

Dualism in the Bush Administration's North Korea Policy

by

**Dr. C. Kenneth Quinones
International Center
Washington, D.C.**

**Published in the April 2003 issue of
*Asian Perspective***

**A Journal of the Kyungnam University
Center for North Korean Studies**

Abstract

President George W. Bush and North Korean strongman Kim Jong Il are locked in a potentially deadly tango. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly North Korea's nuclear ambitions and ballistic missile capability, are the apparent cause. But their dueling has much more fundamental ramifications, especially for North Korea. Bush seems determined to confront Kim with the ultimate dilemma of his regime: either disarm or face the consequences. This contest is being played out in the context of Bush's global foreign policy strategy which accents preventing the "axis of evil," which includes North Korea, from threatening or using weapons of mass destruction against the United States. The President's foreign policy team agrees on what they must accomplish, but is divided into "regionalists" and "globalists" regarding strategy to achieve his goals. Bush has allowed their debate to continue, giving his foreign policy a duality that is a source of concern, and some confusion among allies, friends and the primary enemy, North Korea. Bush claims he seeks a "peaceful, diplomatic" outcome in his clash with Kim Jong Il, but has ruled out negotiations with his regime. Instead, Bush seems hopeful that Kim's regime will collapse. If it does not, an armed confrontation seems inevitable.

Introduction

President George W. Bush and North Korean strongman Kim Jong Il are locked in a potentially deadly tango. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly North Korea's nuclear ambitions and ballistic missile capability, are the apparent cause. But their dueling has much more fundamental ramifications, especially for North Korea. Bush seems determined to confront Kim with the ultimate dilemma of his regime: either disarm or face the consequences.

Within the upper echelons of the Bush Administration there is a consensus on these goals, i.e. disarm North Korea and either alter or end the regime. Debate over strategy, however, persists. At the same time, Bush is struggling to rally support for his goals from the United States' traditional allies, South Korea and Japan, and China. These nations share the U.S. determination to keep the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons, but they are concerned that his strategy could cause a second Korean War. Meanwhile, Kim Jong Il has demonstrated little inclination to accommodate Bush's demands. Their test of wills could eventually result in either: war and the destruction of the Kim Jong Il regime, a diplomatic resolution that permits the regime to survive, Kim capitulates or his regime collapses.

For half a century, the Korean Peninsula has posed a foreign policy dilemma for every American president. Their options have been obvious, and remain constant: limited war, armed deterrence, a negotiated peace, or some combination. The 1950-53 Korean War, despite the deaths of millions of Koreans and tens of thousands of Americans, neither furthered Korea's reunification nor set the stage for a durable peace. Today, as before the war, the two halves of Korea remain hostile rivals, and a durable peace remains elusive. Two million soldiers, thousands of artillery pieces and tanks, hundreds of ballistic missiles and jet aircraft, not to mention naval forces, preserve a fragile truce through deterrence which means the mutual fear of war.

Continuity, more than change, tends to characterize U.S. foreign policy. This is particularly true regarding the Korean Peninsula. Since the Reagan Administration's "Modest Initiative" of 1988, the U.S. and DPRK have attempted to normalize their relations through dialogue and negotiations. But they have done so without altering the underlying configuration of their Cold war postures toward each other, i.e. armed deterrence. This persistent duality of diplomacy and deterrence in their respective approaches appears largely responsible for their inability to resolve their differences and to normalize their relationship.

The Bush Administration, despite its rhetoric to the contrary, initially continued the Clinton Administration's approach to North Korea, but a significant shift of strategy became increasingly apparent after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Until that time, President Bush appeared comfortable with allowing his East Asia experts at the Department of State the lead concerning policy toward North Korea. Secretary of State Colin Powell and his Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs James Kelly headed the effort. They favored the more

traditional approach of “diplomacy backed by deterrence.” Translated into action, this meant multilateral coordination with U.S. allies in Northeast Asia and negotiations with North Korea.

Others in the Administration, particularly State Department Under Secretary for International Security Affairs John Bolton and Defense Department Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, favored a more assertive and unilateral approach to North Korea. The President, preoccupied with domestic affairs, allowed the debate among his foreign policy advisers to continue until the fall of 2002. Nevertheless, from the time of Bush’s June 2001 announcement the outcome of his North Korea policy review until October 2002, Powell and Kelly retained the upper hand regarding North Korea policy. But then came Pyongyang’s affirmation that it had started a new, clandestine nuclear program. Ever since, the initiative has shifted to those who favor a more assertive and unilateral approach to dealing with the problem of weapons of mass destruction, including North Korea.

Meanwhile, Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing and Moscow are increasingly concerned about the likely outcome of Washington’s perceived dualistic approach to Pyongyang. On the one hand, President Bush proclaims he is intent upon working with “allies and friends in the region” to achieve a “peaceful, diplomatic” solution. At the same time, however, he adamantly rejects their preferred option of direct US-North Korea negotiations while holding open the possibility of military action against Pyongyang. Bush’s refusal to engage Kim Jong Il diplomatically, and Kim’s countering with provocative steps continues to escalate tensions in the region that could yield a second Korean War.

Understanding the context for Bush’s options will better enable us to project the extent to which he is prepared to confront Kim Jong Il.

