

# Without Incentives: North Korea's Response to Denuclearization\*

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## Abstract

Negative security assurance (NSA), a key for sustaining the NPT, is supposed to provide a strong incentive for non-nuclear states to keep their status. The NPT also gives economic motivation, assistance for peaceful nuclear activities of the non-nuclear states. The reality that North Korea is going toward the opposite direction should indicate that these traditional ways for promoting nonproliferation are increasingly becoming ineffective.

Neither NSA nor economic assistance could end the nuclear weapon program because these supposed incentives are not consistent with the nation's main reason for acquiring nuclear weapons. This article explains that North Korea develops nuclear weapons for fulfilling the norm to be an independent nation, rather than confronting external threat which could be eased by NSA. The normative achievement helps North Korea's regime competition with South Korea, more critical threat than U.S. nuclear power. This competition gives priority to nuclear power over economic improvement which could not allow North Korea to claim supremacy over South Korea in the near future.

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## Introduction

Negative Security Assurance (NSA), in which a nuclear state promises not to attack a non-nuclear state with nuclear weapons, whereby eliminating the motivation for the non-nuclear state to have nuclear weapons, is not found in the text of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), but for decades people have believed it should be an underlying condition of the NPT. NSA represents compensation for the abandonment of nuclear development presented by the United States (U.S.) to North Korea in the Agreed Framework (AF) of 1994 as well as the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) of 2010.

The NPT, on the other hand, includes economic incentives for denuclearization in which parties to the treaty that do not engage in nuclear weapons development can obtain the benefits of peaceful nuclear explosions (Article 5). The AF also called for providing North Korea with light water reactors and heavy oil until their completion in exchange for freezing the activities of its graphite-moderated reactor and ultimately dismantling it. The joint statement at the conclusion of the fourth round of Six-Party Talks, too, states that Japan, the U.S., China, Russia and South Korea will provide energy cooperation to North Korea.

To increase the effectiveness of these methods, it must be possible to offset the motivation of acquiring nuclear weapons with economic benefits. The current situation of North Korea probably

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indicates that the incentives for non-proliferation since the NPT do not match the motivation of North Korea's nuclear development.

As Sagan states, the official purpose of nuclear weapons can be found in reinforcing a state's external security (the security model). NSA assumes this as motivation. Due to internal competition, however, it is possible that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons for the purpose of reinforcing the legitimacy of the regime by fulfilling the norm as a shared belief about how the nation should appear (the norm model).<sup>1</sup> In such a case, lessening the external threat using NSA will likely not lead to denuclearization, because this is the necessary unofficial role of nuclear weapons in the situation where an internal adversary, instead of an outside one, threatens the survival of the regime.

The most powerful challenger to the North Korean regime in the case of the norm model is indeed South Korea, because the two are regimes in the same unit of a nation state. Given that one nation state should have a single political system, the side that loses any superiority to the other regime will no longer have a reason to exist. The only area in which North Korea is superior to South Korea as the alternative regime is the independence embodied by becoming a nuclear power. North Korea's failure in sustaining the superiority would lead to a similar situation as the socialist states of the Eastern Bloc that collapsed following an increase in supporters internally of the alternative regime of liberal democracy. This is why economic incentives do not lead to denuclearization; there is no way that North Korea could achieve superiority in economic might to South Korea, even if the North improved its economy.

As the threat of liberal democracy penetrating from South Korea heightens, North Korea has clearly indicated a posture that prioritizes nuclear development over its economy. The confrontation with the U.S. over nuclear development is actually a conflict with South Korea. The process of addressing the nuclear crisis must include the co-existence of the regimes in South Korea and North Korea unless the North's collapse would terminate the regime competition.

### **Can Negative Security Assurance really denuclearize North Korea?**

The Obama administration made the intent of NSA even clearer in NPR 2010, but regardless North Korea continued with its nuclear development. If North Korea were pursuing nuclear weapons for its external security, this would mean the credibility of NSA is not sufficient. How correct is this explanation based on such a security model? Below, this paper will take a closer look.

North Korea has engaged in nuclear diplomacy fully comprehending NSA. In the declaration of the right to nuclear weaponry (October 25, 2002) that led to the current crisis, North Korea asserted that the reason was because of the U.S.' violation of NSA. According to the declaration, the (second) Bush administration broke the U.S.' promise in the AF of not targeting North Korea for nuclear attack and such an act at the same time violated NSA, which is the basic spirit behind the NPT. Based on this assertion, this would mean that North Korea would not have to pursue

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb" *International Security*, Vol. 21, No.3, (Winter 1996-1997) p.55. Sagan does not go as far as to use the norm model as a theory for explaining the internal competition faced by the regime. The argument of this paper that the rational goal of following norm is internal competition will be explained once again in the main body. Additionally, the reason why, of the three theories, the domestic politics model is not covered in this paper will be discussed in the conclusion.

nuclear development if there was no longer any threat of nuclear attack. The declaration proposed a nonaggression treaty be concluded between the U.S. and North Korea as a way to solve the problem.<sup>2</sup> The above argument of North Korea is consistent with the security model.

Even before the declaration, North Korea criticized the NPR 2001 as a plan to use nuclear weapons against it.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the 2001 NPR report defines nuclear weapons as means to respond to “large-scale conventional military force” and to “deter a wide range of threats” up to weapons of mass destruction (in other words, including biological and chemical weapons) (page 7), and cites as an example an attack by North Korea on South Korea as an imminent threat that could be subject to the use of nuclear weapons (pages 16 and 17). In the face of doubts over NSA, in February 2002 a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Defense reaffirmed the need to maintain the NSA policy,<sup>4</sup> but they did not necessarily refute the leaked details. The declining credibility of NSA could lead to North Korea's logic behind the declaration of nuclear weapons in October the same year.

On the other hand, the 2010 NPR of the Obama administration gave a more positive impression toward NSA clarification compared to the Bush administration. As a way of strengthening NSA, the 2010 NPR report declared that the U.S. would not attack a non-nuclear state that abides by the NPT and various non-proliferation obligations with nuclear weapons and that it would not use nuclear weapons to threaten these states.<sup>5</sup> This did not mention the previous exception condition<sup>6</sup> of an attack by a non-nuclear state allied to a nuclear weapon state or associated with a nuclear weapon state on the U.S. or its allies. This suggests it is a stricter definition of NSA.

As before, however, the 2010 NPR does not adopt the policy that “the sole purpose” of nuclear weapons is a deterrent against nuclear attack,<sup>7</sup> leaving the narrow possibility that nuclear weapons will be used in retaliation against conventional weapons or biological or chemical weapons.<sup>8</sup> It has been pointed out that this is because nuclear weapons are needed as a deterrent against an attack on South Korea by North Korea using conventional weapons.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in 2010 when the NPR was released, there was a briefing from ROK/U.S. Combined Forces Command to Leon Panetta, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), outlining that nuclear weapons could be an option to respond to an incursion of the demilitarized zone by North Korea.<sup>10</sup> The following year Panetta became Secretary of Defense and indicated the possibility for the use of nuclear weapons when confirming defense guarantees with South Korea.<sup>11</sup> Once these events were

<sup>2</sup> “Conclusion of non-aggression treaty between DPRK and U.S. called for,” *KCNA*, October 25, 2002. The titles of *KCNA* and *Rodong* reports were cited from the English version of them. In the case that the English articles lacked the parts this article cited, the Korean version was referred to.

