NORTH KOREA, NUCLEAR RISK-TAKING, AND THE UNITED STATES

KIM IL SUNG, KIM JONG IL, AND KIM JONG UN

JIHWAN HWANG

North Korea, Nuclear Risk-Taking, and the United States

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Introduction

Why has the Democratic People's Republic of Korea[1] become determined to challenge the United States by going nuclear, although it is a much weaker nation? Why has Pyongyang confronted the United States with its own nuclear weapons program, and how and why has Pyongyang so far changed its nuclear policy toward Washington? In fact, the North Korean nuclear crisis has not been a bilateral issue between Pyongyang and Washington but rather an international concern, including the whole international community. However, this book focuses on Pyongyang's nuclear policy toward Washington since the end of the Cold War, because Pyongyang has constantly insisted on negotiating bilaterally with Washington, arguing the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula was originally generated by America's antagonistic nuclear policy toward North Korea during the Cold War.[2] Furthermore, Pyongyang's main policy regarding the nuclear issue has continuously focused on the relations with the United States, even though international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations (UN) and regional powers such as South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia have participated in this issue.

The North Korean nuclear crisis began to rise to the surface after the end of the Cold War.[3] As North Korea's security environment suddenly worsened after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Chinese diplomatic reformulation, North Korea began to challenge the U.S. nuclear nonproliferation policy. According to Dale Copeland (2000: 37–42), a state in decline like North Korea can adopt one of two foreign policy options: (1) to accommodate its enemy at the risk of war in the long term or (2) to adopt a hardline stance at the risk of war in the short term. Although it does not appear that North Korea intended to go to war against the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, the North has often escalated and

de-escalated the nuclear crisis with its unique nuclear policy. Consequently, North Korea reached the brink of being attacked militarily by the United States due to its reluctance to follow the international demand for nuclear inspections. In June 1994, the United States was making every diplomatic effort to have UN sanctions imposed on North Korea and was also considering a few military options, including preemptive strikes on the North's nuclear facilities.[4] The crisis might have ended in war at the time if Pyongyang had chosen to accept the risk of continuously escalating the situation, but it did not. North Korean leader Kim Il Sung suddenly changed his course of action in June 1994 by switching his nuclear policy from confrontational brinkmanship to conciliatory engagement. The crisis was resolved without any direct military confrontation after former U.S. president Jimmy Carter visited Pyongyang and got Kim Il Sung's agreement to freeze Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program in return for U.S. compensation. Why did Kim suddenly change his nuclear policy, suspending the North's independent nuclear weapons program in response to international threats, and accept the risk of damaging his dignity and the *Juche* ideology of self-reliance that he had valued so long?[5] Did he suddenly recognize that to suspend the nuclear program and improve relations with the United States was less risky than continued escalation of the crisis? If so, why did he not initially reach out to Washington and avoid the risk of confronting the superpower? Although Pyongyang had opted for neither direct confrontation nor any real accommodation during the crisis, its policy focus was evidently seen to move from one to the other.

Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un were not much different in changing their nuclear policies. Kim Jong Il agreed to the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks on September 19, 2005, but soon scrapped it and conducted two nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. Kim Jong Un showed consistently the confrontational nuclear policy by conducting more nuclear tests after he took power in December 2011, but he has also followed his grandfather and father's nuclear policy. In his 2018 New Year's address, Kim Jong Un suddenly called for a new transformation of inter-Korean relations, and North Korea participated in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games.[6] He even had several historic summit meetings with South Korean president Moon Jae-in and U.S. president Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019. Kim Jong Un was trying to change the order of the Korean peninsula through a new charm offensive.

In short, why did Pyongyang shift its footing from confrontation to cooperation and back again instead of maintaining a single nuclear policy? Then, which policy option did North Korean leaders perceive to involve greater risk? Given that every foreign policy option involves a certain amount of risk, the answer depends on the North Korean leadership's assessment of the relative degrees of risk associated with each policy.

In international relations, the case of the North Korean nuclear crisis raises the question of why a weaker nation often accepts the risk of challenging a stronger opponent despite the unfavorable balance of power. War is very costly and risky to all states, so it must be even riskier and potentially catastrophic to weaker states, given the power gap. Thus, the conventional wisdom in international relations posits that a weaker nation is less likely to challenge a stronger nation and risk war because no nation wants to start a losing war (Waltz 1979; Organski and Kugler 1980; Mearsheimer 1983; Kugler and Lemke 1996; Mearsheimer 2001). However, it should also be noted that the weaker may choose to fight against the stronger because they sometimes prefer saving face to being bullied. In reality, there have been a number of cases in which the weaker challenged and actually fought the stronger, and scholars have sought to explain such asymmetric conflicts on the basis of diverse theoretical frameworks (Paul 1994). This book addresses this issue by focusing on the concept of risk, that is, how national leaders of a weaker nation perceive the relative riskiness of foreign policy options and how the risk influences those leaders' decision-making processes. Thus, the theoretical questions of this book are as follows: when do national leaders of a weaker state choose to take the risk of confronting a much stronger opponent, and when do they not? Why do they sometimes change their policy halfway through the crisis, although the initial condition leading to the policy did not change? To answer these questions, this book focuses on how leaders perceive and respond to risk in their foreign policy decision-making.

Thus, the basic question in the North Korean case is why the weaker North Korea did not seek to engage the United States when the nuclear issue first emerged but rather was ready to challenge the most powerful country in the world with its nuclear program, even risking a war. A more central question regarding Pyongyang's nuclear policy is why Pyongyang did not continue to confront the United States but instead chose to change its course of action and cooperate with the United States by agreeing to suspend its nuclear weapons program in June 1994, September 2005, and June 2018, even though the North Korean leaders' security concerns rising from the United States had not disappeared. In addition, if Pyongyang chose to engage the United States, why did it change its course again and resume the risk of confrontation, escalating the crisis by finally conducting several nuclear tests and declaring itself as a nuclear weapons state?

Hence, this book emphasizes that issues of risk are central to an understanding of Pyongyang's decision-making process during the nuclear crisis. In this sense, it draws on the main tenets of prospect theory in international relations and proposes a model of the perceptions of North Korean leaders and their responses to the risk related to the nuclear crisis.

OVERVIEW

Understanding Pyongyang's foreign policy decision-making process regarding the nuclear issue has been one of the most difficult jobs for scholars and policy-makers who study North Korea. Some have characterized North Korea as having a reputation for behaving aggressively, recklessly, and irrationally (Spector and Smith 1991; Cha 2002), while others have seen in the actions of the North's unique internal logic and motives (Kang 1995, 2003b, 2003d; Snyder 1999). Since the early 1990s, developing a clear picture of Pyongyang's nuclear policy has been one of the most important goals of North Korean studies.[7] However, most works have focused more on U.S. foreign policy toward the North Korean nuclear program than Pyongyang's nuclear policy (Mazarr 1995a; Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004). While some have sought to explain Pyongyang's perspective and nuclear policy (Sigal 1998; Snyder 1999; Cha and Kang 2003), the main problem in their works is that they do not explain Pyongyang's policy changes, assuming that Pyongyang has continuously adopted a single nuclear strategy—either of confrontation or of engagement—throughout the crisis depending on the initial circumstance.[8] In addition, the literature does not appear to be very successful in evaluating Pyongyang's decision-making process. Critiquing and building upon these efforts, this book explains the variation in North Korean leaders' perceptions and policies over time during the crisis, exploring how they have perceived and responded to the related risks. To show this, this book draws on prospect theory in international relations and accepts the principle that a risk-taking attitude in decision-making is a function of the situation (Levy 1994b; McDermott 1998, 2004b). Prospect theory has shown that risk-taking tendencies differ depending on the potential gain or loss (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and that changing the initial frames changes subsequent elements of the decision-making process (Kanner 2001; McDermott 2004b). The use of prospect theory may not be entirely new in explaining North Korean behavior (Park 2010), but this book produces novel and unique hypotheses focusing on the North Korean leaders' internal and external perceptions that others had not done before. In fact, Pyongyang's internal and external perceptions and behavior are understood to vary over time depending on the situations caused mainly by changing U.S. policy. This book seeks to explain how the change in North Korean leaders' perception of gain or loss has affected their choice of action and to demonstrate that understanding risks and situations as changing in terms of U.S. policy provides a better picture of Pyongyang's nuclear policy than the static explanation prevalent in the current literature.

This book inquires into three questions regarding Pyongyang's nuclear policy. The first two are concerned with Pyongyang's nuclear policy for the

last three decades and the third with the implications for policy with regard to future confrontations.

1) Why did North Korea change its course of action in the midst of the crisis even though the security environment that led to the initiation of its nuclear weapons program remained essentially the same? For instance, why did North Korea choose to stop confronting the United States in June 1994 and accept the risk of giving up self-reliance in national defense and engaging with the United States? If North Korea had decided to improve relations with the United States, why did it change its nuclear policy again in late 2002 and resume its defiant stance with its nuclear program? Then, why did Kim Jong Un decide to have a summit meeting with the U.S. president after several nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests?
2) If North Korea later chose to improve relations with the United States, why did it initially take the risk of standing up against the much stronger United States, even escalating the crisis to the point of risking war rather than engaging with the United States from the beginning?
3) What does this study imply for North Korea's future nuclear policy and other potential international crises involving weaker states? How does the risk-taking tendency of a weaker state explain its foreign policy behavior? When does a weaker state accept the risk of challenging a stronger opponent, and when does it not?

Pyongyang's Policy Changes

One central question of this book is, *"why did North Korea change its course of action in the midst of crisis even though the security environment that led to the initiation of its nuclear weapons program remained essentially the same?"* North Korea chose not to continue defying the United States but instead to change its nuclear policy and agree to suspend its nuclear program in June 1994, September 2005, and June 2018. This means that contrary to the previous policy, Pyongyang began to take the risk of giving up, though provisionally, its self-reliance in national defense with nuclear weapons rather than continue to accept the risk of maintaining a tough policy vis-à-vis the United States. Then, does such a policy shift to a more conciliatory indicate that Pyongyang became more risk-averse or more risk-acceptant? In fact, it depends on how Pyongyang leaders framed their situation and assessed the relative riskiness of each policy option. A more fundamental question is why North Korean leaders suddenly agreed to suspend their nuclear weapons program halfway through its development, although their threat perception did not change much. In reality, Pyongyang was being threatened more than

ever before because of the possibility of UN sanctions and U.S. preemptive military strikes. If a nation becomes more belligerent as it feels more threatened, why is it that North Korea did not adopt a more aggressive policy? Was Pyongyang's assessment of the relative riskiness of policy options reversed, or did the security environment on the Korean peninsula suddenly change? If Pyongyang had adopted a tit-for-tat strategy and reciprocated when the United States cooperated and retaliated when the United States reneged, as some scholars explain (Sigal 1998, 2000; Cumings 1997, 2004), why did it not respond seriously to previous U.S. offers? Furthermore, why did Pyongyang sometimes concede more than it had before and more than the Americans expected, and why did it consider accepting U.S. conditions that it had refused before?

In this regard, prospect theory posits that we should be very cautious in explaining risk-taking attitudes in situations involving potentially catastrophic losses (Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Quattrone and Tversky 1988; Levy 1994a, 1994b). This means a lot in international relations where situations of catastrophic outcomes of foreign policy may be relatively common, particularly where decisions on war and peace are concerned. It may be true that national leaders would be less likely to risk a nuclear war or an all-out war that may lead to the extinction of the state (Jervis 1989: 171; Levy 1994b: 139–40). This must also be true in the case of North Korea. In the face of catastrophic losses from a war against the United States, Pyongyang might have reframed its perception of the situation and decided to change its course of action. On the other hand, as to why Pyongyang changed its course again later in 2002, 2009, and 2019 and began to take the risk of resuming its defiance against the United States by resuming the once-suspended military provocations, this book also focuses on Pyongyang's reframing of perception on change in America's North Korea policy and its subsequent impact on the making of nuclear decisions. In this sense, this book traces the variation of Pyongyang's perceptions and risk-taking attitudes over time as the nuclear crisis evolved.

Pyongyang's Initial Framing

If North Korea chose to improve relations with the United States, *"why did weaker North Korea initially take the risk of standing up against the much stronger U.S., even escalating the crisis to the point of risking war, rather than engage with the U.S. from the beginning?"* As many works explain, Pyongyang's nuclear program has been closely related to its security concerns since the end of the Cold War (Kang 1995; Mazarr 1995a; Sigal 1998; Moltz and Mansourov 1999; Oberdorfer 2001a; Cha and Kang 2003). In the early 1990s, North Korea lost two major Cold War patrons, the Soviet

Union and China, and this affected Pyongyang's external security dramatically. The North Korean economy also quickly deteriorated as those two great-power allies began to curtail their economic assistance (Hwang 1993). Also, in inter-Korean relations, North Korea has clearly lost the race to South Korea, which has surpassed the North in both military and economic spheres (Hamm 1999; Kang 2003a). In such a losing situation, North Korea appeared to have started its full-scale nuclear weapons program to maintain the balance of power on the Korean peninsula and secure the survival of its regime. Regarding Pyongyang's aggressive nuclear program, one may argue that as a nation feels more desperate, it becomes more belligerent. This proposition is plausible but does not address risks related to different foreign policy options and the responses of national leaders to those risks, given that risk involves both upside benefit and downside cost. For example, which policy option leads to greater cost, confronting the United States with an independent nuclear weapons program or reaching out to the United States by giving up self-reliance in national defense and perhaps even the survival of the regime? On the other hand, which policy option leads to greater benefit, possessing independent capability in defense with nuclear weapons or obtaining a guarantee of security and economic reward by improving relations with the United States?

In this regard, prospect theory indicates that risk perceptions differ depending on the domain of gain or loss and that decision-makers tend to accept risky gambles in the hope of eliminating a certain loss and returning to the original status quo, even at the risk of suffering a greater loss. In this sense, this book explores North Korean leaders' changing assessment of risk based on U.S. policy change and its impact on their risk-taking attitude. It attempts to show that risk-focused analysis can provide a better picture of Pyongyang's decision-making process regarding the nuclear issue.

Policy Question

Finally, this book asks a policy-related question: *"What does this study imply for North Korea's future nuclear policy and other potential international crises involving weaker states?"* It focuses on the single case of North Korea, but its implication may also be considered for other cases.[9] As opposed to conventional wisdom in international relations, the North Korean case may prove that a weaker state may choose to challenge its stronger opponent under certain circumstances. The study of the North Korean nuclear crisis may help explain the risk-taking tendency and foreign policy behavior of other weaker nations. It addresses the questions of when a weaker state accepts the risk of challenging a stronger opponent and when it does not.

DEFINITION OF RISK

Because risk is one of the most important concepts in this book, a clarification of the definition of risk is necessary. As Rose McDermott (1998: 1) explains, "Risk implies some fear of losing an important value or failing to obtain some desired goal." In the context of foreign policy, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (2001: 162) states that "risk refers to situations where any action or lack of action may result in serious losses." When risk is involved in the problem of making choices in the real world, the choices rarely consist of one risk-free and one risky option but rather two risky options (Levy 1994b: 129). Between two risky options, one option may be seen to be riskier than the other because of the degree of divergence in the probable outcomes of the two options. No option is risk-free in foreign policy decision-making, and decision-makers estimate the relative riskiness of each policy option.

In this sense, this book defines risk *in terms of the degree of divergence of outcomes around a decision maker's expected value or reference point* (McDermott 1998: 38–40; Taliaferro 2004b: 26). By definition, a riskier option has a potentially more positive upside and more negative downside than a less risky option (Copeland 2001: 218–20). However, as Levy (1994b: 129) once observed, it is often difficult to define conceptually or measure empirically which option is riskier. Copeland has also argued that national leaders must often choose between equally risky alternatives so that, in some situations, it is impossible to predict which option will be chosen. However, national leaders rarely choose between two equally risky options but try to detect peculiarities in the relative riskiness of each option (Taliaferro 2001: 162). Although the relative riskiness of options and the impact of their possible outcomes cannot be given conceptually, they are, in reality, estimated by decision-makers, and such subjective measurement of risk determines which option is riskier, and so influences their decision-making process.

In this sense, national leaders' risk-taking attitude can be understood by how they perceive the relative riskiness of options and which option they choose, given its relative riskiness. In this book, two different types of risk-taking attitudes are presented: risk acceptance and risk aversion. By definition, risk-acceptant behavior occurs when actors select an option that has more numerous and divergent expected outcomes than the other available options. Risk-averse behavior, on the other hand, occurs when leaders select an option that has fewer and less divergent expected outcomes. Decision-makers may become either risk-acceptant or risk-averse, depending on the situation they face. A risk-acceptant actor is more likely to choose a riskier option despite the risk, while a risk-averse actor is more likely to choose a less risky option due to the risk.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology.[10] According to Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett (2005), a qualitative case study can also establish a causal effect between the independent variable(s) and the dependent variable like large-N statistical studies. Moreover, a case study allows the researcher to uncover causal mechanisms and analyze more observable implications for the competing theories. This study is based on what Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers (1980) called a "parallel demonstration of theory."[11] This method is also similar to what Harry Eckstein (1975) called a "disciplined-configurative study" in case studies.[12] According to these scholars, the goal of this method is to employ a theoretical framework for purposes of description and explanation and then demonstrate its fruitfulness when applied to relevant historical cases. With the application of a theory to a historical case, this method describes and analyzes the outcome in a particular case in terms of theory and presents a new interpretation of the case (Eckstein 1975: 99–104; George 1979: 47–51). The emphasis may be on the explanation of a historical case, but this method may also contribute to theory testing because a case may "impugn established theories if the theories ought to fit it but do not" (Eckstein 1975: 99; George and Bennett 2005: 75). In this sense, this study proposes prospect theory as a theoretical framework and analyzes North Korea's nuclear policy for the past three decades and seeks to provide a stronger interpretation for North Korea's nuclear behavior than other competing explanations in the other literature.

Within-Case Method

In order to apply the prospect theory to Pyongyang's nuclear policy, this study uses "within-case" causal inferences: the "process-tracing" method and the "congruence" method (George 1979; George and McKeown 1985; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Van Evera 1997; George and Bennett 2005). According to George and Bennett (2005: 80), single case studies rely almost exclusively on within-case methods such as process-tracing and congruence. The within-case explanation is akin to that of the historical explanation of single cases, but the process-tracing and the congruence methods make it possible to identify the intervening causal process between the independent variable(s) and the dependent variable and convert a purely historical account of a causal sequence into an analytical and theoretical explanation.

The process-tracing method "is intended to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes" (George and McKeown 1985: 35). In this process, this method provides a theoretical explanation of the causal mechanism between the

independent variable(s) and the dependent variable,[13] and the theory links initial causes to outcomes. Thus, the purpose of applying the process-tracing method of this study is to discover how the variations of the North Korean decision-makers' perception of both domestic and international situations (independent variables) influence their risk-taking attitudes and choices of nuclear policy (dependent variable) over time. Such process-tracing of North Korea's nuclear policy will involve searching for evidence of the decision-making process that can explain the causal path.

On the other hand, when a theory is applied to explain or predict the outcome of a particular case, the congruence method is used (Goerge 1997; Van Evera 1997: 58–63). The researcher uses a theory to predict the outcome of the dependent variable, and if the outcome of a case is congruent with the independent variable and the prediction of the theory linking the two, then it can be said that there is at least a possibility of a causal effect. Thus, the congruence method is useful for understanding the decision-making process and strategic interaction in a single case such as that of North Korea. In terms of the congruence method, this study applies the prospect theory to explain North Korea's nuclear policy during the crisis and explores whether its nuclear policy (dependent variable) is congruent with the prediction of prospect theory.

The process-tracing and congruence methods are combined in an investigation of the causal mechanism determining North Korean nuclear policy.[14] Such a procedure requires the tracing of actors' decision-making and the examination of written records as to the reasons for their actions (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 227). Because actors must communicate with one another in making decisions, the content of this communication necessarily leaves behind some kinds of evidence—documents, participant recollections, public communications in media reports—connected with the decision-making process, even though the evidence may not be complete or unbiased (George and McKeown 1985: 37).

Case Study of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

With these case study methods, this book focuses on North Korean leaders' nuclear decision-making processes for the past three decades. The main goal is to explain why Pyongyang has changed its course of action, although its initial condition regarding the nuclear program remains essentially the same. To this end, this study draws on prospect theory in international relations and seeks to demonstrate how Pyongyang's perception of domestic and international situations has affected its nuclear policy.[15] According to prospect theory, Pyongyang's domestic and international situations can be understood as domains of action, either gain or loss, so this study tries to see how each domain affects

Pyongyang's nuclear decision-making and policy change in the direction predicted by prospect theory. If prospect theory can explain the policies and policy changes that other competing arguments are unable to explain, this study offers support for the applicability of prospect theory to the North Korean case and possibly other international crises involving weaker states.

In order to explain the North Korean leaders' perception of domestic and international situations, this book uses North Korean media reports, government statements, foreign relations documents, memoirs of former officials, and so on. In particular, this book depends heavily on two North Korean state-run media, *Rodong Sinmun* (*Labor Daily*) and *North Korean Central News Agency* (*KCNA*). According to Hwang Jang-yup, who was a member of Pyongyang's inner circle and later defected to South Korea (Hwang 2001: 81–82), *Rodong Sinmun* and *KCNA* have been guided directly by the North Korean supreme leaders. Although these media publish many articles with massive propaganda campaigns for domestic and international purposes, they also include quite authoritative North Korean government statements and foreign relations documents that help understand the North Korean leaders' perception.