The Context for President Bush’s Foreign Policy

The Bush Administration since its conception has endeavored to distinguish itself from the Clinton Administration, particularly regarding policy toward North Korea. President Bush made this clear at the start of his administration when he declared a comprehensive review of North Korea policy. But in reality, it is simply not possible for any president to escape completely his predecessors’ legacy and commitments. Certain patterns persist in foreign policy despite a president’s personal inclinations and political priorities. National interests and domestic political concerns drive U.S. foreign policy. Regional geo-political realities and the concerns of allies and friends play a secondary role. (1)

A president’s personal perspective of the world and prior experience are also key elements in this mix. But here too continuity is evident. Bush, like his predecessor Clinton, brought with him to Washington a parochial world view rooted in Christian fundamentalism and a southern preference for political populism. Like Clinton, Bush also had been the governor of a

southern state. Uninitiated in foreign policy, both presidents at first concentrated on domestic issues, and relinquished oversight of foreign affairs to their foreign policy experts. Realities abroad, however, caused these presidents to shift their focus to foreign policy. For Clinton, it was the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the spring of 1993 that caused him to concentrate on foreign issues. President Bush was able to dwell longer on domestic policy, particularly the issues of tax reduction and education. But the tragic events of September 11, 2001 abruptly shifted his focus to world affairs. Ever since, his daily agenda has been topped with issues regarding the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and North Korea, and the global war on terrorism.

Another continuing pattern of U.S. foreign policy is the inter-agency policy process. Bush, like his predecessor, relied heavily on this process during his first months in office for the formulation of foreign policy. The process begins each morning, after any US. president has listened to the local Washington news and glanced at the front pages of several national newspapers, he receives his daily intelligence briefing. For Bush, it takes less than thirty minutes to glance over National Security Adviser Dr. Rice's five or so page gist of the CIA's colorful, thoroughly illustrated and usually unnecessarily highly classified daily briefing book, the Defense Intelligence Agency's "dog and pony" show of satellite pictures and impressive, colorful charts. Two other intelligence reports, the National Security Agency (NSA) report and the State Department's Morning Summary rely primarily on succinct prose, and spare the visual aids to convey their assessments. (2)

All the world is a stage, Shakespeare reportedly once said. Viewed from the White House, domestic politics is always at center stage. The rest of the world must wait in the wings. This is an unchanging reality, irrespective of whether Democrats or republicans dominate the White House and Congress.

The inter-agency process propels the making and implementation of foreign policy. Heading the process are the six "principles" on the Bush foreign policy team: the Vice President, national Security Adviser, Secretary of State (SecState), Secretary of Defense (SecDef), director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, better known as the Director), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).

These principles share influence, but not equally, nor necessarily as outlined in the U.S. Constitution and laws. The President's personal preferences combine with individual personality and bureaucratic politics to determine each agency's influence on presidential decisions. In the Bush Administration, it is generally accepted that Vice president Richard "Dick" Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, not the NSC Adviser Condoleezza Rice or Secretary of State Colin Powell, play the leading roles in foreign policy decisions. CIA Director Tenet and the JCS chairman have at least equal, if not greater influence than Powell or Rice. (3)

Accompanying Bush to Washington was an accomplished and experienced team of Cold War warriors, all of whom had worked for his father former President Bush:

Vice President, and former Defense Secretary, Dick Cheney
Secretary of Defense, current and former, Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of State, and former JCS Chairman, Colin Powell
National Security Council Adviser, and former foreign policy adviser to
President Bush, Condoleezza Rice
Defense Deputy Secretary, and former Defense and State Assistant Secretaries
in the Reagan and Bush's Administrations, Paul Wolfowitz
State Deputy Secretary, and former Defense Assistant Secretary, Armitage
State Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific Affairs, and former
National Security Council adviser, James Kelly

Their shared experience in government and conservative political philosophy give them a generally common world view. They tend to distrust the "Washington bureaucracy," a general reference to the career foreign and civil service personnel who staff the United States government on a continuing basis. They view them as lacking creativity and initiative. Thus, they agree, policy is best forged at the highest level of government by those the president selected for this purpose. Policy implementation is left to the lower, "working" level of the bureaucracy.

Bush's foreign policy team appears to agree that their foremost responsibility is to preserve and defend the United States' position as the "leader of the free world," champion of democracy and promoter of individual prosperity. World peace is their goal, but the assertion of unrivaled military might must be considered an essential option to preserve "Pax Americana." The "evil empire," i.e. the Soviet Union, has collapsed and its communist ideology is discredited. But a new enemy lurks beyond the U.S. borders in the form of a small number of unpredictable nations that have access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD, nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, plus ballistic missiles). These nations must be denied the option to use these weapons or to proliferate them. How to achieve these goals, however, sparked a continuing policy debate within the Bush Administration. (4)

"Regionalists" verse "Globalists"

From the Administration's start, Bush's foreign policy team divided itself into contending factions. Generally speaking, the regional experts gathered in one group. They divide the world into geographical regions and seek to tailor strategies that match regional characteristics both of the issues and the concerns of allies and friends. They prefer a multilateral, diplomatic approach that accents traditional negotiation, multilateral coordination and the manifestation of United States power and influence vis a vis international organizations. Resort to armed force is to be held in reserve as a final, reluctant option.

