

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA:
1945 TO PRESENT

by

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ABSTRACT

The foreign policy of the United States of America toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly known as North Korea, has an important role in maintaining the peace, stability, and security of Eastern Asia. From the partition of the Korean peninsula following World War II to the country's development of nuclear weapons, the foreign policy of the U.S. had to evolve based on the circumstances in North Korea. The United States, along with China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea, have key roles surrounding the discussions with North Korea. The thesis focuses solely on the presidential administrations of Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama; these men had the greatest impact on U.S. foreign policy with North Korea.

The thesis takes a qualitative approach of research by using primarily government documents, historical records from presidential administrations, articles from foreign policy journals, and books by foreign policy experts. Throughout the research, two common themes of U.S. relations toward North Korea emerge, uncertainty and defiance. North Korea's secretive regime makes it difficult for U.S. presidential administrations to determine the intentions of North Korea's actions. Furthermore, the uncertainty often leads to defiant and aggressive actions by North Korea. From the USS *Pueblo* crisis to the bombing of Yeonpyeong Island, presidential administrations had to walk a fine line of responding with aggression, negotiations, or appeasement. The thesis examines not only the options and implementations of each presidential administration, but also looks toward possible solutions for maintaining peace and stability in Eastern Asia by improving relations with North Korea.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of the United States toward North Korea originated shortly after the conclusion of World War II and escalated in significance during the subsequent Korean War. Since then, the entire history of U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea has been uncertain, with several provocations that almost led to another war. As with foreign policy toward other countries, the presidential administrations have a guiding role in setting the direction of foreign policy. Not every U.S. presidential administration played a major role in foreign policy toward North Korea because relations between the two countries faced a series of provocations, while at other times relations were relatively peaceful and nearly nonexistent. The following thesis will focus on the key presidential administrations that dealt with U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea.

Presidents Truman and Eisenhower set the foundation for U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea. Both presidents were involved in the decision-making surrounding the Korean War and its consequences. The current situation on the Korean peninsula traces its roots back to the end of the Korean War. Following the Korean War, a period of relative peace emerged with very little to no contact between the U.S. and North Korea governments.

The next major portion of foreign relations occurred after two major provocations by North Korea on the U.S. military in the region. The USS *Pueblo* and EC-121 crises caused the Johnson and Nixon administrations to develop formal responses to the provocations. The two administrations had a variety of options, but they realized the benefits must outweigh the risks associated with the chosen response. No one knew for certain what North Korea was planning

after the *Pueblo* and EC-121 crises, but fortunately nothing major occurred between the two countries for quite some time.

The next series of discussions between the U.S. and North Korea occurred during the Clinton administration. While there were no provocations directly aimed at the United States, the discussions surrounded the issue of North Korea's intent to build ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. The Clinton administration's chief accomplishment was the Agreed Framework to ensure nuclear nonproliferation in North Korea. The Bush administration continued the Agreed Framework with North Korea along with plans for verifying its nuclear weapons program, but there were few substantial results. The Agreed Framework eventually fell apart following North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Once the Obama administration came into office, the level of provocations by North Korea increased to a point not seen since the *Pueblo* and EC-121 crises. President Obama had to deal with ongoing nuclear tests, missile tests, the *Cheonan* sinking, and the Yeonpyeong Island shelling. The Obama administration is interested in getting other countries, specifically China, involved in lowering the tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Since the Truman administration, one common aspect of foreign relations with North Korea is the question of uncertainty. It is difficult for even the brightest foreign policy experts to figure out what the secretive regime in North Korea is planning to do next. From provocations like the capture of the *Pueblo* to the discussions about nuclear weapons, it is challenging to determine North Korea's intentions and conduct negotiations with the regime. For instance, the Agreed Framework looked like a promising nonproliferation agreement during the Clinton administration, but the question of nuclear weapons in North Korea was not solved completely

and remains a concern to this day. Does North Korea have real intentions for its provocative acts and defiance, or does it just want concessions from the world community? It is difficult to have a straightforward answer, but the history of U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea certainly helps determine the trend of North Korea's actions.

CHAPTER TWO – THE KOREAN WAR ERA: PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN AND DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

United States foreign policy toward North Korea dates back to the partition of the Korean peninsula in 1945. At the Potsdam Conference, the United States agreed to administer control of Southern Korea while the Soviet Union agreed to control Northern Korea with the division line being the 38th parallel. Although the agreement did not state a specific timeline for the Korean partition, it was understood that the partition would be temporary while Korea rebuilt following the Japanese occupation during World War II (Hickey). What no one knew at the time was the partition would remain for the foreseeable future. The Soviets felt obligated to stay in Northern Korea and refuse any type of reunification of the Korean peninsula despite U.S. tries for a national election (Hickey). The Soviets established a Communist government in North Korea with Kim Il-sung in charge. Each side helped build up their respective parts of the Korean peninsula with Soviet and U.S. troops pulling out of Korea by 1948 (Hickey). The withdrawal of troops would be short-lived as North Korea began its first major act of aggression, of which many more would follow, and sparked the Korean War.

President Harry S. Truman

Background

President Harry S. Truman inherited the presidency following the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Truman began his presidency with many foreign policy challenges including the end of World War II and the consequences of the war. Truman fulfilled the remainder of Roosevelt's term, ran for election in 1948, and won a close race against Thomas Dewey. With the victory, Truman now had a mandate to develop his own foreign policy objectives.

In June of 1950, troops from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) crossed the border and invaded South Korea. U.S. policy prior to the invasion discounted the importance of defending the Southern half of the Korean peninsula from an invasion. General MacArthur said, "[It was] not within the capabilities of the United States to establish Korean security forces capable of meeting full scale invasion" (Pearlman 57). While members of Congress and the Defense Department echoed the same response as General MacArthur, the State Department realized the geopolitical necessity of South Korea toward the rebuilding of Asia, specifically Japan, after World War II. South Korea could be a major, future market for Japanese goods, and unrest in South Korea could have negative impacts on the rebuilding of Japan (Kaufman 8). The mixed opinions in the U.S. government made it unclear whether the United States would intervene militarily against the North Korean invasion. With North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950, it was imperative for the Truman administration to aid the South Koreans. The first task the Truman administration accomplished was imposing a trade and financial relations embargo on North Korea called the Trading with the Enemy Act (Cha and Kang 91). This was just a first step toward a U.S. military intervention against North Korea.

The Soviet Influence on North Korea

The Soviet Union was one of the most influential countries on North Korea during the country's formative years following World War II. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin helped establish Kim Il-sung as the "Supreme Leader" of North Korea. Kim Il-sung was a guiding force in the Workers' Party of Korea, which was North Korea's Communist Party at the time. Due to the Soviet influence, the Kremlin originally did not want North Korea to conduct an invasion of the South because it saw an invasion as "inexpedient, irrational, untimely, and unwise" (Pearlman

58). The Soviets were more focused on developing atomic weapons to increase deterrence against the United States rather than conducting an immediate, conventional invasion of South Korea. Kim Il-sung tried to convince the Soviets that the United States, or even South Korea itself, was planning an imminent invasion of North Korea. As a preemptive move to expand Communist influence, Kim Il-sung thought an invasion of South Korea was necessary (Pearlman 59).

The Decision to Defend South Korea

President Truman looked at the larger picture of international relations in making a decision to protect South Korea. Some scholars question whether Truman's goal in Korea was unification or status quo. Robert Oliver thinks the U.S. wanted the status quo ante bellum, not a reunification on the Korean peninsula (Lee 101). Truman knew the Soviets were looking to expand Communist influence throughout the world by commenting, "The Russians were trying to get Korea by default, gambling that we would be afraid of starting a third world war and would offer no resistance" (Lee 101). The Korean peninsula appeared to be a logical place to expand since North Korea already had a Communist government. Furthermore, with the Chinese Civil War in progress, the possibility of China being controlled by Communists was increasing. There would be political ramifications on the U.S. and its allies if the entire Korean peninsula fell to the Communists as well. Truman felt he needed to do something to protect American prestige throughout the world.

President Truman went to the United Nations (UN) to get approval for assisting South Korea. The UN passed a resolution concerning military sanctions on North Korea, but it did not have an immediate consequence on halting actions against North Korea (Kaufman 8). Truman

would later go back to the UN to get support for intervention against the North Korean army. On a political front, building a global coalition through the UN would have greater political appeal rather than just a unilateral intervention. Truman, like President George H. W. Bush in the First Gulf War, favored the political advantages of developing global coalitions for a single cause. However, global coalitions do have some drawbacks such as an oversized coalition could hamper the ultimate goal if the players involved share differing opinions on how to achieve the goal. In the case of Korea, the global coalition was not oversized by any means; thus, eliminating the major drawback of a coalition. The UN coalition was led primarily by South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom (including the Commonwealth countries of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand).

The United Nations convened a meeting of the Security Council on June 27, 1950, to discuss North Korea's invasion of South Korea. The Security Council passed Resolution 83 acknowledging the North Korean aggression and calling for military assistance to South Korea (Hickey). The Soviet Union, a permanent member of the Security Council, held a veto power against Security Council resolutions. However, the Soviet Union was boycotting the Security Council meetings because of Taiwan's status in the United Nations. Despite the boycott, the Soviet Union still had the power to veto military assistance and walk out of the meeting immediately after voting. The Soviet Union remained committed to the boycott and did not place a vote during the Security Council meeting concerning Korea.