Causal Mechanism

The independent variable in this study is Pyongyang's perception of its own domestic and international situations or domains of action, which is operationalized in terms of either gain or loss compared to the North's status quo and other reference points. Pyongyang's domain of action will be measured by a number of different factors that define the leadership's subjective sense of situation. In international relations, domain and reference points are influenced by leaders' subjective perception and assessment (Stein 1992: 15; McDermott 1998: 36), so it may be difficult to ascertain exactly in which domain leaders are to be placed. In addition, there is some likelihood of bias in these sources because North Korean leaders may have intentionally signaled exaggerated, if not erroneous, information in order to portray the situation in the North's favor. In many circumstances, however, the situation looks so obvious as to offer a fairly clear categorization in terms of the relevant objective sources (McDermott 1998: 37–38).[16] In fact, the domains that Pyongyang perceived can be understood not only from their subjective assessment but also in terms of other objective indicators such as North Korea's alliance relations, domestic political stability and economic situation, inter-Korean relations, the changing balance of power around the Korean peninsula, U.S. policy toward North Korea, and so on.

In this way, domains of action describe the domestic and international environments under which Pyongyang decides its nuclear policy. As prospect

theory explains (Levy 1994b), Pyongyang's domain of action will be judged relative to the reference point, which is normally Pyongyang's status quo. North Korea's initial status quo was the stable balance of power on the Korean peninsula guaranteed by its two Cold War patrons, the Soviet Union and China, but the end of the Cold War put Pyongyang in a different domain and changed the initial status quo. Since then, Pyongyang has framed and reframed its domains of action, and this study traces those domains and explores how they have influenced Pyongyang's nuclear policy during Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un eras.

The dependent variable is Pyongyang's risk-taking attitudes coded as either risk-acceptant or risk-averse, and they vary (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 107–9). Pyongyang may choose to take the risk of defying the United States by maintaining its hardline policy and continuously developing its nuclear weapons program or choose to accept the risk of giving up self-reliance in national defense and engaging the United States by suspending its nuclear weapons program. In fact, Pyongyang's policy toward the United States has shifted back and forth as the crisis has progressed, and these policy changes will be explained on the basis of Pyongyang's domain of action and the relative riskiness of each policy.

As noted above, every policy option involves some risk, and the risk of a given option is evaluated in terms of relative variance in the outcome presented by each choice. In other words, an option with a greater outcome variance constitutes a relatively riskier choice than alternative options.[17] Thus, in most cases, Pyongyang's policy of confronting the United States by going nuclear should be understood to be a riskier choice than its conciliatory policy of engaging the United States and suspending its own nuclear weapons program because the former offers a greater variance of outcome to Pyongyang than the latter, providing a strong potential not only of obtaining a self-reliant way of securing its regime with nuclear weapons (gain) but also of inviting U.S. military attacks and regime change (loss), as seen in the case of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. On the other hand, the policy of engaging the United States by suspending the nuclear weapons program can be said to offer a relatively smaller variance of outcome to Pyongyang, providing a potential of gaining economic benefits and improving relations with the United States (gain) and giving up its self-reliance in national defense and acceptance of U.S. influence in the long run (loss). If North Korean leaders are risk-acceptant, they will choose to confront the United States to change the unfavorable status quo, while if they are risk-averse, they will choose to engage the United States and accept the changed status quo.

However, because Pyongyang's preference may be different, the specific risk should depend on the leaders' subjective assessment of the relative riskiness of the specific policies. In fact, because the North Korean nuclear crisis

has been one of the hottest issues in the post–Cold War era and has involved North Korean officials in many negotiations, there have been many official and unofficial statements in Western media reports as well as in the North Korean media in which North Korean leaders expressed their position with regard to their perceptions. Moreover, because many U.S. and South Korean government officials have discussed this issue with North Korean officials, including Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un, it would be useful to evaluate the statements made in those meetings.

Three Leaders and Multiple Observations

According to King, Keohane, and Verba (1994: 217–28), a single case often involves multiple measures of key variables and multiple observations (Table 0.1).[18] One good way to find more observations is to divide a case into a number of decision-making points because a single case involves larger within-case variations in the dependent variable across time.[19] The method of process-tracing is said to increase the number of observations because it yields many observations within each sequence of events (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 227–28).

Thus, this study is a single-nation case study, but the North Korean nuclear crisis can be divided into multiple periods of observation in terms of Pyongyang's policy changes under three leaders: (1) Kim Il Sung era as a period of policy change from confrontation (first nuclear crisis and defiance against the United States) to engagement (nuclear deal and improvement of relations with the United States in June 1994); (2) Kim Jong Il era as a period of policy change from confrontation (abandonment of the Agreed Framework and withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in January 2003) to engagement (Six-Party talks in 2005 and 2007) and again back to confrontation (first and second nuclear tests); (3) Kim Jong Un era as a period of policy change from confrontation (third~sixth nuclear tests) to engagement (Inter-Korean and U.S.–DPRK summits in 2018 and 2019) and again back to confrontation (nuclear deadlock). Those multiple observations under three North Korean leaders are listed below and will be analyzed in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

This book is a broadly accessible overview of the North Korean nuclear crisis. It highlights the puzzle of why and how weaker North Korea has challenged the stronger United States with its nuclear weapons program and shifted later its footing from confrontation to cooperation and back again, instead of maintaining a single nuclear policy. Chapter 1 takes a deeper look

Table 0.1 Multiple Observations in the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Observations		*Pyongyang's Policy Changes*
Kim Il Sung	First nuclear crisis (pre-1994)	Confrontation
	Nuclear deal (June 1994)	Engagement
Kim Jong Il	Abandonment of the Agreed Framework and withdrawal of the NPT (January 2003)	Confrontation
	Six-Party Talks Agreements (2005, 2007)	Engagement
	Nuclear tests (2006, 2009)	Confrontation
Kim Jong Un	Nuclear tests (2013, 2016, 2017)	Confrontation
	Inter-Korean and U.S.–DPRK summits (2018, 2019)	Engagement
	Nuclear deadlock (post-2019)	Confrontation

Source: Created by author.

at the arguments to date with respect to North Korean nuclear behavior. It questions the widely held view in terms of major international relations theories, which are realism and liberalism. In addition to providing an overview of the muddled thinking on this question, which will be helpful for those less familiar with the debate, I provide concrete suggestions to escape the morass: prospect theory. It addresses an alternative explanation and discusses how to provide a better interpretation of Pyongyang's behavior, drawing on the concept of risk and a nation's risk-taking behaviors.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework of North Korean nuclear behavior. It produces three hypotheses to explain Pyongyang's nuclear risk-taking based on prospect theory in international relations. First of all, if Pyongyang perceives the status quo to be deteriorating, it frames its external situation in the domain of losses, becomes more risk-acceptant, and chooses a riskier nuclear policy in an attempt to restore the status quo (status quo bias). Second, if Pyongyang perceives military confrontation to be imminent, it will be more likely to be risk-averse in the domain of extreme losses and thus pursue a less risky nuclear policy to avoid the catastrophic outcome of war, that is, the collapse of the regime (preference reversal). Third, if North Korea perceives the domestic situation as becoming worse to the point of threatening the regime's survival, it may become externally risk-acceptant and choose a risky nuclear policy to restore the domestic status quo (domestic loss aversion).

Chapters 3 through 5 examine three cases of North Korean nuclear risk-taking from the early 1990s to the present. They test three hypotheses with three-decade-long North Korean nuclear crises under the leaders of three generations: Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un. I provide an overview of each case, trace each North Korean leader's internal and external perceptions, and outline their nuclear risk-taking behaviors. From there, I trace how

the domain of action and a leader's perception have influenced Pyongyang's subsequent risk-taking attitudes over time. I compare three leaders' nuclear policies that move between confrontation and engagement. These three chapters provide a detailed background of the three-decade-long nuclear crises on the Korean peninsula since the early 1990s.

Specifically, chapter 3 takes stock of the origin of the North Korean nuclear crisis and explains why Kim Il Sung, the North Korean founding father, changed his nuclear policy from confrontation to engagement. It traces Kim Il Sung's internal and external domains of action after the end of the Cold War and how his perception changed and became risk-averse, conducting a nuclear deal with the former U.S. president Jimmy Carter in June 1994.

Chapter 4 traces the turbulent battles during the Kim Jong Il era. It explains why the second nuclear crisis broke out on the Korean peninsula and how Kim Jong Il dealt with the renewed nuclear crisis. Although Pyongyang agreed to another nuclear agreement at the Six-Party Talks in 2005, it finally conducted the first nuclear test in 2006. The changed situation in and out of North Korea put Kim Jong Il in a different domain of action and deteriorated his perception, leading to the risk-acceptant nuclear behavior.

Chapter 5 provides Kim Jong Un's perception and nuclear policy since 2012. He had continuously conducted several nuclear tests until 2017 but also surprised the world by accepting not only the inter-Korean summits but also the historical summits with the U.S. president Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019. This chapter focuses on Kim Jong Un's changing domain of action and perception and explains why he promised complete denuclearization right after he announced the completion of nuclear deterrence capability against the United States in November 2017.

The concluding chapter summarizes my arguments that Pyongyang has changed its nuclear policy between confrontation and engagement based on its leaders' domain of action and perception. It provides some policy implications for the ongoing deadlock on the Korean peninsula and Pyongyang's future nuclear policy. Finally, it presents implications for international relations theory, highlighting the theoretical meaning of this book in international relations in general.

NOTES

1. To designate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), several expressions such as North Korea, Pyongyang, and the North are used interchangeably in this book. Similarly, to designate the Republic of Korea (ROK), this book uses South Korea, Seoul, and the South.

2. Kim Il Sung often emphasized that the nuclear issue should be resolved in bilateral talks between North Korea and the United States, given the origin of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. See Kim Il Sung's "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1994. See also the statement by the North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman, "UN Security Council is not a Place in which Our Nuclear Problem is Discussed," *Rodong Sinmun*, April 11, 1993, and its press conference, "Japan and South Korea do not have to Pay Attention to the DPRK-U.S. Talks," *Rodong Sinmun*, June 26, 1994. For U.S. involvement in the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula during the Cold War, see Hayes (1991).

3. For a short initial history of the North Korean nuclear issue, see ISSS (2004: 5–26).

4. Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, "Back to the Brink," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2002.

5. *Juche* is commonly translated as self-reliance and has become the blueprint for North Korean society and the central guideline for its policies (Park 1996, 2002).

6. Kim Jong Un, "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 2018.

7. For example, see Mazarr (1995a); Sigal (1998); Snyder (1999); Moltz and Mansourov (1999); Cha and Kang (2003); and Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004).

8. In this sense, McEchern (2010) is one exception.

9. According to Alexander L. George (1979: 43–49), it is possible to draw some broader lessons from single historical cases, drawing on theory by identifying the many critical conditions and variables that affect historical outcomes and sorting out the causal patterns associated with different historical outcomes. More methodological issues will be addressed later.

10. Methodologically, this study greatly draws on George and Bennett (2005).

11. In her case studies drawing on prospect theory, McDermott (1998: 9–12) also uses the "parallel demonstration of theory" to show the explanatory power of prospect theory in decision making.

12. According to George (1979), Eckstein's discussion of the "disciplined-configurative study" closely parallels Lijphart's "interpretative case study." Lijphart (1971) explains that in this method, "a generalization is applied to a specific case with the aim of throwing light on the case rather than of improving the generalization."

13. As an excellent example that used the process-tracing method, George and Bennett (2005: 227) cites Theda Skocpol's *State and Social Revolution: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. She employed the process-tracing procedure and demonstrated how independent variables were causally related to the outcome of three social revolutions.

14. According to George and Bennett (2005: 183–84, 194–97), the usefulness of combining the congruence and process-tracing methods was demonstrated by Yuen Koong Khong in *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965.*

15. There may be some limitations in applying prospect theory, which is the individual model of choice, to foreign policy decision-making, which is the group setting (Boettcher 1995: 577–79, 2004), but the North Korean case may be relatively free of this criticism, given that North Korea is a very centralized nation in which any

important decisions such as nuclear policy have been made mostly by its successive supreme leaders, Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un.

16. McDermott (1998: 11) offers the analogy of reading a thermometer: "If it is a hundred degrees outside, you do not need to know a whole lot about a particular individual to assume that he is probably hot."

17. For example, "if one option presents a 50 percent chance of winning $5 and a 50 percent chance of losing $10, it is less risky than a gamble which offers a 50 percent prospect of winning $50 and a 50 percent chance of losing $ 100" (McDermott 1998: 39).

18. Eckstein (1975: 85) defines a case as "a phenomenon for which we report and interpret only a single measure on any pertinent variable." King, Keohane, and Verba (1994: 52–53, 217–18) prefer to use the word "observation," but their definition of "observation" coincides with Eckstein's definition of "case." They define an observation as "one measure of one dependent variable on one unit."

19. Stephen Van Evera (1997: 61–63) refers to this as "congruence procedure type 2."

Chapter 1

Realism and Liberalism on the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Why do nations choose to build nuclear weapons?[1] The conventional answer to this question in international relations is the security model: nations will seek to develop nuclear weapons when they face a significant military threat to their security that cannot be met by alternative means (Sagan 1996/97; Thayer 1995; Frankel 1993; Betts 1993; Gompert, Watman, and Wilkening 1995). Such a security-based need for nuclear weapons has been strongly supported by realist tradition in international relations. According to realism, states live in an anarchical international system and, therefore, must rely on self-help to protect their sovereignty and national security (Waltz 1979; Keohane 1986). Any state that seeks to maintain its national security must balance against any rival state that develops nuclear weapons by gaining access to a nuclear deterrent. Then, why do weaker states seek to build nuclear weapons? States facing a military threat may choose between two balancing policies: internal or external (Morgenthau 1985; Waltz 1979; Morrow 1993). States may pursue a form of internal balancing by adopting the costly but self-sufficient policy of developing their own nuclear weapons, or they may pursue a form of external balancing by entering into an alliance with a nuclear power, relying on the ally's guarantee of security in terms of extended deterrence.[2] For weak states, acquiring a nuclear ally is often the only option available because developing their own nuclear weapons is very costly and takes a long time, but they inevitably face the problem of the credibility of extended deterrence by the ally (Sagan 1996/97: 57).

This is evident in the case of North Korea after the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, North Korea had sought to balance U.S. nuclear threats on the Korean peninsula by allying itself with the Soviet Union and China. It began to pursue its independent nuclear weapons program after the end of the Cold War, largely because the Soviet and Chinese nuclear guarantees

could not be trusted any longer.[3] In this sense, most scholars of the North Korean nuclear crisis have focused on the conflict of interest between Pyongyang's nuclear motivation and policy based on security concerns and the international community's efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation (Waltz 1995; Kang 1994/95, 1995; Mack 1991, 1993; Mazarr 1995a, 1995b; Hwang 2008, 2015).[4] Those works are mostly based on realist assumptions in that, as Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik (1999: 13–16) have noted, they assume the existence of a conflict of goals and preferences between North Korea and the international community.

However, other scholars have argued that realist explanations have not quite succeeded in explaining Pyongyang's nuclear negotiating behavior, although they might be able to explain the initial motivation for its nuclear program (Sigal 1998). Based on liberal tradition in international relations, these critics have contended that it is necessary to recognize Pyongyang's conciliatory nature and negotiating strategy after the Cold War. Unlike realists, they do not exclude the possibility that Pyongyang and the international community may share the same goals and concerns and wish to resolve the nuclear crisis through negotiations. Some of them have focused on Pyongyang's changing nature and cooperative behaviors (Harrison 1994, 2002; Oberdorfer 2001a, 2001b), while others have highlighted its reciprocal behaviors and motivation for negotiation based on tit-for-tat strategy (Sigal 1998; Cumings 1997, 2004; Newnham 2004).

On the other hand, some explanations focus on the domestic actors who encourage or discourage governments from pursuing nuclear weapons (Sagan 1996/97: 63). In the context of domestic politics, some scholars emphasize the need to examine North Korea's domestic dynamics during the nuclear crisis (Mansourov 1994a, 1994b; Park 1997; Snyder 1999, 2000; Harrison 1994, 2002; Park 1996, 2002). They argue that structural explanations have not succeeded in explaining Pyongyang's decision-making and negotiating behavior (Mansourov 1994a; Park 1997). These critics have contended that it is important to understand Pyongyang's domestic variables, which include its political structure, economy, decision-making process, leadership, history, and culture.

Explanation according to decision theory based on prospect theory, as in this book, emphasizes North Korean leaders' perception of the crisis and their response to it (Cha 2002, 2003). This approach holds that the course of events related to the North Korean nuclear issue has been strongly influenced by North Korean leaders' specific perception of the crisis and their decision-making process affected by the changing North Korean policy of the United States. This approach looks at the relationship between Pyongyang's strategic environment and decision-making after the Cold War and interprets Pyongyang's perception of and response to the changing situation of the nuclear crisis.

In the context of these three competing approaches to the analysis of nuclear proliferation, this book first presents diverse explanations of North Korea's nuclear policy, then assesses the relative strengths and weaknesses of those explanations, and finally raises the need for a new theoretical framework to explain Pyongyang's decisions, suggesting an alternative approach based on prospect theory in international relations.[5]

REALIST APPROACH

Kenneth Waltz made the following observation about North Korea's motivation for going nuclear after the Cold War: "Like earlier nuclear states, North Korea wants the military capability because it feels weak, isolated, and threatened" (Waltz 1995: 38). According to Waltz, the unfavorable balance of power on the Korean peninsula governs Pyongyang's mindset and behavior so strongly that it cannot but go nuclear. In fact, the realist approach captures North Korea's motivations for nuclear weapons very well. From Pyongyang's perspective, North Korea has been under a serious military disadvantage compared to South Korea. Even worse, North Korea's two Cold War allies, the Soviet Union and China, have become increasingly unreliable, while South Korea remains firmly allied with the United States, which provides a strong guarantee of security backed by nuclear weapons. Most scholars who study the North Korean nuclear issue do not disagree with this explanation for Pyongyang's initial motivation to develop its own nuclear weapons (Mack 1991, 1993; Bracken 1993; Kang 1994/95, 1995; Mazarr 1995a, 1995b; Mansourov 1995; Sigal 1998; Harrison 2002; Cha 2002; Cha and Kang 2003; Cumings 2004), and such realist thinking has dominated scholarly and policy discourses on this issue (Sigal 1998: 244–49). They share the idea that the conventional military balance has shifted rapidly in the South's favor and that the North's relationship with its allies has deteriorated dramatically. However, there have been a few differing opinions within the realist approach regarding Pyongyang's nuclear intention and policy. One group of scholars believe, like Waltz, that because North Korea is determined to go nuclear, it will eventually possess nuclear weapons, although it cannot use them for anything but deterrence (Mack 1991, 1993; Waltz 1995). Another group of scholars focuses on the North's expansionist ambition, arguing that Pyongyang wants to threaten the United States and South Korea with the use of nuclear weapons (Spector and Smith 1991; Bracken 1993; Downs 1999; Cha 2003). The third group of scholars criticizes these two groups and argues that North Korea's development of nuclear weapons can be prevented if Pyongyang's security dilemma is resolved (Kang 1994/95, 1995, 2003b, 2003d; Mazarr 1995a, 1995b; E. Kang 2003; Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004).

Determined to Seek Nuclear Deterrence

Waltz posits that North Korea is determined to go nuclear and that no country is able to prevent it from doing so:

> The United States opposes North Korea's presumed quest for nuclear military capability, yet in the past half-century, no country has been able to prevent other countries from going nuclear if they were determined to do it. . . . A country that wants to build nuclear weapons and not be caught doing it, will disguise its efforts and hide its bombs. (Waltz 1995: 37–38)

In this view, although North Korea cannot use nuclear weapons except for deterrence because any war on the Korean peninsula would put North Korea at severe risk of the downfall of its regime, it will not sacrifice its nuclear program for any reason and will eventually possess the bombs: the more vulnerable North Korea feels, the more strenuously it will pursue a nuclear program.

Like Waltz, Andrew Mack (1991, 1993) argued that from Pyongyang's perspective, the reasons for not going nuclear are outweighed by the perception of a growing strategic need for nuclear weapons. With the military balance shifting dramatically in the South's favor and the alliance relations worsening quickly, it is not surprising that North Korea is determined to acquire nuclear capability because nuclear weapons offer Pyongyang a strategic equalizer on the Korean peninsula and powerfully curb any U.S. temptation to use nuclear weapons against the North (Mack 1993: 341–42; Mack 1991: 95). Also, given North Korea's difficult economic situation, nuclear weapons offer the only hope of achieving a self-reliant and effective defense (Mack 1993: 343). Optimists may expect that Pyongyang is willing to give up the nuclear option or that it has been simply using the nuclear issue to gain concessions from the United States and South Korea, but they never recognize how vital Pyongyang's perceived interests are in acquiring a nuclear deterrent. In this sense, Pyongyang's concession is clearly a stalling tactic.

As Waltz expects, North Korea may be determined to go nuclear because abandoning the nuclear option would make the North more vulnerable to South Korea's growing conventional military strength. The United States and South Korea do not want to undermine their military superiority on the peninsula and tend to play down Pyongyang's security concerns, so Seoul's conventional military superiority and the U.S. nuclear threat to Pyongyang are not likely to be taken lightly. Consequently, the two allies do not expect that they will be able to resolve Pyongyang's security concerns and prevent it from going nuclear. Furthermore, North Korea may be determined to continue its pursuit of nuclear weapons regardless of any security assurances. Given the seriousness of the North Korean nuclear crisis, Pyongyang may well feel that possession of nuclear weapons is a better guarantee against

U.S. nuclear strikes than any other verbal security guarantees that the United States and South Korea may offer (Mack 1993: 359).

In short, according to this approach, North Korea is likely to possess nuclear weapons eventually due to its siege mentality. In the meantime, North Korea is seeking to buy time to hide and complete its nuclear weapons program, so it appears to have a plan for hiding its nuclear capabilities. Thus, North Korea's nuclear weapons program may be delayed but cannot be stopped due to its worsening strategic environment. They would argue that Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile tests clearly support their argument that Pyongyang would never give up its nuclear weapons program.