But other Bush Administration foreign policy advisers divide the world along global themes and issues. Paramount among their concerns is the global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Regional characteristics and the sensitivities of allies and friends are of

secondary importance. Foremost is the defense of the United States. For the sake of self preservation, they argue, the United States must develop a home based, national missile defense system to defend against a small number of rogue nations equipped with weapons of mass destruction. Of greatest concern are Iraq and North Korea. (5)

To defend against this threat, the traditional U.S. defense posture required revision. The basic outline of deterrence posture would be retained. The strategic triad of nuclear tipped ballistic missiles, long range bombers and nuclear submarines would be preserved along with a dozen aircraft carrier battle groups. In Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would be expanded to include the nations of Eastern Europe. In Northeast Asia, the separate bilateral defense treaties with Japan and the Republic of Korea would remain unaltered, as would the forward deployment of U.S. armed forces in the region.

Also to be preserved is the global network of treaties designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These include the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Missile Technology Control regime (MTCR) and the series of treaties that outlaw chemical and biological weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency, a United Nations agency, would be retained and strengthened for deployment to any nation to determine whether they harbor weapons of mass.(6)

Overlaying this traditional deterrence posture, however, would be a new National Missile Defense (NMD), a global network of sophisticated long range ballistic missile detection and destruction facilities. These sites would all be built in the United States. The system's primary purpose would be to defend the United States from attack weapons of mass destruction launched from rouge nations.

Theoretically, NMD, its advocates declared, has multiple benefits. It would restore "Fortress America," something American defense planners had yearned for since the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor violated Americans' sense of security behind their two ocean navy. Fear of foreign attack persisted during the Cold War because of the Soviet Union's arsenal of nuclear tipped ballistic missiles. NMD, it is promised, will protect the United States from the world's new villains. (7)

At the same time, America's defense could be made "leaner" and "meaner," yet remain all powerful but at a lower cost. Reducing the need to maintain large numbers of ground, sea and air forces abroad would eventually allow politicians to claim they could "bring the boys home," a politically potent refrain in the United States. Related costs would be reduced. Reliance on support from allies would become less essential, reducing America's need to respond sensitively to their *quid pro quo* requests for compensation in exchange for assisting the United States. Then too, in the event of war, American casualties could be kept to a minimum while maximum

destruction rained down on the enemy in retaliation for its attempt to use weapons of mass destruction against the United States.

President Bush's June 2001 announcement about the outcome of the North Korea policy review indicated that the "regionalists" had initially won out over the "globalists." For the next several months, Secretary of State Powell and Assistant Secretary of State Kelly repeatedly proclaimed the United States' willingness to talk to North Korea "any time, any where and without preconditions." Then came the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Abruptly, President Bush's focus shifted to foreign policy, and he began to place greater emphasis on his "globalists'" preferred strategy, less on that of the "regionalists." His now famous January 2002 "axis of evil" State of the Union speech confirmed these changes.

North Korea Policy - "Regionalists'" Ascendancy

President Bush ordered a broad review of U.S. foreign policy at the start of his Administration. One month after he had taken office, two North Korean ambassadors came to Washington to deliver a message to the Bush Administration. Then North Korea Permanent Representative to the United Nations Li Hyong-chol and his deputy Li Kun made known their government's desire to initiate talks with the United States. They were informed that any such talks would have to await the conclusion of the policy review. Two weeks later a small delegation from Pyongyang headed by the then North Korean Foreign Ministry American Affairs Director General Han Song-ryol arrived in Washington to learn about international financial institutions. He too was told at a private social event that US-North Korea talks would have to await the end of the Administration's policy review. (8)

Then South Korean President Kim Dae-jung visited Washington in March 2001. The timing for his visit could not have been worse. Kim's apparent insistence on the visit was ill considered given Bush's preoccupation with domestic issues, specifically the appointment of officials to his new Administration and pending income tax cut legislation. Bush's East Asia foreign policy team was also preoccupied with the mid-air collision between the US Navy intelligence aircraft and a Chinese fighter, plus the accidental sinking of the Japanese fishing vessel by a US Navy nuclear submarine.

Nevertheless, Kim Dae-jung briefly met the new president. Kim was anxious to sustain the momentum toward reconciliation with Pyongyang that had developed the previous June during his historic summit with Kim Jong Il. Toward this end, Kim wanted to retain leadership regarding policy toward North Korea, and to win Bush's public affirmation of support for Kim's strategy of diplomatic engagement and economic cooperation with North Korea. But Bush reacted assertively and negatively. Kim Dae Jung returned home essentially empty handed and

embarrassed. Pyongyang was quick to note the public friction between the two allies. After this premature summit in Washington, the pace of Korean reconciliation slowed significantly.

Goals: Nevertheless, President Bush subsequently sanctioned the “regionalists” approach to dealing with North Korea when he announced the outcome of his policy review in June 2001.(9) The goals established during the previous two administrations were retained: North Korea was to:

- halt development, production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,
- comply fully with the Agreed Framework,
- join the international community’s effort to halt terrorism and to respond concretely to Japan’s concerns regarding its kidnaping of Japanese citizens,
- accommodate the international humanitarian organizations’ need for access within North Korea and accountability for its food aid,
- reduce the threat of its conventional armed forces pose to South Korea, and
- demonstrate greater concern for the welfare and human rights of North Korea’s people.