The Truman Administration's Foreign Policy Objectives in Korea

The Truman administration practiced the policy of containment against Communist regimes such as North Korea. However, containment itself was a passive concept aimed at

holding back the Communists until the regime collapsed internally. President Truman took a maximalist view of containment that attempted to protect all areas of the world threatened by the spread of Communism. General MacArthur wanted to take the concept of containment a further step by advocating rollback during the Korean War. Rollback was aimed at causing the North Koreans to worry about defending land that was already under their control. Thus, it implied that the 38th parallel was not a real border and insisted on pushing U.S. and UN forces all the way to the Yalu River. Interestingly, public opinion in the U.S. tended to favor military intervention into North Korea, as evidenced by the politically opposite magazines *Life* and the *New Republic* publishing articles in favor of a free Korea (Kaufman 9).

While the concept of rollback appealed to the Truman administration, crossing the 38th parallel and progressing deep into North Korea carried risks of Chinese or Soviet intervention. China had warned that it would intervene in the war if U.S. and UN forces were to cross the 38th parallel. General MacArthur downplayed the Chinese threat and assured Truman at a meeting in Wake Island that the Chinese threat was minimal (Kaufman 10). Thus, the approval was given to allow U.S. and UN forces march toward the Yalu River bordering China.

The U.S. and UN march into North Korea went smoothly, with little initial resistance. However, there were intelligence reports that Chinese troops were already in North Korea preparing for resistance. By November, Chinese troops fought a short battle against the UN troops before retreating (Kaufman 11). MacArthur once again discounted the battle's significance and ordered his troops to march toward the Yalu. A few days later, Chinese troops attacked the U.S. troops forcefully, causing the U.S. troops to retreat southward for safety. It would prove to be a long, brutal retreat for the U.S. forces back to the 38th parallel. Following

the Chinese intervention, Truman wanted to tread cautiously by limiting the war to Korea despite opposition from MacArthur (Pearlman 169).

The Political Results of Truman's Objectives

The Truman administration proceeded toward its foreign policy objectives in Korea after the urging from General MacArthur that the invasion would proceed smoothly. Nevertheless, the decision to proceed north of the 38th parallel seemed ambitious, but it would turn into a major mistake on the part of MacArthur. The brutal retreat had political ramifications on the Truman administration, and it widened the rift between MacArthur and Truman. Politicians in Washington D.C. began to dislike the way things were going in Korea. Some thought the war was too costly, but others like Republican Congressman Joseph William Martin, Jr. pushed for intensifying the conflict by claiming, "We must win" (Clayton 590).

Discussions within the White House and the U.S. military centered on the issue of MacArthur's future. Some officials within the Truman administration, especially Secretary of State Acheson, felt that MacArthur should be relieved of command (Clayton 591). On the other hand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were more cautious in their attitude toward removing MacArthur from command. Paul Nitze proclaimed, "The President was reluctant to relieve General MacArthur...he leaned over backwards to see whether he couldn't work things out" (Pearlman 170). Truman, nevertheless, issued the order to relieve MacArthur as Supreme Allied Commander on April 10, 1951.

Truman was met with opposition for relieving MacArthur from command in Korea. The Truman administration received many letters and telegrams calling for the reinstatement of MacArthur. J.A. Sullivan, a general merchant, wrote a letter to Truman stating:

You [Truman] have made a grave mistake. The General is bigger than he was; you are smaller, much smaller. You are dead politically. MacArthur is a hero! We needed MacArthur; he did not need us... YOU WILL REGRET IT! I think Dean Acheson is persona non grata to the American public, as a whole; and he should RESIGN or be REPLACED by another... (Sullivan)

The political sentiment turned against Truman, despite MacArthur's embarrassing retreat from the Yalu River following the Chinese intervention in North Korea. Despite the public outcry, Truman wanted to maintain his policy of limited war in Korea since MacArthur was no longer an obstacle. Truman's term was ending shortly, and the situation in Korea was changed with the removal of MacArthur. Truman did not have enough time to commit the country to his policy of limited war and ultimately ending the war in Korea. That job would be left to the next president, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower

The popular World War II general was sworn in as President of the United States on January 20, 1953, and was now responsible for the country's foreign policy. One of his main campaign promises and foreign policy goals was an end to the war on the Korean peninsula. During an October 24, 1952, campaign speech, Eisenhower stated, "That job requires a personal trip to Korea. I shall make that trip. I shall go to Korea" ("Presidential candidate"). How exactly would President Eisenhower accomplish an end to the Korean War? The Eisenhower administration, especially Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, continued to advocate the strategy of rollback in Korea. However, the Eisenhower administration also developed a New

Look strategy comprising the doctrine of massive retaliation, which included the possible use of nuclear weapons.

President-elect Eisenhower, fulfilling his campaign promise, visited South Korea in December 1952 for three days talking to generals and examining the battlefield from the air (Hickey). Eisenhower appeared committed to ending the war in Korea, but how exactly would he accomplish this? Being a general, would he opt for a military option? Alternatively, would he go immediately to the peace table for diplomatic talks?

Military Options and the Question of Nuclear Weapons

Just because Eisenhower had the intention of peace in Korea does not mean he discounted military options to achieve his goal. Eisenhower, being a prominent general, had his administration review military options for ending the war in Korea. Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson planned a military advance into North Korea, with possible air support and the use of tactical nuclear weapons (Steuck 310). The success of another attack was not too optimistic, but there was hope that a strong attack would force North Korea to give concessions at the peace talks. In March 1953, the Joint Chiefs of Staff met and questioned the use of tactical nuclear weapons in ending the war (Steuck 310). The National Security Council held a meeting on May 20, 1953, discussing the use of nuclear weapons to hasten the signing of the armistice (Jackson 55). The meeting made no significant decisions regarding the use of nuclear weapons. The National Security Council Planning Board released a report in April 1953 stating the strength of Chinese and Communist forces in Korea was too high for any U.S. military success (Steuck 310). The Eisenhower administration, while keeping the military options open, wanted

to avoid another setback like the Truman administration encountered following MacArthur's march to the Yalu River and subsequent retreat.

Scholars frequently study the option of using nuclear weapons against North Korea citing the Eisenhower administration's strategy of massive retaliation. The debate about using nuclear weapons against North Korea continued even after the armistice was signed because of the possibility of another invasion. Eisenhower said, "We should use the bomb in Korea if aggression is renewed" (Jackson 57). Eisenhower was so committed to the use of nuclear weapons that he tried to convince British Prime Minister Winston Churchill about the effectiveness of nuclear weapons against North Korea (Jackson 62).

A common issue discussed surrounding the use of nuclear weapons was the role of China in North Korean affairs. As indicated during the Truman administration, the Chinese provided North Korea military support to push the Americans toward the southern part of the Korean peninsula. If China played a vital role in North Korean affairs, would China be a valid target for nuclear weapons in case of an armistice breach? The Joint Chiefs of Staff and State Department declared in a memorandum the importance of prohibiting the Chinese Communists from assisting North Korea even if it means using nuclear weapons (Jackson 60). The Eisenhower administration emphasized the role of the Communists as the primary cause of trouble in Korea. Despite the rhetoric, the plans of bombing China were limited to only targets that were known to support North Korea (Jackson 59). There was no intention to overthrow the Chinese government or get the Soviet Union involved.

Peace Talks

Despite the military options, the Eisenhower administration saw no single military solution for ending the war quickly and successfully. The Eisenhower administration started making efforts to sign an armistice ending the conflict on the Korean peninsula. A key factor in the peace talks was the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. The Soviet Union was now more willing to end the conflict on the Korean peninsula (“The Korean War”). U.S. public opinion in the months leading up to the armistice was divided, but 69% of Americans polled favored signing an armistice along the current lines, according to an official memorandum within the Eisenhower administration (“Public Opinion”). Within the same poll, 70% of Americans had confidence in Eisenhower’s handling of the Korean War (“Public Opinion”).

The final armistice agreement was signed on July 26, 1953 with the following three main provisions: (1) halt of hostilities; (2) creation of a demilitarized zone; (3) transfer of prisoners of war (“The Korean War”). Eisenhower made a speech the same evening saying, “Tonight we greet, with prayers of thanksgiving, the official news that an armistice was signed almost an hour ago in Korea. It will quickly bring to an end the fighting between the United Nations forces and the Communist armies” (Wooley “Radio”).

Other Diplomatic Talks with North Korea

In addition to the armistice, the United States and North Korea agreed to hold diplomatic meetings in Panmunjom in October 1953 to discuss the issue of foreign military forces on the Korean peninsula (Lee 102). North Korea wanted the removal of all foreign forces on the Korean peninsula, but the United States was uncertain about the potential for a future North Korean invasion of South Korea. Overall, the Panmunjom meeting ended in December 1953 without any substantial results, but it was a step at diplomatic negotiations between the U.S. and

North Korea (Lee 102). The border village of Panmunjom would be the only location for communication between the U.S. and North Korea into the future (Lee 103).

In another effort to solve the questions surrounding the Korean peninsula, a diplomatic meeting was held in Geneva on April 26, 1954, consisting of foreign ministers of China, South Korea, North Korea, the Soviet Union, and sixteen UN countries (Lee 102). The Geneva Conference tried to resolve the issues of foreign troops on Korean soil, but the conference turned into a rivalry between the two main camps, the Communists and the Western countries. The Soviet Union, China, and North Korea expressed discontent with the UN intervention in Korea and called for the removal of all foreign troops in Korea (Lee 102). The conference also brought up the issue of having a Korea-wide election supervised by neutral countries to determine the future of a united Korea. The United States, along with its allies, felt that the Communists could not provide a fair and free election in Korea. Thus, the “Sixteen-Nation Declaration” was issued which denounced the Communists for its negative outlook concerning the UN intervention in Korea (Lee 103). Like the Panmunjom meeting, the Geneva Conference failed to produce concrete results due to the widening rift between the Communists and Western countries.