<sup>3</sup> Song Moo-Gyong “U.S.-led military exercises condemned,” *Rodong*, March 27, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Philipp Bleek, “Bush administration reaffirms negative security assurances,” *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 32, No.2 (March 2002).

<sup>5</sup> US Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, (April 2010), 15.

<sup>6</sup> “Clinton Issues Pledge to NPT Non-Nuclear Weapon States,” April 6, 1995, <http://fas.org/nuke/control/npt/docs/940405-nsa.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, (April 2010) viii, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>9</sup> Daryl G. Kimball and Greg Thielmann, “Obama's NPR: Transitional, Not Transformational,” *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 40, No.4 (May 2010), 20-21.

<sup>10</sup> Leon Panetta, *Worthy Fights* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 274

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

brought to light, the Korean Central News Agency commented that the episodes validated North Korea's efforts to secure a nuclear deterrent against the U.S. as correct.<sup>12</sup>

In theory, the Obama administration's inability to adopt "the sole purpose" policy overlaps the issue of no-first-use (NFU) of nuclear weapons more than NSA for non-nuclear states. This is because the possibility of nuclear retaliation against attacks using conventional weapons cited in the 2010 NPR applied to nuclear states and states not following the denuclearization obligations of the NPT and other treaties.<sup>13</sup> In other words, if it denuclearized, North Korea would no longer be under threat of nuclear attack by the U.S.

Nevertheless, North Korea had room to doubt that the non-adoption of "the sole purpose" meant NSA does not apply to it. Since long before North Korea's nuclear weapons became a reality, the U.S. could have thought there was a need to use nuclear weapons as a deterrent against North Korea's conventional weapons. In 1977 during the Cold War, the U.S. attempted to remove tactical nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, but this is not because it believed nuclear weapons were unnecessary as a deterrent against North Korea. During the review of whether to remove these weapons, the CIA said that even if removed North Korea would expect the possibility of the U.S. bringing these weapons back or using them, so the deterrent would remain in place.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the U.S. considered the use of nuclear weapons as an option for the deterrence of North Korea at a time which was still far away from possessing nuclear weapons of its own.

In 1978, the U.S. adopted NSA with the exception of an attack by a non-nuclear state allied to a nuclear weapon state or associated with a nuclear weapon state, after obtaining consent from its allies such as South Korea that feared the credibility of nuclear proliferation deterrent.<sup>15</sup> At a glance, this could mean that as long as it did not attack South Korea together with a nuclear state such as China, the U.S. would not retaliate against North Korea using nuclear weapons.

However, China had already been removed from the targets of the U.S.-South Korea Alliance.<sup>16</sup> If the U.S. and South Korea considered that there was a high probability that North Korea would invade South Korea alone, this was likely a scenario that never really considered nuclear retaliation against allied forces of China and North Korea. Despite this, if South Korea agreed that the credibility of extended nuclear deterrence would not be significantly damaged by the U.S.' adoption of NSA, the NSA policy would not inhibit the U.S. from employing nuclear weapons in responding to an attack by North Korea without direct participation by China or Russia.

Indeed, the definition of allied to a nuclear weapon state or associated with a nuclear weapon state used as a condition for removal of NSA application by the U.S. was sufficient as long as there

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<sup>12</sup> "KCNA Commentary Denounces U.S. Nuclear Threat against DPRK," *KCNA*, October 20, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> US Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, (April 2010), 16.

<sup>14</sup> US Central Intelligence Agency, "The Implications of Withdrawing Nuclear Weapons from Korea," Memorandum, August 11, 1977, 2, [http://nautilus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/CIA-Withdrawing\\_ROK\\_NWs.pdf](http://nautilus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/CIA-Withdrawing_ROK_NWs.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> "Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to President Carter," May 16, 1978, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980*, (Washington D.C.: US Government Publishing Office, 2015) Vol.26, 1212.

<sup>16</sup> Takeshi Watanabe, "Nikyokuka ni Tomonau Hitaishou Doumei no Kinou Koushin: Taikokuseiji ni Okeru Beikandoumei no Yakuwari [Redefinition of Asymmetric Alliance in Bipolar World: The South Korea-United States Alliance in Great Power Politics]," *Journal of Law* (Keio University), Vol.83, No.12, (December 2010): 539-534.

was a promise of mutual defense, even if no cooperation was provided by a nuclear weapon state at the time of the attack.<sup>17</sup> For example, even if North Korea was party to the NPT and fulfilled the definition of a non-nuclear weapon state per the U.S.' NSA at the time (any non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT or any comparable internationally binding commitment not to acquire nuclear explosive devices), there was no possibility for North Korea to be removed as a target of nuclear deterrent as long as it did not abandon its mutual assistance treaties with China and the Soviet Union.

The Obama administration's NSA eliminated the exclusionary condition of mutual defense with nuclear weapon states perhaps because it could continue to target North Korea for nuclear deterrence since it obtained nuclear weapons. Based on the above, it appears that North Korea had a reason to believe that it was a potential target of a nuclear attack by the U.S. anyway.

However, strong doubts arise with regard to whether North Korea was consistent in demanding NSA because of the response to the President Obama's "nuclear-free world" speech. In April 2009, prior to the NPR 2010, President Obama delivered the speech about detailed steps he would take to realize a "nuclear-free world," including reducing the role of nuclear weapons.<sup>18</sup> In response, North Korea, too, stated that it fully supported the complete elimination of nuclear weapons at the First Committee of the 64th UN General Assembly. North Korea's statement included the following: "When the states with the largest nuclear arsenals take the lead in nuclear disarmament, it will positively influence the newly emerged nuclear weapons states in various parts of the world and also contribute to total elimination of nuclear weapons on this globe."<sup>19</sup>

This strongly suggests that North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons would continue to be justified as long as the world's nuclear weapon states including the U.S. did not abandon their weapons.<sup>20</sup> In preparation for the Obama administration's announcement of the NPR, North Korea formulated an argument that differed from the 2002 declaration, in which it mainly justified its right of obtaining nuclear weapons as a lack of NSA, in order to avoid denuclearization even under a stricter interpretation of NSA or adoption of "the sole purpose" policy. Four years later after the response to the "nuclear-free world," North Korea legislated this stance at the Supreme People's Assembly.<sup>21</sup>

It could be rationale for North Korea's national security to keep its nuclear weapon program if the U.S. NSA was not credible enough. Nevertheless, such a national security hypothesis is inconsistent with the fact that North Korea's preference away from NSA emerged at the time of "nuclear-free world" rather than greater U.S. nuclear threat. Why did North Korea have to do so in 2009?