The shift in priorities was slight relative to those of the Clinton Administration. The recovery of American soldiers’ remains left behind in the Korea War would be de-emphasized while greater emphasis would be placed on North Korea’s compliance with international norms regarding humanitarian assistance. This was done by linking future U.S. food aid to North Korea’s accommodation of international norms for monitoring and accounting for such aid.

Strategy: Continuity characterized the strategy for achieving the Administration’s goals. The Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TICOG) forum would continue. (10) This multilateral group regularly brought together diplomats from Washington, Seoul and Tokyo to coordinate their strategies for dealing with Pyongyang. Diplomacy and deterrence were to remain the corner stones of the Administration’s, and TICOG members’ strategy:

- maintain deterrence through a strong, forward deployment of U.S. forces in Northeast Asia back by the bilateral defense allies with Seoul and Tokyo,
- nurture trilateral diplomatic collaboration and coordination vis a vis TICOG,
- support South Korea’s engagement policy toward North Korea, and support the International Atomic Energy Agency’s monitoring of North Korea’s nuclear facilities.
- urge China to temper Pyongyang’s occasional unruly impulses, project to the North Korean people a benign image of the United States through food aid,
- pursue negotiated resolutions of outstanding bilateral issues, and
- offer inducements for North Korea’s compliance with U.S. goals.

The Bush Administration’s regionalists, like their predecessors in the Clinton Administration, believed Pyongyang could be induced through diplomatic negotiations to gradually disarm itself of weapons of mass destruction in exchange for a multilateral package of economic benefits. All the while, the United States would maintain its deterrence capability in the region. In essence, this was the basic approach former Clinton Administration Defense Secretary

William Perry had advanced in 1999. (11)

Negotiations: Even the ground rules for anticipated U.S. negotiations with North Korea suggested continuity with those of the previous two administrations. These rules were first outlined in January 1992, at the start of the former Bush Administration's final year, during the first ever meeting of ranking US and North Korean diplomats. A key crafter of this outline was James Kelly, then National Security Council East Asia adviser and later State Department Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs in the younger Bush Administration. At the 1992 meeting, Washington proposed that bilateral relations, both diplomatic and commercial, could be normalized if Pyongyang took following steps: (12)

- end its nuclear weapons development program and allow IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities,
- end its export of ballistic missiles, particularly to the Middle East,
- publicly renounce and end all support for international terrorism,
- eliminate its arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, and halt their development,
- engage South Korea in dialogue to resolve outstanding issues,
- facilitate and cooperate in the location and recovery of the remains of all U.S. military personnel left in North Korea during the Korean War, and
- demonstrate respect for the human rights of the North Korean people.

In exchange, the United States would grant North Korea:

- a series of high level political talks to resolve outstanding issues,
- reduce U.S. ground forces on the Korean Peninsula,
- phase out U.S. economic sanctions once North Korea had renounced publicly international terrorism and had ended its export of ballistic missiles, and
- phase in normal diplomatic and commercial relations in tandem with North Korea's progress toward fulfilling other items on the U.S. wish list.

The younger Bush Administration in June 2001 essentially adopted the same goals and strategy first forged during the former Bush Administration, and which had been acted upon during the Clinton Administration. The former Bush Administration, working closely with the South Korean government, had made impressive progress until the fall of 1992. At that point, evidence gathered during IAEA inspections indicated North Korea was attempting to conceal the true amount of plutonium it had produced. Ranking foreign policy makers like then JCS Chairman Colin Powell, Defense Department Assistant Secretary Richard Armitage, and NSC East Asia Adviser James Kelly left the government believing in the soundness of their strategy, but convinced North Korea could not be trusted.

These prominent “regionalists” appeared poised in June 2001 to resume their effort to disarm North Korea and to entice it into compliance with international norms of behavior. On

June 7, 2001, the day after President Bush announced the outcome of the North Korea policy review, Secretary Powell told journalists during a press conference with then visiting South Korean Foreign Minister Han Sung-soo, “.. of greatest interest to us both ... was President Bush’s statement of yesterday that the United States is prepared to resume an enhanced dialogue with North Korea on issues of mutual interest to both nations.” (13) On September 6, 2001, the joint statement issued at the end of a continuing series of TICOG meetings read in part, “..the United States was prepared to undertake serious discussions with North Korea without preconditions and expressed its hope that North Korea would positively respond to its call at an early date.” (14)

But North Korea’s response over the next several months to the Secretary’s and his diplomatic team’s repeated overtures was disappointing. Not until April 30, 2002 did the White House and State Department announce Pyongyang’s readiness to engage in negotiations. The previous day, CNN Television’s web cite carried a story that reported the State Department was ready to send Ambassador Jack Pritchard to Pyongyang. But then nothing happened. (15)

Clarification of the U.S. position finally came in a June 10 speech the Secretary made at the Asia Society’s annual dinner in New York. The United States was prepared to have “talks,” that is a dialogue with Pyongyang. Negotiations, however could follow only if North Korea first took steps to address four key areas of concern: eliminate ballistic missiles, concentrate resources on caring for the welfare of its people, reduce the threatening posture of its conventional military forces, and come into full compliance with the IAEA’s safeguards per requirements of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Pyongyang’s response was prompt and negative.(16)

Hindsight suggests President Bush had handed his regionalist only half a victory in June 2001. They could offer to engage North Korea in “dialogue,” but not in negotiations. On the one hand, this half victory appeared aimed to placate South Korean President Kim Dae-jung’s persistent desire to see the United States resume its high level dialogue with North Korea. At the same time, Bush could also placate his domestic conservative supporters with frequent statements that chastised Kim Jong Il’s authoritarian regime and echoed Republican criticism of the Clinton Administration’s Agreed Framework.