The Truman and Eisenhower Administration Conclusion

Both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations dealt with the North Korean invasion of South Korea and its consequences. The Truman administration had the responsibility to decide whether U.S. intervention was necessary in Korea. With UN support, Truman led the U.S. on a military intervention aimed at protecting South Korea from Communism. A major obstacle was the conflicting goals of President Truman and General MacArthur in Korea. Ultimately, Truman relieved MacArthur as Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, but at the same time, it

increased political opposition within the United States. Truman left office with the ongoing Korean War and no particular end in sight.

Meanwhile, the Eisenhower administration came into office with the goal of ending the Korean conflict and ensuring the safety of South Korea against possible future invasions. Eisenhower, even before assuming office, visited South Korea to assess the situation. He was left with a variety of choices regarding North Korea, such as whether to use nuclear weapons or draw the line to end the fighting. The subsequent peace talks resulted in the signing of an armistice agreement ending the fighting on the Korean peninsula. The results of the Korean War included a widened separation between the Communists and the Western countries along with a continued division of Korea around the 38th parallel. The division of the Korean peninsula continues until this day, with the foundation for U.S. foreign policy set during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

CHAPTER THREE – THE VIETNAM ERA: PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON AND RICHARD NIXON

Relations between the United States and North Korea were scarce in the years after the end of the Korean War. There were only a few small incidents including the shoot down of a U.S. military helicopter in North Korea in 1964 and the attempted assassination of South Korean President Park Chung-hee in 1968 (Lee 105). As the U.S. became involved in the Vietnam War, it was natural for U.S. foreign policy to gravitate toward the war effort in Southeast Asia. However, acts of aggression by North Korea including the capture of the USS *Pueblo* and the shoot down of the EC-121 intelligence aircraft would cause both the Johnson administration and the Nixon administration to devote time for decision-making regarding North Korea.

The Johnson Administration and the Pueblo Crisis

Background

The Johnson administration focused on domestic policy such as the Great Society, but the situation in Vietnam forced the administration to increase emphasis on foreign policy. Meanwhile, relations between the United States and North Korea diminished when North Korean commandoes tried to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee at the Blue House on January 21, 1968 (Lee 106). The assassination attempt was unsuccessful, but it enhanced U.S. awareness of North Korea's potential for creating further hostility in the future. Only two days later on January 23, 1968, North Korea captured the USS *Pueblo*, a lightly armed U.S. naval reconnaissance ship. The ship was conducting surveillance of Soviet ships and listening to radio signals off the coast of North Korea (Haggard 7). A key fault in this mission was the lack of preparation for defending the ship against hostile actions. Following an attack on the USS

Liberty, the U.S. federal government had plans to upgrade the *Pueblo* with more powerful armament for defense against attacks. Yet, the budget for these armament upgrades was cut to a minimum, and the *Pueblo* was deemed worthy to sail with two .50 caliber machine guns (Haggard 8). The ship was ordered to get no closer than 13 miles to the North Korean mainland since North Korea claimed up to 12 miles out to sea (Haggard 8).

As the *Pueblo* was quietly off the coast of North Korea listening for radio signals and collecting samples, two North Korean fishing boats spotted the ship and reported it to North Korea's government. The activity grew as North Korea sent torpedo boats and MiG fighter jets to the scene. The North Korean ships ordered the *Pueblo* to leave the area, but Captain Bucher of the *Pueblo* claimed the ship was about 15 miles offshore, which were international waters (Haggard 11). Why did the captain not defend his ship from this antagonistic confrontation? He claimed the two machine guns were frozen and vulnerable to hostile fire (Haggard 12). Since the *Pueblo* was overwhelmed by North Korea fire, the captain decided to destroy all classified information and equipment before surrendering to the North Koreans. By the time the ship surrendered and was taken to Wonsan Port, not all of the classified information was destroyed (Haggard 13).

At the time of the ship's capture, the captain claimed the *Pueblo* was at least 15 miles off shore, which was well above the 12-mile zone claimed by North Korea (Koh 273). The North Koreans took the ship's 83 crewmembers captive and published propaganda claiming that an American ship was caught spying in North Korean territorial waters (Koh 273). North Korea was able to obtain a written confession from Captain Bucher that the *Pueblo* ventured into North Korean waters, but there is suspicion of fabrication due to the confession's poor English

grammar (Koh 273). The North Koreans treated the captured American sailors harshly, and the crewmembers claimed they were tortured for an admission of guilt (Koh 274).

The Question of an Immediate Response

The Johnson administration, whose hands were full in Vietnam, tried to develop a response aimed at obtaining the release of the ship and its sailors. An immediate, military response relied on U.S. military forces in the region to provide aerial support for the *Pueblo*. However, U.S. military aircraft were not ready to provide immediate support due to distance, equipment, and planning constraints (Mobley 43). The distance constraints involved U.S. fighter jets based in nearby Japan. It would have taken too much time to prepare the aircraft for the journey to North Korea. Furthermore, there were questions surrounding an agreement with Japan that prevented U.S. fighters from flying into a combat mission directly (Mobley 44). This meant the fighters would have to stop in South Korea first before continuing to North Korea. The U.S. had fighters stationed in South Korea, but all were equipped with nuclear weapons which required removal and replacement with conventional weapons (Mobley 43). Finally, the U.S. was just not ready to provide a quick military response to the *Pueblo* due to poor contingency planning. The key in a rescue of the *Pueblo* was a prompt response before the ship got into a North Korean port. Once the *Pueblo* docked at Wonsan port, it would be difficult for the U.S. to provide military support because of North Korean anti-aircraft defenses and seventy-five MiGs stationed near the port of Wonsan (Mobley 45). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Wheeler, based on the situation in North Korea, told President Johnson that it was too dangerous for a U.S. attack into North Korea.

Other Options

Back in Washington D.C., the State Department put together a Korea Working Group to develop options along with the positive and negative aspects of each option. The group developed ten well-reasoned options for the Johnson administration to consider. Among the top options was a surgical airstrike of North Korean air and naval bases responsible for the capture of the *Pueblo* (Mobley 59). The surgical bombing option was the most aggressive of the options discussed at the Korea Working Group. Another option discussed was a blockade or mining of Wonsan harbor, both of which were less aggressive actions than a surgical airstrike. The less aggressive options included pursuing high-altitude reconnaissance missions over North Korea and the possibility of establishing trade embargos on the country (Mobley 62).

Former President Eisenhower, who played an instrumental role in U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea, urged the Johnson administration to consider using nuclear weapons as retaliation (Jackson 56). Eisenhower was known for keeping nuclear weapons on the table in case of a future invasion or attack by North Korea, known as massive retaliation. It is unclear how much thought Johnson put into the possibility of using nuclear weapons, but he did not consider it as one of his main options for ending the *Pueblo* crisis. The use of nuclear weapons simply carried too much risk of escalating the issue into a full-scale war.

President Johnson reviewed the various options and decided to stay away from the militarily hostile options, opting for additional negotiations with North Korea. In February 1968, American and North Korean officials started secret talks in Panmunjom about the *Pueblo* crisis (Lee 107). No immediate results of the talks occurred, but the South Koreans felt betrayed that the U.S. was talking in secret with the Communist government (Lee 107).

Throughout the ordeal, the United States refused to admit the *Pueblo* ventured into North Korean territorial waters. Johnson deployed the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* off the coast of South Korea in a show of force (Koh 274). Koh argues that Johnson practiced much restraint and never intended to use force against North Korea (274). The United States negotiated with North Korea to obtain the release of the prisoners and the ship, with priority placed on the prisoners. Overall, there were 28 meetings between American and North Korean officials about the incident (Lee 107). After ten months of negotiations, North Korea released all surviving crewmembers after an apology stating the ship wandered into North Korean waters. The U.S. officially withdrew the statement, but North Korea claimed a diplomatic victory over the United States (Lee 108).

Opinions of the Johnson Administration

George C. Herring praises Johnson for his restraint in handling the *Pueblo* crisis (752). While it is true that Johnson kept his restraint from using military force against North Korea, the initial negotiations with North Korea produced very few tangible results in terms of gaining the swift release of the crew and ship. Graham Allison disagrees with Herring by pointing out that Johnson lacked a means of response and chose not to do anything significant (30). Allison does not see any particular success in the Johnson administration other than the eventual release of the captured American sailors nearly a year later, but North Korea's refusal to release the actual ship is somewhat embarrassing to the United States. The *Pueblo* itself may not have been the most important ship in the U.S. Navy, but the fact that a commissioned naval ship remains in the hands of North Korea as a propaganda display for tourists is awkward. Presidential

administrations since Johnson have attempted to negotiate with North Korea about the *Pueblo's* release, but none of the attempts were successful.

The Nixon Administration and the EC-121 Crisis

Background

President Nixon, like Johnson, also faced foreign policy challenges because of North Korea's hostile actions. Nixon, a prominent realist president, focused more on tackling foreign policy issues compared to the Johnson administration that focused on domestic policy like the Great Society. Nixon was poised to bring about an end to the Vietnam War through concepts such as *détente* and linkage. Nixon also came into office with a view of reducing the role of the U.S. military throughout Asia, which was called the Guam Doctrine (Lee 109). In August 1969, Nixon met with South Korean President Park Chung-hee about South Korea's need to rely on its own military forces, but Nixon also emphasized U.S. backing if North Korea were to attack South Korea according to the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 (Lee 85). Nixon planned to withdraw 24,000 U.S. military personnel from Korea by 1973 and offer help to build up South Korea's forces (Lee 85).

In the meantime, talks about reunification on the Korean peninsula were well underway. Nixon made his historic visit to China in 1972 to help improve relations, but North Korea viewed the visit with uncertainty about Korea's future (Lee 85). North Korea knew the United States had troops stationed in South Korea and did not like the idea of unification with the presence of U.S. troops. The reunification talks stalled and both sides remained uncertain about the other's motive.