Pursuing Expansionist Ambitions

Although North Korea may have begun its nuclear weapons program for the sake of deterrence due to its siege mentality, some scholars believe that the program is still threatening and may be used to further Pyongyang's expansionist ambitions (Spector and Smith 1991; Bracken 1993; Downs 1999; Cha 2003).[6] Because North Korea has been willing in the past to use violence to advance its expansionist goals, its nuclear program may be connected with an effort to pursue reunification by intensifying military pressure on the South (Spector and Smith 1991). Even if Pyongyang's main purpose in developing nuclear weapons is to guarantee the survival of the regime, the program may be useful in affording Pyongyang a more threatening military posture (Downs 1999).

Pyongyang's threatening behavior can be explained by the offensive realist theory in international relations (Hwang 2005). According to John J. Mearsheimer (1994/95, 2001) and Eric J. Labs (1997), in the international system, states always face the threat that other states may use force to conquer them, and such anarchy provides strong incentives for expansion. Because only power can guarantee states' survival under conditions of international anarchy, states are obliged to maximize their power relative to other states and pursue expansionist policies. Thus, a revisionist state like North Korea is assumed to be more inclined to exploit every opportunity to expand its relative power (Schweller 1994), and such a nation's goal is not only survival but ultimately to prevail in the system. In this sense, some scholars regard Pyongyang's nuclear program as potentially offensive and increasing the likelihood that North Korea will initiate a war. For Pyongyang, negotiating with the United States may be intended to ensure the survival of the regime, and it may not be able to initiate a potentially regime-terminating war as long as the U.S. and South Korean resolve for deterrence remains credible. However, this approach argues that Pyongyang may be able to consistently use the program to extend its power on the peninsula by pressing the United States and South Korea to disarm (Downs 1999: 280–81).

As for Pyongyang's offensive ambitions, many scholars emphasize its past aggressive behaviors (Spector and Smith 1991; Downs 1999; Cha 2002, 2003). They say that North Korea has sought to reunify the Korean peninsula through aggressive policies such as direct military attack, terrorist attacks, and political and social destabilization. Also, outside the peninsula, North Korea has been a major arms supplier to countries supporting terrorism, so the U.S. government has identified North Korea as a sponsor of international terrorism. Given such aggressive behaviors, acquiring nuclear weapons will definitely reinforce Pyongyang's inclination to invade the South and threaten world peace. Even if Pyongyang's nuclear capability were used only as a deterrent against the U.S. nuclear threat, it would inevitably increase the dangerousness of North Korea as a rogue state (Spector and Smith 1991: 8). These scholars also raise the issue of irrationality, recklessness, and unpredictability of the North Korean leadership.[7] They see North Korea as dangerous because the decisions and actions of its leaders have been irrational and unpredictable. Its opacity over the past years has raised many questions about this mysterious and isolated regime (Cha 2002: 46–50), so they believe that a nuclear-armed North Korea must be viewed as extremely dangerous with a character different from those of most states (Bracken 1993: 142). Thus, they perceive the possibility that Pyongyang will undertake limited but very aggressive acts of violence with the hope of leveraging the situation more to its advantage. This looks extremely dangerous, but it may also look rational when a nation has nothing to lose and nothing to negotiate with.[8] Thus, they are very skeptical of how much Pyongyang's intentions have really changed.

As offensive realists predict, Pyongyang's nuclear development may not be prevented due to its expansionist ambitions, and any concessions to Pyongyang appear to be useless. Because North Korea has linked its demand for U.S. nuclear assurances to other conditions, they believe that giving any concessions may merely open the door to new demands. Thus, there is nothing conciliatory in Pyongyang's behavior. Given the absence of changes in the military situation on the peninsula and the history of North Korea's revisionist inclinations over the past years, they conclude that North Korea would give up neither its expansionist ambition nor the nuclear weapons program. To these scholars, nuclear tests set Pyongyang back in the direction of brinkmanship and are fairly serious and strong evidence validating their skepticism of Pyongyang's intentions (Cha and Kang 2003: 148–53).

Resolving Security Concerns

Most realists are pessimistic about Pyongyang's nuclear policy. They do not believe that North Korea will agree to give up its nuclear weapons program

through negotiation. Insofar as realists could conceive of ending the North Korean nuclear program, they believe that only coercion would work because the threat of war makes states more amenable to compromise (Sigal 1998: 248). However, a group of Korean experts have argued, while drawing on a realist framework, that North Korea can be persuaded and/or paid to suspend its nuclear weapons program if the United States and South Korea guarantee its security and offer appropriate economic rewards (Kang 1994/1995, 1995, 2003b, 2003d; Mazarr 1995a, 1995b; E. Kang 2003).[9] Because North Korea may not develop nuclear weapons under certain circumstances, they believe that the North Korean nuclear issue is an "avoidable crisis" (Kang 2003b), which might be regarded as a security dilemma (Hwang 2003). U.S. negotiators also began negotiations on the assumption that Pyongyang might be "talked down" from its defiant nuclear posture (Wit, Poneman, and Galluci 2004: xiv–xv).

These scholars do not deny that North Korea wishes to develop nuclear weapons for its security. It is not surprising that any nation with intense security concerns like those of North Korea should wish to possess nuclear weapons. In the face of declining superpower support and the balance of power quickly changing to its disadvantage, one of the most highly effective ways of securing its sovereignty is clearly to develop nuclear weapons capability, especially if the other side has nuclear weapons (Kang 1995). Furthermore, the nuclear program became a useful tool of diplomacy and a flexible support system by drawing world attention to Pyongyang and establishing a firmer power basis for the regime (Mazarr 1995b: 100). In fact, North Korea's significance to the world with the bomb would be much greater than it is without the bomb. However, these scholars believe that the North Korean nuclear program can be prevented if Pyongyang's security concerns and economic difficulties are addressed. Due to the shifting balance of power, Pyongyang started to develop its nuclear weapons, but because it understands that nuclear weapons may not change the balance of power in its favor but rather invite additional threats to itself, Pyongyang has been making diplomatic overtures to the West for the past three decades, seeking to improve relations with the international community. Pyongyang has been recently very active and interested in engaging the world and has adopted the reciprocal sequence of diplomatic relations, including a summit with the United States, although such efforts were interrupted later.

Theoretically, North Korea's security dilemma can be explained in terms of defensive realism (Jervis 1978, 1999; Glaser 1994/95; Van Evera 1998, 1999; Taliaferro 2000/01; Snyder 1991). As Robert Jervis (1978, 1999) has argued, there may be a security dilemma under anarchy in which the attempt by one state to increase its security has the effect of decreasing the security of others. Such a security dilemma may cause nations to worry about each

other's future intentions and relative power and may generate a spiral of mutual hostility. However, because states normally pursue security-seeking strategies for survival and are driven more by fear than by the desire to conquer, contrary to the expectations of offensive realists, defensive realists believe that states would be willing to settle for the status quo and that conflict is avoidable under most circumstances.

In this sense, North Korea's nuclear program may be suspended if its security dilemma is resolved. These scholars argue that North Korea has not been involved in any expansionist or aggressive behaviors since the late 1980s. If North Korea still had any aggressive ambitions, it could set off a few atomic bombs right away, but North Koreans have not done so because their goal is regime survival, not a military confrontation with the United States and South Korea (Kang 2003a: 320–21). This view implies that the nuclear weapons program is intended as a deterrent and a bargaining chip to ensure the survival of the regime. Thus, although North Korea is not the most reliable negotiating partner and may even cheat if it is allowed to, it is more likely to give up most, if not all, of its nuclear capabilities and engage the international community peacefully as long as its security concerns are addressed and it feels that the long-term military and economic benefit outweighs the short-term benefit of developing nuclear weapons (E. Kang 2003). This is why the United States and South Korea need to address Pyongyang's military and economic concerns quickly and decisively by offering many incentives, which is how the nuclear deals in 1994, 2005, and 2018 were achieved (Mazarr 1995a, 1995b). U.S. negotiators on the North Korean nuclear issue also saw that the 1994 Agreed Framework provided an opportunity for North Korea to break out of its security dilemma and save face (Wit, Poneman, and Galluci 2004: 390). To these scholars, even the nuclear tests do not necessarily prove that Pyongyang has an expansionist ambition or is determined to go nuclear, but implies merely that the North's threat perception went from bad to worse due to changing security environment on the Korean peninsula (Kang 2003a: 320–22; Cha and Kang 2003: 134–48).

Criticism

As noted, realist interpretation has attributed Pyongyang's motivation for the nuclear weapons program to its security concerns after the Cold War. However, the realist perspective does not appear to have quite succeeded in explaining Pyongyang's actual nuclear policy during the crisis. In fact, realist predictions regarding Pyongyang's nuclear behavior have not fit the actual course of events with respect to the North Korean nuclear issue. Waltz has contended that North Korea is determined to go nuclear and will not suspend its nuclear weapons program because its increasing insecurity should lead

the North to accelerate its nuclear weapons development. As many critics contend, however, Pyongyang's real nuclear policies have not appeared to support such an argument (Sigal 1998; Park 1997). Contrary to realist predictions, North Korea has often significantly sacrificed its nuclear weapons program in return for U.S. military and economic assurances. Those who argue Pyongyang's expansionist ambition for nuclear weapons have also been criticized because the North Korean leadership appears to have been more interested in securing its own regime than conquering the South due to the growing threats from the inside as well as from the outside. In fact, rather than demonstrating any expansionist ambition and accelerating the construction of nuclear arms, North Korea has often sought benefits from the international community and actually suspended its nuclear program.

As Waltz has argued, some may contend that North Korea has disguised its efforts to buy time to complete its nuclear weapons (Mack 1993). However, such a claim is questionable because North Korea has already lost much time and has delayed many nuclear processes that it would not have if it were really rushing to achieve its goal. Rather, the crisis appears to have accelerated while Pyongyang perceived the increasing threats from the outside. Furthermore, North Korea has made it clear that it wants to negotiate a new package deal like the Agreed Framework in 1994, the Six-Party talks in 2005 and the U.S.–North Korea summit in 2018.[10] On the other hand, some realist approaches contend that North Korea suspended its nuclear program because the United States and South Korea offered military and economic assurances to the North (Kang 2003a, 2003b; Mazarr 1995a, 1995b; E. Kang 2003). Many critics of realist explanations—especially liberals—also agree with this point, but they are still criticized for having overemphasized the importance of structural determinants such as the balance of power and its deterrence effect and have ignored other important variables that influence Pyongyang's nuclear policy.

LIBERAL APPROACHES

Realists posit that cooperation between nations with power asymmetries can often be achieved by imposition from the stronger nation (Waltz 1979), but liberals argue that North Korea's cooperation with the United States has not been realized in the way that realists predicted (Sigal 1998). They acknowledge the importance of the balance of power on the Korean peninsula, but they emphasize the North Korean regime's changing attitude toward cooperation and its negotiating strategy. They have contended that cooperation has become possible because of Pyongyang's need to change its long-sustained isolation and interact with the international community (Sigal

1998; Smithson 1999; Newnham 2004; Cumings 1997, 2004). Although not all of these scholars identify themselves as liberals, their perspectives can be characterized as liberal because they believe that mutually beneficial political exchange and cooperation can be achieved, as liberal scholars of international relations generally agree (Keohane 1984). These views differ from those of realists, who believe that there is generally no opportunity for mutually profitable compromise or negotiation (Legro and Andrew 1999: 16–18). For this reason, the liberals emphasize the possibility of Pyongyang's cooperative behavior with the international community rather than continued confrontation and rogue behavior.

Reciprocal Behavior

When North Korea began to negotiate with the United States in the early 1990s, the most readily apparent behavioral pattern identified by many scholars and diplomats was one of reciprocation (Sigal 1998, 2000, 2002; Newnham 2004; Cumings 1997, 2004). Some scholars have offered a new image of North Korea as a "shopkeeper" (Zartman and Michishita 1996; Y. Kim 2002). As opposed to the notorious image of a "warrior" during the Cold War, which was characterized as aggressive, intransigent, recalcitrant, and stubborn (Downs 1999), North Korea as a "shopkeeper" is characterized as practical, open-minded, and compromising.[11] In this new role, North Korea is expected to cooperate with the international community regarding the nuclear issue only if it can get assurances of security and economic benefits from the outside. While many scholars acknowledge Pyongyang's cooperative behavior, their perceptions vary as to its extent.

First of all, some scholars draw on the theory that economic incentives may be, in general, more effective and produce positive outcome than economic sanctions (Snyder 1997; Smithson 1999; Martin 2000; Newnham 2004). They explain that North Korea has positively responded to the economic incentives offered by the United States as seen in the 1994 Agreed Framework and the Six-Party talks in 2005. Because North Korea is now more open to the world and thus more economically and politically vulnerable to external influence, if economic incentives are offered, it is more likely to cooperate with the international community rather than persist in its own view. With such economic incentives, these scholars believe, North Korea is expected to negotiate a new deal even after the collapse of the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party talks, and the renewed North Korean nuclear crisis may be resolved peacefully again if the United States offers positive incentives.

Leon V. Sigal (1998, 2000, 2002) was more optimistic about Pyongyang's reciprocal strategy and ascribed the failure of cooperation to the

uncooperative attitude of the United States. Examining North Korean nuclear policy during the first nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, Sigal (1998, 2000) concluded that Pyongyang had adopted the tit-for-tat strategy as defined by liberal scholars in international relations (Robert Axelrod 1985).[12] On the basis of the tit-for-tat strategy, Pyongyang reciprocated when the United States cooperated, and it retaliated when the United States reneged. He argued that Pyongyang was willing to make a sacrifice by suspending its nuclear program but took such compromising steps only when the United States chose to reject coercive measures and offer diplomatic give-and-take. So, he concluded that the problem was that the United States had been neither cooperative nor responsive enough to address North Korea's military and economic concerns. Due to American unwillingness to negotiate with Pyongyang, cooperation was not possible and often slow to emerge.

Bruce Cumings (1997, 2004) also blamed the United States for the nuclear crisis. He held that Pyongyang's position was to use its nuclear program to establish a new relationship with the United States. Because Pyongyang's only card is the possibility that it possesses nuclear weapons, it has to use bluff and brinkmanship to get what it needed. However, the real nature of the North Korean nuclear issue lies in the fact that the survival of the North Korean regime is at stake because the United States has been threatening North Korea with nuclear weapons. In this sense, Cumings argued that North Korea's behavior was more justified in this nuclear crisis and that the real problem of this issue lay in the U.S. hardline policy toward North Korea. He said that if Pyongyang's real goal was to build nuclear weapons, it could simply justify its nuclear program as a deterrent against U.S. threats, but what Pyongyang has really done was a masterful diplomatic game to ensure its survival.

Pyongyang's Changed Nature

Selig S. Harrison (1994, 2002) and Don Oberdorfer (2001a, 2001b) were also positive in their views of Pyongyang's motivations and saw more active intention of change and cooperation than Americans believe. Harrison said that after the end of the Cold War, North Korea quickly changed its course of action and has been flexible in adapting to changing circumstances, clearly signaling to the international community that it would be willing to give up the nuclear weapons program if its political and economic security could be assured. Rather than choosing belligerently to go nuclear or responding passively to external incentives, he saw that North Korea has actively used its nuclear program as a bargaining chip in its effort to improve relations with former adversaries such as the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

Oberdorfer was also positive about the changed nature of the North Korean regime. After Kim Il Sung defused the confrontation by accepting a U.S. offer of a nuclear freeze and leaving the door open for further negotiation, Kim Jong Il sought to create favorable new conditions in order to alter the deadly situation on the Korean peninsula. Oberdorfer believed that given Pyongyang's active efforts toward peaceful engagement, carrots would work better than sticks in resolving the nuclear crisis so that Pyongyang could be bought off, if the price was right, because the North Korean leaders wished to negotiate with the United States.

In short, these liberal perspectives posit that North Korea wants to improve relations with the United States, so Pyongyang is ready to give up its nuclear weapons program in a diplomatic process of give-and-take. To the liberals, the three-decade nuclear crisis would also be seen as Pyongyang's effort to obtain benefits in exchange for nuclear concessions.

Criticism

Liberal explanations of the North Korean nuclear policy have emphasized Pyongyang's need for cooperation with the international community. Many scholars have sought to explain Pyongyang's reciprocal and cooperative behaviors in terms of the liberal theory in international relations that cooperation can be facilitated under anarchy. However, liberal approaches are still unsatisfactory because they have not succeeded in explaining Pyongyang's changing policies during the nuclear crisis. Many Korean experts have shown that Pyongyang has not really pursued a simple, tit-for-tat strategy but has rather responded to the United States on the basis of its peculiar internal logic (Snyder 1999; Downs 1999; Mansourov 1994a). North Korea has projected the image not only of a "shopkeeper" but also of a "warrior" during the nuclear crisis and has often switched its nuclear policy from one to the other (Zartman and Michishita 1996; Y. Kim 2002). It implies that Pyongyang has a unique decision-making process and does not depend on a simple, tit-for-tat strategy that considers only the changing policy of the United States. In other words, Pyongyang has been very skillful in combining different negotiation tactics and policy courses to meet its short-term and long-term needs. In this sense, the liberal approach is often criticized as having uncritically accepted Pyongyang's view regarding the nuclear issue (Pollack 2003: 44). Thus, it is necessary to look more closely at the situations in which North Korean leaders have been placed and how they have perceived and responded to the overall strategic environment. The arguments regarding Pyongyang's tit-for-tat strategy and changing behavior do not consider such specific decision-making processes.

EXPLANATIONS BY DOMESTIC DETERMINANTS

Those who emphasize North Korea's domestic politics contend that Pyongyang's nuclear policy has not been realized in the way that structural approaches predicted (Park 1997). They acknowledge the importance of external variables but still raise the need to consider other internal variables such as North Korea's domestic political stability, leadership, history, and culture (Mansourov 1994a; Park 1997; Snyder 1999, 2000; Harrison 1994, 2002; Park 1996, 2002). Such a focus on domestic politics implies that Pyongyang's nuclear policy is not only a response to changing U.S. foreign policy but also a reflection of the changing domestic situation.

Domestic Political Structure

According to Alexandre Y. Mansourov (1994a, 1994b) and Selig Harrison (2002), there had been policy debate in North Korea between hardliners and pragmatists inside the regime since the end of the Cold War.[13] Especially with regard to the nuclear issue, there emerged new strategic thinking by pragmatists at the Institute of Peace and Disarmament[14] and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Pragmatists in Pyongyang are said to have argued that the only way to avert an economic collapse is to turn to the United States, Japan, and South Korea for help because the negative economic impact of the nuclear weapons program became increasingly clear in the 1990s. Thus, they argued that the military aspect of the nuclear program should be put on hold if the international community would agree in return to engage North Korea diplomatically and economically. However, it is said that hardliners in the military have argued that the United States and South Korea were bent on destroying the regime so that the North would never get help from these adversaries. In this sense, changes in North Korean nuclear policy are understood in terms of the rise and fall of pragmatists in Pyongyang's domestic politics. In order to keep negotiating with the United States, these pragmatists need to keep their domestic opponents at bay, but such efforts often face continual attacks from hardliners due to the aggressive attitudes of the United States toward North Korea.

On the other hand, Kyung-ae Park (1997) assumed that the dominant goal of the North Korean leadership has been to stay in power so that the interest of the leadership elite—survival and maintenance of their power—better explains Pyongyang's nuclear behavior. She contended that the most important determinant of Pyongyang's behavior is the leaders' drive to ensure their political and physical survival. Because economic recovery and consolidation of power in a change of leadership are the most

important issues in Pyongyang's domestic policy, North Korean leaders often choose policies to ensure the survival of the regime at the expense of the interest of the nation. In this sense, Pyongyang's negotiated cooperation and confrontation with the United States regarding the nuclear issue are both understood as efforts by the North Korean leaders to consolidate domestic power.

History and Culture

Scott Snyder (1999, 2000) analyzed North Korean diplomatic negotiation styles and tactics in its broader cultural and historical context. His main question was how North Korea's policy choices are shaped by its unique experiences. Pyongyang's experience during the Cold War resulted in its choices of stubbornness, self-reliance, and a strong defense of sovereignty for its strategy and tactics in international negotiations, but the end of the Cold War has created a new strategic situation under which Pyongyang has no choice but to pursue negotiations in order to gain the resources necessary for regime survival. However, because Pyongyang's ideology of self-reliance remains unchanged, its substantive concessions or changes in a negotiation position will neither be acknowledged nor revealed to the public. This is how the North Korean regime saves face and why there is repeated cooperation and confrontation in Pyongyang's nuclear policy (Hwang 2009).

With regard to North Korea's unique political culture, Han S. Park (1996, 2002) focused on *Juche* (self-reliance). He argued that in order to analyze Pyongyang's foreign policy behavior, it is necessary to examine the belief system of its ruling elite. Because *Juche* calls for self-reliance in national defense and because the nuclear issue is directly related to the regime's survival and stability, *Juche* ideology has determined the course of Pyongyang's nuclear policy since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, Pyongyang has seen its possession of nuclear capability improve its bargaining power in the international community, so the nuclear issue has served to address its political and economic difficulties since the 1990s. Thus, Park claimed that Pyongyang would do anything to proceed with its development and production if the nuclear bomb is perceived to be necessary for self-defense. Conversely, if Pyongyang believes that self-defense is viable without nuclear weapons with the negotiated settlement, its willingness to compromise will increase greatly. In short, North Korea's nuclear policy will be determined by how North Koreans see *Juche* ideology implemented in the nuclear issue.