Ascendancy of the Globalists

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 abruptly shifted President Bush’s focus from domestic to foreign policy issues. During the subsequent intense foreign policy discussions with his advisers, he appears to have increasingly aligned his thinking with the globalists, and less with the regionalists. This became most evident regarding North Korea during his January 2002 State of the Union speech in which he uttered the now famous phrase “axis of evil” and identified Iraq and North Korea as two of its most threatening members. In Seoul, there was official concern that

the President's remark was provocative and unnecessary. Pyongyang reacted with outrage.

One month later, in February 2002, President Bush made his first official visits to Tokyo and Seoul. In Tokyo, concerns about terrorism and Japan's economic woes topped the agenda. But in Seoul, Presidents Bush and Kim Dae-jung concentrated on North Korea and its weapons of mass destruction. In Seoul, President Bush sought to reassure his South Korean counterpart that he supported a policy of engagement and dialogue with North Korea. But during a February 20 press conference, Bush said, "I will not change my opinion on the man, on Kim Jong-il until he frees his people and accepts genuine proposals from countries such as South Korea or the United States to dialogue (sic); until he proves to the world that he's got a good heart, that he cares about the people that live in his country." (17) Bush's rhetoric inadvertently personalized the US-North Korea dispute and set additional preconditions for the normalization of their relations. His remarks did little to further both Powell's and President Kim Dae-jung's efforts to resume dialogue.

In March 2002, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a summary of the Nuclear Posture Review, a classified Pentagon contingency plan for the possible use of nuclear weapons against seven countries, including North Korea. Pyongyang reacted with outrage. A March 14 Foreign Ministry statement condemned the contingency plan, "If the plan turns out to be true, this will indicate that (the Bush Administration) has backpedalled (sic) its commitment to the non-use of nukes, which was honored by its preceding administrations .." The Foreign Ministry recalled U.S. assurances to North Korea that "it would not use nuclear weapons against and threaten the DPRK with them," a promise contained in the June 1993 US-DPRK Joint Statement that had been incorporated into the Agreed Framework. The Foreign Ministry statement concluded, "Now that nuclear lunatics are in office in the White House, we are compelled to examine all the agreements with the U.S." (18) Pyongyang's rhetoric, as always, played into the hands of Washington's advocates of a hardline stance vis a vis North Korea.

A month later, on April 1, 2002, Bush again handed his divided council of foreign policy advisers a split decision. On the one hand, he sent Congress a request of \$95 million to support the work of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an international agency championed by his regionalists and vital to implementation of the Agreed Framework. At the same time, however, he concurred with his globalists' concerns about the accord and warned that he would not continue to sanction funding for the organization unless North Korea could be proven to be in full compliance with its commitments to the Agreed Framework as well as its obligations to the IAEA. (19) North Korea once again reacted negatively. It continued to reject dialogue with Washington. During an inter-Korean meeting in Pyongyang on April 4, North Korea's representative alleged to his South Korean counterpart that the United States and South Korea were conspiring to "strangle" North Korea.

Thereafter, Bush's globalists became increasingly audible. On April 17, State Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human rights and Labor Lorne Craner told a Congressional caucus that North Korea is "among the most repressive regimes in the world." The next day, Defense Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in the daily press briefing said, "for a year we've been saying we would meet anywhere, any time without conditions and the north Koreans have basically been stiffing (sic) us. Then the President makes his State of the Union message and all kinds of people say, 'Oh! This is terrible, it will obstruct diplomacy in Korea,' and now we're starting to hear the North Koreans would like to talk to us." He concluded, "I think the President's basic message is that the combination of hostile regimes that support terrorism and that also have weapons of mass destruction is just something we can't continue to live with indefinitely." (20) State Assistant Secretary for Non-proliferation John Wolf on April 19, at an international conference on arms control, defended Bush's "axis of evil" remark and repeatedly referred to North Korea. Little noticed at the time, Wolf commented that North Korea was one of a small number of nations that pursue "clandestine programs to develop weapons of mass destruction." (21)

The White House and State Department announced on April 30, 2002 that North Korea was "prepared to begin talks with the U.S.," but nothing came of the announcement and no explanation was offered. Instead, on May 6 State Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton gave a speech entitled, "Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction." He claimed Pyongyang had "weaponized" biological weapons in violation of international conventions against this. He said: (22)

Despite the fact that its citizens are starving, the leadership in Pyongyang has spent large sums of money to acquire the resources, including a biotechnology infrastructure, capable of producing infectious agents, toxins, and other crude biological weapons. It likely has the capability to produce sufficient quantities of biological agents for military purposes within weeks of deciding to do so, and has a variety of means at its disposal for delivering these deadly weapons.

In January, I also named North Korea and Iraq for their covert nuclear weapons programs, in violation of the NPT. This year, North Korea did not meet Congressional certification requirements because of its continued lack of cooperation with the IAEA, its failure to make any progress toward implementing the North-South Korea Joint De-nuclearization Declaration as called for under the Agreed Framework, and for proliferating long-range ballistic missiles. Finally, we believe that North Korea has a sizable stockpile of chemical weapons, and can manufacture all manner of CW agents.