On April 15, 1969, North Korean MiG fighter jets shot down a U.S. Navy Lockheed EC-121 electronic surveillance aircraft killing all airmen on board the aircraft. Similar to the *Pueblo*, the EC-121 was on a routine mission gathering intelligence close to the North Korean coastline. Unlike the *Pueblo* incident, there was no need for negotiating with North Korea about the return of American personnel or equipment since everything was destroyed. However, the act's provocativeness could lead to an increased possibility of military retaliation by U.S. forces. It is difficult to determine the exact reason why North Korea shot down the EC-121, but the country did not back down on its steadfast position that the EC-121 flew into North Korean airspace. The aircraft's orders were to stay about fifty miles offshore, and the U.S. claimed the aircraft was at least ninety nautical miles off the coast of North Korea when it was shot down (Lee 108).

The Nixon Administration's Options

President Nixon first heard news of the crash on April 15, and he realized the missteps that the Johnson administration made during the *Pueblo* crisis. Nixon had two major options for dealing with the EC-121 incident. The first option was an immediate military retaliation, as indicated by officials of the United States Pacific Command (Mobley 120). However, the military forces in the region necessary for retaliation were not ready for immediate deployment. The USS *Enterprise*, a prominent carrier group, was busy with the enhanced bombing in Vietnam. It would have taken time to gather the forces to retaliate against North Korea.

Unlike Johnson, Nixon did not like to assemble his advisors into the so-called "Situation Room" for a meeting about the EC-121 (Mobley 121). Nevertheless, the National Security Council met on April 16 to discuss options, which mostly involved military force, for responding to the situation. Nixon's advisers realized that if a military response was taken, North Korea's

air defenses were a major obstacle to conducting a successful operation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a plan called FRESH STORM aimed at taking out North Korea's air defenses in anticipation for a U.S. military strike (Wampler). Nixon's Cabinet members differed in opinions about the ideal options for responding to the situation in North Korea. While most of Nixon's Cabinet members favored some sort of military retaliation, Secretary of Defense Laird and Secretary of State Rogers objected to retaliation citing the possibility of sparking two wars in Asia (Mobley 123). Indeed, Nixon realized the possibility of escalation resulting from a military retaliation.

Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger met several times to discuss options. According to recently declassified documents, Nixon seriously discussed the option of nuclear retaliation with his advisors. One option, called FREEDOM DROP, was a tactical nuclear strike on key North Korean targets with few estimated casualties (Wampler). The other nuclear option was more large scale with plans to destroy most of North Korea's military forces (Wampler). Nixon also met with Secretary of State William Rodgers who favored a restrained approach. Rodgers stated, "The weak can be rash; the powerful must be more restrained" (Lee 109). In all of the options, the Nixon administration was uncertain about North Korea's response to a military strike.

The Nixon Administration's Response

Nixon decided to avoid the consequences of using military options and relied on diplomatic options instead. At a press conference, Nixon proclaimed his restraint against using military force, but calling the attack "unprovoked" (Lee 109). Nixon called for the resumption of reconnaissance flights in the region with naval backup provided by Task Force 71 (Lee 109).

In line with Nixon's Guam Doctrine of reducing the role of the U.S. military in Asia, the number of U.S. troops in South Korea was decreased along with the eventual removal of Task Force 71. Instead of direct U.S. support, Nixon wanted the allies in the region to carry a heavier burden for their own protection (Lee 110). Furthermore, Nixon urged the peaceful coexistence of the Communists and the Western world despite their differing views on issues, which was a main reason for his trip to China (Lee 109).

The Johnson and Nixon Administration Conclusion

The Johnson administration was caught off guard during the Vietnam War with the sudden capture of the USS *Pueblo* off the coast of North Korea. The administration took time to develop a response aimed at obtaining the release of the crewmembers and the ship. After ten months of negotiations, North Korea released the *Pueblo's* crew but kept the ship as a museum to show foreign visitors. Following the release of the American sailors ten months after the capture, Johnson called for the strengthening of U.S. military forces in South Korea to provide deterrence against a North Korean invasion.

The Nixon administration, known for its hard-line stance, approached the EC-121 incident with caution much like the Johnson administration. The Nixon administration, however, seriously discussed military options of retaliation against North Korea, but opted for restraint. Indeed, this concept of restraint is a key obstacle that future presidential administrations will face regarding foreign policy toward North Korea. Is the option of conducting an immediate, military retaliation worth the risk of restarting a large-scale war on the Korean peninsula? Both the Johnson and Nixon administration felt that the risk of war was too high for conducting a military retaliation; thus, both opted for peaceful responses.

CHAPTER FOUR – NEW CHALLENGES FOR PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

Much like Lyndon Johnson, President Bill Clinton came into office with ambitious domestic policy goals, but he initially spent little of his time contemplating foreign policy issues except for NAFTA; however, his foreign policy worldview evolved over his first term as he began to pay more attention to traditional security issues (Jewett and Turetzky). A highlight of the Clinton administration's foreign policy was Somalia, but otherwise there was a lack of consistency, according to Ryan Barilleaux (29). The subject of North Korea was pretty far down the initial list of important foreign policy issues for the newly formed Clinton administration. However, North Korea would garner the attention of the Clinton administration through its own actions, or in some cases, a lack of action involving international inspections of nuclear facilities. Richard Melanson argues that the Clinton administration worried the most about North Korea compared to other countries because of the threat of nuclear weapons (265).

Background

Clinton preferred using multilateral diplomacy by interacting with regional powers and international institutions (Melanson 264). In North Korea's case, regional countries like China and Russia have a certain amount of influence on North Korea since the Korean War. China, for instance, provides North Korea with 90 percent of its energy, 80 percent of trade goods, and 45 percent of its food (Bajoria). North Korea clearly relies on China for the survival of the country, and Chinese influence on North Korea has the possibility of being an effective method for conducting foreign relations. Joel Wit uses the metaphor of "lips and teeth" to describe the closeness of China and North Korea (21). William Triplett refers to the China and North Korea

relationship as an opportunity for “borrowed knife” linkage (12). China realizes it needs to balance its relationship with North Korea and may not be willing to increase punitive actions on North Korea. Russia, to some extent, also has influence on North Korea because of its former Communist partnership. While other regional countries like Japan and South Korea lack direct influence, the subject of North Korea is an important aspect of Japan and South Korea’s respective foreign policies. Multilateral diplomacy also has the positive aspect of gaining international legitimacy for decisions and subsequent actions. Clinton realized the importance of getting the other regional players involved in negotiations, but it could come at a cost of having too many players at the negotiating table. Having too many players increases the difficulty of reaching an agreement because all of the involved parties have their own national interests.

Major Points of the Clinton Administration’s Foreign Policy

The Clinton administration’s foreign policy toward North Korea centered on several main issues including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Agreed Framework, and the terrorism list. The issue of nuclear weapons was a major source of worry for the Clinton administration at the time. The unpredictability of North Korea’s actions in the past, like the USS *Pueblo* and EC-121 crises, added to the level of uncertainty the Clinton administration had about North Korea. Despite a focus on domestic policy, the administration spent time considering North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons.

The Question of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty

Prior to the Clinton presidency, North Korea had signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, but the country showed few signs of following the treaty’s provisions.

North Korea repeatedly refused to give the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) permission to inspect suspected nuclear sites inside the country. The country continued its development of nuclear weapons despite international disapproval. For instance, the international community widely knew about North Korea possessing a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, but the primary cause for concern was the development of a reprocessing facility for sourcing plutonium to manufacture nuclear weapons, which was a violation of the NPT (Henriksen 30). North Korea planned to withdraw itself from the NPT in March 1993, but the Clinton administration felt this would have been a bad move because it could lead to a nuclear arms race in South Korea and Japan for defensive purposes (Barilleaux). Negotiations among the United States, South Korea, Japan, and North Korea commenced with a goal of preventing North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT. North Korea ultimately agreed to remain a signer of the NPT and allow international inspectors into the country (Henriksen 30). In return for the agreement, the Clinton administration lessened economic sanctions against North Korea hoping to improve relations between the countries (Henriksen 31). North Korea, nevertheless, remained defiant against international inspection of nuclear facilities within the country.

These factors triggered the Clinton administration to evaluate its options once again for dealing with a nuclear threat from North Korea. On NBC's "Meet the Press," Clinton made a seemingly aggressive statement, "North Korea cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb" (Henriksen 31). Secretary of Defense Les Aspin made a statement afterwards that toned down the reaction against North Korea, saying North Korea could not become a "nuclear power" (Henriksen 31). These two statements show the differing views within the Clinton administration about the question of North Korea possessing nuclear weapons. The first

statement implied a staunch refusal to allow North Korea to possess any nuclear weapons, while the second statement implied it was acceptable for North Korea to possess nuclear weapons as long as the country did not become a nuclear power like the United States or Russia. These differing opinions raise questions about the degree to which North Korea should be allowed to develop nuclear weapons, if any.

The Agreed Framework

In the light of North Korean defiance, the Clinton administration continued negotiations with North Korea about its nuclear program. The next major event was the Agreed Framework in October 1994 that included several provisions aimed at solving the nuclear problem. During a visit to North Korea in June 1994, former President Jimmy Carter played an unofficial role in the development of the Agreed Framework. Carter openly criticized the sanctions placed on North Korea, and the Clinton administration was forced to accept Carter's deal with North Korea (Bluth).

The Agreed Framework's goal was a nuclear freeze within North Korea, specifically calling for the closure of the Yongbyon reactor. In return for the nuclear freeze, the agreement allowed for the construction of two light water reactors in North Korea for power generation purposes only. The light water reactors are harder for nuclear proliferation compared to North Korea's existing graphite reactors (Henricksen 31). The Agreement Framework helped reaffirm North Korea's commitment to the NPT. Clinton made a statement on October 18, 1994, saying, "I am pleased that the United States and North Korea yesterday reached agreement on the text of a framework document on North Korea's nuclear program. This agreement will help to achieve a longstanding and vital American objective: "an end to the threat of nuclear proliferation on the

Korean Peninsula” (Woohley “Remarks on Nuclear”). The Clinton administration believed the Agreed Framework would end the nuclear problem in North Korea.