Criticism

Those who focus on Pyongyang's domestic politics may explain considerable vacillations in its behavior during the nuclear negotiations with the United States (Mansourov 1994a). By tracing the domestic rise and fall of pragmatists, they may explain Pyongyang's changing approaches to the nuclear issue. However, given the question of why the influence of those pragmatists may rise and fall, it is necessary to look more closely at Pyongyang's top leadership and its decision-making process. Because Pyongyang's top leadership finally decides which approach will be implemented, it is critical to examine how they perceive and respond to specific international and domestic situations.

EXPLANATION BY PROSPECT THEORY

In international relations, prospect theory has been developed to examine a nation's crisis behavior in terms of its leaders' perception and decision-making process. Prospect theory accounts for risky inclinations by states as their situations deteriorate. It explains that states do not make choices on the basis of profit and loss, contrary to the assumption of the expected utility theory, but rather they treat gains and losses differently. It implies that states over-value current possessions so that they are generally averse to losses and have a tendency to try to maintain the status quo. Due to such loss-averse tendencies, if the threat of losses were perceived to be certain in the absence of corrective action, states' incentive to undertake excessive risks in order to avoid those losses would be reinforced. In short, if a state perceives the status quo to be deteriorating, the state may be willing to take a riskier action in order to prevent further deterioration of the status quo (Levy 1994b). Several scholars in international relations have applied key concepts of prospect theory, such as framing, loss-aversion, and risk-taking attitudes, to foreign policy decision-making (Jervis 1989, 1991; Levy 1987; Maoz 1990; Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi 1992). Prospect theory was actively studied in international relations in the 1990s (Stein 1992; Levy 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Jervis 1994; McDermott 1998) and has been continuously developed theoretically (McDermott 2004a, 2004b, Kanner 2001, 2004; Taliaferro 2004a, 2004b; Jervis 2004). There have been efforts to apply the theory to specific cases of foreign policy decision-making in several cases of international crisis (Farnham 1994, 1997; McDermott 1994, 1998; McInerney 1994; Whyte and Levi 1994; Weyland 1996; Levi and Whyte 1997; Kanner 2001; Haas 2001; Taliaferro 2004a, 2004b).

In the North Korean case, Victor Cha (1999, 2002, 2003) applied prospect theory to Pyongyang's decision-making. Evaluating potential motivation for preventive war, he argued that the North Korean leadership might perceive some use of limited force as a rational choice despite the recognition that they have little chance of winning. The issue he raised was that if Pyongyang's leadership perceives that any situation is better than the current one and that doing something is better than doing nothing, they can rationally choose to fight even when there is little hope of victory (Cha 2002: 46–50). In other words, if North Korea perceives itself to be the potential target of a U.S. attack and frames its situation in the domain of losses, then the likelihood of its preemptive or preventive action is high. Because North Korea's decisional frame is a losing one and its time horizon is very short, Pyongyang's motivation for preventive actions is salient. In this sense, Cha contended that Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program has much to do with its preventive/preemptive war motivations. Because Pyongyang's end game has changed from prevailing on the peninsula during the Cold War to ensuring basic regime survival after the Cold War, such a concern may spur preemptive actions. According to this argument, the notion that North Korea's nuclear program was created solely for bargaining purposes does not take into account Pyongyang's strong motivation for developing nuclear weapons. The logical plan of action would not be to negotiate away its potential nuclear capabilities but to really acquire nuclear weapons and then confront the United States and South Korea from a stronger position. Thus, Cha believed that North Korea's continuous development of nuclear weapons appeared to be more than a bargaining ploy and represented a purposeful drive (Cha and Kang 2003: 148–53).

However, Cha's analysis was deductive and somewhat speculative about Pyongyang's policy and also saw Pyongyang's nuclear policy as static. While he accounted for the preemptive motivation, his analysis stopped short of explaining the leaders' decision-making processes that analysis by prospect theory should provide. In particular, he did not account for the evolution of North Korean leaders' opinions on the nuclear issue. Given that he perceived Pyongyang's behavior as more or less consistent over time, he did not succeed in explaining considerable vacillations in Pyongyang's nuclear behavior during the negotiations with the United States. Thus, we should be very careful in applying prospect theory to a weaker state like North Korea. As Cha himself acknowledged (Cha 2002: 58), relative risk assessments are not easy. Indeed, it is difficult to determine which of the two prospects—preventive war or continued decline—involves greater risks (Levy 1994b: 303). Because a weaker state in decline should run a much greater risk by initiating a preventive war than a stronger state, the weaker would be more likely to decide to preserve the status quo to avoid a worst-case scenario—the extinction of the

nation or the regime—than to lash out with military force. Prospect theory does not necessarily predict that a state will choose risk-acceptant behavior in the domain of losses because its decision may be reversed when the probable outcome seems too catastrophic (Levy 1994b: 139–40). For instance, if national leaders predict that war will lead to the collapse of their nation or regime, they must be less likely to go to war, even in the domain of losses. Thus, when the outcome of a risky choice is too catastrophic, the standard hypotheses of prospect theory may not be applied without additional considerations. In this vein, this study seeks to reinterpret Pyongyang's nuclear policy by combining prospect theory and domestic politics.

SUMMARY

Points of Agreement

Most works on Pyongyang's nuclear policy appear to agree on the subject of Pyongyang's motivation for developing nuclear weapons. They assert that the growing concerns about regime survival resulting from the increasing disadvantage of power relative to the South and deteriorating alliance relations after the Cold War motivated Pyongyang to start its own nuclear weapons program. To ensure its survival, the North Korean regime has sought to negotiate using its nuclear program as a bargaining tool, whether it is really willing to suspend it and cooperate with the international society or just trying to buy time to complete the bombs. However, such a motivation has not directly explained the course of events connected with the nuclear issue. Pyongyang's actual nuclear policy has been implemented in ways somewhat different from those described by the usual motivation-based explanations.

Points of Disagreement

The most important issue related to North Korea's nuclear policy is whether it wants to initiate a new style of engagement with the international community by suspending its nuclear program. While some hold that North Korea is so determined to go nuclear that there is little room to negotiate, others are more optimistic about a change in the behavior of the regime and prospects for a more cooperative policy. However, the problem here is that most explanations have a tendency to see only one face of Pyongyang's nuclear policy, either confrontation or engagement. What matters is that there appear to be some vacillations in its policy because Pyongyang has often intensified and defused the nuclear crisis, depending on its strategic needs. To explore such variations, it is necessary to look at Pyongyang's decision-making process because Pyongyang created its own nuclear policy based on its unique strategic

environment and domestic politics, and not simply as a tit-for-tat response to international incentives or threats. Some works have focused on the domestic decision-making process in North Korea, but they do not quite succeed in tracing the changes in the views of the top leadership on the nuclear issue.

Where Does This Book Go from Here?

As noted above, the present explanations of Pyongyang's nuclear policy have failed to explain why there have been some variations in that policy during the crisis. Given that the North Korean regime has long been characterized by paternalistic supervision by three leaders, Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un, and that all major decisions, including those having to do with nuclear policy, are made at the highest level of leadership, the importance of studying the top leaders' perceptions of the nuclear issue and their decision-making process cannot be overemphasized. For this reason, prospect theory facilitates analysis of the North Korean leaders' decision-making process and explains the vacillations of its nuclear policy, suggesting a useful framework to bridge a gap between the scholarly interpretation of Pyongyang's nuclear policy and its actual policy.

NOTES

1. Scott Sagan (1996/97) proposes three models of nuclear proliferation: the security model, the domestic politics model, and the norms model. Most literature on the North Korean nuclear issue has focused on the security model, although some deals with domestic determinants.

2. In the South Korean case during the Cold War, see Hwang (2006).

3. As a memorandum released by the North Korean Foreign Ministry shows, North Korea directly related its need for a nuclear weapons program to the Soviet Union's establishment of diplomatic relations with South Korea. See *KCNA*, September 19, 1990.

4. On the other hand, a certain group of scholars has emphasized that Pyongyang may also have expansionist ambitions connected with its nuclear program (Spector and Smith 1991 and Cha 2002).

5. Samuel S. Kim (1998: 3–31) explains that studies of North Korean foreign policy have been based on two competing theories of international relations: system-level theory and unit-level theory. The former means structural approaches such as realism and liberalism, and the latter emphasizes domestic political and societal factors. This study adds a third—decision theory—to these two approaches.

6. Sagan (1996/97: 57) also argues that North Korea, like Iraq, might be the best example of the offensive coercive threat motivation to compel changes in the status quo.

7. Irrationality and madness have been main themes used to explain Pyongyang's aggressive foreign policy, as Kang (2003a) and Smith (2000) observe.

8. In the same vein, U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice (2000) has written that the North Korean regime is malign and dangerous because it "has little to gain and everything to lose from engagement in the international economy."

9. Especially, David Kang (1995, 2003a) has identified himself as a realist. C. S. Eliot Kang (2003) uses mercantile realism to explain Pyongyang's cooperation.

10. The Six-Party talks aimed at dealing with the developing nuclear crisis after the revelation of Pyongyang's new covert nuclear program using highly enriched uranium. The Six-Party talks include the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia.

11. These two images were defined by Harold Nicolson (1964). The "shopkeeper" sees a middle ground between demands and can always make a deal, while the "warrior" sees concession as weakness and will make an agreement only on his own terms.

12. Robert Axelrod (1985) demonstrates experimentally that cooperation can emerge from conflict between distrustful adversaries if they adopt a tit-for-tat strategy. One side begins by cooperating and then reciprocates if the other side cooperates or retaliates if the other side reneges. Axelrod argues that cooperation is possible between the two adversaries, if they focus on the long-term benefits.

13. For example, such a debate occurred in a meeting of the ruling North Korean Workers' Party Central Committee on December 24, 1991 (Harrison 2002: 203–4).

14. According to Mansourov (1994a), Institute of Peace and Disarmament is the principal think tank in North Korea that formulates new foreign policy approaches and proposes new policy ideas. Researchers are educated abroad, have access to all the information about the external world, and are relatively free to discuss the North's foreign policy issues, especially nuclear issues.

Chapter 2

Theorizing the North Korean Nuclear Risk-Taking

Prospect Theory

This chapter draws on prospect theory in international relations and proposes a theoretical framework for explaining North Korea's nuclear policy. Before delineating decision-making in weaker states and its application to North Korea, it summarizes the basic tenets of prospect theory developed in the areas of psychology and economics.

PROSPECT THEORY AND DECISION-MAKING UNDER RISK

Prospect theory is a theory of decision-making under conditions of risk. The expected-utility theory has dominated the analysis of decision-making under risk but observed behaviors of most individuals' actual choices under risk have exhibited several effects that are inconsistent with the basic tenets of the expected-utility theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979).[1] Criticizing such inconsistency between theory and reality, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1979) formulated prospect theory as an alternative theory of decision under risk. According to Kahneman, Tversky, and other decision psychologists,[2] prospect theory has proposed some very important insights different from those of the expected-utility theory regarding how most individuals actually make decisions under conditions of risk, and their insights have been widely accepted in most fields of social science.[3]

Reference Dependence

First of all, while the expected-utility theory posits that people think in terms of their net assets, prospect theory finds that people tend to think in

terms of gains and losses. According to Kahneman and Tversky (1979: 277), the overall asset position matters in principle, but "the preference order of prospects is not greatly altered by small or even moderate variations in asset position." They found that people make their decisions in terms of changes in assets rather than net asset levels, in other words, gains and losses from a reference point rather than levels of wealth and welfare. The reference point is taken to be the status quo or one's current assets in most cases, but in some cases, "there are situations in which gains and losses are coded relative to an expectation or aspiration level that differs from the status quo" (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 286).

Risk-Taking Tendency: Risk-Aversion versus Risk-Acceptance

Second, Kahneman and Tversky found that when people make decisions based on this reference point, they do not respond to gains and losses in the same way. In their experiment (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 268), for example, given a choice between $3,000 for certain and an 80% chance of getting $4,000 and a 20% chance of getting nothing, 80% of respondents chose the certain $3,000, despite the lower expected value ($3,000 < $3,200). However, given a choice between a certain loss of $3,000 and an 80% chance of losing $4,000 and a 20% chance of losing nothing, 92% of respondents took the risky gamble of $4,000 or nothing, again despite the lower expected value (–$3000 > –$3200). In short, they found that people tend to be risk-averse with respect to gains and risk-acceptant with respect to losses. The preference between negative prospects is the mirror image of the preference between positive prospects, so the preference order is reversed at around 0, which is called the *reflection effect* (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 268), and this finding is inconsistent with the expected-utility theory.

Loss-Aversion

Third, Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1986, 1991) also found that people overvalue losses relative to comparable gains so that the pain of losses exceeds the pleasure from gains.[4] For example, the pain of losing $100 exceeds the pleasure of unexpectedly gaining $100. It means that people over-evaluate current possessions and show a tendency to be loss-averse and remain at the status quo, which is called the *endowment effect* (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1990, 1991; Thaler 1980: 43–47). Because of such loss-aversion and status quo bias, the reference dependence is critically important. People frame outcomes in terms of a reference point and differentiate losses from gains, so the identification of the reference point is critical in exploring problems of choice (Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 1986).

Summarizing these findings, (1) people think gains and losses from a reference point (reference dependence), (2) people do not respond to gains and losses in the same way (risk-aversion), and (3) people overvalue losses relative to comparable gains (endowment effect).

Shifts of Reference

Fourth, a change of reference point can alter the preference order for prospects even if the values and probabilities associated with outcomes remain the same. Because people accommodate to gains more quickly than to losses (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler 1990: 1342), which they call *instant endowment effect*, it is important to understand how they respond to a change in the status quo and encode it. In Kahneman and Tversky's example (1979: 286), if a person has already lost $2,000 and is now facing a choice between a sure gain of $1,000 and a 50/50 chance to win $2,000 or nothing, and if he has not yet adapted to his losses, he is likely to encode the problem as a choice between a certain loss of $1,000 and a 50% chance of losing $2,000 rather than as a choice between a certain gain of $1,000 and a 50% chance of winning $2,000. Thus, Kahneman and Tversky (1979: 286–87) found that a negative translation of a choice problem, rising from incomplete adaptation to recent losses, is likely to increase risk-acceptant tendency in some situations. This has a more significant consequence for strategic interaction (Levy 1994a: 13). If individual A has just made a gain at the expense of individual B, B's attempt to recover his losses from the old status quo will be perceived as a potential loss by A from the new status quo, so both will be in the domain of losses and become risk-acceptant. As a result, even after a series of losses, people may not adjust to the new situation but rather continue to frame around the old reference point. Then, they will perceive any chance of improving their position to the point that still falls short of the original reference point as a loss, and they will engage in risky behavior to eliminate those losses and return to the original reference point (Levy 2000: 197–98).

Probability Weighting Function and the Certainty Effect

Fifth, Kahneman and Tversky (1979: 265) found that people overweigh outcomes that are considered certain relative to outcomes that are merely probable, which is called the *certainty effect*.[5] It means that people evaluate the complete elimination of risk and the mere reduction of risk in a different way. In other words, changes in probabilities near 0 and 1 have a greater impact on preferences than comparable changes in the middle of the probability range (Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Quattrone and Tversky 1988). The most dramatic example of this effect is provided by the oft-cited hypothetical game

of Russian roulette (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 283). If you are given the opportunity to purchase the removal of one bullet from the loaded gun, would you pay as much to reduce the number of bullets from four to three as you would to reduce the number of bullets from one to zero? Of course, you would pay much more money to remove the last bullet than the fourth bullet, even though each removal reduces risk by the same percentage—one-sixth. This effect implies that the risk-taking tendency predicted by the standard prospect theory may not occur in extremely improbable or almost certain events. For instance, a risk-acceptant attitude in the domain of losses may not occur in cases where the probability of the outcome is very small or where the outcome is too catastrophic (Tversky and Kahneman 1986: 258). Because people recognize that the negative value of a negative gamble is increased in such a situation, they are likely to show risk-aversion even in the domain of losses, and this is why people buy insurance policies to compensate for the possibility of rare catastrophes (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 285–86).

Framing and Evaluation

Prospect theory distinguishes two phases in the choice process: an early phase of framing (or editing) and a subsequent phase of evaluation (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 274–77). The framing phase consists of a preliminary analysis of offered prospects, and the decision-maker identifies a reference point, available options, possible outcomes, and the value and probability of each of these outcomes. In the subsequent evaluation phase, the decision-maker evaluates the prospect of each option and chooses the option of the highest prospect. To this end, the decision-maker combines the values of possible outcomes—as reflected in an S-shaped value function—with their weighted probabilities—as reflected in the probability weighting function—and then maximizes prospective utility (Levy 2000: 198–99). As noted above, the identification of the reference point in the framing phase is particularly important because the decision-maker's definition of the reference point can have a critical effect on the choice he makes. Framing of the reference point makes it possible to understand in which domain the decision-maker is situated (gain or loss), and a change in the reference point can result in a change in preferences—possibly preference reversal—even if the values and probabilities associated with outcomes remain the same (Tversky and Kahneman 1986).

PROSPECT THEORY, WEAKER STATES, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Drawing on these main findings of prospect theory, this book now turns to the foreign policy decision-making of weaker states under conditions of risk

in order to apply prospect theory to the North Korean case. Prospect theory itself is a theory neither of foreign policy nor of international relations, so it generates substantive predictions about neither international outcomes nor a nation's foreign policy behavior. Thus, it is necessary to specify how the individual-level patterns of this decision theory can be integrated into a theory of foreign policy and strategic interaction in international relations (Levy 1997a: 106–7). As William A. Boettcher III (1995, 2004) and Kowert and Hermann (1997) demonstrated, there are some limitations in the application of prospect theory to international relations. Most of the limitations are apparent when a laboratory-based theory of gambling decisions in psychology is translated into a real-world theory of foreign policy decision-making in international relations (Levy 1994b: 128–29),[6] and when the model of individual choice is translated into the group setting (Boettcher 1995: 577–79). McDermott (2004b: 304–7) also admitted that such limitations may restrict the utility of applying prospect theory to international relations. As Kahneman suggested, however, the principles of prospect theory should provide a heuristic benefit in the analysis of more complex decisions like those made in international relations, and the main concepts of prospect theory must be useful tools for understanding such decision-making (Kahneman and Tversky 2000: xi). McDermott (2004b: 290, 294) also argued that many of the insights provided by prospect theory relate to the impact of context and situation on individual choice and action, so that prospect theory places a critical emphasis on the role of the political environment in determining policy choices in international relations. Thus, the individual is not the only focus in prospect theory, although the theory starts at the individual level of analysis, and it emphasizes situational factors that influence individuals. The situation largely determines the leader's domain of action in international relations and provides the shifts in the strategic environment that lead to changes in risk-taking attitude and foreign policy. In this vein, this book integrates insights from prospect theory and other foreign policy theories, derives a theoretical framework of the foreign policy decision-making of weaker states, and applies it to the North Korean nuclear crisis.

FRAMING

Strategic Interaction

International relations are, by nature, strategic interactions among nations. A nation's foreign policy outcomes, such as war and international cooperation, cannot be understood apart from the choices the other nation makes and the interaction between those choices (Lake and Powell 1999: 3–4). This implies

that a nation's policy outcome is influenced as much by the other nation's choice as by its own choice (Levy 1994b: 129).

This means a lot when a nation frames issues and outcomes with regard to other nations. Consider the situation immediately after a nation has suffered some loss in the international arena. After suffering the loss, the nation may not easily renormalize its reference point but instead attempt to recover its loss and restore the original reference point, even at the risk of suffering a larger loss (Levy 2000: 203). Even when the nation accepts the loss and adjusts to the new status quo, it rarely, if ever, does so quickly. Thus, its reference point will be the earlier status quo rather than the new status quo, and the nation is more likely to seek to recoup its loss because the nation, looking back at the old status quo, is likely to perceive itself to be in the domain of losses (Jervis 2004: 173–74). However, because the other nation, which has just made some gains, will quickly renormalize its new reference point and adjust to the new status quo due to the *endowment effect,* it will attempt to maintain the new status quo. In this situation, each will be in the domain of losses and accept greater than normal risk in order to maintain its own version of the status quo, often contributing to a spiral of hostility and inadvertent confrontation (Stein 1992: 22).

The Persian Gulf War in 1991 provides a good example of such conflicting reference points in the international arena. After the seizure of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein appeared to quickly renormalize his reference point around his new gains and saw retreating from Kuwait as suffering a loss from the new status quo, harming his reputation at home and in the Arab world. However, the United States clearly saw the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait as a loss. As a result, Saddam adopted a risk-acceptant strategy in his confrontation with the United States to maintain the new status quo, while the United States accepted a war to restore the old status quo (Levy 2000: 206–7). Likewise, reference dependence in prospect theory shows why the strategic interaction among nations so often creates security dilemmas in international relations, as Jervis (1978) explained.

Domestic–International Interactions

Another important issue is the interaction between domestic politics and international relations. Domestic politics and international relations are by nature intertwined, but theories of international relations have often ignored the importance of domestic politics in world politics. This is largely due to the strong influence of structural realists, particularly Kenneth N. Waltz (1959, 1979), who argued that domestic politics does not make a significant difference in the basic behavior of nations in international relations. Realists do not deny that domestic politics influences foreign policy but contend that

the pressures of international competition weigh more heavily than internal political pressures. However, neither a purely domestic nor a purely international analysis can provide a complete picture of the field. Thus, many scholars have tried to link domestic politics to international politics and explain the relationship between the two. Prospect theory in international relations also emphasizes leaders' perception of domestic politics in foreign policy options (Levy 1994b; Taliaferro 2004b; McDermott 2004b).

To develop a model of domestic–international interactions in weaker nations, this book posits that domestic politics is an important part of the explanation for a state's foreign policy (Putnam 1988; Fearon 1998) and analyzes how the domestic politics of weaker nations become entangled with their foreign policy in the perspective of prospect theory. It focuses mostly on the "second image" because it seeks to explain a weaker nation's foreign policy decision-making, while in interpreting perceptions of leaders, it also deals with the "second image reversed" by exploring the impact of international relations on domestic situations. In most studies that explore how international politics and domestic politics interact, scholars explain the relations in two opposite ways. One is the "second image" that Waltz (1959) explained, and the other is the "second image reversed" that Gourevitch (1978) emphasized. The "second image" refers to the international effects of domestic events, and the "second image reversed" to the domestic effects of international events.