<sup>17</sup> George Bunn, "The Legal Status of U.S. Negative Security Assurance to Non-Nuclear Weapon States," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol.4, No.3 (1997): 6.

<sup>18</sup> White House Office of Press Secretary, "Remarks By President Barack Obama," April 5, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> "DPRK's Efforts for Peace in Korean Peninsula Reiterated," *KCNA*, October 18.

<sup>20</sup> The following study already pointed out the utilization of the Obama speech by North Korea for justifying its nuclear weaponry. Hideya Kurata, "*Rokushakaigou to 'Anzen no Hoshou' no Chiikiteki Tenkai: Beikokuno Kakutaiseito Kitachousen 'Kakuhooyuu' no Shuuji* [The Six Party Talks and the Regional Development of 'Security Assurance': US Nuclear Posture and North Korea's Oratory in 'Nuclear Weaponry']," Masao Okonogi and Junya Nishino ed., *Chosen Hanto no Chitsujyo Saihen* [Transformation of the International Order of the Korean Peninsula, (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2013), 251-252.

<sup>21</sup> "Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted," *KCNA*, April 1, 2013.

2009 was the year of internal security rather than external threat for the North Korean regime: the start of power succession from Kim Jong-Il to Kim Jong-Un. As this paper will explain more in the next chapter, the nuclear weapon program plays a critical role for the regime's domestic competition against an alternative system and the regime also conducted the second nuclear test, which aimed for validating its legitimacy vis-à-vis South Korea, in 2009.

In addition, North Korea's provocative way of developing nuclear capabilities has contradicted the intention of preventing military attacks from the U.S.; developing nuclear weapon increases enemy's incentive for preventive attack to eliminate the future threat.<sup>22</sup> The reason why North Korea could expose its nuclear program for brinkmanship was that the nation already had non-nuclear deterrence capabilities, long range artilleries and multiple rocket launchers deployed within the range of Seoul. Even though North Korea's notion utilizes the Iraq and Libya cases in justifying its "self-defense" nuclear weaponry,<sup>23</sup> unlike the two nations, North Korea's capabilities to impose casualties was enough to deter the U.S. preventive attack even at the time of the first nuclear diplomacy.<sup>24</sup>

Kim Jong-Un could enjoy this deterrence improved by the continuous reinforcement from 1993.<sup>25</sup> It was not simply the fact that North Korea had no other choice than to equip itself with nuclear weapons for external security reasons. Establishing nuclear deterrence to the U.S. was probably a choice made due to internal factors rather than external factors. Even if the U.S. strengthened the credibility of NSA and restricted the purpose of nuclear weapons to deterrence to nuclear attacks, it is difficult to believe that U.S. adaptation of the strict NSA and limiting the nuclear weaponry's purpose to deterrence to nuclear attack would lead to North Korea's denuclearization. The inability to apply the national security model requires examination of the norm model that considers the security of the internal regime as the main factor, instead of external security.

### **Ongoing Regime Competition: Building Nuclear Weapons as a Norm**

Even some who see North Korean nuclear program's intention to preserve regime do not focus on other than deterrence against outside military intervention.<sup>26</sup> While Christopher Way and Jessica Weeks did mention about the norm model, they did not regard achieving a normative goal as a strong motive for regime which survival was threatened.<sup>27</sup> Sagan himself did not explain this model from the viewpoints of regime's survival. However, fulfilling a norm is the function of nuclear weaponry for regime to prevent inside enemy's emergence. This is because the appearance of a state that the people consider to be great contributes to legitimacy as internal competitiveness.

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<sup>22</sup> Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, (New York: WW Norton & Company), 59-63.

<sup>23</sup> "KCNA Commentary Lauds Successful H-bomb Test in DPRK," *KCNA*, January 8, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Ashton Carter and William Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution), 1999, 128-129.

<sup>25</sup> Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966—2008*, (New York: Routledge), 2010, 106-107 and 193-194.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Way and Jessica L. P. Weeks. "Making It Personal: Regime Type and Nuclear Proliferation." *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 3 (2014): 710. US Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 2015*, January 2016, 5-6.

<sup>27</sup> Way and Weeks, 707.

For this hypothesis to be the case, the regime pursuing nuclear development should be directly faced with a threat from an internal adversary. The internal adversary faced by North Korea is South Korea. As long as the two Koreas share a domain considered to be a state unit, there is the possibility that people in one side can consider the other as legitimate. The extension of the opposing regime's posture caused by a majority of the people having such awareness would likely be a phenomenon similar to the fall of East European communism. The Ceaușescu regime of Romania collapsed because a majority of the people living in the territory including military personnel acknowledged liberal democracy as the replacement for the existing system. For the people of North Korea, South Korea represents this alternative regime.

Essentially, there should only be one regime within a state unit and South Korea has obviously achieved greater economic success than the North regime. Despite this, North Korea has continued to evade a situation in which an overwhelming majority of its people and the military support South Korea. Like a surviving power in any other political competition where people are faced with a choice between two alternatives,<sup>28</sup> the reason why North Korea still succeeded in exhibiting its *raison d'être* is that the regime raises an issue which divide people between the two in favor of the North; North Korea has displayed its dominance regardless of its economic conditions by realizing the normative value of self-reliance in the face of world powers.

South Korea has fulfilled the norm of economic prosperity, but it is unable to develop nuclear weapons freely like North Korea because it is bound by its nuclear cooperation agreement with its ally, the U.S. As indicated by the South Korean term "Nuclear Sovereignty (*Haek Jukwon*)"<sup>29</sup> that reflects the dissatisfaction toward restrictions imposed by the U.S., the normative value of ethnic independence in nuclear development is shared by both North Korea and South Korea. By challenging the U.S. with nuclear weapons, North Korea has established an advantage in regime competition with South Korea. The confrontation with the external enemy of the U.S. is also a battle to refute South Korea as an internal enemy who gave up its independence to this external enemy. For this reason, the source of legitimacy for North Korea to continue existing is its superior position over South Korea in terms of independence. Nuclear diplomacy in this situation is political competition with South Korea as a way of following the self-reliant norm using military force.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, North Korea required the U.S. to play the role of external enemy needed for competition with South Korea in following the self-reliant norm. In its nuclear tests to date, North Korea has unilaterally created the stage in which the U.S. had to emerge in the role of the enemy.

<sup>28</sup> E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*, (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 1975), Ch.4.

<sup>29</sup> The following work was cited regarding South Korea's actions based on its dissatisfaction with a lack of "nuclear sovereignty." Lee Chong-Hun, *Hanguk ue Haek Jukwon* [The South Korea's Nuclear Sovereignty], (Seoul: Gulmadang) 2009.

