

Abstract of
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Dealing With Pyongyang –
In Search of a More Effective Strategy
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The United States and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) both claim equal determination to achieve a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue, but their strategies have failed to achieve progress toward their avowed goal. Here we focus on Washington's preferred strategy of "neo-containment." The Bush Administration, since taking office in 2001, has consistently rejected any engagement of North Korea, diplomatically and commercially. Yet at the same time it has declared its preference for a "diplomatic" solution to the nuclear issue. Achieving a "diplomatic" solution without diplomacy and diplomatic dialogue is impossible. Since the start of his second term, however, President Bush appears to have moderated his rejection of engagement" by tempering his preference for "containment" with some aspects of engagement. This has yielded a hybrid strategy labeled here as "neo-containment." All the fundamental elements of containment remain in place, such as restrictions on diplomatic contact and economic sanctions, but some dialogue is permitted "under the umbrella of the Six Party Talks and for the sole purpose of resolving the nuclear issue. Bush's "neo-containment" strategy, however, ignores the fact that even if the Six Party Talks resume, successful negotiation of a resolution and its implementation will require a strategy of engagement.

Key Words:

Containment: This was the basic United States' strategy to halt the spread of communist ideology and the political influence of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and their allies, including North Korea and North Vietnam. The United States ringed these adversaries with a network of interlocking security alliances. In East Asia, the United States sought to isolate diplomatically and commercially so-called "Red China," North Korea and North Vietnam by denying them diplomatic intercourse and excluding them from international organizations.

CVID: Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement of North Korea's civilian and military nuclear programs and related activities remains is the fundamental goal President George W. Bush set for his administration in its dealings with North Korea.

Engagement: Republican President Richard Nixon, at the behest of his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, initiated this strategy in the early 1970s for the purpose of increasing the gap between "Red China" and the Soviet Union. The strategy aimed to "open" China and induce it through diplomatic and economic enticements to temper its hostility toward the United States, and to conduct its international relations in a manner more consistent with accepted international norms. President Reagan successfully

applied the strategy toward the Soviet Union in the 1980s. South Korea's President Roh Dae-woo, with the encouragement and support of former President Bush, initiated engagement of North Korea. The Clinton Administration continued this strategy vis a vis North Korea, but President George W. Bush in 2001 dismissed engagement as similar to appeasement.

Neo-containment: President George W. Bush replaced his predecessor's reliance on engagement with a new strategy that access the basic elements of containment, but relies on selected elements of engagement. Containment was essentially defensive. Neo-containment accents assertive, unilateral United States action. It encompasses the self-proclaimed right of "pre-emptive nuclear counter proliferation strategy." This means the United States will launch a "first military strike" against any nation it believes poses an imminent threat to US national security. President Bush declared North Korea one such nation when he included it in his so-called "axis of evil." Nevertheless, he holds open the possibility of first achieving a "peaceful diplomatic solution" with North Korea.

New York Channel: This is the only authorized channel for diplomatic communication between the United States and North Korea. Initiated in 1993, State Department officials, either by telephone or in face to face meetings, engage in diplomatic dialogue with their North Korean counterparts who are accredited to the United Nations.

Six Party Talks: Initiated in June 2003, President Bush has designated this the only acceptable forum for United States negotiations with North Korea. China initiated the talks for the purpose of facilitating a peaceful diplomatic resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. The talks bring together official representatives of China, Japan, North and South Korea, Russia and the United States. Thus far, the talks have achieved only limited progress toward a diplomatic resolution.