This speech was tantamount to an indictment of North Korea as one of the world's most

dangerous possessors and proliferators of weapons of mass destruction. It put the regionalists on the defensive and stifled their efforts to engage Pyongyang in dialogue. Secretary Powell's June 10, 2002 speech to the Asia Society in New York attempted to keep alive the option to pursue dialogue and negotiations. However, Pyongyang's July 1 armed clash with Seoul's navy in the Yellow Sea overshadowed Powell's effort.

Kim Jong Il took Washington, Seoul and Tokyo by surprise on July 24. His Foreign Ministry's spokesman expressed regret to Seoul for the June clash in the Yellow Sea (West Sea as the Koreans call it) and proposed the resumption of working level North-South talks in August. He confirmed that North Korea's foreign minister would meet his Japanese counterpart at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) at the end of July, and affirmed Pyongyang's willingness to host an official visitor from Washington, D.C.(23) The overtures drew prompt, positive responses from Seoul and Tokyo. Within a few weeks, Seoul's dialogue and economic cooperation with North Korea has resumed at a quickening pace. Tokyo announced at the end of August that Prime Minister Koizumi would make an historical trip to Pyongyang for a first ever Japan-North Korea summit.

Washington's response was much less enthusiastic. Secretary Powell did meet briefly with his North Korean counterpart at the ARF, but nothing came of the encounter during the next two months. At the same time, however, the Administration continued its indictment of North Korea in the "axis of evil." On July 29, while Powell was meeting with North Korea's foreign minister, State Office Director of Chemical, Biological and Missile Proliferation Vann Van Diepen presented the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on International Security a long litany of North Korea's disregard for international conventions designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.(24)

A month later, Under Secretary Bolton repeated his stern indictment of Pyongyang. In his August 29 speech to the Korean-American Association, Bolton described North Korea as a: (25)

self-created and self perpetuated tragedy. For decades Pyongyang has strangled its own economic development and starved its people while building a massive military force armed with missiles and weapons of mass destruction. Without sweeping restructuring to transform itself and its relations with the world, the North's survival is in doubt.

He delivered a long litany of steps required of North Korea. It must "begin implementing military confidence building and tension reduction measures." Calling North Korea an "evil regime," he warned, "Change in the North's diplomatic, economic, and security posture is necessary, but not sufficient for it to join the community of nations." He cited its "continuing development of weapons of mass destruction and exporting the means to deliver them" as one of

“our gravest” concerns. Regarding chemical and biological weapons, he said “there is little doubt that North Korea has an active program.” As for nuclear weapons, Bolton alleged that Pyongyang continues its “attempts to procure technology worldwide that could have application in its nuclear program.” While he admitted that “North Korea has frozen plutonium production” per the 1994 Agreed Framework, Bolton asserted that “North Korea has not begun to allow inspectors with the IAEA to complete all of their required tasks.” He labeled North Korea “the world’s foremost peddler of ballistic missile-related equipment.” The Under Secretary concluded that President Bush’s “axis of evil” remark was “more than a rhetorical flourish – it was factually correct. ... As President Bush has said, ‘We cannot permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to export the world’s most dangerous weapons.’” Recalling President Bush’s February 2002 statement in Seoul that the United States is “prepared to talk with the North about steps that would lead to a better future, a future that is more hopeful and less threatening,” Bolton concluded, “We continue to stand by this offer of dialogue – anytime, any place.”

At the time, President Bush was preoccupied with Iraq, but took time out to share his candid assessment of Kim Jong Il with prominent American journalist Bob Woodward. Bush’s on the record interview soon appeared in newspapers around the world and Woodward’s book, *Bush at War*. Bush told Woodward, “I loathe Kim Jong Il!” Waving his finger in the air, according to Woodward’s account, Bush reportedly shouted, “I’ve got a visceral reaction to this guy, because he is starving his people. ... Maybe its my religion, maybe it’s my – but I feel passionate about this.”(26) Maybe this was not meant as a statement of foreign policy, but the president’s remarks stunned many while outraging Pyongyang’s hardliners. Once again, Bush’s rhetoric did nothing to further his regionalists’ efforts to engage North Korea in diplomatic dialogue.

Three weeks later, on the eve of Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s Pyongyang Summit, the White House released its “National Security Strategy of the United States of America.”(27) This document formalized the Bush Administration’s adoption of the globalists’ foreign policy goals and strategy. In the introductory remarks, President Bush proclaims, “Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, ... We will build defenses against ballistic missiles and other means of delivery.” In the statement’s body, North Korea is identified as the “principal purveyor of ballistic missiles ... while developing its own Weapons of Mass Destruction arsenal.”

The ill-fated Kelly mission to Pyongyang followed two weeks later, October 1-3. Regionalists, as well as U.S. allies in Seoul and Tokyo, had hoped the visit would set the stage for a diplomatic break through. But North Korean First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Sok-ju reportedly confirmed that his nation had initiated a second, clandestine nuclear weapons program. Stunned, angered and frustrated, Kelly and his delegation promptly departed Pyongyang. Official silence followed while Kelly briefed his counterparts in Seoul and Tokyo.