<sup>30</sup> This idea was partly inspired by the following paper. Masami Nishino "Al-Qaida Trends After the 9-11 Terrorists Attacks", *NIDS Security Reports*, No.11 (October 2010), 50-52; Masashi Nishino "Saiido Kutubuno Shakairon [Social Theory of Sayyid Qutb]," *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, (March 2002), 98-102. Concepts to exclude outside forces could not solely lead to the emergence of extremist groups which advocate that. Only after the justification of fighting against internal rulers who do not realize the objective enough, the groups could rise in the society as alternative to the ruling people. This causal order is the reminder of an important necessary condition for sustaining alternative regime to the dominant system. For North Korea to survive, it has to show not only its confrontation against the outside force, the US, but also the reason why South Korea, an economically-successful system, has to be denied for fighting the enemy.

With respect to the first nuclear test in 2006, North Korea probably understood that the test diminished the prospect for receiving NSA from the U.S.; North Korea agreed to the denuclearization action plan on February 13, 2007, despite the absence of U.S. NSA in exchange of the measures for denuclearization in the plan.<sup>31</sup> The first nuclear test, an important step for shifting away from demanding NSA, was carried out for a reason the nation created by itself. North Korea conducted a missile launch while drawing out a strong reaction from the U.S. leadership on the U.N. Security Council, and as aimed, it defined the U.N. Security Council resolution as a threat to ethnic independence, which it used to justify the test. The fact that North Korea elicited a reaction from the U.N. Security Council in response to its missile launch can be read from the nature of the Six Party Talks. Essentially, North Korea's declaration of its withdrawal from the NPT two years earlier in January 2003 should have been discussed by the U.N. Security Council. The Six Party Talks are an alternative created when China negotiated with the U.S. to avoid a U.N. Security Council resolution.<sup>32</sup> After stating it would suspend its participation in these Six Party Talks "for an indefinite period" (North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs; February 10, 2005),<sup>33</sup> North Korea lifted the moratorium on missile launches in its declaration of withdrawal from the NPT.<sup>34</sup> If missile launches were conducted with the Six Party Talks shutdown, the only place to discuss this problem would be the U.N. Security Council. North Korea launched missiles knowing this in an attempt to impose the role of enemy on the U.S. by forcing debate in the U.N. Security Council.

On the other hand, North Korea has indicated in a series of moves its intention to demand negotiations for removal of financial sanctions placed on it by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.<sup>35</sup> However, this does not become a reason for launching missiles during the process leading back to the negotiating table. U.S. State Department officials who engaged in the Six Party Talks regarded the financial sanctions by the Treasury that were more effective than anticipated as a burden for North Korean policy.<sup>36</sup> Given that, it is difficult to say that North Korea did not have the means to set up negotiations. The reason for the provocative attitude can be found in internal factors.

The objective of missile launches at that time was in drawing out "pressure" to justify its nuclear tests. Even though, before launching the missiles, a spokesman for the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that nuclear tests would be performed as "more powerful physical response" to "pressure" placed on it by any state,<sup>37</sup> avoiding the U.N. Security Council resolution could not be an objective of that statement. The spokesman's statement was made after

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<sup>31</sup> Kurata, "The Six Party Talks and the Regional Development of 'Security Assurance'," 248-249.

<sup>32</sup> Hideya Kurata "Beichuu Taikokukanno Kyocho toshiteno Chousenhantou Rokushakaidan: Kakufukakusan Seisaku to Chiiki Anposeisakuno Kousaku [The Six Party Talks as a Concert of Great Powers: Interactions between Nonproliferation and Regional Security]," Satoshi Amako and Emi Mifune ed., *Bouchousuru Chuugokuno Taigaikankei: Pakusu Shikato Shuuhenkoku* [Expanding China's External Relations: Pax Sinica and China's Neighbors] (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2010), 146-147.

<sup>33</sup> "DPRK FM on Its Stand to Suspend Its Participation in Six-party Talks for Indefinite Period," *KCNA*, February 10.

<sup>34</sup> "Statement of DPRK Government on its withdrawal from NPT," *KCNA*, January 10, 2003.

<sup>35</sup> "Memorandum of DPRK Foreign Ministry," *KCNA*, March 3, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Juan Zarate, *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013), 237, 247.

<sup>37</sup> "DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Its Missile Launches," *KCNA*, July 6, 2006.



Japan submitted<sup>38</sup> a draft resolution criticizing the missile launches to the U.N. Security Council. At this stage, there was no sound reason for North Korea to expect Japan and the U.S. to withdraw their U.N. Security Council resolution by the threat. Once U.N. Security Council Resolution 1695 was issued, North Korea stated it was “a de facto ‘declaration of war’” by the U.S. and used this as evidence for rising military tensions to respond with the nuclear test together with joint exercises by ROK-U.S. *Combined Forces*,<sup>39</sup> even though no enforcement measures under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter were included.

According to North Korea, this nuclear test represented one of the battles to protect “the sovereignty of the country” from the U.S. which was attempting to destroy “the socialist system chosen by its people themselves.”<sup>40</sup> The North Korean regime defined itself as the system “chosen by its people” in order to stipulate that South Korea, a U.S. ally, violates the norm of “self-reliance.” The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK), which is a propaganda body for North Korea’s regime competition, delivered necessary discourse for this purpose up to the nuclear test. The CPRK stated that South Korea’s participation in exercises with the U.S. forces represented cooperation in “outside forces” that violates “self-reliance,”<sup>41</sup> and represents nothing more than being “servile” to the U.S. which wants to start a “nuclear war.”<sup>42</sup>

Similar to the first test, the second nuclear test that was conducted in 2009 was carried out with the U.S. forced to play the role of unjust external enemy. First, North Korea made a pre-announcement regarding its launch of the Kwangmyongsong-2 satellite using an Unha-2 rocket.<sup>43</sup> In this aspect, this launch differed from the one in 2006 that was carried out without warning, but the intent was not necessarily to ease frictions with other nations. The claim justifying the launch of the rocket excluded nearly all internally legitimate reasons for North Korea to rescind the launch. From the details of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1695 and Resolution 1718 already adopted, North Korea should have easily been able to understand that it would be criticized by the U.N. Security Council for testing missile related technologies even if it was a satellite launch. North Korea likely chose the rocket launch to validate its normative actions to protect its ethnic “independence” from unjust enemy interference, even if it was space science.

