does China give high priority to attaining a complete termination of North Korea's nuclear program? Or does China seek to put the cork back in the bottle, meaning a restoration of the situation before the Kelly visit to Pyongyang in October 2002?

The failure of the Administration to respond effectively to North Korea's concerted propaganda campaign also contributed significantly to U.S. diplomatic defeats. Pyongyang employed propaganda constantly to implement its strategy of spreading fear that it would end participation in the six-party talks and then promoted its proposals as benign and peace seeking. In pushing its proposal for a non-aggression pact and formal U.S. security guarantee, it used the Iraq war and the Bush Administration's tough rhetoric against North Korea. Chinese, Russian, and South Korean leaders all expressed concern that the United States was planning to attack North Korea. In initiating the nuclear freeze proposal, North Korea was aware that China, South Korea, and Russia had misgivings over the collapse of the Agreed Framework. North Korea also employed enticing terms, such as "non-aggression, nuclear freeze, deterrence, simultaneous actions, simultaneous package deal, bold concession, and non-interference in our economic development" to appeal to elite and public opinion in these countries. These attractive captions also overshadowed in overseas perceptions the lack of substance in these proposals and the likely hidden North Korean agenda in them. South Korean elite and

public opinion, in particular, appears to have been influenced heavily by Pyongyang's propaganda strategy. A public opinion poll in South Korea in January 2004 found that 38 percent of South Koreans believed that the United States was the biggest threat to peace vs. 33 percent who listed North Korea.

It is doubtful that the Bush Administration has a clear recognition that a key part of the diplomatic interaction with North Korea in the six-party talks is a propaganda struggle. Its reaction to North Korea's proposals after each Beijing meeting was to reject them and re-state the U.S. position that North Korea first commit to the CVID formula. Administration officials did not challenge the substance of the proposals in order to point out their negative features and bring into the open North Korea's hidden agenda in them. The Administration's only substantive response to the non-aggression proposal was to contend that the U.S. Senate would not approve it. In short, while the Administration's demand that North Korea commit to a complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantling of its nuclear programs is a legitimate requirement for the start of any settlement process, it has been a limited, one-dimensional, and inadequate response to North Korea's sophisticated diplomatic and propaganda strategy.

The Administration's response to North Korea's constant denials of a uranium enrichment program has also been limited. As North Korean propaganda accelerated its promotion of Pyongyang's proposals from mid-2003 onward, it also steadily escalated the denials of an HEU program. U.S. responses have been infrequent and have simply argued that North Korea admit to the program during the Kelly visit to Pyongyang. North Korea's denial of such an admission presented to the other involved countries a "he said-she said" situation in which the attractiveness of North Korea's negotiating proposals and the controversy over the Administration's use of intelligence information to justify the war with Iraq weakened the U.S. position. The Administration claimed that it had firm evidence of the uranium enrichment program, but there was no offering of evidence. This, despite many reports that U.S. intelligence agencies had accumulated considerable information of North Korean overseas procurements and attempted procurements of equipment and materials that could be used in uranium enrichment; North Korean attempts at procurement had occurred even in the open societies of Western Europe and Japan. The Administration went into the February 2004 session of the six-party talks hoping that the doubts about its claim would be countered by the alleged confession of A.Q. Khan, Pakistan nuclear czar, to providing HEU technology and components to North Korea. Khan's reported

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confession apparently influenced the South Korean Government to stand with the United States; but continued expressions of skepticism from the Chinese and Russians demonstrated that the Bush Administration had not overcome the deficiencies in its responses to North Korea s propaganda strategy.

The Collapse of the Six-party Talks, July 2004 to June 2005

In July 2004, North Korea appears to have made a fundamental decision to adopt a strategy to undermine the six-party talks. What was North Korea's motive for such a decision? It seems that it was a fear that the proposal, which the Bush Administration had issued at the June 2004 six-party meeting, would gain support from the other governments in the talks and be established as a principle basis of negotiation of a nuclear settlement. From late 2003 until the U.S. proposal of June 23, 2004, North Korea had been in a dominant position in the talks, partly because of the lack of a U.S. comprehensive proposal. While the Bush Administration's proposal contained weaknesses and lacked essential details, its basic structure and principles threatened North Korea's dominant diplomatic strategy.

North Korea's immediate objective appears to have been to kill the June 23 proposal as a basis for future negotiations before the Bush Administration could gain support from other governments. Pyongyang's undermining strategy began with a statement by its Foreign Ministry on July 24, 2004, denouncing the June 23 proposal as purely a sham proposal that was nothing new, inferior to North Korea's reward for a freeze proposal, and thus was little worthy of any further discussion.