In other words, at the domestic level, leaders of weaker states reflect the domestic situation in their foreign policy decision-making. They choose foreign policies that serve their domestic interests and avoid policies that might destabilize their regime. At the international level, leaders seek to maximize the positive effects of the international situation on domestic politics and minimize the negative consequences of foreign developments. Leaders of weaker nations ignore neither of these games and make every effort to reconcile the pressures of the two levels simultaneously. This book explains the domestic–international interactions in prospect theory further and applies it to the North Korean case.

Weaker States

The meaning of prospect theory is significant in the case of a weaker state like North Korea.[7] Although weaker states may be less likely to adopt risky policies due to their power constraints, many works have demonstrated that weaker states do not differ very much from great powers in their foreign policy behaviors. Despite the unfavorable balance of power, weaker states have fought their stronger opponents and even won many wars (Paul 1994). In most cases, weaker states, like great powers, have shown the tendency to

balance against their aggressors rather than bandwagon (Labs 1992). The logic of preventive war—risk-acceptant policy due to the loss-aversion in terms of prospect theory—has also been applied to weaker states that perceive the status quo as deteriorating (Levy 1987: 89).

As McDermott (2004b: 294) clearly noted, the idea of prospect theory in international relations is that a leader in a good situation is more likely to be cautious in his choice, while a leader in a bad situation is more likely to make risky choices to recover his losses. A risk-taking attitude is a function of a situation where the situation determines the leader's domain of action, and the leader chooses a reference point related mostly to the situation they face (Stein 1992: 18). Thus, loss-aversion and risk-taking attitudes are important concepts used to analyze a weaker state's behavior, because in most cases a weaker state's place in the international environment is given by the international system or great powers, so a weaker state behaves under conditions of greater risk than others.

Dynamic Change in Framing

One of the most serious problems in theories of international relations is that they have difficulty explaining change. Although preferences and actions of nations often change in the real world, most theories, including realism, have much difficulty in accounting for change over time. This is not the case in prospect theory, where a decision-maker's risk-taking attitude is assumed to shift in response to changes in the environment. Because a decision-maker's risk-taking attitude is a function of the situation in prospect theory, his risk-taking attitude is expected to shift in response to a change in the situation. McDermott (2004b: 292) argued that as the domain shifts from one of gains to one of losses, a decision-maker's risk-taking attitude is also likely to shift from risk-aversion to risk-acceptance. Thus, a decision-maker who perceives a worse situation than before is more likely to choose a risky policy to improve his position and return to the original status quo, while a decision-maker who perceives a better situation is less likely to choose a risky policy (Kanner 2001: 121–22). As a result, a change in perception of a situation will make the decision-maker reframe the outcome and lead to a different course of action.

Changes in reference points in interaction among nations are also important because nations are very slow to adjust to the new status quo after suffering losses but very quick to adjust after making gains. As noted above, if state A has just made a gain from state B and quickly reframed its reference point around the new status quo while state B does not accept its losses, each will be in the domain of losses and be likely to take risks to maintain its own status quo. In this sense, a shift in reference point can induce not only a change in

policy but also a reversal of preference by making a decision-maker choose a policy that he would not choose if he could maintain the original reference point (Taliaferro 2004b: 31). This issue is significant when we consider a decision-maker's loss-aversion. Because a decision-maker is generally averse to loss, whether an outcome is treated as gain or loss has a significant impact on the choice he makes. When even an identical outcome is reframed as a loss rather than a gain, the decision-maker may reverse his preference and make a different choice (Tversky and Kahneman 1981).

Such changes in the environment leading to changes in policy have been widely discussed in international relations. In the case of the Clinton administration's intervention in the Bosnian war, for example, the administration was risk-averse in the domain of gains and decided not to intervene militarily in Bosnia at the beginning, but as the war continued and U.S. policy was criticized as a failure, the administration perceived a shift of position to the domain of losses, changed its Bosnian policy, and intervened in the war in 1995 (Kanner 2001: 125–66). In another example, George H. W. Bush took an initial risk in launching military action against Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf War in 1991 after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, but once American forces had repelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Bush's risk attitude shifted from a more risk-acceptant stance to a more risk-averse one, and he decided not to invade Iraq (McDermott and Kugler 2001).

EVALUATION: CHOOSING A FOREIGN POLICY OPTION

Loss-Aversion and Status Quo Bias in the International Domain

First of all, it is significant to understand how the leaders of a weaker state perceive their reference point and domain of action when they make decisions during a crisis. Prospect theory explains that people do not consider gains and losses in the same way but overvalue current possessions and have a tendency to want to maintain the status quo. The implication of such loss-aversion in international relations is that leaders of states are also likely to have a status quo bias (Jervis 1989: 29–35).[8] In fact, states make greater efforts to preserve the status quo when threatened with loss than to improve their positions by comparable amounts (Levy 1994b; Jervis 1994). For example, states are sometimes willing to fight to defend the same territory that they would not have been willing to fight to acquire in the first place.[9] During the Cold War, while each side generally respected the other's sphere and did not pursue a serious rollback policy beyond the established sphere in the face of significant risk, they adopted very obdurate and determined

policies when protecting what they considered to be their established spheres, as the United States during the Cuban missile crisis and the Vietnam War (Jervis 2004: 168).

Due to such status quo bias, the disadvantage of giving up the status quo is over-weighted, so states are more likely to be loss-averse in the international arena. As a result, if a loss is perceived to be certain in the absence of corrective action, a loss-averse attitude reinforces the incentive to accept excessive risks in order to avoid that loss. Thus, such a loss-averse and risk-acceptant attitude can contribute to the instability and escalation of conflict in international relations and inhibit agreements that would otherwise seem rational.[10] In other words, if the leaders of a state perceive the state's status quo to be deteriorating in the international arena, they will be more willing to take a risky foreign policy option in an attempt to maintain the status quo. In this sense, deterrence may work against a state that identifies gains but is far less likely to work against a state that identifies certain losses from the status quo (Stein 1992: 20–22).

This point is also consistent with the logic of preventive war (Levy 1994b: 138–39). Preventive war occurs when a state suffers increasing inferiority in capabilities compared with the opponent over time (Van Evera 1999; Lebow 1984). Thus, preventive war is driven by closing windows of opportunity or expanding windows of vulnerability brought on by relative power shifts (Organski and Kugler 1980; Kugler and Lemke 1996, 2000; Gilpin 1981). Facing such a power shift, both stronger and weaker states will attempt to defend the status quo, although this logic has been applied mostly to great powers. However, the logic of preventive war is often adopted by weaker states if they are dissatisfied with their situations and that the status quo is likely to deteriorate even further (Levy 1987: 89). Even if weaker states are less likely to win a war, the probability and costs of defeat in a later war are often much greater, and the expected utility of fighting now may exceed the expected utility of delay. Because the time horizon of a weaker state is very short in this losing situation, the state may become risk-acceptant and choose a preventive war, believing that any situation is better than the current one. Rationalist explanations also agree with the logic that states are likely to find preventive war inevitable under such conditions because a future war with a stronger opponent may be more costly (Bueno de Mesquita, 1981: 80–81; Fearon 1995: 404–8).

For example, although Japan was much weaker than the United States, it attacked Pearl Harbor and initiated the Pacific War. Japan attacked not because the Japanese leaders had much confidence in winning the war[11] but because they saw that the only alternative to war was to be controlled by an American-dominated international system and to surrender much of their position in Southeast Asia and China, without which Japan could not sustain

its economy and war machine (Van Evera 1999: 89–94; Taliaferro 2004b: 94–131).

In short, prospect theory in international relations posits that when a weaker state has recently experienced a loss or perceives a certain loss in the near future, it frames its external situation as the domain of losses compared with the status quo and is more likely to take a risky foreign policy in order to restore the status quo, as Table 2.1 summarizes. Thus, a weaker state may risk a preventive war against a stronger opponent when it sees the status quo deteriorating. Even if it does not initiate a war, it may still adopt a risky foreign policy and escalate the crisis in an attempt to avoid loss.

Thus, in the case of the North Korean nuclear crisis, if North Korea experienced certain losses, it was more likely to become risk-acceptant and adopt a riskier foreign policy.

> *Proposition 1: If North Korean leaders perceive North Korea's status quo to be deteriorating, they frame their external situation in the domain of losses and are more likely to become risk-acceptant and choose a riskier nuclear policy in an attempt to restore the status quo.*

The counter-proposition can also be formed, stating that if North Korean leaders perceive North Korea's status quo to be improving, they frame their external situation in the domain of gains and are more likely to become risk-averse and take a less risky foreign policy option in an attempt to avoid losing what they have gained. In the case of a weaker state, however, it is necessary to examine which of the two prospects—an attempt to restore the status quo (e.g., preventive war) or a continued decline—involves a greater risk (Levy 1994b: 139). Because a weaker state runs a much greater risk in attempting to return to the status quo than a stronger state, it may be more cautious and try only to avoid the worst possibility, that is, the collapse of the state or a regime change as a result of preventive war. This is because the preference reversal may occur when a catastrophic outcome is predicted, as will be explained below.

Catastrophic Outcome and Preference Reversal

Even if a weaker state is inclined to become risk-acceptant in the domain of losses and adopts a risky foreign policy to restore the status quo, it does

Table 2.1 Status quo Bias and Risk-Taking

Deteriorating situation	→	Status quo bias/ loss-aversion	→	Risk-acceptant attitude	→	Seeking to restore the status quo

Source: Created by author.

not always appear to do so. As noted above, people have a tendency to differentiate the complete elimination of risk from the reduction of risk, even if the change in expected utility is the same (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Quattrone and Tversky 1988; McDermott 2004a: 152). This implies that people will pay far more to reduce the risk of a catastrophic loss, as clearly seen in the previous Russian roulette analogy. As a result, a decision-maker's risk-acceptant attitude in the domain of losses may not occur in cases where the result of the decision is perceived to be very disastrous. In such extreme situations, people recognize the increased negative value of negative gambles and show more risk-averse behavior even in the domain of losses, so preference reversal occurs.[12]

This means a lot in international relations, where situations of catastrophic outcomes are fairly common, particularly in situations involving decisions of war and peace.[13] It must be true that state leaders would be less likely to risk a nuclear war or an all-out war that might lead to the state's collapse (Jervis 1989: 171; Levy 1994b: 139–40).[14] In the Cuban missile crisis, for example, Khrushchev chose to suffer a certain and immediate loss by withdrawing Soviet missiles from Cuba rather than run the risk of a catastrophic outcome—nuclear war. President Kennedy also chose to suffer a certain political loss by agreeing publicly to withdraw the Jupiter missiles from Turkey rather than risk nuclear war (Stein 1992: 22–23).

This issue is more apparent to leaders of a weaker state who face a greater probability of suffering the collapse of the state or a regime change after a war. Thus, in the domain of extreme losses, a weaker state would become risk-averse as opposed to the normal risk-acceptant attitude in the domain of losses. However, if leaders of a weaker state believe that the policy option to restore the original status quo does not result in a disaster, they would be more likely to be risk-acceptant and adopt a risky foreign policy in the domain of losses, as noted above. For example, if leaders of a weaker state in a deteriorating status quo believe that a war will not be total but can remain limited or that conflicts will be nonmilitary and so not potentially catastrophic, they would feel relatively comfortable in choosing such a foreign policy to improve their situation.

In this sense, prospect theory can explain why a weaker state often initiates a limited war against a stronger opponent (Stein 1992: 21; Paul 1994).[15] A limited war is, by definition, a war that is confined to a local geographical area and directed against selected military targets with restricted objectives (Osgood 1957). To a weaker state, a limited war implies that it does not have to be concerned about the collapse of the state even if it loses the war. In this type of situation, leaders of a weaker state may often believe that the expected benefit of fighting may be greater than that of not fighting because they may achieve some military and political aims from the war. A limited war also

means that stronger opponents do not fight the war with all their military and economic resources, which can encourage leaders of a weaker state to believe that they may have some good chance of military and political victory. Due to such limitations of stronger opponents, weaker states may assume that they can limit the area and the extent of war to a specific point where they can have a relative advantage and bear the costs of a counter-attack, so they may expect that a diplomatic settlement can be reached, pursuing the strategy of *fait accompli* (George 1991: 382–83).

In summary, when national leaders of a weaker state fear certain and immediate losses from a continuous deterioration of the status quo and do not perceive the outcome of the crisis escalation to be a certain disaster, then they may be inclined to prefer the risk of escalating the crisis that is probable to the risk of continuous deterioration that is certain. However, if they identify certain catastrophic losses from confrontation, they will be more likely to become risk-averse and seek to accommodate the enemy in order to avoid a certain worst-case scenario (*certainty effect*). Thus, despite the status quo bias, prospect theory does not necessarily predict that states become risk-acceptant in the domain of losses to return to the original status quo because a preference reversal may occur when the outcome of the choice is too catastrophic (Levy 1994b: 139–40).

In this sense, Victor Cha (2002) argued that North Korean leaders may find a limited war by preemptive/preventive strikes very useful if they see the status quo as deteriorating because a limited war may help change the North's status quo. However, it is very uncertain what a limited war on the Korean peninsula would be like and what North Korean leaders expect the outcome of military confrontation to be. As will be seen later in the studies of different periods in the North Korean nuclear crisis, military confrontation on the Korean peninsula has a high probability of escalation into a full-scale war, and the North Korean leaders also clearly understand this. So, as prospect theory predicts, if a crisis grows extremely serious and North Korean leaders see some possibility of military confrontation with the United States and South Korea, they will be more likely to become risk-averse rather than risk-acceptant and seek to resolve the crisis even if they are in the domain of losses because the risk is too great.

Proposition 2: If North Korean leaders perceive military confrontation to be imminent, they will be more likely to be risk-averse in the domain of extreme losses and pursue a less risky nuclear policy to avoid the certain catastrophic outcome of war.

Domestic Loss-Aversion and International Risk-Taking

Leaders of a weaker state may also have a certain risk-taking attitude in the domestic political arena. Prospect theory in international relations posits that

gains and losses need not be defined exclusively in terms of a nation's international relations because leaders are also concerned about their domestic political positions (Levy 1994b: 121; Taliaferro 2004b: 36). According to McDermott (2004b: 295–96), leaders tend to have particular areas in which they spend more time and energy, and it is important to discern which areas leaders particularly focus on because their overall domains of action are likely to be influenced by those specific areas. In particular, if leaders are in deep domestic trouble, their domain of action is more likely to be determined by domestic political dynamics. This "second image" effect in prospect theory is such that a state's international behavior may be strongly influenced by the logic of domestic politics, possibly in terms of leaders' domestic gains and losses (Huth, Bennett, and Gelpi 1992: 498–501). In certain domestic situations, national leaders may be tempted to engage in some foreign policy action against external enemies in order to pacify their domestic enemies or distract attention from domestic problems. In this situation, leaders are in the domain of losses created by a deteriorating status quo in domestic politics and may become risk-acceptant externally in an attempt to restore the domestic status quo. For instance, McDermott (1994, 1998) showed that domestic insecurity in the United States increased the Carter administration's risk-acceptant attitude and contributed to the decision to attempt a hostage rescue mission in Iran in 1979.

Such externalization of domestic political pressures has been widely discussed in international relations. Domestic political issues may cause several types of international disputes. First of all, if the escalation of a dispute in the international arena reaches a certain level and backing down is too dangerous under domestic political pressure, national leaders may decide that the initiation of a war is a more rational choice than accepting domestic political risks (Fearon 1994: 586–87). Second, if a political regime lacks popular legitimacy and strong internal stability, the regime leaders may have incentives to externalize domestic hostility and pressures, expecting that the "rally-round-the-flag" effect will help improve domestic stability (Huth and Russett 1993: 66; Levy 2000: 208). Third, as some studies have noted (Maoz 1989; Walt 1992; Paul 1994), revolutionary regime changes may increase the chances of a state's engaging in external conflicts. On the other hand, there may be some cases in which national leaders are less likely to consider domestic political pressures. If a domestic regime is strong enough to control domestic challenges so that the leaders do not have to worry much about the domestic pressures, not to mention regime collapse, they are less likely than leaders of other nations to be influenced by domestic politics in their foreign policy options (Weeks 2014: 29–32). This may be the case more often in societies whose leaders do not have to consider reelection (McDermott 1998: 37).

In short, domestic situations may powerfully influence foreign policy decision-making. In some situations, leaders may opt for external war to ensure the survival of their regime even if chances for victory are very doubtful, as can be the case for weaker states (Table 2.2).

North Korean leaders may be less likely than others to consider domestic political pressures, because they exert a high degree of control, command a high degree of loyalty, and are not very concerned about domestic pressures. Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un have been remarkably insulated from punishment at the hands of the domestic audience. They could take gambles on developing nuclear weapons with less concern for the domestic aftermath. As McDermott (2004b: 295–96) noted, if domestic politics are going well, but foreign affairs are not, leaders' domains of action and decisions are more likely to be influenced by foreign affairs where the crisis takes place. However, if the domestic situation grows extremely worse and they begin to worry seriously that the regime will collapse from the inside, leaders may change their external risk-taking attitude and, thereby, foreign policy. Desperate people have nothing to lose, so they are more likely to take a much greater risk than would be expected for a chance to recoup past losses or gain new ground. This situation can be understood to be similar to the mindset of terrorists who resort to suicide bombing (McDermott 2004a: 150). On the other hand, the "second image reversed" effect may also work. If the international situation improves, leaders may use favorable relations with other countries by choosing a conciliatory foreign policy and seeking to stabilize the chaotic domestic situation. In this sense, whether the domestic regime is sustainable or not is very significant in understanding the impact of domestic politics on a weaker nation's risk-taking attitude and foreign policy decision-making, especially in the case of North Korea.

> *Proposition 3: If North Korean leaders perceive that the domestic situation is becoming extremely worse to the point of threatening the regime's survival, they are more likely to become externally risk-acceptant and choose a risky nuclear policy option to restore the domestic status quo.*

This proposition posits that if the North Korean regime's domestic control becomes unsustainable, the domestic situation will be more likely to have

Table 2.2 Domestic Loss Aversion and International Risk-Taking

Deteriorating situation in domestic politics	→	Status quo bias/loss-aversion	→	International risk-taking	→	Risky foreign policy to restore the domestic status quo

Source: Created by author.

Table 2.3 Pyongyang's Domain of Action and Foreign Policy Risk-Taking Attitudes

		International situation		
		Gains (or neutral)	*Losses*	*Extreme Losses*
Domestic situation	Sustainable	*A* (Risk-averse)	*B* (Risk-acceptant)	*C* (Risk-averse)
	Unsustainable	*D* (Risk-acceptant/ Risk-averse)	*E* (Highly risk-acceptant)	*F* (Highly risk-acceptant)

Source: Created by author.

a critical influence on leaders' foreign policy decision-making, and North Korean leaders will seek to externalize the domestic instability regardless of the international situation. Thus, the counter-proposition implies that while the regime's domestic control is still strong enough to manage domestic challenges, the North's international situation is more likely to determine leaders' risk-taking attitude and foreign policy.

SUMMARY

In applying prospect theory to foreign policy decision-making, it is of central importance in identifying a nation's reference point and domain of action, whether leaders of the nation make decisions in the domain of gain or loss. Particularly in the case of a weaker state, it is necessary to examine leaders' external and domestic domains of action, whether they perceive a potentially catastrophic outcome of their foreign policy or a serious threat from domestic instability.

Table 2.3 summarizes three propositions explained in this chapter and represents the possible risk-taking attitudes of North Korean leaders on the basis of their domestic and international domains of action. The international loss-aversion and the status quo bias in the domain of losses (Proposition 1) are represented in *B*, while the preference reversal brought about by the prospect of catastrophic outcome in the domain of extreme losses (Proposition 2) is represented in *C*. Finally, the external impact of domestic loss-aversion when domestic control is unsustainable (Proposition 3) is explained in *D, E*, and *F*. Table 2.3 demonstrates that North Korean leaders' risk-taking attitude is strongly influenced by domestic politics if domestic control is unsustainable, while it is determined more by international situations when domestic control is sustainable. It also suggests that if the North's domestic and international situations are both in the domain of losses, the risk-acceptant attitude grows much stronger.

NOTES

1. The inconsistency of the expected-utility theory between theory and reality has been discussed by several scholars of international relations (Levy 1997a, 1997b; McDermott 1998).

2. Most works by Kahneman, Tversky, and other decision psychologists about prospect theory, originally published earlier in diverse journals, have been reprinted in one volume (Kahneman and Tversky 2000).

3. Regarding prospect theory's widespread acceptance, Robert Jervis (2004: 166) explained that it is because when people first read about prospect theory, they immediately think "Yes, when I suffer even a minor setback, it really hurts and I can remember a number of occasions on which I have taken a foolish risk in an attempt to avoid or recover from a loss." For such contributions, Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002.

4. As often quoted, tennis player Jimmy Conners exclaimed, "I hate to lose more than I like to win" (Levy 1994a: 11). Football player John Elway also once remarked, "The fun of going to the Super Bowl in no way compares to the wrath you get for losing one," *New York Times*, January 2 1999, cited in Levy (2000: 219).

5. This effect is also true of uncertain but extremely likely outcomes. Kahneman and Tversky posit that people are likely to discard events of extremely low probability and treat events of extremely high probability as if they were certain, which is called the *pseudocertainty effect* (Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 282–83; Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Quattrone and Tversky 1988).