Once U.N. Security Council criticism of the missile launch was issued likely as foreseen (April 13, 2009), the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated its stance that the country would carry out a nuclear test and re-launch of missiles as long as there was not “an immediate apology” by the U.N. Security Council.<sup>44</sup> An “apology” from the U.N. Security Council is absolutely unlikely.<sup>45</sup> The goal of the position statement of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign

<sup>38</sup> “Gist of Japan-circulated draft text of N. Korea resolution,” *Kyodo News*, July 6, 2006; US Department of State, “Press Briefing on North Korea Missile Launch,” July 4, 2006, 2001-2009.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/68547.htm, as of November 19, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> “DPRK Foreign Ministry Clarifies Stand on New Measure to Bolster War Deterrent,” *KCNA*, October 3, 2006.  
<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> “Projected RSOI and Foal Eagle Exercises under Fire,” *KCNA*, March 13, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> “‘Ulji Focus Lens’ under Fire,” *KCNA*, September 2, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> “Preparations for Launch of Experimental Communications Satellite in Full Gear,” *KCNA*, February 24, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> “UNSC Urged to Retract Anti-DPRK Steps,” *KCNA*, April 29, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> The following study has already pointed out that North Korea acted under the assumption that there would never be an “apology.” Hideya Kurata “*Kakujikkengo no Chousenhantou* [The Korean Peninsula After the 2nd Nuclear Test] August 9, 2009, [https://www2.jiia.or.jp/RESR/column\\_page.php?id=175](https://www2.jiia.or.jp/RESR/column_page.php?id=175)

Affairs was likely not to obtain an “apology,” but rather to use criticism of the U.N. Security Council that would not issue an “apology” as a moral reason for nuclear testing. No “apology” was made as was expected, leading to North Korea conducting a nuclear test to protect “the sovereignty of the country and the nation and socialism.”<sup>46</sup>

As a champion of socialism, North Korea attempted to validate itself through confrontation with the U.S. unilaterally using nuclear tests once it had followed the norm of independence lacking in South Korea, a champion of liberal democracy. The day after U.N. Security Council Resolution 1874 was issued for the nuclear test, the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs stipulated, “this confrontation is an issue related to the sovereignty and dignity of the DPRK rather than an issue related to peace and security—this is the DPRK-U.S. confrontation,” and announced a stance that it would begin creating weapon-grade plutonium and enrichment of uranium as well as carry out military response to the “attempted blockade” by “the U.S. and its followers.”<sup>47</sup> According to the DPRK statement, the response of the U.S. and South Korean militaries to the nuclear test represented a “confrontation with fellow countrymen” in which “the South Korean puppet warmongers” are “a shock brigade in executing the U.S. policy for a war of aggression against the DPRK, nuclear war servants and war maniacs.”<sup>48</sup>

If North Korea was competing to follow the norm of “independence,” its nuclear test in this case a mean of political competition with South Korea, a non-compelling force of securing the support of people in regime selection, rather than a compelling force militarily. Indeed, North Korea’s survival strategy of “*Songun* (Military-first) Politics” shares the focus with soft power theory for controlling people without relying on force, and it defines nuclear weapons as products of this strategy.

According to the preamble of the North Korean constitution (part inserted in 2012), North Korea’s Kim Jong Il promoted *Songun* Politics to “safeguard with honour the achievements of socialism which are the precious legacy of Comrade Kim Il Sung” during the crises following “the collapse of the world socialist system” at the end of the Cold War. The outcome of these efforts is a position as “a nuclear state and an unchallengeable military power.” Since the socialist system did not collapse by military incursion, it was also not a situation prevented by *Songun* Politics.<sup>49</sup> The achievement of the collapse of the former Soviet Union and East European communist regimes not by using the NATO forces also stands as a primary example of soft power theory advocated by Joseph Nye.<sup>50</sup> If the outcome of *Songun* Politics in stopping the penetration of liberal democracy is

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<sup>46</sup> “KCNA Report on One More Successful Underground Nuclear Test, KCNA, May 26, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> “DPRK Foreign Ministry Declares Strong Counter- Measures against UNSC’s “Resolution 1874”,” KCNA, June 13, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> “S. Korean Warmongers’ Arms Buildup Blasted,” KCNA, June 13, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> My previous study already discussed the goal of military-first politics and South Korea’s threat to North Korea caused by the sharing of territorial notions. Takeshi Watanabe, “*Kyouino Gensen toshitenno Aidentitii Kyouyuu: Kitachousenno Seizontousou* [Shared Identity as a Source of Threats: North Korea’s Struggle for Survival],” Kaigai Jijyo, Vol. 61, No. 6 (June 2013). In addition, the following study was referenced with regard to North Korea using the collapse of the Eastern Bloc socialist countries as a lesson for forming its military-first politics doctrine. Atsuhito Isozaki “*Kimuiruson to Ideorogi; Kitachousen ‘Sengun Shiso’ eno Michi* [Kim Jong-Il and Ideology: North Korea’s Road to ‘the Songun Idea’],” Keio University Faculty of Law ed., *Keio no Kyoyogaku: Keiogijyukudagaku Souritsu 150nen Kinen Hougakubu Ronbunshuu* [Keio’s Liberal Arts: Festschrift in Honour of the Keio University 150’s Anniversary], (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2008), 81-82.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 48-50.

status as a “nuclear state,” the goal of nuclear weapons should be in reinforcing conceptual power in competing with an alternative regime.

### North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Prevent Human Rights

In the midst of “the collapse of the world socialist system,” North Korea passed down the “*Songun* revolutionary leadership” and “led the country to a series of victories [against the U.S.] using the nuclear confrontation and fulfilled a great task in ethnic history with the possession of nuclear weapons.” The policy of North Korea's economic development that championed this was approved at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea around two months after the third nuclear test took place in January 2013. This represented “a new strategic line on carrying out economic construction and building nuclear armed forces simultaneously.”<sup>51</sup> If this policy carried over the threat awareness of *Songun* Politics, the reason why resources were invested in nuclear development even though economic reconstruction was needed is likely because North Korea did not want to follow the fate of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc socialist countries.

Indeed, after approving “the Line of Simultaneously Developing the Two Fronts,” the nuclear test of January 2016 further clarified the intention toward internal security and was deemed as a battle with the “conspiracy” threatening the race using basic human rights. According to the statement of the North Korean government regarding the “H-bomb” experiment, the U.S. intended to bring about the fall of the regime using a “conspiratorial ‘human rights’ racket,” and in response North Korea carried out the test as “a measure for self-defence the DPRK has taken to firmly protect the sovereignty of the country and the vital right of the nation.”<sup>52</sup> The wording of confronting “human rights” as the mode of conspiracy with the nuclear test was also seen at the 7th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea held for the first time in 36 years. The joint slogans of the Central Committee and the Central Military Commission stated “destroy the fanatic attempt for starting war to invade Korea by the U.S. imperialist and the South Korean puppet warmongers” and stressed “crush the anti-DPRK ‘human rights’ conspiracy.”<sup>53</sup>

From the standpoint of deterrence against a foreign enemy, there is no reason to connect human rights issues with nuclear tests. However, “independent unification” reaffirmed<sup>54</sup> at the Party Congress represents a form of logic behind the “federal formula” continuing to separate the north from the south; or in other words, preventing the expansion of liberal democracy embodying basic human rights to the north.<sup>55</sup> Unification must never take the form of full control of the peninsula by a liberal democratic regime, which is influenced by the U.S. and thus violates the

<sup>51</sup> “Report on Plenary Meeting of WPK Central Committee,” *KCNA*, March 31, 2013.