Back in Washington, word of the diplomatic fiasco did not leak to the press until October 16 when *USA Today* correspondent Barbara Slavin, an experienced Pyongyang watcher, learned what had happened.(28) A ranking Bush Administration source in the National Security Council confirmed to her that North Korea had committed a “material breach” of the Agreed Framework. An official statement issued late in the day confirmed this. The State Department’s spokesman explained that “North Korean officials acknowledged ...” having a clandestine highly enriched uranium program” and had told the U.S. delegation that North Korea “considered the Agreed Framework nullified.” The spokesman termed the North Korea program a “serious violation” of the 1994 Agreed Framework, the NPT and the 1992 South-North Korea Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and concluded with a call for the “peaceful resolution of this situation.”(29)

North Korea’s admission severely damaged the regionalists’ credibility. They had long argued that North Korea could be induced through diplomatic negotiations to forego its nuclear ambitions, and other weapons of mass destruction, in exchange for economic benefits. But Pyongyang had now demonstrated the futility of previous such efforts. Likewise, any future effort to pursue a negotiated settlement appeared to be futile. Having broken all of its previous promises to end its nuclear program, no one in Washington’s foreign policy community could argue convincingly that Pyongyang could be trusted to keep future promises to again halt such programs.

Clearly, North Korea’s admission consolidated the globalists gradual ascendancy in foreign policy toward North Korea after “9/11.” The President’s personal, and political preference for assertive and often condescending mantra to describe Kim Jong Il and his regime, appealed to his conservative Republican supporters, many of whom are globalists, so he intensified it. But it also caused his regionalists in Washington and allies in Seoul and Tokyo to cringe. They knew Pyongyang would react with rage, not submission to Washington’s will. The regionalists, headed by Powell, persisted through the spring and summer into the fall of 2002, but their program of diplomacy and deterrence was gradually being eclipsed.

The President’s rhetoric had emboldened his globalists. They unleashed a steady, highly audible barrage of pointedly worded speeches to Congress, the American public and U.S. allies in Northeast Asia. Their intent was both to substantiate the President’s “axis of evil” and to humble Pyongyang before the international audience. Their efforts achieved a mixed outcome. The globalists rallied broadening support in the United States for their strategy. At the same time, however, Pyongyang became increasingly intransigent in its refusal to accommodate Washington’s demands. All the while, the governments in Seoul and Tokyo worried that the impasse between Washington and Pyongyang was headed toward a confrontation that could have grave consequences for their nations.

Bush’s Two Track Approach to North Korea

Bush reacted with caution and restraint to Pyongyang's outrageous admission. One obvious reason was that Iraq remained his first priority. He did not wish to alienate Beijing and Moscow over North Korea while he was pushing the UN Security Council to sanction his objectives regarding Saddam Hussein. Also, he needed Seoul's and Tokyo's support for resolutions being pursued in TICOG, KEDO and the IAEA aimed at chastising North Korea for its misconduct.

The promise of talks "any time, any where" with Pyongyang was replaced with a new policy line best summarized in the President's own words. On January 14, 2003, the president said:
(30)

I want to remind the American people that prior to North Korea making the decision it made, that I had instructed our Secretary of State to approach North Korea about a bold initiative, an initiative which would talk about energy and food, because we care deeply about the suffering of the North Korean people. And then the North Koreans made a decision. And the decision they made was to ignore international norm, ignore treaties that they had – agreements that they had reached, and start building potential nuclear weapons, enriching uranium. And now they have expelled – are in the process of kicking out IEAE (sic) people.

I view this as an opportunity to bind together nations in the neighborhood and around the world to make it clear to the North Koreans that we expect this issue to be resolved peacefully, and we expect them to disarm. We expect them not to develop nuclear weapons. And if they so choose to do so – their choice – then I will reconsider whether or not we will start the bold initiative that I talked to Secretary Powell about.

People say, well, are you willing to talk to North Korea? Of course we are. But what this nation won't do is be blackmailed. And what this nation will do is use this as an opportunity to bring the Chinese and the Russians and South Koreans and Japanese to the table to solve this problem peacefully.

The President's rambling and somewhat disjointed remarks are nevertheless revealing. His apparent foreign policy goals remain consistent: North Korea's discarding of its weapons of mass destruction and related programs and compliance with international safeguard norms. The regionalists in the Bush Administration appear to retain their president's confidence. He seems to be heeding their advise. His rhetoric is relatively restrained regarding North Korea, and he avoids mentioning Kim Jong Il by name. Earlier, his rather condescending remarks had not only outraged Pyongyang, but contributed to a flare up of anti-American sentiment in South Korea. He aligns himself with Seoul's and Tokyo's preferred strategy, "a peaceful, diplomatic solution," and claims he wishes to bring them together with Beijing and Moscow to solve the problem jointly. This

preference is reflected in his Administration's earlier efforts in October and November to rally multilateral support at the TICOG, KEDO and IAEA needed to chastise Pyongyang's misconduct. Finally, he hints at North Korea possibly benefitting from his "bold initiative," a multilateral package of economic inducements should Pyongyang chose to measure up to international demands. Subsequently, he advocated a multilateral dialogue, termed the "P five plus five," to be convened between: the permanent five members of the UN Security Council (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China) plus South Korea, Japan, Australia, the European Union and, of course, North Korea.