6. Especially in international relations there may be difficulty in operationalizing and testing the theory using case studies in the context of decision making (Boettcher 1995: 577–79). Kowert and Hermann (1997) also argued that when prospect theory is applied to international conflict, it is necessary to consider not only how leaders frame conflicts but also the character of the leaders themselves, that is, individual differences in risk taking. For a criticism on prospect theory by rational-choice approach, see Morrow (1997).

7. McDermott (1998: 10) notes that in applying prospect theory to decision-making in the international environment, a nation of the hegemonic status like the United States offers the perfect case because there is less constraint forced by the dynamics of the system itself. However, this book does not adhere to her argument. Rather, it posits that prospect theory has been very useful in explaining foreign policy behaviors of weaker states, for instance, in the cases of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 (Levi and Whyte 1997; Taliaferro 2004b), Argentine policy during the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas crisis (Levy and Vakili 1992), and Iraqi policy in the 1991 Persian Gulf War (Levy 2000: 206–7).

8. Levy (2000: 201) noted that the status quo bias of prospect theory is consistent with defensive realism (Jervis 1978, 1991; Posen 1984; Snyder 1991; Van Evera 1999; Taliaferro 2000/01), which argues that states maximize security by aiming to preserve the status quo in the international system. This point will be explained later in conclusion of this book.

9. For instance, Soviet leaders were willing to engage in the "use of decisive and perhaps risky action far more readily for defending as opposed to extending Soviet gains" (Ross 1984: 247, cited in Levy 2000: 201).

10. Most works on international cooperation focus on the distribution of gains from economic interdependence and security cooperation. The meaning of loss aversion in prospect theory is that international cooperation is more difficult because the issue often involves the distribution of losses rather than gains (Stein and Pauly 1992).

11. In fact, the Japanese leaders clearly recognized on the eve of the attack that the United States was much stronger than Japan. They estimated that the balance of capabilities favored the United States as much as eight or nine times (Paul 1994: 64).

12. It appears that most people possess a natural aversion to extreme options or situations (McDermott 2004a: 149).

13. Tversky and Kahneman (1991) and Stein (1992: 22–23) suggested that loss aversion reflects the importance of choice and appears to be more salient for safety than for money.

14. Waltz (1995: 37–40) also claimed that "nuclear war is so fearful that states take precautions to avoid any chance of preemptive or accidental war." In such an extreme case, the explanation by structural realism is similar to that by prospect theory.

15. For example, Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the Chinese intervention in the Korean War against the United States in 1950, the second Kashmir War by Pakistan against India in 1965, and the Argentine invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas in 1982.

Chapter 3

Kim Il Sung

From Confrontation to Engagement

This chapter and the next two focus on case studies that answer the questions raised in this book. Drawing on prospect theory in international relations, these case studies show how North Korea's initial nuclear policy was formed after the end of the Cold War and why it changed afterward. As noted before, North Korea's nuclear policy has been strongly influenced by its security concerns since the end of the Cold War (Kang 1995; Mazarr 1995a; Sigal 1998; Moltz and Mansourov 1999; Oberdorfer 2001a; Cha and Kang 2003). In order to understand the North's nuclear policy, this chapter focuses on the North's domestic and international situations during the Kim Il Sung era. As prospect theory posits, risk-averse decision-makers in the domain of losses maintain a belief set that the possible gains are less than the possible losses for any change from the status quo, while risk-acceptant decision-makers in the domain of gains believe the opposite. Thus, risk-averse decision-makers are more likely to maintain the status quo because of the fear of possible losses, while risk-acceptant decision-makers are more likely to seek to change it (Kanner 2001: 94–97). If prospect theory holds for the North Korean case, North Korean leaders should be risk-averse if facing potential gains and risk-acceptant if confronted with potential losses. Thus, the purpose here is to show how Pyongyang's situation was framed and reframed and how the situation and the change of situation affected the risk-taking attitude and then its nuclear policy. These three chapters will show how the North Korean leaders identified the reference point, the available options, the possible outcomes, and the value and probability of each of these outcomes.

In this chapter, the case study of Pyongyang's nuclear policy during the first nuclear crisis between 1989 and 1994 highlights the perceptions and policy changes of North Korean leaders, particularly Kim Il Sung. First of all, the post–Cold War circumstances that formed Pyongyang's initial frame of

reference are presented, and then Pyongyang's nuclear perception and policy that resulted from the situation. Finally, the situation change in June 1994 led to Pyongyang's new perception and policy.

FRAMING NORTH KOREA'S POST–COLD WAR DOMAIN OF ACTION

As Victor D. Cha (2002: 58) rightly stated, one of the most difficult problems in applying prospect theory to North Korea is the paucity of reliable data on the perceptions of the North Korean leaders.[1] Thus, in addition to the frame directly perceived by North Korean leaders, it would also be helpful to look at subsidiary indicators that are relatively reasonable and by which the leaders of any country would evaluate their current situation.[2] In order to help understand Pyongyang's reference point and domain of action, this chapter examines not only North Korean leaders' personal perceptions but also such subsidiary indicators as military, economic, and alliance situations that illustrate the changing balance of power on the Korean peninsula after the Cold War.

Pyongyang's Situation during the Cold War

Although many Korean experts have believed that North Korea was powerful enough to threaten the South, the North has been in continuous decline compared to the South even during the Cold War (Kang 2003a). In terms of economic development, North Korea was close to South Korea by the mid-1970s but then quickly fell behind.[3] It is clear that North Korea was never close to the South in absolute GDP, and the economic gap between them continued to widen after the end of the Cold War. According to one estimate (Hamm 1999: 131), the North's GDP in 1970 ($4.43 billion) was more than half that of the South ($8.11 billion), but by 1980 it was barely one-fourth ($16.68 billion) that of the South ($61.07 billion). This gap continued to grow in the 1980s, and at the end of the Cold War, the South Korean economy was 10–15 times greater. In the early 1990s, many doubted whether the North Korean economy could be sustained for very much longer.

In the area of military comparison, although North Korea hardly had the material capability to start a second Korean War, the balance of power on the Korean peninsula was roughly maintained until the 1970s. However, the military balance began to shift rapidly against the North in the 1980s. According to one data set,[4] North Korea had been in rough parity with South Korea until the mid-1970s in terms of military expenditure, but then quickly fell behind. At the end of the Cold War, the North's military expenditure was only half that of the South, $5.23 billion in the North compared to $10.62 billion in the

South in 1990. Due to its economic inferiority, North Korea could not catch up with South Korea's military spending, but instead focused on the size of the military and began to increase greatly the numbers of military personnel in the mid-1970s. By 1990, the North Korean troop strength had grown to almost three times its size in 1975, from 470 thousand to 1.2 million. North Korea's armed forces enjoyed numerical superiority at the end of the Cold War, but given the deteriorating economy, it is clear that the North's military training, equipment, and overall quality of combat readiness must have been growing steadily worse for a long time (Kang 2003a: 304–10). Conversely, the South Korean military was better equipped, better trained, and more versatile, with better logistics and support. North Korea still possessed more armed forces and hardware than the South in the 1990s, but the South's military must always have been more efficient because it was supported by a much stronger economy. Thus, given the obsolescence of most equipment, the actual capabilities of most North Korean units must be notably less than what raw numbers suggest (Masaki 1994/95; Beldecos and Heginbotham 1995; O'Hanlon 1998). One assessment suggests that the qualitative superiority may even double the South's combat effectiveness (Dupuy 1990). As David Kang (2003a: 303) noted, North Korea was a "moribund challenger" and South Korea was a "rising defender" throughout the Cold War. In short, the balance of power on the Korean peninsula has continuously moved against the North, and the power gap grew even wider after the end of the Cold War.

Pyongyang's Perception during the Cold War

Although the balance of power on the Korean peninsula was unfavorable to North Korea during the Cold War, the North Korean leaders did not appear to view the situation as dismal because it was not yet as desperate as it became in the 1990s (Mack 1991: 95; Cha 2002: 59). According to the East German transcripts of confidential discussions between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung, Kim himself did not see the North's position in the 1970s and 1980s as a losing one (Schäfer 2003/04: 33–35).[5] In 1977, when Kim met Honecker, he was extremely confident, despite some economic difficulties, in the superiority of his *Juche* ideology and in North Korea's security, mainly because of the domestic instability in the South arising from President Park Chung-hee's unpopular authoritarian rule and the North's military and economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and China.[6]

In the 1980s, Kim's confidence remained undiminished, although he was somewhat concerned about the South Korean–American joint military exercise, "Team Spirit."[7] He noted that "in South Korea people are now waging a good battle against the puppet regime and the US occupiers," that "the dictator is trembling," and that "there is no injection that can save a man who is already

dying." Thus, Kim concluded that "the situation is good" and emphasized that "we must show the South Koreans the superiority of socialism."[8] Kim was also optimistic about the Sino-Soviet relations and the support of those two governments for the North. Despite China's past dispute with the Soviet Union and incipient cooperation with the United States, Kim believed that "the Chinese have improved governmental relations with the Soviet Union" and that China "would never put herself on the side of the US against the Soviet Union," so that "all socialist nations should work toward creating trust between the Soviet Union and China." Especially to the relations with North Korea, Kim was sure that "both the Soviet Union and China are our comrades-in-arms."[9]

In fact, North Korea had obtained strong security guarantees from the two great power allies by the end of the 1980s, delicately maneuvering between the Soviet Union and China, neither of which wanted to push North Korea closer to the other. In early 1984, when China was rapidly improving relations with the United States, Kim traveled to Moscow and met Konstantin Chernenko, the new General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. Through his visit to Moscow, Kim expected to gain benefits from China as well as the Soviet Union. Chinese leaders stressed their backing for the North in their talks with American leaders, and Hu Yaobang visited North Korea just before Kim left for Moscow, promising continued support for the North.[10] On the other hand, North Korea received huge amounts of military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union, including not only coal and oil but also military hardware such as MiG-25 fighters, surface-to-air missiles, and surface-to-surface SCUD missiles.[11] During this visit, the Soviet leaders even promised to build nuclear power plants in the North.[12] Such generous assistance from the Soviet Union continued until the end of the 1980s. Even Mikhail Gorbachev supported North Korea militarily and economically in the mid-1980s, once writing that "North Korea was seen as a privileged ally, close to us through the socialist family group and the treaties of mutual friendship and protection. For this reason, we fulfilled virtually all of Pyongyang's wishes for weapons deliveries and economic help" (Oberdorfer 2001a: 154–60).[13] As seen from Kim's discussion with Honecker, such generous assistance of the Soviet Union and China in the 1980s reassured him of the two great power allies' security guarantee. In this situation, North Korean leaders did not perceive their domain of action to be a losing one.

Change of Situation and the Reference Point after the Cold War

North Korean leaders, especially Kim Il Sung, did not perceive themselves to be in the domain of losses during the Cold War owing to the strong security

guarantees of the two great power allies, although the North was in continuous decline relative to the South. After the end of the Cold War, however, the North's external situation shifted dramatically, "toughed by winds of change" (Oh 1990). By the early 1990s, Pyongyang apparently began to see its situation as a losing one with the end of the Cold War and the diplomatic and economic reformulations of the Soviet Union and China. In fact, North Korea experienced increasing political isolation in East Asia from the end of the 1980s. South Korea hosted the 1988 Olympic Games, and both the Soviet Union and China attended.[14] In September 1991, South Korea succeeded in becoming a member of the United Nations, although North Korea had objected to the South's separate seating for a long time, relying on Soviet and Chinese vetoes. In this vein, South Korea finally established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union on September 30, 1990, and also with China on August 24, 1992. These developments implied that North Korea had begun to lose the security guarantee of its two Cold War allies while South Korea continued to enjoy its strong U.S. security alliance.

The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union adjusted its foreign policy in the late 1980s. According to Anatoly Chernyayev, Gorbachev's national security assistant, the Soviet Union's Politburo decided, in a meeting on November 10, 1988, to improve the relations with South Korea. Because the fundamental reason for the Soviet policy change was economic,[15] the national interest took precedence over whatever impact the new policy might have on the Korean peninsula. Gorbachev once said that the Korean issue "should be approached in the context of our broad international interests, as well as our domestic interests" (Oberdorfer 2001a: 197–200). Regarding the Soviet policy change and recognition of the South, North Korea responded with great anger. When the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze went to Pyongyang in September 1990 to explain the policy change, Kim even refused to meet him, although persuading Kim was Shevardnadze's principal purpose for the trip. In the meeting with him, North Korea's Foreign Minister, Kim Yong-nam not only warned that the Soviet's diplomatic normalization with South Korea would embolden it to destroy North Korea, as in the East German case, but also implied that North Korea would no longer be bound by pledges not to create any weapons it desired, which clearly meant nuclear weapons.[16] Although Shevardnadze promised that the Soviet policy shift would not change the nature of Soviet relations with North Korea and that all Soviet obligations toward the North would remain unchanged, North Korean leaders could not trust his words any longer because he had already reversed his previous pledge that the Soviet Union would not establish diplomatic relations

with South Korea. In the state-run newspaper *Rodong Sinmun*, North Korea issued an aggressive commentary on the Soviet policy change, titled "Diplomatic Relations Bought and Sold with Dollars," claiming that "the Soviet leaders promised just a few years ago that the Soviet Union would never change its fundamental position on South Korea . . . but now that they throw away their solemn promises and establish diplomatic relations with South Korea, what else can we call it but *betrayal*?" (emphasis in original).[17] In this situation, it is not so difficult to imagine the sense of abandonment that North Korean leaders felt as a result of the Soviet policy change.

China

North Korea had no other nation to ask for help but China. Although China was much more cautious than the Soviet Union, it was also moving toward diplomatic normalization with South Korea. Like the Soviet Union, China also clearly recognized potential domestic and international gains to be made from an improvement of relations with South Korea, which could force the South to terminate its long-standing diplomatic relationship with Taiwan (Lee 1994; I. Kim 1998). Also, according to one Chinese estimate, Chinese trade with South Korea in 1990 was seven times as large as its trade with the North and was rapidly growing, raising the need for official relations.[18] Although China appeared to have moved slowly toward South Korea to avoid losing its influence over North Korea, its policy change became apparent in 1991. When Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng visited Pyongyang in May 1991, he is said to have officially informed Kim Il Sung of China's decision not to veto South Korea's entry into the United Nations (I. Kim 1998).[19] In August 1992, China finally established diplomatic relations with the South. North Korea did not officially respond to China's policy change as it had to the Soviet recognition of Seoul.[20] Kim Yong-nam even reportedly stated that Beijing's new relationship with Seoul was "nothing special . . . nothing that matters to us."[21] However, according to Hwang Jang-yup, a member of Pyongyang's inner circle at the time, North Korean leaders criticized China's improving relations with South Korea very bitterly and even discussed using the Taiwan issue to balance against China (Hwang 1999a: 252, 1999b: 67–68). As a result, Pyongyang's relations with China were not as good as they had been, although this was not publicly revealed.

North Korea's Economic Situation

Moscow and Beijing's policy changes put Pyongyang in very deep trouble, both political and economic. Moscow had been Pyongyang's most important

trading and security partner, providing Pyongyang with not only large amounts of oil and gas but also most of its weapons and weapons technology. Especially after Kim's visits to Moscow in 1984 and 1986, the Soviet Union had provided increasing quantities of industrial and military goods on highly concessional terms and was by 1988 shipping $1.9 billion in goods to North Korea while receiving less than $0.9 billion in return (Eberstadt, Rubin, and Tretyakova 1994). However, North Korea's economic performance turned downward after 1989 and continued in further recession after the end of the Cold War. According to one estimate (Sigal 1998: 22–23), oil imports from the Soviet Union dropped to less than one-tenth, from 440,000 tons in 1990 to 40,000 tons in 1991, and starting in 1991, the Soviet Union demanded hard currency for its exports to Pyongyang. This cutback forced North Korea to depend more on China, but China was not willing to compensate for the loss of Soviet aid and notified Pyongyang in May 1991, when Li Peng visited Pyongyang that it would change its basic trade policy with Pyongyang, soon to discontinue its own concessional terms and barter exchange and to demand hard currency (I. Kim 1998: 107; Oberdorfer 2001a: 243–44).

As a result, starting in 1990, North Korea's GDP began to contract (Hamm 1999: 131). It fell 7.5 percent in 1991 from $25.6 billion to $23.67 billion, 10.6% in 1992 to $21.15 billion, and again 11.1% in 1993 to $18.8 billion. North Korea's foreign trade also fell in 1991 by 38.1% from $4.17 billion to 2.58 billion.[22] With the already widening gap between the two Korea's economies, as noted above, the North Korean economy fell further and further behind after the Cold War. Even worse, such economic stagnation made its high level of military spending unsustainable, so the North's military spending also became stagnant in the early 1990s, compared to the South's rapid increase. Besides, North Korea could not continue to sustain the size of its armed forces, cutting 100,000 military personnel in 1993 and also drastically decreasing arms imports.[23] As a result, the balance of power between the two Koreas became even more unfavorable to the North in the 1990s.

Pyongyang's External Perception

North Korea was quickly placed in a very perilous situation militarily, economically, and politically in the early 1990s. What North Korean leaders perceived from this worsening situation was that they could no longer rely upon the Soviet and Chinese security guarantees and that they should begin to worry very seriously about the survival of their regime. Kim Il Sung spoke of Pyongyang's difficult situation very frankly when he talked with Chinese leaders. Only one week after Shevardnadze visited Pyongyang in September 1990, Kim suddenly traveled to China for unannounced meetings with Deng Xiaoping, the senior Chinese leader, and Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of

the Chinese Communist Party, and discussed his concerns for the future of socialist countries and especially North Korea.[24] In this meeting, Kim asked Deng, "How long will the red flag fly?" He asked Chinese leaders not to follow Moscow's recognition of Seoul, but China's relations with South Korea were already rapidly developing, and only one month after the meetings with Kim, Beijing agreed with Seoul to exchange trade offices equipped with quasi-diplomatic consular functions and established full diplomatic relations less than two years later.

As a result, North Korean leaders clearly acknowledged the change in the world and came to see their country as isolated and abandoned. In 1991, Kim said to William Taylor, an American expert on Korea, "The world is changing all around us" (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 5). Also, in his New Year's Address in 1992, Kim stated, "Last year imperialists and enemies concentrated on attacking our country, which is the last fortress of socialism . . . but we firmly defended our achievement of socialism, our people and party closely banded together."[25] In 1993 New Year's Address, Kim especially emphasized the regional threat to North Korea, saying that regional powers "threaten militarily and put economic pressure on us."[26] Kim Jong Il also stated, in early 1992, that "one-step concessions and retreat from socialist principles have resulted in ten and hundred step concessions and retreat, and finally invited the grave consequences of ruining the working class parties themselves."[27] In short, it is evident that North Korean leaders perceived themselves to be situated externally in the domain of losses after the end of the Cold War. As noted above, prospect theory predicts that North Korean leaders are less likely to accept the unfavorably changed international situation as a new status quo but are more likely to seek to restore the

Table 3.1 Framing North Korea's International Situation

	Cold War (1970s~1980s)	*Post–Cold War (early 1990s)*
Military balance	From balanced to unfavorable	Deteriorating
Economy	Slowly growing	Stagnant
Alliance situation	Strong security guarantee from the Soviet Union and China	Loss of two great power allies' security guarantee
Perception	Optimistic: "The situation is good; we must show the South Koreans the superiority of socialism"	Concerned: "How long will the red flag fly?"
Reference point	Balance of power on the peninsula and the unification of two Koreas under the North's regime	Balance of power on the peninsula and survival of the regime
Domain of action	Gain or neutral	Loss

Source: Created by author.

balance of power on the Korean peninsula in order to secure their regime's survival, as American intelligence has also understood.[28] Thus, it can be said that North Korea's reference point at the time was regime survival through the maintenance of the balance of power on the Korean peninsula.[29] In this losing situation, North Korean leaders are more likely to be risk-acceptant to return to their original reference point. A summary comparing North Korea's international situation during and after the Cold War is provided in Table 3.1

EVALUATING NORTH KOREA'S POLICY OPTIONS AFTER THE COLD WAR

In applying prospect theory to North Korea's nuclear policy, it is necessary to evaluate the options that might be considered by North Korean leaders in order to determine the perceived relative riskiness of each option. As McDermott (1994: 78) explains, assessments of risk can involve the calculation of the probability of success for a particular choice and the utility of each option.

Although there might be many policy considerations, according to scholars of international relations, there were three plausible policy options for North Korean leaders when they faced the growing security concerns after the end of the Cold War: internal balancing, external balancing, and bandwagoning. First of all, North Korea might choose between balancing and bandwagoning. As structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz (1979) and Stephen Walt (1987) argue, North Korea might be able to balance against the rising concerns for its security. In balancing against outside threats, North Korea could choose between internal and external balancing (Waltz 1979; Morrow 1993). On the other hand, according to some scholars (Schroeder 1994; Schweller 1994) who see bandwagoning as historically far more widespread than structural realists suggest, North Korea could bandwagon rather than balance. For North Korea, internal balancing would mean mostly developing its own independent nuclear weapons program in addition to the missile program and other conventional military forces, while external balancing would mean finding another ally that could replace the Soviet Union and China. Bandwagoning finally would mean that North Korea could reach out and improve relations with its main Cold War enemies, the United States, Japan, and South Korea. However, given that there was no other great power ally left on which North Korea could surely depend for its security, it can be said that Pyongyang's policy options were reduced to two: to go nuclear or to engage in diplomatic relations with its Cold War enemies, especially the United States. These two policy options are exactly what Copeland (2000: 37–42) explained as possible foreign policy options for a nation in decline: to accommodate or to adopt a hardline stance. For North Korea, to accommodate would be to

engage and improve relations with the United States, while a hardline stance would be to develop nuclear weapons and confront the United States. Regarding these two options, it is necessary to understand how risky North Korean leaders perceived those options to be and which policy they finally chose.