<sup>52</sup> “DPRK Proves Successful in H-bomb Test,” *KCNA*, January 6, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> “*Chosun Rodong Tang Jungang Uiwonhuwe Chosun Rodong Tang Jungang Gunsu Uiwonhuwe Kongdong Kuho: Chosun Rodontang Jae Chil Jia Teahwe e Chuumhayo* [WPK Central Committee, Central Military Commission Issue Joint Calls for 7th Party Congress],” *Rodong*, February 18, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> The 7th Congress of the Korea Workers' Party “*Chosun Rodong Tang Jae Chil Jia Teahwe Kyolchongso: Chosun Rodong Tang Chungang Uiwonhuwe Saop Chonghwa e Tehayo* [The Decision of the 7th Congress of the Korea Workers' Party: On the Review of the Work of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea],” May 8, 2016, article 3; “DPRK Government, Political Parties, Organizations Call for Accelerating Final Victory of Independent Reunification,” *Rodong*, May 17, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Details of “independent unification” can be found in: “*Koryo Minju Ryongpang Konghwakuk Changrip Pangan* [the proposal for founding the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo],” the 6th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea Report, October 10, 1980.

independence norm. If this is the basis for refuting unification led by South Korea, the nuclear test of 2016, which equated the defense of “the sovereignty of the country” from the U.S. and protection of only the North Korean regime,<sup>56</sup> is an act that validates such a belief to deny the South as a U.S. ally.

North Korea’s threat awareness toward human rights, too, was born from fears of South Korea based on the lessons gained from the fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc regimes. In November 2006, North Korea criticized, prior to its adoption, the U.N. General Assembly resolution demanding improvement in the country’s human rights conditions as “human rights diplomacy” similar to “the Helsinki process” carried out by the U.S. and its followers against the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries.<sup>57</sup> The basic human rights acknowledged by the Eastern side in the Helsinki Final Act eventually led to the receptiveness inside the Eastern side of liberal democracy representing a concept of an alternative regime.<sup>58</sup> This Helsinki process represents a good example common to both *Songun* Politics and soft power theory.<sup>59</sup> North Korea did not use such words when criticizing past human rights resolutions. The difference with the resolution of 2006 was that South Korea voted in favor for the very first time.

If it views basic human rights as a political concept that let people choose liberal democracy, North Korea should have understood South Korea’s support for the human rights resolution as its intent to withdraw from the agreement in the South-North Joint Declaration of the first summit meeting (June 15, 2000). North Korea accepted the proposal for holding the summit meeting only after the Berlin declaration by then South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung. In the declaration, the President indicated his awareness that it would be difficult to apply the experience of Germany unification to the Korean peninsula, and he proclaimed that rather than unification, Korea should aim for peaceful coexistence firstly. Consistently, the South-North Joint Declaration at the summit meeting included the President Kim Dae-Jung’s position to regard the “federation” initiative, which allows survival of the North Korean regime, as an approach which shows a commonality with South Korea’s unification concept.<sup>60</sup> For North Korea, this was nothing more than negative security assurance in soft power in which South Korea agreed not to pursue the Helsinki process where liberal democracy penetrated socialist countries and brought about the collapse of East Germany.

As long as the spread of the notion of human rights was a promoting factor of the Helsinki process, as the competing liberal democratic regime, South Korea’s approval of the U.N. human rights resolution greatly damaged the credibility of this security assurance. At the second South-North summit meeting with South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun in 2007, Kim Jong-Il of North Korea attempted to get the South Korean side to promise not to vote in favor of future human rights resolutions based on the principle of “not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other side.”<sup>61</sup> According to the stance conveyed by North Korea to the Roh Moo-Hyun administration, South Korea could not support human rights resolutions “after the historical South-North summit

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<sup>56</sup> “DPRK Proves Successful in H-bomb Test,” *KCNA*, January 6, 2016.

<sup>57</sup> “KCNA Urges U.S. to Stop Trumpeting about “Human Rights Issue,”” *KCNA*, November 22, 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 224-256.

<sup>59</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, p.118.

<sup>60</sup> South-North Joint Declaration, June 15, 2000, article 1 and 2.

<sup>61</sup> “Declaration for Development of North-South Relations and Peace and Prosperity,” October 4, 2007, article 2.

meeting.”<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, the South Korean government once again supported the resolution, but when doing so the reason why the Minister of Unification and others opposed the country's support for the resolution was because it “interfered with the internal affairs of the other side.”<sup>63</sup> This was likely a principle agreed upon in the South-North Joint Declaration.

North Korea failed in reshaping the coexistence agreement. Until the second nuclear test two years later, South Korea's posture toward promoting human rights in North Korea began to appear not only in the U.N. General Assembly resolution but also directly in unification policy. South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak who took office in 2008 clearly stated the unification concept as North Korea's “basic human rights will be brought in line with the same dimension as the universal values of humankind.”<sup>64</sup> Also, the president stated that South-North issues could not be resolved through “exclusive nationalism” and “must be viewed as an international issue at the same time as an internal ethnic issue.”<sup>65</sup> North Korea strongly criticized the details of this posture as a violation of the concept of “By Our Nation itself” in the South-North Joint Declaration of 2000; or in other words the agreement of “independent unification” from the viewpoint of North Korea.<sup>66</sup> North Korea saw basic human rights that South Korea attempted to apply to the North as a clear violation of the concept of “independent unification.”

At this time, North Korea could very well have already decided to fight against the invasion of ethnic “independence” by liberal democracy using nuclear tests. North Korea used its criticism of South Korea for violating the “independent unification” agreement as a form of logic for drawing contrast between North Korea's legitimacy and South Korea because (1) South Korea's withdrawal from South-North coexistence was an act of complicity with the foreign enemy and (2) North Korea's nuclear weapons are protecting the entire Korean people from this foreign enemy. According to this, the Lee Myung-Bak administration that demanded denuclearization together with the U.S. was complicit with the U.S.' intention to “terribly create the danger of the threat of nuclear war against the Korean people,” which was cited as the same as the attempt to remove “a deterrence against nuclear war of the North working to protect the entire Korean people.”<sup>67</sup>

Less than six months later, as discussed above, North Korea embarked on missile launches to draw out the threat of the foreign enemy as a reason for conducting its second nuclear test. At the “public gathering in Pyongyang to celebrate the success of the second nuclear test” organized by the leaders of the Party, military, and labor organizations after the nuclear test, the successful test was highly lauded as “defending the sovereignty of the country and socialism,” and strongly emphasized as progress of “the road of independence, the road of *Songun*” by the military and the people in the face of “the vicious hostile policy toward the DPRK” taken by “the U.S. imperialist”

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<sup>62</sup> Song Min-soon, *Pinghanun Umjiginda: Pihaekhwawa Tongile Hyonjang* [A Gracier will Move: The Scene of Denuclearization and Diplomacy for Unification], (Seoul: Changbi, 2016), 452.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 448-449.