The Agreed Framework gained opposition from the newly elected Republican Congress because of its lack of verification and the provision allowing the transfer of nuclear technology to North Korea for power purposes (Henriksen 37). Due to the lack of verification, it would be difficult for the U.S. to ensure compliance of the agreement in the future. Furthermore, the agreement included a provision for a foreign country to construct two light-water reactors in North Korea for power usage purposes, which many members of Congress opposed. The light-water reactors have a lower likelihood of nuclear weapons usage, compared to North Korea’s existing Yongbyon nuclear reactor (Melanson 266).

Sin Yong Song, North Korea’s Vice Minister of Power and Coal Industries, called the Agreed Framework’s plan to construct two light water reactions a “scheme” by the United States (Yong). He thought the U.S. made this agreement because of anticipation of an early North Korean collapse following Kim Il-sung’s death (Yong). The so-called “scheme” was just typical rhetoric by the North Korean officials to draw criticism of the United States at any given opportunity. As it turned out, Kim Jong-il, Kim Il-sung’s son, succeeded him smoothly and successfully without an early collapse of North Korea.

Removal from Terrorism List?

Shortly before Clinton left office, his administration considered the removal of North Korea from the U.S. terrorism list. In February 2000, Clinton submitted the following four requirements to North Korea before the U.S. would remove it from the terrorism list: (1) issue a written guarantee that it is no longer involved in terrorism; (2) provide evidence that it has not

conducted a terrorist act in the last six months; (3) join the international anti-terrorism agreements; (4) address issues of past terrorism support (Manyin 7). Both South Korea and Japan had differing opinions about North Korea's removal from the terrorism list. South Korea's President Kim Dae-jong agreed that North Korea should be removed from the terrorism list because it no longer posed a terrorist threat (Manyin 7). Japan, however, raised concerns about the issue of North Korea abducting Japanese citizens as a terrorism act (Manyin 7). In addition, North Korea's firing of a ballistic missile over Japan in 1998 may have caused concern about the removal from the terrorism list.

Secretary of State Madeline Albright made a historic visit to North Korea in late 2000 to discuss various issues including the kidnapping of Japanese citizens and North Korea's ballistic missile program. During the meeting, North Korea downplayed the Japanese abductee issue and turned down the Clinton administration's four requirements for removal from the terrorism list (Manyin 9). Ultimately, the Clinton administration left the discussions empty handed and did not remove North Korea from the terrorism list.

Opinions of the Clinton Administration

Joel Wit examines the effects of the Clinton administration's policy toward North Korea. Wit acknowledges the importance of Clinton's multilateral approach to diplomacy, but he also cautions a *complete* focus on multilateralism (Wit). However, there are also obstacles in multilateral diplomacy with North Korea due to the differing views of the key players. It is often challenging to develop an agreement that satisfies all sides of the negotiating table. For instance, giving concessions, such as economic aid, to North Korea has the possibility of upsetting South Korea, which may take a tougher stance by objecting to any concessions. China, on the other

hand, may be unwilling to draw a tougher stance on North Korea compared to the United States, Japan, or South Korea. China's national interests in North Korea have the potential to hinder or benefit any type of negotiations.

The concept of concessions was a key issue of debate within not only the Clinton administration, but also other presidential administrations. For instance, the U.S. pledged 500,000 tons of food aid in 1999 to help alleviate North Korea's famine (Melanson 266). In return, North Korea agreed to allow U.S. officials to inspect a nuclear facility within the country. Once the U.S. inspectors visited the facility, North Korea had already removed the questionable nuclear material as witnessed by intelligence reports of activity prior to the visit (Melanson 266). North Korea successfully obtained the food aid while preventing the discovery of suspected nuclear material. Is North Korea using its nuclear weapons program to gain concessions from the international community? It is arguable that North Korea is taking advantage of aid without giving concrete results to its promises. Hostile actions of North Korea often lead to a trend of concessions and broken promises.

The Clinton Administration Conclusion

The Clinton administration started with little interest about North Korean affairs. However, with increasing signs of nuclear weapons development, the administration turned its attention to decision-making surrounding North Korea's nuclear program. The administration made several efforts to stop nuclear development, including the Agreed Framework, but none of which made substantial, long-term improvement in the U.S. relationship with North Korea. Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were able to leverage their advantages in discussions with the United States by obtaining foreign aid. Despite North Korea's commitment to the NPT and the 1994

Agreed Framework, North Korea would withdraw from the NPT in 2003 causing the Agreed Framework to crumble. North Korea continues with the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles despite the administration's attempts at negotiating a means of verification. Hence, Clinton's Secretary of Defense William Perry called North Korea "the greatest security threat to the United States and the world today" (Melanson 265).

CHAPTER FIVE – CONTINUING CHALLENGES FOR PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

As President George W. Bush took office, he faced the continuing challenges regarding North Korea's nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs. The Bush administration initially did not have large foreign policy ambitions, according to Georgetown University Professor Andrew Bennett, who thought Bush would be a minimalist and unilateralist in foreign affairs (Hiebert). The Bush administration realized the shortcomings of the Agreed Framework and felt a need to change the direction of foreign policy toward North Korea. Bush set a major part of his foreign policy during the 2001 State of the Union Address in which he listed North Korea as a part of the "axis of evil." North Korea was already on the list of terrorist supporters prior to the Bush administration, but the "axis of evil" reinforced the idea of North Korea being a rogue state. The administration appeared to be on a more aggressive stance against North Korea compared to prior administrations. Despite the "axis of evil" remark, Bush made it clear at a 2002 news conference that the "We [United States] have no intention of invading North Korea" (Bumiller).

Background

The Bush administration was divided in terms of foreign policy perspective. Michael Mazarr writes in *Foreign Affairs* that the Bush administration contained two distinctive camps of followers: the hawks and the pragmatists (Mazarr). Mazarr considers the hawkish members of the administration to be Undersecretary of State John Bolton, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, while the moderate, pragmatist member was Secretary of State Colin Powell (Mazarr). Powell wanted the Bush administration to continue negotiations with North Korea regarding the Agreed Framework begun under the Clinton administration.

Overseas, South Korean President Kim Dae Jung sided with Powell by urging the administration to continue with Clinton's policies surrounding the Agreed Framework (Mazarr). Indeed, President Bush had to deal with conflicting views within his administration and internationally about the best policy toward North Korea.

The Bush administration arguably leaned toward the hawkish viewpoint during the first term in office. While the Bush administration distrusted North Korea's defiance against the U.S. throughout his entire term, the administration shifted views in the second term to allow for diplomatic flexibility called tailored containment (Kwak and Joo 145). This tailored containment policy allowed for several meetings of the Six Party Talks regarding North Korea's nuclear program in 2007-2008.

Major Points of the Bush Administration's Foreign Policy

Like other presidential administrations, the Bush administration had to tailor its foreign policy goals based on the situation in North Korea. The growing questions regarding North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs were two main topics the Bush administration had to address. The continuation of the Agreed Framework talks was a move to increase the effectiveness of the agreement. The creation of the Proliferation Security Initiative was another accomplishment of the Bush administration aimed at preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. However, North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006 raised eyebrows at North Korea's entrance into the exclusive "nuclear club."

The Agreed Framework Talks Continue

Bush came into office following Clinton's efforts with the Agreed Framework and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The Bush administration wanted to continue the Agreed Framework and suggested filling in the gaps of the original framework. The original framework under Clinton did not deal with North Korea's ballistic missile program, so Secretary of State Colin Powell urged the adding of ballistic missiles to the agreement in 2002 (Cha, "Nuclear North" 139). North Korea saw the latest action as against the national interest of the country. In the response, North Korea sought a non-aggression treaty with the U.S. before continuing discussions about the nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The Bush administration was not willing to issue a non-aggression treaty with North Korea, but the administration verbally reassured North Korea that there were no intentions to invade the country. North Korea was not satisfied with a verbal assurance, and the discussions led to a stalemate between the U.S. and North Korea because no side was willing to back down on its demands. North Korea removed itself from the NPT in 2003, which contributed to the fall of the Agreed Framework.

Moderate observers like David Kang argue that the Bush administration's unwillingness to hold a diplomatic dialogue with North Korea in his early years in office was a fault of his administration (Cha, "Nuclear North" 147). Kang opts for a more open dialogue with North Korea, despite failed efforts in the past. On the other hand, Victor Cha disagrees by saying the U.S. should not use the strategy of appeasement following the breakdown of the Agreed Framework (Cha, "Nuclear North" 160).

Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)

On May 31, 2003, President Bush called for the creation of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) with an "aim to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their

delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern” (“Proliferation”). This agreement called for the interception of ships suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. and over 90 other countries have agreed to the conditions of the PSI, but South Korea originally refused to join the PSI because of “unique geopolitical situations” (“S. Korea). South Korea feared that if it joined the PSI, it would complicate relations with North Korea. The PSI naturally angered North Korea since it was the primary target of the agreement, even though the PSI did not specifically state North Korea as the intended target. Elections in South Korea led to a shift in power to the opposition party, and South Korea agreed to join the PSI in May 2009. North Korea called South Korea’s joining of the PSI “tantamount to a declaration of war” (“S. Korea”). Furthermore, North Korea’s state-run news agency released the following statement: “The PSI is a mechanism for a war of aggression built by the U.S. against the DPRK under the pretext of intercepting and blockading ships and planes, etc. suspicious of transporting weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons and missiles” (“CPRK”). The outrage by North Korea was expected, but the results of the PSI’s creation remained limited to a verbal confrontation rather than a physical conflict. With South Korea’s joining of the PSI, the U.S. and South Korea improved relations in the Obama administration. The Bush administration was able to set the agenda for the PSI to help prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction by North Korea.