After July 24, North Korea began to put into place other elements of its strategy: a boycott of the talks and, an escalating series of justifications for the boycott.

Bush Administration criticisms of Kim Jong-il, South Korea's nuclear activities (revealed in August 2004) passage by Congress of the North Korea Human Rights Act, and the U.S. hostile policy toward North Korea. North Korea's demand that the Bush Administration end its hostile policy as a condition for future talks served two purposes for Pyongyang. The broad, elastic definition of hostile policy enabled North Korea to shift constantly and increase its conditions for returning to the talks. It also enabled North Korea to begin to move its own agenda in the talks from primarily economic demands to military ones. From September 2004 onward, North Korean statements on U.S. hostile policy began to emphasize elements of the U.S. military presence and practices in South Korea and in Northeast Asia and

charged that these constituted intent of the Bush Administration to launch a nuclear attack on North Korea.

In late 2004, North Korea appears to have made another key decision to make the undermining strategy more permanent. North Korea's thinking at the end of 2004 appears to have set two primary, long-term goals for its undermining strategy. The first was to create a protracted diplomatic stalemate on the nuclear issue, at least through the second term of the Bush Administration and probably beyond. The second goal was to gain from other governments an acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. To secure these long-term goals, North Korea issued its statement of February 10, 2005, which gave the boycott more permanency. North Korea then issued on March 31, 2005, a radical new agenda for the talks, an agenda of military demands on the United States, which Pyongyang said would have to be the focus of negotiations at any future six-party meetings. These new military demands called for a major scaling back of the U.S. military presence in and around the Korean peninsula and U.S. acceptance of a peace system to replace the 1953 Korean armistice. The new agenda was the culmination of North Korea's growing definition of a U.S. hostile policy in military terms since September 2004; the radical nature of it leads to an objective conclusion that its aim is to undermine further the six-party talks, whether or not there are future meetings.

Beginning in September 2004 but especially after the February 10, 2005 statement, North Korea issued explicit, frequent statements claiming to possess nuclear weapons. This indicates that part of North Korea's strategy is to condition other governments to accept North Korea as a legitimate nuclear weapons state. This radically new objective appears to stem from at least two factors. First, if North Korea succeeded in creating four to six atomic bombs from the 8,000 reactor fuel rods which it removed from storage in early 2003, its arsenal of possibly up to ten atomic bombs likely would give the leadership an expanded stake in continuing the nuclear weapons programs rather than agreeing to give them up. Second, it may reflect the growth of North Korean confidence of the success in the undermining six-party talks strategy. North Korean commentaries in late 2004 boasted of diplomatic successes in 2004 and of U.S. diplomatic defeats.

The North Korean leadership was justified in its confidence. The other six-party governments, especially China, South Korea, and Russia, were non-critical of North Korea's undermining of the talks while criticizing the Bush Administration pointedly. In October 2004, the South Korean and Chinese foreign ministers publicly rebuffed Secretary of State Colin Powell during his visits and called for more

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creative proposals for a nuclear settlement. South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun delivered major speeches in Los Angeles and Europe in November in which he rejected imposing any form of pressure on North Korea, said North Korea was justified in promoting a nuclear deterrent because of its perception of an outside threat (ie., the United States), and described North Korea's reward for a freeze proposal as a considerably positive.[14] North Korean propaganda organs mentioned these speeches on several occasions as well as the failure of the Powell mission. But most fundamentally, the Bush Administration lacked an effective way to counter North Korea's undermining strategy and restore the six-party talks.

In the weeks that followed the Administration's proposal of June 23, 2004, the Bush Administration failed to place its proposal into a dominant position in the six-party talks. One reason was the lack of details in key components of the proposal. However, the major reason was the absence of an effective U.S. follow-up strategy to promote the proposal in the weeks after June 2004. In fact, there was no follow-up strategy to promote the proposal, secure positive public diplomatic pronouncements from the other six-party governments, and gain endorsements from the media and opinion-makers in South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia. In trips to East Asia, including South Korea, in July 2004, National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice and U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton mentioned the proposal but offered no detailed explanation of its positive attributes. Securing from their host governments public statements of support for the June 23 proposal did not appear to be high on their agendas. Instead, they emphasized the Administration's pre-June Libyan formula in their public statements. Administration and State Department officials spoke little of the proposal until the visit of Secretary of State Colin Powell to South Korea and China in late October 2004. An early warning of the Administration's passive stance toward its own proposal was its non-reaction to Russian criticisms of the proposal in August 2004.