<sup>64</sup> Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, *Sangsengkwa Kongyongue Daepuk Jongchek: Hanpando Tongile Gumi Kagawojimnida* [North Korea Policy for Coexistence and Prosperity: The Peace Unification of Korea will Come Closer], August, 2008, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Republic of Korea Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, *Lee Myung-bak Taedongryong Yonsol Munjip* [The Speeches of President Lee Myung-bak], Vol.1, (Seoul: Republic of Korea President Office, 2009), 53.

<sup>66</sup> “Lee Myung Bak Group's Traitorous and Anti-Reunification Acts Assailed,” *KCNA*, July 5, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

and “their lackeys the South Korean conservative forces.”<sup>68</sup> The wording of confrontation with South Korea who is complicit with the enemy of the Korean people emerged in nuclear testing, and North Korea disseminated to the people this as a reason for supporting “independent unification” protecting the North from the control of liberal democracy.

### **Divergence of Regime Survival and Economic Interests**

The more direct the threat of the penetration of liberal democracy, the more the priority of economic interests in North Korea’s survival strategy lessened. North Korea’s “the Line of Simultaneously Developing the Two Fronts” policy that avoids concentration of resources on the economy was adopted because of the threat of internal security similar to the collapse of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, and the country’s repeated nuclear tests despite the economic disadvantage of sanctions was strongly indicative of this. Indeed, when North Korea’s Kim Jong-Un adopted the “Simultaneously Developing” policy, South Korea clarified an intention to replicate the process that led to the collapse of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc.

The name itself of the Trust-Building Process (TBP) initiative advocated by the Park Geun-Hye administration which Kim Jong-Un faced could be seen as based on the intention of replicating the Helsinki process. When a presidential candidate, Park Geun-Hye authored an article for *The Wall Street Journal* in which she asserted that she would alleviate South-North confrontations and tensions with neighboring countries like the Helsinki process in Europe.<sup>69</sup> Even in the official explanation of the TBP after she assumed office, the Park administration emphasized the goal was the National Community Unification Formula led by a liberal democratic regime advocated around the end of the Cold War.<sup>70</sup> The government also directly discussed the similarities between the Northeast Asia Policy concept based on the TBP and the Helsinki process.<sup>71</sup>

“The Line of Simultaneously Developing the Two Fronts” was a reasonable response to the South Korea’s intention to promote a Northeast Asian-version of the Helsinki process. The political regime is a choice between two alternatives. As long as it is not superior to liberal democracy, North Korea could be absorbed by South Korea. The viewpoint that North Korea is irrational for continuing with nuclear development and damaging its economic interests disregards the differences between improvement and superiority. Even if it improves its economy by opening up to reform, North Korea will never be superior to the developed country of South Korea. Only in following the “independence” norm by building nuclear weapons can North Korea be superior to South Korea. Ending nuclear development to focus resources on economic construction represents a fatal flaw for the survival of the regime. Consequently, North Korea has no other choice for economic improvement than “Simultaneously Developing” with nuclear weapons.

Even before “The Line of Simultaneously Developing,” North Korea did not regard escaping

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<sup>68</sup> “Pyongyangites Meet,” *KCNA*, May 26, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Park Geun-hye, “A Plan for Peace in North Asia; Cooperation among Korea, China and Japan needs a correct understanding of history,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 13, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, *Hanpangdo Sinrae Process* [The Trust-Building Process of the Korean Peninsula], (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2013), p.20. Although Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun did not directly refute the the National Community Unification Formula, they did refrain from making direct references to the concept.

<sup>71</sup> ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperative Initiative: Moving beyond the Asian Paradox towards Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia*, 2013, p.13.

from economic troubles in the same light as regime survival. Certainly, the impetus behind North Korea taking the next step in pursuing nuclear tests could very well have been the financial sanctions placed on Banco Delta Asia (BDA) by the U.S. in 2006. Nevertheless, North Korea did not necessarily prioritize the recovery of the money it lost. North Korea dedicated itself to the effort to remove the scarlet letter,<sup>72</sup> or the stigma that there was no legitimacy for its existence. Despite the U.S. implementing sanctions against BDA as a blow against the important source of funds underpinning the regime,<sup>73</sup> the amount North Korea demanded during the process of removing these sanctions was a small amount that baffled the U.S. side.<sup>74</sup>

The trend of not equating economic interests with regime survival likely began to strengthen a little before the BDA sanctions in response to the “important proposal” by the Roh Moo-Hyun administration of South Korea to provide North Korea with electricity. The impetus behind this proposal was North Korea’s declaration about the indefinite suspension of the Six Party Talks. The reason of the suspension was because the Bush administration in its second term targeted North Korea for regime change as an “outpost of tyranny.”<sup>75</sup> The “important proposal” presented to North Korea by the Roh Moo-Hyun administration as an incentive for continuing talks actually magnified North Korea’s insecurity. According to the proposal, South Korea would compensate for electricity which North Korea was unable to obtain because the light water reactors promised in the AF were never provided. This would mean that North Korea would have to rely on electricity from South Korea, which was the alternative political system that could bring about regime change.

The then-deputy head of the NSC’s Secretariat with the Roh Moo-Hyun administration recalls that the “important proposal” contributed to the restarting of the talks,<sup>76</sup> but South Korea is the only party that refers to the “important proposal” in the joint statement of the fourth Six Party Talks, and North Korea never made public an affirmative response.<sup>77</sup> The contradictory statement that North Korea, which never wanted to hand over “power sovereignty” to South Korea, took a reserved stance to the proposal is also seen in the memoir of the same high ranking government official.<sup>78</sup> North Korea seemingly refused to accept assistance. This means that within the Roh Moo-Hyun administration understanding was lacking that South Korea’s economic assistance would threaten North Korea’s survival. North Korea prioritized independence from its enemy of the liberal democratic regime of South Korea rather than electricity.

Later, as South Korea intensified its actions that could be read as an intention to replicate the Helsinki process, such as applying basic human rights to North Korea, North Korea would lessen the priority placed on economic interests even further. North Korea began to not only refuse new proposals for assistance, but also take actions itself to free itself of existing economic benefits that

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<sup>72</sup> Zarate, *Treasury’s War*, p.255.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.229.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.255.

<sup>75</sup> “DPRK FM on Its Stand to Suspend Its Participation in Six-party Talks for Indefinite Period,” *KCNA*, January 10, 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Lee Jong-seok, *Karnar Uie Pyonghwa: Roh Moo-hyun Sidae Tongil Uekyo Anpo Bimangrok* [The Peace on Blade: Memorandum Record of the Unification, Diplomacy and Security Under the Roh Moo-hyun Administration], (Seoul: Gemagouwon, 2014), 313.

<sup>77</sup> This was pointed out by the following study: National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asia Strategic Review 2006* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2006), 70.

<sup>78</sup> Lee Jong-seok, 320-321.

it had gained continuously. This took shape in the form of the removal of North Korean workers from the Kaesong Industrial Zone (KIZ, South-North cooperation project operated in North Korea by South Korean companies) following the nuclear test of 2013 and the approval of “the Line of Simultaneously Developing the Two Fronts”.