Did the Bush administration’s efforts regarding the PSI work? Opinions of the PSI’s effectiveness vary, but it is worth an examination of the tangible results of the agreement. In 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated publicly that the PSI’s member countries intercepted shipments of weapons of mass destruction in twelve instances, two of which involved

North Korea (Valencia 17). Critics of the PSI say a UN coalition of countries would be more effective than the current PSI led by the United States. A UN coalition could broaden international views of intercepting foreign ships; however, a UN coalition would face the same difficulties of getting China and Indonesia involved in intercepting ships suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction (Valencia 18). A UN coalition would continue to have opponents as well, so no single authoritative body would provide a 100% solution to raiding foreign ships at sea. The PSI was a first step, but the agreement's main goal was preventing the shipment of weapons of mass destruction components to other entities. The PSI did not cover the question of North Korea's domestic nuclear weapons program, only the shipment of its components internationally.

First Nuclear Test

North Korea's first nuclear test was not a complete surprise because it has a history of developing nuclear weapons despite attempts by the United States and the international community to prevent the country from obtaining nuclear weapons. North Korea officially conducted its first underground nuclear weapons test on October 9, 2006, but the test was deemed a fizzle by international observers. According to seismic readings following the blast, the test had a magnitude range of between 4.0 and 4.2, which meant the test was low yield or a fizzle (Kalinowski). Nevertheless, the nuclear test made it clear to the international community that North Korea was serious about developing and improving its nuclear weapons capability. The 2006 test was just a first step on the road to becoming a full-fledged nuclear state.

The Bush administration had several options for responding to North Korea's nuclear tests. The test itself was not enough to call for immediate military action. What type of response

was necessary to prevent North Korea from further developing its nuclear weapons capabilities? The answer depends on the observer's point of view regarding the nuclear issue. In the past, observers feared the possible consequences of countries like China, India, and Pakistan developing nuclear weapons, but all three countries refrained from using nuclear weapons in hostile ways. The nuclear weapons in China, India, and Pakistan contributed to deterrence, but the overall concerns decreased. Despite never using nuclear weapons in a hostile manner, a key concept is the question of who controls the nuclear weapons. For instance, instability in Pakistan leads to concerns about the safety of its nuclear weapons. If the government were to fall, who would get their hands on the nuclear weapons? The Pakistani government claims it has safeguards in place to prevent the nuclear weapons from falling into the wrong hands.

North Korea obtaining nuclear weapons does not make it an immediate threat to some observers, but North Korea's intentions for having nuclear weapons are unknown. Perhaps the nuclear weapons are just another way for North Korea to obtain concessions from the international community? This intention is the least worrisome because of the diminished threat to the region, but the added deterrence of nuclear weapons increases the possibility of foreign countries giving aid to North Korea. On the other hand, does North Korea really intend to use the nuclear weapons in an offensive manner against another country? This intention is dangerous because it would lead to instability in the region. Once again, it is unclear what will happen with North Korea's nuclear weapons program, but a big fear is the possibility of North Korea selling its nuclear technology to other rogue states or entities like terrorist groups.

Another aspect to consider about North Korea's development of nuclear weapons is the concept of a delivery system. North Korea does not appear to have a tested and reliable delivery

system for the nuclear weapon, specifically intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States. Even if North Korea places the nuclear warhead on one of its more reliable short to medium range missiles, the country lacks the development of a nuclear warhead small enough to fit on the delivery system. It will take time for North Korea to develop both a nuclear warhead and a delivery system for the nuclear warhead.

The Bush administration responded to the nuclear test by increasing economic sanctions on North Korea based on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 (Hiemann). As with many sanctions, it is important for all players involved to contribute to the sanctions. However, China and South Korea did not carry out its prescribed sanctions and refused participation in the PSI (Hiemann). Therefore, the sanctions did not lead to any lasting changes regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Other Negotiations

Foreign policy observers, including Hiemann, Kwak, and Joo, agree that the Bush administration shifted its foreign policy approach to North Korea following the 2006 nuclear test. The Bush administration attempted to get North Korea to join the NPT again, but the attempts failed. Members of the Six Party Talks agreed to the Denuclearization Action Plan in February 2007, which showed the Bush administration's willingness to negotiate with the regime (Hiemann). Previously, the Bush administration took a tough stance and was not willing to change its demands. The Denuclearization Action Plan had the goal of ending North Korea's nuclear program in two proposed phases: initial and disablement phases (Kwak and Joo 92). In return for cooperation, North Korea would receive foreign aid (mostly oil) and a promise of removal from the list of terrorism (Kwak and Joo 92). However, the U.S. was not pleased with

North Korea's cooperation and transparency regarding the dismantlement of its nuclear weapons program. North Korea cited the lack of promised foreign aid as a reason for not cooperating fully. The members of the six parties met again in October 2007 in an effort to reach an agreement about North Korea's nuclear program. North Korea agreed to the discussions concerning the shutdown of the Yongbyon reactor and being more transparent in the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program (Joo and Kwak 93). The Yongbyon reactor's main cooling tower was demolished the following year, and large amounts of foreign aid entered North Korea because of its cooperation.

Opinions of the Bush Administration

Victor Cha, a member of Bush's National Security Council, views himself as a hawk while he served under the Bush administration. Cha reasons that being a hawk is not all about an engagement with North Korea. Instead, Cha advised the Bush administration to send aid to North Korea to influence the people's will to fight against the regime ("Korea's place in the axis" 84). Aid in itself is intended for the people of North Korea rather than the leaders. While the likelihood of the aid causing people to rise up against Kim Jong-il's authoritarian regime is slim, the humanitarian aspect of the aid would help improve the well-being of the North Koreans facing scarcity of food. Cha does not focus only on aid to North Korea; he also advocates a method of obtaining peace through strength ("Korea's place in the axis" 85). This refers to the development of a missile shield against a North Korean threat while negotiating with the North Korea government at the same time. The missile defense system would defend not only the United States, but also the two main allies South Korea and Japan. Cha believes it would

enhance the U.S. bargaining position since North Korean missiles would become less effective against the intended targets (“Korea’s place in the axis” 85).

While Victor Cha and David Kang favored an engagement strategy with North Korea, there are several other foreign policy options the Bush administration had in dealing with North Korea. On the extreme side of engagement is the option of military force. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had his commanders develop a plan for a war with North Korea (Richardson 42). While being prepared for a possible war would make the country ready for an immediate response if needed, the concept of going to war carries serious consequences. Commander of U.S. Forces Korea General Luck estimated one trillion dollars in economic damage and another one million casualties if a war were to break out on the Korean peninsula (Richardson 43).

James Laney, former U.S. ambassador to South Korea, advocated a moderate strategy of negotiation with the secretive regime. His plan called for an assurance of North Korean security while ensuring the dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear program with verification (Richardson 41). This moderate option is a promising solution since North Korea has been pushing for a non-aggression pact with the U.S. for the past several years. Yet, North Korea’s unwillingness to allow inspectors into the country to verify its nuclear weapons program is troubling. In the past when North Korea showed signs of allowing inspectors into the country, the country would find a way to circumvent the inspections by removing questionable material.

On the opposite side of going to war, there is the strategy of appeasement. However, appeasement has a negative connotation dating back to the Munich Conference with Adolf Hitler regarding Czechoslovakia. Appeasing North Korea could cause the country to work undercover

by selling its weapon technology to other rogue states or terrorists (Richardson 43). The PSI was created to prevent the transfer of this weapon technology to outside entities. Otherwise, appeasement toward North Korea did not appear to be a suitable solution for foreign policy under the Bush administration, and for that matter, other presidential administrations as well.

The Bush Administration Conclusion

President Bush initially took an aggressive stance toward North Korea's defiance surrounding the Agreed Framework, but changed its strategy following North Korea's nuclear tests. Nonetheless, there were few substantial changes in U.S. foreign relations other than a more open willingness to negotiate. In December 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice commented, "You'd have to be an idiot to trust the North Koreans" (Cha, "U.S. Korea Relations"). This statement sums up what the Bush administration learned about negotiating with North Korea during his two terms in office. The period from 2007-2008 had a continuation of the Six Party Talks regarding the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear program in return for offers of foreign aid. Both the U.S. and North Korea did not have complete trust in the other side's promises. By 2008, the Six Party Talks led to tangible results with the demolishing of the Yongbyon reactor in North Korea.

In a final effort to improve relations with North Korea before leaving office, the Bush administration removed the country from the U.S. government's list of state sponsors of terrorism (Manyin 4). In return, North Korea agreed on verification of its plutonium program (Manyin 4). The U.S. removal of North Korea from the terrorism list was viewed negatively by Japan due to the ongoing kidnapping issue. Furthermore, the removal may signal approval of North Korea's history of hostile actions against the U.S. and foreign countries, and it is possible

that further hostile actions will continue. Despite the Bush administration's efforts, the incoming Obama administration will have to take the reins in guiding the Six Party Talks or perhaps taking the country down a completely different foreign relations path.

CHAPTER SIX – PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Almost immediately after President Barack Obama came into office, the Obama administration was forced to handle the ongoing dealings with North Korea. The previous presidential administrations had set a foundation for U.S. foreign policy, but each president can change the direction of policy. President Obama wants to continue focusing on multilateral diplomacy based on the Six Party Talks comprising of China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, and the United States. The Obama administration hopes the discussions will lead toward an ultimate goal of denuclearizing North Korea and ensuring stability in the region. However, in light of hostile actions performed by North Korea since Obama took office, the president must make modifications to his plan based on the circumstances. With tensions rising on the Korean peninsula, it is important for President Obama to determine the best possible solution for lowering tensions with minimal conflict if possible.