Less obvious from these remarks, however, is Bush's other policy track, the one his globalists champion. He punctuated his remarks with the stern and cryptic phrase, "But what this nation won't do is be blackmailed." To decipher his meaning we must turn to the remarks and actions of the globalists.(31) Their preferred strategy is contained in an official document entitled *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* Although dated September 17, 2002, it was not released to the public until early December. Weapons of mass destruction, WMD, are identified as the primary threat to U.S. defense. All "U.S. military and appropriate civilian agencies" must be prepared to "counter the threat and use of WMD by states and terrorists against the United States, ..." In the event "deterrence may not succeed," U.S. military forces and appropriate civilian agencies (i.e. the CIA)" are authorized to take "preemptive measures." "All elements" of the U.S. strategy to combat WMD "must be brought to bear" on proliferators, but, "Because each ... is different, we will pursue country-specific strategies that best enable us and our friends and allies to prevent, deter and defend against WMD ..."

The meaning of "counter proliferation" was demonstrated on December 10 in the Arab Sea about six hundred miles southeast of Yemen.(32) The U.S. Navy, with assistance from a Spanish warship, seized a Cambodian cargo ship bound for Yemen that carried about fifteen North Korean produced Scud ballistic missiles. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, when confirming the incident, described it as "a very successful coalition interdiction effort..." But he admitted that there was "no clear authority to seize the shipment" and the merchant vessel was released.(33) Actually, this "preemptive" counter proliferation effort was contrary to international law.

Yet to be completely deciphered is Bush's ultimate goal regarding North Korea. In the case of Iraq, he initial justification for an invasion of Iraq was to disarm it of its weapons of mass destruction. Eventually he added what he called at the time a secondary goal, the toppling from power of Saddam Hussein. By February 2003, Bush in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank, was publicly admitting his aim is to destroy Hussein's regime and replace it with a new democracy. Pyongyang's leadership is convinced this is actually Bush's foremost goal regarding North Korea.

Pyongyang's concerns are not entirely groundless. President Bush for over one year has made known repeatedly his disdain for Kim Jong Il. So too have some of his closest foreign policy advisers. In a late November, 2002, off the record interview, one of these officials made known his personal views and tied them to those of President Bush. In this interview, the unidentified official reportedly said: (34)

But in general, I think we need to stop thinking about what we're going to give (North Korea). Instead, we need to think about how we're going to change this (Kim Jong Il) regime. How are we going to bring this government down? That's the threat, the government. That's what our President thinks. Our diplomats are uneasy with it but that's what our President thinks. He's very clear on that. He was quoted in the (Washington) Post and on (CBS television program) Sixty Minutes saying that he loathed the leader, 'the dear leader.' That's our President. That's what he thinks! There's not much mystery in this. Change the regime."

Such remarks are not necessarily policy. But in the context of an escalating international crisis, they suggest such an option is under active consideration. Further strengthening this assumption is the Bush Administration's willingness to employ pre-emptive counter proliferation measures against nations that proliferate weapons of mass destruction. This clearly includes all members of the "axis of evil," particularly Iraq and North Korea. Regime change has slowly emerged as a concrete option regarding Iraq. Whether this will prove true in the case of North Korea remains to be seen.

At the present time, President Bush appears to be keeping his options open regarding North Korea, except that he has ruled out diplomatic negotiations. A February 28, 2003 *New York Times* report made this clear. State Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage, a regionalist, had reportedly angered the President by suggesting the United States might engage North Korea in direct negotiations "beneath a multilateral umbrella." Bush apparently ruled out any such possibility. This suggests Bush intends to achieve his "peaceful, diplomatic" resolution of the second nuclear crisis with North Korea by focusing sufficient multilateral pressure on Kim Jong Il to compel him to disarm voluntarily. But no nation in history has disarmed without a fight. This leaves open the options of toppling the North Korean regime from within, or overwhelming it with military might. Bush Administration confidence that Kim Jong Il's people might end his rule appear to have encountered a severe set back. The CIA, according to a March 2, 2003, *Washington Post* report, retracted its assessment that suggested there was substantial domestic opposition to the North Korean dictator. For unexplained reasons, the CIA's confidence in its source of intelligence had evaporated. This leaves armed confrontation as the Bush Administration's sole option for resolving the escalating nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

Conclusion

President Bush's dual approach to North Korea has yet to achieve any of its desired results. Dueling over policy and strategy between traditionalists and globalists continues within his administration. The president appears to shift his preference from one group to the other, perpetuating the debate. While this may ensure him a continuous flow of recommendations about how to deal with North Korea, it also has major disadvantages.

The duality in Bush's policy is keeping all concerned nations on edge. Seoul in particular has repeatedly vented frustration with Washington because of the President's vacillation between Seoul's shared goals and preference for a "peaceful, diplomatic" resolution, but his sometimes provocative rhetoric and saber rattling strategy. Tokyo has returned to its previous passive state vis a vis Pyongyang. While it quietly supports Bush's goal of disarming Pyongyang, it prefers Seoul's strategy of direct dialogue and economic inducements. Beijing and Moscow appear to share Seoul's concerns and discomfort with Bush's approach. As for Pyongyang, the ambiguity of Bush's ultimate, preferred goal, i.e. regime change, seems to have convinced Kim Jong Il that he has no alternative but to retain his ability to defend his regime with weapons of mass destruction.

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