By suspending operations of KIZ and sacrificing foreign currency income, North Korea focused on eliminating remarks that it was an inferior regime that relied on South Korea (the suspension continued from April to the beginning of September 2013). According to the CPRK statement warning of the closure, the argument of the South Korean side that it could never close KIZ, an indispensable “source of money,” even if North Korea was confrontational with the nuclear test represented sacrilege to the dignity of the North Korean regime caused by “the puppet group of south Korea, its dutiful media and hack writers.”<sup>79</sup> This removal of workers atop such criticism became a specific action for negating the basis of circulating awareness from South Korea that North Korea is not a deemed independent state.

The declaration on removal of workers took on a critique of the Park Geun-Hye administration by accusing the then-Defense Minister<sup>80</sup> as a “South Korea conservative influence.” However, North Korea began to show growing concern that its reliance on South Korea through KIZ was damaging its legitimacy from about five years prior to this during the Roh Moo-Hyun administration. The closure of KIZ was not the fault of any specific administration, but a consequence of North Korea’s fears about long-term trends in which South Korea deviated from the co-existence agreement.

At the end of the Roh Moo-Hyun administration, Prime Minister Han Duck-Soo asserted the legitimacy of defining products from KIZ as made in South Korea under the US-Korea Free Trade Agreement, and stated that this handling falls under the stipulations of Article 3 of the South Korean Constitution deeming the entire peninsula to be the territory of South Korea.<sup>81</sup> North Korea pointed out that this viewpoint “greatly violated its sovereignty” and blamed it as negating the South-North Joint Declaration of 2000 as it did not align with the “independent unification era” based on the concept of “By Our Nation itself.”<sup>82</sup>

Actually, Kim Jong-Un emphasized the realization of “independent unification” in his “New Year Address” prior to the nuclear test of 2013, indicating strife for thoroughly fulfilling the joint declarations of the two south-north summit meetings,<sup>83</sup> in which North Korea considered to receive the assurance of independence from the South. The later warning about the closure of KIZ was issued on the same day as a government statement about the scorched earth policy toward the “puppet group” of the South Korean Presidential Secretariat and South Korean military bases.<sup>84</sup> The closure of KIZ was carried out after shifting the intent of the battle of protecting “sovereignty” from its enemy of the U.S. to confrontation with the “puppet” of South Korea.

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<sup>79</sup> “DPRK Warns Future of Kaesong Industrial Zone Depends on S. Korea’s Attitude,” *KCNA*, March 30, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> “Important Steps Declared as Regards Kaesong Industrial Zone,” *KCNA*, April 8, 2013.

<sup>81</sup> “Kaesong Gongdan Uwonsanji Sikakuja, Han “Pukhaek Haekyordaemyon Modu Hankuksan”, Mi “Injong Anur go [The Gab regarding the Kaesong Industrial Zone: South Korea demands Products from the Zone should be South Korean products while the US Rejects the Stance],” *Kukmin Ilbo*, April 4, 2007.

<sup>82</sup> “S. Korean Authorities’ Anti-DPRK Malarkey Assailed,” *KCNA*, April 22, 2007. Additionally, the controversy of the KIZ is mentioned once in the following study. Takeshi Watanabe, “Shared Identity as a Source of Threats: North Korea’s Struggle for Survival.”

<sup>83</sup> “Kim Jong Un Makes New Year Address,” *KCNA*, January 1, 2013.

<sup>84</sup> “North-South Relations Have Been Put at State of War: Special Statement of DPRK,” *KCNA*, March 30, 2013.



North Korea conducted a nuclear test to prove its “independence” from South Korea which it saw as violating the co-existence agreement, and toward that end, North Korea sacrificed the economic interests of KIZ. The policy of “Simultaneously Developing” prioritizing the self-reliant norm over the economy was first applied with this nuclear test. The “Simultaneously Developing” policy clearly indicated that “nuclear weapons are not applicable to economic transactions even if they were a product to exchange for U.S. dollars.”<sup>85</sup> Because of the rationale for regime survival from internal threats, nuclear weapon development will continue irrespective of the economic disadvantages.

## Conclusion

The acquisition of nuclear weapons will likely heighten North Korea's deterrent force. This paper does not refute this point. However, there appears to be a reason for rejecting denuclearization that is more urgent than deterrence. The abandonment of military hard power leads to the decline of soft power, too.<sup>86</sup> This is because the revelation of dominant military power also has the effect of forming a preference for others.<sup>87</sup> If it abandons nuclear weapons, North Korea cannot show to people anything where it is superior to the economic power of South Korea.

North Korea's survival depends on regime competition that demands the choice of two alternatives with South Korea from among the Korean people. Nuclear tests show a posture of a prominent independent state that South Korea cannot realize and represent an act that creates a point of superiority in this regime competition. Under the axis of confrontation visible from the “independence” strife with the U.S. that is the “puppet” master of South Korea, the regime since the Kim Il-Sung would be the only legitimate choice for the Koreans.

The reason why this paper did not cover the domestic politics model, which represents one of Sagan's three theories, that regards the lobby of scientists and others as the decisive factor for nuclear development relates to this. The political powers the regime excluded as enemies to the Korean “independence” are not South Korea alone. The people seen as in charge of group leadership as a possible replacement leader of the regime have all come and gone. The last of these people was Jang Song-Thaek, who was executed in 2013 when the third nuclear test was conducted on suspicion of organizing a coup attempt through a conspiracy with the U.S. and South Korea.<sup>88</sup> It is unlikely that a political influence independent of the sole leader of the regime would be created internally and that this power would apply the domestic politics model that determines the state policy of refuting denuclearization. Indeed, events indicating this have not been observed.

The existing deterrence of turning Seoul into a “sea of fire” using non-nuclear weapons remains fully functional as a form of external security. The fatally important reason for nuclear weapons can be found in the survival of the regime in terms of internal security. The posture of North Korea not demanding NSA anymore suggests that North Korea actually prefers mutual

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<sup>85</sup> “Report on Plenary Meeting of WPK Central Committee,” KCNA, March 31, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 9

<sup>87</sup> Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p.40; Nye, *Soft Power*, 26.

<sup>88</sup> The following article includes argument related to the threat awareness toward South Korea's penetration and the execution of Jang Song-Thaek. Takeshi Watanabe, “*Jang Song Thaek Shokei ni Miru Kitachousen Dokusai Taisei no Kawaranu Zushiki* [Jang Song Thaek's Execution and North Korea's Autocratic System],” *WEDGE*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (February 2014).

deterrence with the U.S. through nuclear weapons. As long as it cannot be superior to South Korea economically, North Korea's economic interests will never trump nuclear weapons in terms of regime survival. This is the reason why the provision of economic interests does not lead to denuclearization. The coexistence of regimes will likely be a condition for putting an end to the nuclear crisis, unless the regime's collapse ends the regime competition. Approaches to non-proliferation, which has relied heavily on NSA and economic incentives, have reached a major turning point.