Hostile Actions

North Korea has a long history of conducting hostile actions during previous presidential administrations. It continued with its record of hostile actions once President Obama came into office. While some of these hostile actions involved the United States directly, such as the capture of U.S. citizens along North Korea's border, other actions affected the U.S. indirectly, such as the sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan* or the bombing of Yeonpyeong Island. North Korea also continued testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons during the Obama administration.

Capture of U.S. Citizens

Citizens of the United States who strayed too close to North Korea's border face capture and sentencing by North Korea's government. While this issue is not necessarily a national security threat, the involvement of U.S. citizens garners the attention of the presidential administration in power. On March 17, 2009, North Korean guards captured two American journalists, Euna Lee and Laura Ling, claiming they trespassed into North Korean territory. North Korea sentenced the two journalists to twelve years of hard labor for "hostilities against the Korean nation and illegal entry" (Bosland). In January 2010, North Korea arrested Aijalon Mahli Gomes for trespassing into North Korea and sentenced him to eight years of hard labor (Sang-Hun).

Launch of the Taepodong-2

North Korea first tested the Taepodong-2 long-range ballistic missile in 2006 during the Bush administration, but the test was unsuccessful. On April 5, 2009, North Korea conducted a second test of the Taepodong-2 carrying a payload called Kwangmyŏngsŏng-2. North Korea maintained the payload and launch were for peaceful purposes, but the United States remained skeptical of the test's ultimate motive. The U.S. saw the possibility of North Korea attaching a warhead to the Taepodong-2 in the future. Furthermore, portions of the Western United States were within the maximum range of the Taepodong-2 ("North Korea Space Launch"). North Korea maintained that the Taepodong-2's payload made it into orbit successfully, but international observers questioned the test's success ("North Korea Space Launch"). The test increased tensions in the region once again due to the threat of the rocket flying over another

country and dropping debris. Around the same time, North Korea also restarted plans to enrich uranium to levels needed for a nuclear bomb.

Second Test of a Nuclear Device

Only a month after test firing the Taepodong-2, North Korea conducted a second underground nuclear weapons test on May 25, 2009. While the first test in 2006 was a fizzle, the 2009 test showed that North Korea learned from the first test and improved the effectiveness of the device (Charles and Tabassu). Nonetheless, there are conflicting reports from various governments and organizations regarding the yield of the 2009 test. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization said the yield was only slightly higher than the 2006 test, but Russia said the yield was 20 kilotons, which is roughly equivalent to the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan in World War II (Charles and Tabassu). The real yield is likely between the two estimates, but the 2009 test is viewed as more of a success than the 2006 test. Despite the test's questionable success, it could take significantly longer for North Korea to develop an effective delivery system such as a nuclear warhead capable of fitting onto a ballistic missile. Nevertheless, the underground nuclear tests are enough for North Korea to join the exclusive group of countries possessing nuclear weapons. The threat of a North Korean nuclear weapon is enough to provide deterrence against a foreign attack. This is something that the Obama administration must take into account in its considerations of North Korea.

Sale of Arms to Terrorist Groups and Foreign Entities

North Korea has long been under suspicion of providing aid to foreign terrorist groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and the Iranian Revolutionary

Guard (Manyin 20). North Korea also reportedly sold arms to Iran, Libya, Pakistan, and Syria (Triplett 197). Both the Clinton and Bush administrations made efforts to remove North Korea from the terrorism list, but only the Bush administration succeeded in removing it from the terrorism list. Since North Korea's removal from the terrorism list, new reports of North Korean support to terrorist groups have emerged.

At Bangkok airport in December 2009, investigators seized an Ilyushin-T74 from Pyongyang with 35 tons of arms shipments destined for Iran (Manyin 21). The weapons included rocket launchers, shoulder-launched missiles, and other arms components which would likely have gone through Iran and eventually to Hezbollah or Hamas for use in attacks against Israel (Manyin 21).

In 2007, Japan's *Sankei Shimbun* reported arms shipments to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan officials searched North Korean ships and found all types of conventional arms including machine guns and rocket launchers (Manyin 24). The PSI allowed for the searching of North Korean ships suspected of transporting weapons of mass destruction and arms components.

Once again, these actions by North Korea do not directly affect the United States, but preventing the spread of terrorism is a goal of U.S. foreign policy, especially attacks against Israel, a key U.S. ally in the Middle East. Furthermore, the selling of arms and technology to foreign entities allowed North Korea to obtain a source of foreign income. If the U.S. could stop the sale of arms from North Korea, it would eliminate a portion of the country's income for use in developing and improving nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles. The Obama administration

must take into account these new reports of terrorist support in developing his foreign policy toward North Korea.

Sinking of a South Korean Warship

Tensions on the Korean peninsula continued to escalate during the Obama administration with the sinking of the South Korean naval ship, *Cheonan*, on March 26, 2010. An international investigation pointed to a North Korean torpedo that exploded near the ship and caused the sinking (Charles, “Seoul”). The sinking caused the deaths of 46 South Korean sailors, along with injuries to 56 sailors (Charles, “Seoul”). Although this incident did not directly involve the United States, the ship belonged to the South Korean Navy, a key U.S. ally in the region. The *Cheonan* sinking increased tensions between North and South Korea. The sinking of another country’s naval ship is usually an act of war, but North Korea maintains a level of deterrence with its ballistic missile and nuclear program. Furthermore, North Korea’s large army, although not well equipped by modern standards, is still a considerable foe if ground fighting were to commence on the Korean peninsula.

Attack on Yeonpyeong Island

On November 23, 2010, North Korea fired artillery shells toward the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong, thereby increasing tensions to the highest point since the Korean War. Two South Korean marines and two civilians were killed in the attack while fifteen soldiers and three civilians were wounded (Sung-ki). The island’s civilian residents quickly evacuated the island, as they feared for their safety. North Korea claimed South Korea was responsible for initiating

the attack by firing artillery during a training exercise into waters claimed by North Korea (Powell).

Why would North Korea fire on South Korea at this time? There are several possible reasons why North Korea is becoming more aggressive. The first scenario is the North feels threatened by U.S. and South Korea's joint military exercises in the Yellow Sea (Powell). The North expressed the threat of an imminent invasion by the U.S. and South Korea, although it is unlikely. It is also doubtful that North Korea used this as a preemptive attack because of the superiority of the South Korean and U.S. militaries. Another scenario is a power struggle in North Korea involving Kim Jong-un, the successor to his father Kim Jong-il (Powell).

The Obama Administration's Options and Decisions

The Obama administration faced several obstacles regarding his intent to continue the Six Party Talks with North Korea. The hostile actions performed by North Korea threatened to hinder his planned diplomatic negotiations. With the aid of advisors, the president had to consider his options for responding to these acts of hostility and make the final decision about the path of U.S. foreign policy in the near future.

Response to the Capture of U.S. Citizens

The Obama administration tried to determine the best method for obtaining the release of the two journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling. Secretary of State Clinton sent a letter to North Korea apologizing for the actions of the two journalists and asking for their release (Boland). However, the U.S. was not able to obtain immediate release of the journalists as a result of the apology. Over a year later, an envoy under former President Clinton flew to North Korea to

discuss the issue with its leaders. North Korea agreed to release the journalists after Clinton's visit. In August 2010, the same type of diplomacy was used when former President Carter visited North Korea to obtain the release of Aijalon Mahli Gomes, another American citizen who trespassed into North Korea. This type of diplomacy appears effective in gaining the release of U.S. prisoners, but it fails to address the larger issues of North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons program. Other governments in the region including Japan may feel left out since North Korea allegedly continues to hold Japanese citizens hostage. A motive for North Korea to release the American hostages is the additional publicity of former high-ranking U.S. officials visiting the country. It allows North Korea to show off the legitimacy of their government in dealing with foreign countries in a formal situation.

Response to the Taepodong-2 Launch

The Obama administration watched the Taepodong-2 launch closely along with top U.S. military officials. The U.S. Northern Command remained confident that the launch did not threaten the U.S. mainland or Hawaii; thus, the U.S. took no defensive military action other than remaining on alert ("North Korea Space Launch"). President Obama released a statement condemning the launch of the Taepodong-2 ballistic missile. Obama cited the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 that prohibits North Korea from developing ballistic missiles (Wooley, "Statement on the Situation"). The president reassured his commitment to blocking the development of any weapons of mass destruction in North Korea. He also remained committed to the Six Party Talks for solving the problem. Besides the presidential statement, the U.S. did not respond with any other actions against North Korea such as economic sanctions.

Response to the Second Nuclear Test

North Korea's second nuclear test a month after the ballistic missile test prompted the Obama administration to release another statement calling the nuclear test a violation of international law and again mentioning the ballistic missile threat (Woolley, "Remarks on the Situation"). The Obama administration chose to rely on the United Nations Resolution 1874, which called for sanctions against North Korea and continuing the arms embargo on the country (Nanto 7). Both China and Russia agreed to Resolution 1874, including the clause prohibiting the export of luxury goods to North Korea. However, China continued the export of luxury goods at levels equivalent prior to the resolution, which raised questions about the effectiveness of Resolution 1874 (Nanto 7). Despite these two hostile actions by North Korea, Obama remained committed to the Six Party Talks and creating an agreement with North Korea. Once again, the administration took no significant action other than the harsh rhetoric.