The Administration also failed to offer pointed rebuttals to escalating North Korean justifications for its undermining strategy after Pyongyang announced its boycott of further six-party meetings. Washington's reaction to the speeches of President Roh Moo-hyun in November 2004 was particularly striking in its passivity. Bush and Roh met in Santiago, Chile, one week after Roh s Los Angeles speech. By all accounts, the U.S. President did not raise the speech with Roh, who went from Santiago to Europe where he delivered similar speeches criticizing the United States and sympathizing with North Korean positions. In short, North Korea had every reason to believe at the end of 2004 that its undermining strategy was working. Clearly,

Pyongyang was emboldened to expand it in early 2005, which it did beginning with the declaration of February 10, 2005.

Outlook

North Korea's undermining strategy probably does not preclude accepting periodically, albeit infrequently, six-party meetings. However, North Korea has positioned itself so that even if an occasional meeting is held, it can maintain its objective of a diplomatic stalemate. China's statements of May 10 and 11, 2005, opposing any sanctions related to the six-party talks and blaming the Bush Administration for a diplomatic stalemate, gives North Korea a blank check to continue its undermining strategy. China now seeks only that North Korea give lip service to the talks. Pyongyang's new agenda of March 31, again, appears intended to assure a continued diplomatic stalemate; the Bush Administration is unlikely to discuss major cutbacks in U.S. military forces, activities in Northeast Asia or a peace settlement. North Korea no doubt knows that.

A long term diplomatic stalemate will enable North Korea to continue to develop its nuclear program, expand its production of nuclear bombs, and, most importantly, move toward a capability to produce nuclear warheads that can be mounted on North Korean missiles. Moreover, the more effective nuclear deterrent North Korea develops, the greater its options to proliferate weapons of mass destruction to other governments like Iran and Syria and factions within these governments (including Pakistan) that have ties to terrorist groups.

A long term diplomatic stalemate will also enable North Korea to gain acceptance from other governments of its status as a nuclear weapons state, whether or not it conducts any nuclear tests. Over time, the policies of other governments, especially neighboring governments, likely will reflect assumptions that North Korea possesses nuclear weapons. Their agendas toward Pyongyang will move away from the nuclear issue to emphasize more cooperative relationships. Only Japan is a likely exception to such a trend.

An almost certain outcome of a protracted diplomatic stalemate and the increased recognition of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state will be progressive estrangement between the United States and South Korea. The aftermath of President Roh's November 2004 speeches already has created estrangement, as Bush Administration officials reportedly voiced anger to each other over the speeches. South Korean influence in Washington in 2005 had sunk to the lowest level in many years. South Korea and the United States are likely to diverge further in their policies toward the new situation.

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South Korea can be expected to de-emphasize the nuclear issue and stress economic benefits to North Korea. The already-noticeable trend of South Korea-China cooperation on policies toward North Korea likely will grow. On the other hand, the United States likely will continue military vigilance and may institute possible moves against North Koreas illegal activities, such as drug trafficking and counterfeit currency. A move against illegal activities would constitute an exception to Bush's passive strategy but the Administration would likely consider it a safe exception, one that would not jeopardize its priorities toward the Middle East and the Iranian nuclear program. But it undoubtedly would draw criticism from South Korea. Washington could also be expected to increase its emphasis on North Korean human rights abuses; South Korea already takes a contrary position to the United States over human rights. The Bush Administration is certain to strengthen military cooperation with Japan in the future and encourage Japan to expand its regional security role. South Korea already is critical of the United States' Japan-first policy, and future estrangement on this issue is likely in the new situation of diplomatic stalemate on the North Korean nuclear issue. Estrangement over North Korean policy also will make more difficult U.S.-R.O.K. talks on the future roles and missions of U.S. forces in South Korea.

In the new situation of protracted diplomatic stalemate and further development of North Korea's nuclear capabilities, the Bush Administration undoubtedly can deter North Korea from using its nuclear capabilities for aggressive purposes in Northeast Asia. However, the passive strategy of the Bush Administration will increasingly constitute a bet--a wager that North Korea's mounting confidence in its diplomacy and nuclear weapons will not result in a North Korean decision to escalate its proliferation activities with regard to both the types of weapons and materials and the recipients of these weapons and materials.

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