Relative Riskiness of Each Policy Option

As Jack Levy (1994b: 129) has observed, foreign policy choices that national leaders face "rarely involve one riskless and one risky option but rather two risky options, and which is riskier is often difficult to define conceptually or measure empirically." Thus, the relative riskiness and possible outcomes are not given conceptually but should be estimated subjectively in terms of the leaders' assessment. Both North Korea's policy options involve certain amounts of risk, and it is necessary to assess North Korean leaders' perception and assessment of the relative riskiness of each policy option.

Confronting the United States with a Nuclear Program

Throughout the first North Korean nuclear crisis, Pyongyang denied that it had any intention of developing nuclear weapons and argued that its nuclear program was designed solely for the purpose of peaceful energy production. In his 1992 New Year's Address, Kim Il Sung stated "We have made it clear over and over again that we have neither the willingness nor the capacity to develop nuclear weapons and that we are ready to accept the nuclear inspection under the impartial condition."[30] Kim Il Sung also said to U.S. representative Stephen Solarz in December 1991 that North Korea had no nuclear reprocessing facilities (Oberdorfer 2001a: 264). However, Kim's statement was a lie. When North Korea reported later to the IAEA in May 1992 regarding its nuclear material and equipment, it confirmed the construction of a reprocessing plant and also admitted that it had reprocessed about 90 grams of plutonium in 1990.[31] Furthermore, IAEA inspectors announced after the inspection in July 1992 that North Korea seemed to have been cheating, declaring that there was some discrepancy between what Pyongyang initially reported and what the IAEA inspectors actually found. As opposed to the North's claim, reprocessing appeared to have occurred in three separate periods:1989, 1990, and 1991 (Sigal 1998: 43). This implies that North Korea essentially had a nuclear weapons program, or at least that its leaders had been thinking about developing the weapons, whatever their purpose was to be.

For North Korea, the nuclear option was a very risky choice that would clearly involve confrontation with the international community. As Copeland (2000: 54, 2001: 214) noted, a hardline policy like Pyongyang's nuclear option

involves a large risk in the short term. Although Kim Il Sung made several bellicose statements, he clearly acknowledged the downside and negative outcome of the nuclear option. When Kim met Solarz, he expressed his view of the disastrous outcome of using nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula. "What's the use of a few nuclear weapons? Assume that we are producing nuclear weapons and have one or two nuclear weapons. What's the point? If we fire them, they [Americans] will kill the Korean people" (Sigal 1998: 34). Also, in his 1991 New Year's Address, he stated, "If a war occurs in our country in which the danger of war is always seriously hanging in the air, it will endanger even the existence of the nation, not to speak of national unification."[32] Such statements imply that he clearly understood that even the suspicion of a nuclear program might lead to a serious military confrontation with the United States and that a war on the Korean peninsula might result in the end of the North Korean regime. Thus, when the United States and South Korea resumed "Team Spirit" in early March 1993, in a punitive measure for the North's uncooperative policy with the IAEA regarding the special inspection, North Korea had to order its people and armed forces to enter a "state of semi-war" and denounced the "Team Spirit" exercise as a nuclear war game preliminary to an invasion.[33] Kim Il Sung recognized that such confrontation "is making inter-Korean relations dangerous" and "may drive the situation into a catastrophe."[34] Likewise, North Korean leaders believed that the nuclear option might make the situation extremely worse, and this might be the main reason for Pyongyang's continuous denial of the nuclear weapons program and why Kim Jong Il often referred to his nuclear policy as "brinkmanship" (Hwang 1999a: 259).

On the other hand, North Korean leaders also clearly understood the upside and potentially positive outcome of the nuclear option. Because their security concern was heightened mainly by the loss of the two allies' nuclear guarantee, North Korean leaders expected that independent nuclear weapons would ensure their regime's survival. Such a desire for security based on nuclear weapons was strongly implied in Pyongyang's public statement after the Soviet Union informed Pyongyang of its policy change on the Korean peninsula. It announced that the Soviet's establishment of diplomatic relations with South Korea would "leave us no other choice but to take measures to provide for ourselves some weapons for which we have so far relied on the alliance."[35] North Korean leaders also believed that becoming a nuclear power might help improve the collapsing economy by making the international community more conciliatory. According to Hwang Jang-yup, North Korean leaders believed that "if North Korea has many nuclear weapons, the United States will be scared and give economic assistance to the North" (Hwang 1999a: 329). In short, it appears that North Korea might keep open the option of developing nuclear weapons unless its regime's survival and international security are completely assured.

Engaging the United States

According to K. A. Namkung, who was an independent intermediary for North Korea in the early 1990s,[36] after the end of the Cold War, North Korea made three major policy decisions: the first was to normalize relations with the United States and Japan,[37] the second was to seek peaceful coexistence with South Korea, and the third was to introduce market reforms (Sigal 1998: 138–39). In particular, Kim Il Sung himself emphasized the importance of Pyongyang's bilateral negotiation with Washington rather than multinational cooperation with other regional powers, saying in his 1994 New Year's Address,

> It is the United States that raised the suspicion of the North's nonexistent nuclear development and also that actually brought nuclear weapons into the Korean peninsula and threatened us. Thus, nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula should be resolved through the North Korean-U.S. talks in all respects.[38]

In reality, North Korea sought to reach out to the United States after the Cold War. In 1990, Kim Il Sung proposed a conciliatory statement that the United States could withdraw its troops from South Korea step by step, as opposed to his previous demand that the U.S. troops leave the Korean peninsula right away. Moreover, Kim also made public a new disarmament proposal and a non-aggression pact between the two Koreas that seemed more realistic than earlier proposals.[39] In these efforts, North Korea had long sought direct, high-level talks with the United States and finally achieved a meeting between Arnold Kanter, Undersecretary of State for political affairs, and Kim Yong-sun, Secretary for International Affairs of the North Korean Workers' Party, although the United States was not much interested in the talk.[40] During the Clinton administration, North Korea held several high-level talks with the United States and produced a few agreements under which the North sought to obtain regime security and economic benefits.[41]

North Korean leaders clearly saw the positive outcome of engaging the United States, that is, some political and economic benefits from Washington's recognition of Pyongyang. First of all, it would definitely help North Korea come out of isolation and gain its voice in the international community. Furthermore, North Korea expected U.S. security assurances against the threat and use of force on the Korean peninsula, including nuclear weapons.[42] Second, the North's improved relations with the United States would help bring much economic investment to the North. Particularly, North Korea expected the United States to encourage Japan to engage with North Korea and wanted to receive a large amount of reparations from Japan for its colonial rule (Hwang 1999a: 315; Oberdorfer 2001a: 220–22).

However, North Korea's effort to improve relations with the United States was not a cost-free choice but also involved the negative side of risk. North Korea sought to improve relations with the United States but was very reluctant to allow a U.S. embassy or liaison office to be opened in Pyongyang (Hwang 1999a: 315). It was because its leaders, especially Kim Jong Il, did not want the U.S. officials to collect sensitive information or spread ideas of American democracy, destabilizing the regime (Hwang 1999b: 68). Likewise, they were strongly worried about the impact of U.S. influence on the North Korean regime, even if they saw the positive side of seeking diplomatic relations with the United States.

Relative Riskiness of Two Policy Options

Risk is defined in terms of the degree of divergence of outcomes around a decision maker's expected value or reference point, so a riskier option, by definition, has potentially a more positive upside and a more negative downside than a less risky option. In this sense, North Korean leaders' risk-taking attitude can be understood by how they perceived the relative riskiness of options and which option they actually chose, given the relative riskiness. If Pyongyang was a risk-acceptant actor, it was more likely to choose a riskier option despite the risk, while if it was a risk-averse actor, it was more likely to choose a less risky option.

The relative riskiness of North Korea's policy options explained above is summarized in Table 3.2. Regarding the policy of confrontation with nuclear weapons, the perceived positive outcome was that if the North became a nuclear power, it could assure its own security and regime survival in a self-reliant way (in North Korean terms, *Juche*) and might receive some economic assistance from the United States, which would fear its nuclear weapons. The negative outcome of a nuclear confrontation was that it might invite U.S. military attack and lead to regime collapse in the short term. On the other hand, the positive outcome of engaging the United States was that Washington

Table 3.2 Relative Riskiness of North Korea's Policy Options

	Confrontation	*Engagement*
Positive outcome	Self-reliant security assurance and economic assistance	Less reliable U.S. security guarantee and economic assistance
Negative outcome	U.S. military attack and regime collapse in the short term	U.S. influence and domestic instability in the long term
Relative riskiness	riskier	Less risky

Source: Created by author.

might provide security guarantees, offer some economic assistance, and help Pyongyang break out of its isolation. However, the negative outcome was that engagement might increase U.S. influence and destabilize Pyongyang's domestic politics in the long term.

Thus, given the positive and negative outcomes of each option, North Korean leaders seem to have perceived confrontation with nuclear weapons to be a riskier choice because it had a potentially more positive upside (gain) and more negative downside (loss). Because North Korea could not rely upon the security guarantees of even its Cold War allies, Russia and China, a U.S. security promise must have been seen by North Korean leaders to be less reliable than nuclear armament.[43] A U.S. military attack must have been seen as a more imminent danger in the short term than the negative impact of U.S. influence on North Korea's regime survival in the long term. As Taliaferro (2001: 173) and Copeland (2000: 54) acknowledged, a hardline policy, the confrontation with nuclear weapons in the North Korean case, is seen to be riskier because it produces both more positive and more negative outcomes than the policy of engagement with the United States.

Pyongyang's Policy Decision

During the first nuclear crisis, North Korean leaders did not adopt one option and completely dump the other but tried to pursue both. Although they sought to engage the United States, they also did not stop confronting it with their nuclear weapons program. Rather, they were unwilling to cooperate and chose to opt for confrontation, even risking a worse outcome, when they had a conflict of interest between two different policies. Moreover, as prospect theory posits, it must be very difficult for Pyongyang to stop the nuclear program that it has already begun due to the *endowment effect*. Kim Il Sung once said that "pressure and threat do not work for us, and such methods cannot solve the problem but may drive the situation into a catastrophe. The U.S. should look straight at all the facts and behave with prudence."[44]

Whatever Pyongyang's purpose for its nuclear program, North Korean leaders did not hesitate to confront the United States to defend the nuclear program in the early 1990s when they were placed in a difficult situation with regard to that program. For instance, in early 1993, when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) demanded a special inspection of the two suspect sites to investigate the discrepancies between the North's initial declaration of plutonium production and the IAEA's findings, and also when the United States and South Korea resumed the Team Spirit exercise as a punitive measure for the North's uncooperative attitude toward the IAEA, North Korea rejected the international community's demands and even declared that it would withdraw from the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).[45]

Although North Korean leaders had sought to promote better relations with the United States, as the situation deteriorated regarding the nuclear issue, they became risk-acceptant and opted for confrontation to save face and the nuclear program rather than cooperating with the international community. Even if such a hardline policy might ruin its desire to resume high-level talks with the United States, North Korea consistently refused to allow the IAEA's special inspection and threatened to lash out. The North Korean Foreign Ministry announced in the press conferences that "if pressures and sanctions are implemented, they will result in a serious consequence . . . and we will decisively take self-defense measures against them," and stressed that "we will regard them [sanctions] as a kind of a declaration of war."[46] Although North Korea later resumed high-level talks with the United States, it still refused to accept the special inspection of its undeclared nuclear facilities, so the discrepancy of Pyongyang's prior reprocessing activities was never cleared up, even after North Korea agreed to suspend its nuclear program in 1994 and concluded the Agreed Framework (Pollack 2003: 17, 30).[47] According to Hwang Jang-yup (2001: 218), when the United States adhered to the special inspection, North Korean leaders were even thinking of announcing Pyongyang's possession of nuclear weapons with an underground nuclear test. This risk-acceptant policy also continued in 1994. When the IAEA and the United States demanded in early 1994 that North Korea fully comply with the IAEA safeguards agreement and accept the full inspection, North Korea just agreed to host an inspection for routine maintenance of the monitoring equipment but rejected the special inspection and finally started removing fuel rods from the Yongbyon reactor and began refueling without the IAEA's agreement or consultation.[48] One North Korean official even threatened his South Korean counterparts in the North–South talks, saying, "Seoul is not far from here. If a war breaks out, it will be a sea of fire."[49]

At the same time, North Korea wanted to reach out to the United States and sought to improve relations with the United States, but whenever it was placed in a difficult situation, its leaders escalated its nuclear crisis by signaling their risk-acceptant attitude. In fact, North Korean leaders wanted to continue dialogue only under favorable conditions and to negotiate on their own terms exclusively (Sigal 1998: 142). Thus, when the situation did not go as smoothly as they desired but grew worse, North Korean leaders were ready to take the risk of confronting the United States with their nuclear program. In short, North Korea did not adopt a simple tit-for-tat strategy in negotiating with the United States, as some have characterized it (Sigal 1998; Cumings 1997, 2004), but responded to America's North Korea policy with its own peculiar logic. North Korean leaders often reciprocated U.S. offers of cooperation but resisted when the situation was unfavorable to them and opted for confrontation rather than engagement to make the situation advantageous.

REFRAMING NORTH KOREA'S DOMAIN OF ACTION: JUNE 1994

Change in Pyongyang's International Situation

Whatever the real purpose of Pyongyang's nuclear program in the early 1990s, it was actually used as a bargaining chip to obtain diplomatic recognition, security assurances, and economic benefits from the United States. Whenever conflicts with the IAEA and the United States arose, Pyongyang enhanced its bargaining power by escalating the nuclear crisis and reducing its level of cooperation with the international community. However, such brinkmanship inevitably increased the risk of confrontation with the United States and made the crisis even worse.

UN Sanctions

In reality, the crisis intensified in 1994 to the extent that the United States considered several coercive and military options. In May 1994, after North Korea began to remove fuel rods from the Yongbyon nuclear reactor without consulting with the IAEA, the United States withdrew its offer to resume the third round of high-level talks and started to build international support for UN sanctions. According to U.S. officials who were in charge of the North Korean issue (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004), what might be extremely shocking to Pyongyang was that neither Moscow nor Beijing was actively willing to block UN sanctions. When South Korean president Kim Young-sam visited Moscow, Russian president Boris Yeltsin reportedly promised that Russia would not object to UN sanctions, although the Russian government proposed an international conference to resolve the North Korean issue.[50] On the other hand, China continued to express skepticism about sanctions and to support further dialogue but faced a dilemma regarding the North Korean issue because it did not wish to hurt the improving relations with the United States and South Korea.[51] Although North Korea continually emphasized that "China does not agree to sanctions,"[52] China implied to South Korea and the United States that it would not stand in the way of the international community in either passing or enforcing sanctions. Beijing was said to have warned Pyongyang that its patience had run out and its role was limited in resolving the sanctions issue (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 198–99, 208–9; Oberdorfer 2001a: 320–21). In fact, Beijing must have sent a warning signal to Pyongyang by not blocking the UN Security Council statement on May 30 demanding that the North shut down the reactor in accordance with the IAEA's requirement, which the North refused.

U.S. Military Strikes

In this situation, the United States planned to augment allied military forces around the Korean peninsula and considered several military options, including preemptive strikes on North Korea's nuclear facilities. Although North Korea had threatened that "sanctions mean a war,"[53] North Korean leaders had perceived that sanctions might be followed by U.S. military attacks. If sanctions did not work for North Korea, it was highly probable that the United States might start some preemptive military strikes on the North's nuclear facilities or other military options. In reality, faced with the possibility that Pyongyang would divert plutonium from a nuclear reactor to its weapons program, the United States seriously contemplated preemptive strikes on the North's nuclear facilities in June 1994. According to the Clinton administration's Secretary of Defense William Perry and Assistant Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, the United States readied plans at the time for striking at North Korea's nuclear facilities and discussed mobilizing hundreds of thousands of American troops for the possible war.[54]

On the other hand, the United States had developed new noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) and conducted an NEO exercise in South Korea on June 6 to check preparedness for an evacuation in case of an emergency. Because an American evacuation from the South would have sent a strong signal to Pyongyang that war might be imminent, Pyongyang became increasingly suspicious and complained that the exercise was another example of preparations for "a northward invasion."[55] Furthermore, on June 13 and 15, the South Korean government conducted the first nationwide civil defense exercises in many years to check the mobilization status of over six million reserves for civil defense (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 215–19).

In the case of a military confrontation with the United States, Pyongyang might have faced a serious strategic dilemma. If North Korea were to strike back against a U.S. attack, it was highly possible that the military conflict would escalate into a full-scale war on the Korean peninsula (Kang 2003c: 60). The experience of the Korean War in 1950 and South Korea's strong desire to unify Korea suggested a worst-case scenario to Pyongyang.[56] If a full-scale war broke out, it would clearly lead to the complete defeat of North Korea and the collapse of the regime, given the military balance on the Korean peninsula. However, there was no longer any hope of military support from Russia or China. Yeltsin was said to have confirmed to Kim Young-sam that the article in the 1961 military assistance treaty between the Soviet Union and North Korea stipulating automatic intervention in case of war was "de facto dead."[57] As for a possible Chinese response, according to U.S. officials (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 209), there were some stories in Hong Kong newspapers, which were known to reflect Beijing's thinking, that China

might not support Pyongyang if hostilities erupted, notwithstanding the 1961 mutual friendship treaty committing China to North Korea's defense.

On the other hand, if North Korea did not respond to a U.S. military strike, it was very probable that the North Korean regime would suffer from serious trouble both internally and externally due to the perception of weak will and capability, given its traditional emphasis on national pride and sovereignty, which is apparently symbolized by the *Juche* ideology. In fact, North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman declared on June 1, "We will not compromise at all regarding unjust pressures. . . . This is our determined will that regards sovereignty as our life."[58]

Therefore, in either case of military response or not, Pyongyang was going to experience a catastrophic and very dangerous outcome for its regime's survival if a war occurred. Thus, to continue confronting its adversaries with the nuclear program was a very risky choice likely to produce an extremely negative outcome in spite of the positive aspects of becoming a nuclear power.

Change of Pyongyang's Perception and Risk-Taking Attitude

When the crisis became extremely worse in May and June 1994, as the risk of military confrontation with the United States dramatically increased, it appeared that North Korean leaders began to reinterpret the urgency of the crisis and show some conciliatory attitudes to prevent a worst-case scenario from being realized. Of course, Pyongyang, as usual, sent several mixed signals to the international community. In a meeting with Cambodian leader Norodom Sihanouk, Kim Il Sung reportedly said that North Koreans would rather accept a war than give in if Americans decided to make war.[59] Pyongyang also declared on June 13 that it would immediately withdraw from the IAEA, expel the remaining international inspectors, and refuse to cooperate with the "continuity of safeguards," after the IAEA decided to suspend its technical assistance in response to Pyongyang's uncooperative behavior.[60]

However, Pyongyang's effort to avoid catastrophe became apparent during this period. As opposed to its consistent denunciations of Moscow after its recognition of Seoul in 1990, Pyongyang began to emphasize Russia's support of North Korea. On two consecutive days, *Rodong Sinmun* printed articles that emphasized the Russian promise of military support in case of war and expressed Pyongyang's desire that Russia put pressure on the United States.[61] Pyongyang also emphasized Chinese leader Jiang Zemin's statement that "patience is needed to solve such a complicated problem as the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula . . . the door of talks is not closed but there is some room and possibility for dialogue."[62] In this article, Pyongyang especially stressed that "maintaining dialogue and negotiation is an efficient way of solving problems" rather than UN sanctions and military confrontations.

Pyongyang also made several conciliatory suggestions, which contrasted with its hardline statements. In the face of the U.S. military buildup on the peninsula, Pyongyang proposed a new peace meeting to the United States and expressed its desire to discuss a new peace assurance structure to prevent military buildup and recurrence of war.[63] On the other hand, North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator Kang Sok-ju said in a June 3 statement, which was announced unusually as his own and not under the rubric of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that North Korea was going to propose a package deal in the third round of high-level talks with the United States that would include all questions in which the United States might be interested, such as Pyongyang's agreement to the IAEA's routine and ad hoc inspections, its return to the IAEA, and the dismantlement of its reprocessing plant when light-water reactors replaced the existing facilities.[64] Many U.S. officials also believed at the time that Kang's statement was a new step and advanced offer that intended to resolve the worsening crisis (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 213; Oberdorfer 2001a: 321). Kim Il Sung also referred to such an offer in an interview with American newspapers.[65] Furthermore, such an offer was repeated to Selig Harrison[66] and Jimmy Carter in June 1994, when they separately visited Pyongyang and met with Kim Il Sung.

Such conciliatory behavior looked different from that of previous periods and appeared to show how much Pyongyang was troubled by the worsening situation and how deeply it was concerned about finding an exit from the crisis while also saving face (Snyder 1999: 89–91). According to Hwang Jang-yup (2001: 286–87), Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il were extremely worried about the possibility of a U.S. attack at the time and eagerly welcomed Carter's visit to Pyongyang. They also laid great hopes for the summit meeting with South Korean president Kim Young-sam. Although Kim Jong Il continuously appeared to take a tough stance and practice brinkmanship, Hwang testified that Kim feared the United States very much, saying that only the United States was to be feared. Hwang even contended that if the United States had declared an ultimatum at the time, Pyongyang would have had to surrender because its leaders had become risk-averse in the face of a U.S. attack and wanted to avoid regime collapse at the time. Kim Il Sung also feared a U.S. military attack, saying that if North Korea fired on it, the United States would kill the Korean people (Sigal 1998: 34).