Response to the Sale of Arms to Terrorist Groups and Foreign Entities

The Obama administration has not made any firm decisions yet about North Korea's support of terrorist groups despite the breach of UN Resolution 1874 prohibiting the export of arms. After the seizure of arms intended for Hezbollah, the U.S. State Department saw no need to add North Korea back to the terrorism list (Manyin 2). There is an ongoing debate in Washington D.C. about whether to add North Korea to the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated in an interview that she was willing to reconsider adding North Korea to the list again (Finn). President Obama, however, saw no need to add North Korea to the list of state sponsors based on a February 3, 2010, report to congressional leaders stating, "[North Korea] does not meet the statutory criteria to again be designated as a state

sponsor of terrorism” (“Letter to Congressional”). Adding North Korea to the list of official state sponsors of terrorism is merely a formality, but it would reinforce the idea of North Korea being a rogue state. However, there is also the possibility that North Korea would demand removal before continuing with negotiations.

Response to the Sinking of a South Korean Warship

Following the *Cheonan* sinking, the U.S. and South Korea announced joint naval exercises in the Sea of Japan to show off their forces, strengthen military ties, and increase deterrence against North Korea. Knowing North Korea’s own deterrence, the Obama administration had to walk a fine line in its actions hoping not to provoke further conflict. In typical defiance, the North Korean government condemned the joint U.S. and South Korean naval exercises as a show of aggression (Cloud). For the Obama administration, the joint military exercises were a good way to show off U.S. and South Korean forces without causing a war. Without the show of military force, North Korea could get comfortable with the idea of sinking foreign ships. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates visited the demilitarized zone briefly after the sinking. During their visit, the two Cabinet members reiterated the U.S. commitment to defend South Korea from any acts of North Korean aggression (Cloud). Secretary of State Clinton announced additional sanctions against North Korea hoping to block the flow of money used for North Korea’s nuclear program without hurting the people of North Korea (Cloud). Clinton also emphasized the need to enforce the existing sanctions against North Korea following the denial of international inspectors into North Korea.

Response to the Attack on Yeonpyeong Island

To denote the urgency of the situation, presidential staff woke President Obama at 3AM following the North Korean attack on Yeonpyeong Island (Powell). Obama spoke with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak over the telephone and expressed outrage at the attack. With 30,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in South Korea, the U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to protecting South Korea from a North Korean invasion (Laney). The U.S. Navy sent the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* and several destroyers to the Yellow Sea for joint military exercises with the South Korean Navy. As with previous hostile events, the President's options were limited.

One major option considered is relying on China to put pressure on North Korea to end these hostile actions. Secretary of State Clinton and U.S. lawmakers have expressed publicly the need for China to play a major role in negotiations with North Korea. U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona said, "They [China] could bring the North Korean economy to its knees if they wanted to" (Laney). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen also urged China to take a leading role regarding North Korea (Laney). Trying to influence China is a relatively peaceful option if the Chinese are willing to use their ties with North Korea as a way to stop further hostile actions. Thus far, China has shown mixed signs of continuing its existing policy or removing its support from the North Korean regime. Following the *Cheonan* sinking, China refused to go against North Korea or punish it for the hostile action (Bajoria). China thought both North Korea and South Korea should do a better job of ensuring peace (Powell). However, President Hu Jintao of China later urged North Korea to stop its hostile actions (Bajoria). China also called for emergency talks among the six parties following the

Yeonpyeong Island attack (Leney). China appears unwilling to break its close ties with North Korea, but at the same time, it realizes the need to encourage a lowering of tensions in the region. China does not intend to increase instability in North Korea; therefore, the option of using China as a go-between in diplomatic talks has mixed opinions.

Another option for dealing with this situation was a surgical airstrike against North Korean artillery positions (Cha, “What Do They”). While neither side may want a war, further conflict was certainly possible if North Korea continues to commit acts of aggression against South Korea. President Obama chose to exercise restraint following the Yeonpyeong Island incident, and he encouraged President Myung-bak to exercise restraint as well. However, a future attack on South Korea would likely mean some form of military retaliation by the South Koreans.

President Obama’s Cabinet members echoed the same response to the hostile actions as the president himself. They felt that Obama needed a different direction of foreign policy compared to the carrots and sticks methods of the Clinton and Bush administrations. However, it is too early to tell if there will be any significant results from the Obama administration’s foreign policy toward North Korea.

Opinions of the Obama Administration

Victor Cha says Obama has positioned the U.S. well both for a negotiation and sanctions track (“What Do They Really Want” 128). Like prior presidential administrations, the Obama administration has chosen to make economic sanctions a key policy against North Korea. At the same time, Obama continues to emphasize the need for the Six Party Talks and coming to an agreement about North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile program. Even so, the numerous

acts of North Korean hostility committed during the Obama administration threaten to complicate the negotiations among the six parties.

A report by the Congressional Research Service suggests the reasoning for the increase of hostile actions since 2009 is an effort to shift North Korean power to the military in the midst of Kim Jong-il's succession (Nanto). Furthermore, the CRS Report points out the upcoming 100th birthday of Kim Il-sung in 2012 as a second reason for the recent increase in hostile actions (Nanto). By the early part of 2011, the level of hostile actions by North Korea has diminished once again, but it is certainly possible for North Korea to conduct another public demonstration of its power by 2012.

Future Relations with North Korea

The Obama administration has the task of setting the foundation for future relations with North Korea. One aspect to consider is the passing of North Korean power to the next generation. Kim Jong-il's health in recent years appears to be declining and steps to groom the next leader, Kim Jong-un, are apparently well underway in the secretive regime of North Korea. The immediate impact on U.S. foreign policy is not known, but it is definitely an issue that either the Obama administration or future presidential administrations need to consider.

North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear program threaten to complicate future talks to improve relations between the U.S. and North Korea. North Korea's motives for possessing a nuclear weapon and ballistic missile capability are not fully understood. Scholars can only debate about North Korea's intentions for possessing long-range missiles and nuclear weapons. One possibility is that the nuclear capability is just a means for setting serious negotiations with South Korea, Japan, and the United States. Prior to North Korea's nuclear weapons, the country

had to commit other acts of aggression such as capturing the USS *Pueblo* and shooting down a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft to gain international attention. While North Korea is still active in pursuing acts of aggression, the aggression is now backed by a nuclear deterrence. Thus, U.S. military options against North Korea would be difficult due to North Korea's large army, ballistic missile program, and nuclear capability. This leaves the U.S. and other regional powers with few choices in pursuing relations with North Korea. Perhaps North Korea just wants to gain concessions from diplomatic negotiations with regional powers. However, the danger lies in the fact that no one other than North Korea's leaders truly knows the intentions of possessing nuclear weapons. North Korea's intentions might not be limited to peaceful negotiations and gaining concessions; it may also be interested in selling its nuclear and ballistic missile technology to other rogue states or even terrorists. There is suspicion that North Korea has assisted Syria with the development and construction of a nuclear reactor in 2007 (Triplett 197). Nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles falling into the wrong hands could lead to further trouble internationally. Therefore, it is important for the Obama administration and future presidential administrations to take into account the array of possibilities.

The Obama administration has chosen to continue with the Six Party Talks in the hope of improving relations with North Korea. It is too early to determine whether the Obama administration's negotiations will cause an improvement in relations. Just as the presidential administrations before Obama, the likelihood of North Korea committing future acts of aggression is high. Furthermore, the threat of a nuclear-armed North Korea remains, so the next question will be what will North Korea do next?

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION

U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea shows no clear signs of improvement in the near future. The entire history of foreign policy toward North Korea was filled with hostility, uncertainty, and defiance. From the very founding of the DPRK to the present, it is difficult for presidential administrations to choose the appropriate method for responding to acts of hostility while attempting to maintain peace on the Korean peninsula. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations dealt with North Korea's invasion of South Korea and the consequences of the conflict.

Both the Johnson and Nixon administrations had options of military retaliation to the *Pueblo* and the EC-121 crises, but both administrations practiced restraint to avoid escalation. The use of military force carries instant gratification, but it also has a risk of escalating the crisis to a large-scale war. Johnson, and most certainly Nixon, considered military responses to North Korean provocations, but neither administration chose a military response. At the time, the risks of using military force outweighed the benefits of retaliation.

Moving forward to the Clinton and Bush administrations brought new challenges to U.S. foreign policy. North Korea began development and production of ballistic missiles along with plans for a nuclear weapons program. Diplomatic talks about North Korea's nuclear program resulted in agreements like the Agreed Framework, and it looked as if North Korea was willing to cooperate. However, as it turned out, the agreements about North Korea's nuclear programs lacked substantial, long-term results. The threat of nuclear weapons remained throughout the rest of the Clinton and Bush administrations.

The Obama administration has many obstacles to deal with in addition to the questions surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. Obama appears committed to the Six Party Talks while attempting to keep the situation on the Korean peninsula from escalating. In an attempt to lower tensions, the Obama administration is focusing on getting North Korea's ally, China, involved in persuading North Korea to stop its provocative actions. China certainly has a better ability to influence North Korea compared to the United States, but it is unclear how tough of a stance it will take against North Korea.

The various presidential administrations since Truman walked a fine line when responding to North Korea's demands or acts of provocation. In spite of the level of tensions at times, no administration has responded to North Korea's actions with military force since Truman and Eisenhower. Instead, each president chose restraint and diplomatic solutions to North Korea in order to maintain peace and stability in the region. In reality, no side may want a large-scale war because of the resources required and the general instability caused by war. For instance, about a quarter of North Korea's GDP goes toward defense spending, which causes obstacles to maintaining the well-being of its citizens ("CIA"). Food shortages and scarcity of electricity are common throughout the country, and a war would only increase the strain on North Korea's weak infrastructure. As the succession of power begins to take place in North Korea, it is easy to remain hopeful that relations between the United States and North Korea will improve. However, hopes should never be too high as witnessed by the transfer of power from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il in 1994. Nevertheless, U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea will remain a vital issue for U.S. presidential administrations to consider in the years to come.

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