In short, in 1994, North Korean leaders began to perceive the situation as becoming extremely worse to the extent that direct military confrontation with the United States might occur. There was a high probability that military confrontation with the United States would lead to a major war on the Korean peninsula and result in the end of the North Korean regime, the outcome that North Korean leaders wished to avoid. As Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il acknowledged, North Korean leaders were situated in the domain of extreme

losses in June 1994. Prospect theory predicts that if national leaders see themselves in a catastrophic situation (i.e., in the domain of extreme losses), they become risk-averse to avoid a worst-case scenario and are not likely to accept the risk associated with the catastrophe. Just so, as the domain of action moved toward catastrophic loss, Pyongyang's risk-taking attitude also moved from risk-acceptant to risk-averse. North Korean leaders suddenly became risk-averse in June 1994 and tried to avoid a worst-case scenario.

PYONGYANG CHANGED ITS COURSE OF ACTION: JUNE 1994

The frame of Pyongyang's situation changed dramatically in June 1994, when its leaders recognized the imminent UN sanctions and U.S. military options. Reframing the situation placed the North Korean leaders in the domain of extreme losses in which the catastrophic outcome—regime collapse—might occur as the result of external forces. This section explains the change in Pyongyang's policy that changes in perception and risk-taking attitude produced.

From Confrontation to Engagement

Although several policy options may have been available to Pyongyang, the key question facing North Korean leaders in June 1994 was whether they should continue the existing policy or not: to continue confronting the United States with its nuclear program or not.[67] However, because the existing policy was not sustainable owing to the possibility of a catastrophic outcome, North Korea could not but choose to change its course of action.

In this situation, the first North Korean nuclear crisis was suddenly resolved right after former president Carter visited Pyongyang and met with Kim Il Sung in June 1994. In this meeting, Carter proposed a freeze of the North Korean nuclear program monitored by the IAEA, and Kim accepted it (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 221–26; Oberdorfer 2001a: 326–36; Sigal 1998: 155–62). Kim Il Sung agreed to freeze his nuclear program, accept IAEA monitoring, and return to the NPT if the United States would help the North replace the old graphite-moderated reactors with new light-water reactors and asked the United States for a guarantee that there would be no use of force against North Korea. In fact, Kim's offer was exactly the same as what Kang Sok-ju had publicly offered to the United States on June 3 and what Kim Il Sung had told Selig Harrison. However, what clearly demonstrates Pyongyang's policy change was that Pyongyang did not reject a new version of the U.S. offer, although the United States tried to interpret the Carter–Kim deal to Washington's advantage by expanding the definition of nuclear freeze

and imposing additional conditions. In an official confirmation letter to Kang Sok-ju on June 20, U.S. negotiator Robert Gallucci declared, "Your willingness to freeze the nuclear program means that the DPRK will not refuel the 5-MW reactor nor reprocess spent fuel while U.S.-DPRK talks continue."[68] Although such a demand was beyond what Kim Il Sung had offered and much beyond the legal restraints of the NPT,[69] Pyongyang accepted it.

In North Korea's official reply to Gallucci's letter two days later, Kang Sok-ju stated "We would like to assure you that, for the sake of the third round of the DPRK-USA talks, we are prepared neither to reload the five-megawatt experimental reactor with new fuel nor to reprocess the spent fuel."[70] Given that North Korea had utterly refused to comply with such demands before, and also that Kang Sok-ju himself objected to those conditions even in a meeting with Carter, arguing that North Korea would need to reprocess the spent fuel in the cooling ponds within three months (Sigal 1998: 161), Pyongyang's acceptance of the new U.S. demand was a surprise in itself and proved that Pyongyang was willing to change its nuclear policy. Such an unconditional acceptance was unprecedented in North Korea–U.S. nuclear negotiations. As one American diplomat said, "Never before during the North Korean nuclear crisis had Pyongyang simply accepted the key U.S. demands without reservation or counteroffer" (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 239).

Pyongyang had confronted the United States with the nuclear issue through the early 1990s, but in June 1994, it was suddenly willing to accommodate the U.S. demand in the face of the extremely risky outcome for regime survival implied by UN sanctions and a prospective U.S. attack. As Oberdorfer (2001a: 336) explained, "In the spring of 1994, the growing power of the forces arrayed against it strongly suggested that further escalation of tension would be dangerous and not necessarily to North Korea's advantage. By the time Carter arrived, Kim Il Sung was seeking a way to end the crisis without losing face or surrendering his bargaining card, and the former president provided the means." U.S. officials who participated in this deal also shared this view and made the following observation:

> Pyongyang had to know that if it passed up the face-saving exit and continued to defy the international community, it would experience increasing isolation and hardship. In 1994 this coercive side of diplomacy came to the fore through a gradual military buildup on the peninsula and efforts to seek global support for economic sanctions. Ominous signals from Beijing at the time must have undermined the North Koreans' confidence that China would intervene to insulate Pyongyang from the effect of UN Security Council sanctions. These efforts put pressure on North Korea to back down when the crisis crested in June 1994. Arriving in Pyongyang at the critical moment, former President Jimmy Carter gave the North Koreans a face-saving way out. They took it. (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004: 398)

Table 3.3 North Korea's Policy Change in June 1994

	Nuclear confrontation	*Resolving the nuclear crisis*
Positive outcome	Protecting national pride and nuclear sovereignty and receiving economic aid	Avoiding the worst outcome, securing nuclear energy, and receiving economic aid
Negative outcome	UN sanctions, U.S. military attack and regime collapse	Loss of nuclear sovereignty and nuclear weapons program
Relative riskiness	Extremely risky	Less risky

Source: Created by author.

Pyongyang became risk-averse in the domain of extreme losses in June 1994 and chose to change its policy and resolve the crisis to avoid a worst-case scenario. To keep confronting the United States with the nuclear program was an extremely risky option, as can be seen in Table 3.3.

DOMESTIC SITUATION AND NUCLEAR POLICY: 1989–1994

During the first North Korean nuclear crisis, many worried that North Korea might lash out against the international community as its domestic situation grew worse. Indeed, Pyongyang's risk-taking attitude may have been influenced to a certain degree by domestic political developments. The importance of domestic politics in prospect theory is that a nation's foreign policy might be strongly influenced by the logic of its domestic dynamics, possibly in terms of its gains and losses in domestic politics (Levy 2000: 213). In fact, if the North's domestic situation had actually deteriorated in the early 1990s to the point of threatening its regime's survival, Pyongyang might have been tempted to engage in some risky foreign policy behavior in order to resolve its domestic instability. In such a serious situation, Pyongyang would have found itself in the domain of losses created by a deteriorating status quo in domestic politics and might have chosen a risky foreign policy in an attempt to restore the domestic status quo. The question here is whether the North's domestic situation in the early 1990s had deteriorated to the extent that its leaders had to be seriously concerned about regime collapse from the inside and so might choose to lash out externally in a desperate mindset of "double or nothing" logic (Cha 2002: 54). Because North Korean leaders clearly knew that a war on the Korean peninsula would probably mean the end of their regime, they must have explored risk-taking in foreign policy cautiously in terms of their domestic considerations. Moreover, because North Korea has been as extremely controlled and closed as any other society in history, its leaders might control the domestic situation relatively easily.

Domestic Stability

Indeed, North Korea's domestic situation became significantly worse in the early 1990s. Its economy especially was rapidly deteriorating. Starting in 1990, North Korea suffered several consecutive years of economic decline, its GDP falling by an average of about 10% each year. As a result, the North Korean economy contracted by one-third in this period between 1989 and 1994. Furthermore, energy shortages made the already difficult situation worse. The abandonment of subsidized trade with the Soviet Union in 1990 and China in 1992 occurred in this period, and fuel shortages caused by these cuts were undermining both military capability and economic viability. In fact, Pyongyang conceded that its domestic situation had indeed become difficult. In early December 1993, the Central Committee of the North Korean Workers' Party announced that the major targets of the seven-year economic plan had not been met and that the North's economy was in a grave situation (Oberdorfer 2001a: 297–98). Kim Il Sung also himself admitted in his 1994 New Year's Address that "we encountered considerable difficulty and obstacles in the economic construction due to the unexpected international events and the acute situation created in the country."[71]

However, it is very doubtful that North Korea's domestic situation in this period grew so much worse as to threaten the regime's survival from the inside and make its leaders more risk-acceptant externally to restore the domestic status quo. In reality, there were few overt signs of internal opposition or rebellion against the regime. Although there were some reports of starvation and food riots, they may have been exaggerated (Merrill 1993: 47, 1994: 15). Rather, Pyongyang had long been aware of such domestic causes of regime instability and had kept any dissent relatively suppressed with strong social control system (Oh and Hassig 2000: 127–47).[72]

Leadership Succession

The North's domestic stability also can be seen from the smooth leadership change from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il in the 1990s. If the North's domestic politics had been unstable, Kim Jong Il's status should have been relatively weak, and he would have had some difficulty in succeeding to power, but he moved up without much difficulty as chairman of the National Defense Commission and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army (Merrill 1993: 43, 1994: 12). Although there were reportedly some rumors of a power struggle, they were never confirmed. Preparations for succession to leadership had been regular and steady, and there had been evidently a division of responsibility in the early 1990s, with Kim Il Sung taking charge of foreign and inter-Korean relations while Kim Jong Il attended to domestic affairs (S. Kim 1995: 14–18). Kim Il Sung himself said in an interview, "As far as the

internal affairs of our country are concerned, everything is dealt with by Kim Jong Il," although he continued to carry on external work.[73] Furthermore, according to Hwang Jang-yup (2001: 88–89, 1999b: 317), even Kim Il Sung could not impose his will upon Kim Jong Il in the 1990s because his son had substantially assumed power in almost all areas. Suh Dong-kwon, who was director of the South Korean intelligence agency and met with Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il in October 1990, also noticed that Kim Il Sung "appeared to seek to read his son's face during the meeting."[74] Hence, the change of leadership in the North Korean regime was relatively smooth during this period.

Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy

North Korea's domestic situation continued to worsen in the early 1990s, but it was not so serious that the leaders anticipated a loss of social control and considered externalizing the domestic pressure. It appears that the threat that North Korean leaders perceived in domestic politics was smaller than the threat they perceived in foreign affairs. This means that Pyongyang's political structure was still solid enough to withstand the readjustments and realignments during the economic difficulty and leadership succession process (Harrison 1994: 18). Contrary to many Western beliefs, Pyongyang's domestic time horizon in this period was not short.[75]

SUMMARY

During the early 1990s, North Korean leaders perceived North Korea's status quo to be deteriorating, so they framed their external situation in the domain of losses and became risk-acceptant, taking a riskier foreign policy option in an attempt to restore the status quo. In June 1994, however, they perceived military confrontation to be imminent on the Korean peninsula, so they became risk-averse in the domain of extreme losses and sought to engage the United States to avoid the certain catastrophic outcome of war. On the other

Table 3.4 Pyongyang's Nuclear Risk-Taking Attitudes under Kim Il Sung

		International situation	
		Losses	*Extreme losses*
Domestic situation	Sustainable	*B* (Risk-acceptant: pre-June 1994)	*C* (Risk-averse: June 1994)
	Unsustainable	*E* (Highly risk-acceptant)	*F* (Highly risk-acceptant)

Source: Created by author.

hand, because they perceived in the early 1990s that domestic stability was still sustainable and controllable, the international situation seemed to have a more critical influence in determining their nuclear policy and decision-making. If they had perceived a serious threat to their regime from the inside and believed that domestic stability was not sustainable, they might have become risk-acceptant in the international arena to restore the domestic status quo and might have seriously considered externalizing the domestic tensions regardless of the international situation. However, this was not the case for North Korea in June 1994. Finally, Table 3.4 is a reproduction of Table 2.3 with some modifications. In the matrix, North Korea's risk-taking attitudes moved from *B* to *C* in terms of changes in its domestic and international situations.

NOTES

1. In fact, when prospect theory is applied to international conflict, it is not always clear how a decision-maker identifies the reference point (Levy 1994b: 143).

2. Victor Cha (2002: 58–63) used (1) ideational objectives that legitimate and celebrate national identity, (2) economic and military well-being, (3) standing in the international community, and (4) availability of allies.

3. Even before the 1970s, South Korea had a bigger absolute GDP than North Korea, but GDP per capita for the two Koreas was roughly equal until the mid-1970s, because the South has always had twice the population of the North.

4. National Material Capabilities (v6.0) data set in the Correlates of War Project at <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities>.

5. In an effort to fill the significant gap in information about North Korean decision making, the Korea Initiative of the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS) mined the archives of North Korea's former allies, Russia and East European countries, and put together the documents in "New Evidence on North Korea" in the *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Bulletin* 14/15 (2003/04). All documents used in this chapter for Kim Il Sung's statement come from East German archives and can be found in the *CWIHP Bulletin*.

6. "Document No. 6: Report on the official friendship visit to the DPRK by the Party and state delegation of the GDR, led by Com. Erich Honecker, 8–11 December 1977." See also Oberdorfer's description of the meeting from the East German document, cited in Oberdorfer (2001: 96–101).

7. "Document No. 7: Stenographic record of conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung, 30 May 1984."

8. "Document No. 10: Report on conversation between Prof. Dr. Manfred Gerlach and Kim Il Sung, 26 May 1986," and "Document No. 7: Stenographic record of conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung, 30 May 1984."

9. "Document No. 8: Memorandum of conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung, 31 May 1984."

10. "Document No. 8: Memorandum of conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung, 31 May 1984."

11. According to one estimate (Oberdorfer 2001: 156), after Kim's 1984 visit, North Korea's imports from the Soviet Union jumped from $471 million in 1984 to $1.186 billion in 1986 and $1.909 billion in 1988, which accounted for roughly two-thirds of North Korea's imports from all countries.

12. "Document No. 7: Stenographic record of conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung, 30 May 1984."

13. See also Kim's discussion with Honecker about Gorbachev in "Document No. 11: Report on the Visit by Erich Honecker to the DPRK, 18–21 October 1986."

14. In a countermeasure to the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, North Korea hosted the 13th World Games of Youth and Students in Pyongyang in 1989, but due to the economic stagnation, it had much difficulty in preparing the event. Kim Il Sung himself once admitted the difficulties to a delegation from East Germany, saying, "These are very difficult and also expensive preparations.… The build-up work in small cities has been suspended for the time being. … It is primarily the army that is working at the construction sites in Pyongyang." See "Document No. 12: Report on a Tip to the DPRK by a Delegation from the GDR, 16 May 1988."

15. North Korea strongly criticized the Soviet's policy change, saying that the Soviet Union "sold off the dignity and honor of a socialist power and the interests and faith of an ally for $2.3 billion." *Rodong Sinmun*, October 5, 1990.

16. The story of this meeting came from American journalist Don Oberdorfer's interviews with three members of the Soviet delegation who were present in the meeting, cited in Oberdorfer (2001: 214–17).

17. *Rodong Sinmun*, October 5, 1990. Since then, North Korea's bitter denunciations on the Soviet/Russian policy on the Korean peninsula were often found in *Rodong Sinmun*. For instance, see the press conference by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Russia should not intrude itself into other's business above its own place," *Rodong Sinmun*, April 14, 1993. Interestingly, Pyongyang's criticism on the Soviet Union and Russia are quite different from its continuous emphasis on the good relations with China even after China's diplomatic normalization with Seoul. See "Whatever the imperialists' maneuvers, they cannot break the traditional friendship relations of blood between China and North Korea," *Rodong Sinmun*, May 4, 1993. Similar articles appeared several times in *Rodong Sinmun,* for instances, May 5, July 16, and October 23, 2003.

18. Tai Ming Cheung, "More Advice than Aid," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 6. 1991.

19. In his New Year's Address released just four months before Li Peng visited Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung made it clear that he objected to the South's separate seating in the UN. *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1991.

20. There was no editorial or commentary in *Rodong Sinmun* denouncing China's recognition of South Korea as there had been in the Soviet case.

21. Don Oberdorfer, "N. Korea Says U.S. Blocks Progress on Nuclear Inspection," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1992.

22. These numbers are from Statistics Korea, Korean national statistical office at <http://kostat.go.kr/portal/eng/index.action>. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) estimated that until 1990, half of North Korea's trade had been conducted with the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe (DIA 1996).

23. According to an estimate by the United States Department of State (1996), North Korea's arms imports were highest in 1988 ($1.249 billion) but then declined: $719 million in 1989, $230 million in 1990, $99 million in 1991, $32 million in 1992, and $5 million in 1993.

24. The story of Kim Il Sung's meetings with Chinese leaders comes from an interview with a former Chinese diplomat, who had access to the details, cited in Oberdorfer (2001: 219–20).

25. "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1992.

26. "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1993.

27. "The Historical Lesson in Building Socialism and the General Line of Our Party," *People's Korea*, February 15, 1992, cited in Kihl (1994: 205–6).

28. For example, DIA (1996) once stated, "North Korea's immediate policy relies on protecting its own form of socialism from foreign influence or eventual political collapse."

29. While North Korean negotiators met with U.S. officials, they often raised the issue of a security guarantee by the United States.

30. *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1992.

31. Don Oberdorfer, "N. Korea Releases Extensive Data on Nuclear Effort," *Washington Post*, May 6, 1992.

32. *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1991.

33. "Government Statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 13, 1993.

34. "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1994.

35. A memorandum released by the North Korean Foreign Ministry, *KCNA*, September 18, 1990.

36. Regarding K.A. Namkung's background and main role during the first North Korean nuclear crisis, see Sigal (1998: 137–50).

37. Besides the Cold War hostility, there was the issue of colonial history in the relations with Japan. For the reason of Koreans having the difficulty of security cooperation with Japan, see Choi and Hwang (2017).

38. *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1994.

39. On the proposals about gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops, disarmament, and the non-aggression pact, see Kim Il Sung's "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1991. See also William Taylor, "Shifting Korean Breezes," *Washington Times*, June 6, 1990.

40. According to Don Oberdorfer (2001: 239), when he met Kim Yong-sun in 1991, Kim said to him, "I want to meet U.S. Secretary of State James Baker" and asked him to inform Baker of this request.

41. For instance, the Joint Statement of June 11, 1993, the Agreed Statement of July 19, 1993, the Agreed Statement of August 12, 1994, and the Agreed Framework of October 21, 1994. These documents are reprinted in Sigal (1998: 260–64).

42. U.S. security assurance was the North's consistent demand from the beginning, for example, Kim Yong-sun's demand for the cessation of U.S. threats when he met with Kanter (Sigal 1998: 35–37).

43. As Waltz (1979: 168) and Sagan (1996/97:57) posited, developing a nuclear arsenal is much more reliable than any other method because of the credibility issue, although nuclear armament is costly and takes a long time, so Pyongyang's development of its own nuclear armament can be said to have a more positive upside than reaching out to the United States.

44. "New Year's Address," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1994.

45. "Government Statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *Rodong Sinmun*, March 13, 1993.

46. *Rodong Sinmun*, March 13 and May 13, 1993.

47. The nuclear activities covered under the Agreed Framework were limited to the declared sites associated with the North's extant reactor program and related facilities. North Korea did not have to allow inspection of any undeclared sites until "a sufficient portion of the LWR is completed," which was not realized due to the collapse of the Agreed Framework in December 2002. See the Agreed Framework reprinted in Sigal (1998: 262–64).

48. *Rodong Sinmun*, May 16, 1994. Fuel rods could not only offer information about North Korea's past nuclear behavior but also be used to produce four to five nuclear weapons in the future.

49. John Burton, "N. Korea's 'Sea of Fire' Threat Shakes Seoul," *Financial Times*, March 22, 1994.

50. R. Jeffrey Smith and William Drozdiak, "U.S. Aides Say Other Powers are Leaning toward Tougher North Korean Sanctions," *Washington Post*, June 11, 1994. Anyway, North Korea did not accept Russia's proposal for an international conference. *Rodong Sinmun*, April 2, 1994.

51. "North Korea Presents China with Dilemma," *Washington Post*, June 17, 1994.

52. *Rodong Sinmun*, June 11, 1994.

53. *Rodong Sinmun*, June 6 and June 14, 1994.

54. Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, "Back to the Brink," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2002. For more information about U.S. preparation and plan for military attack against North Korea, see Wit, Poneman and Gallucci (2004: 204–6) and Oberdorfer (2001: 324–26).

55. "U.S. Non-Combatant Evacuation Exercise Denounced," Pyongyang Korean Central Broadcasting Network, June 7, 1994.

56. South Korean Defense Minister Kwon Yong-hae also expressed such an opinion in early 1993, telling U.S. defense secretary Les Aspin that even a surgical strike against the Yongbyon reactor would lead to a major escalation of hostilities and result in a general war on the peninsula (Oberdorfer 2001: 282–83).

57. "Kim Young-sam Briefs Journalists on Russian Visit," *Hanguk Ilbo [Korea Daily],* June 5, 1994.

58. *Rodong Sinmun*, June 2, 1994. Kim stressed the importance of sovereignty in North Korea, saying that "sovereignty is a human's life and a state and nation's life," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1992.

59. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 23, 1994.

60. "We will never allow the IAEA's arrogant maneuvers," Statement by North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, *Rodong Sinmun,* June 14, 1994.

61. *Rodong Sinmun*, April 1 and 2, 1994.

62. *Rodong Sinmun*, June 11, 1994.

63. "The U.S. should respond to our peace proposal," statement by the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Rodong Sinmun*, April 29, 1994. Pyongyang confirmed this proposal again on May 23. See *Rodong Sinmun*, May 24, 1994.

64. "Our path will be different if the U.S. chooses a coercive way," *Rodong Sinmun*, June 4, 1994.

65. *Washington Times*, April 15, 1994. Lena H. Sun, "North Korea Doesn't Have Nuclear Arms, Leader Says," *Washington Post*, April 17, 1994; T.R. Reid, "N. Korea's Kim Says U.S. Blocks Progress," *Washington Post*, April 19, 1994.

66. For Selig Harrison's visit to Pyongyang in June 1994, see Harrison (2002: 222–24) and Mazarr (1995a: 2–3).

67. Theoretically, Pyongyang might also have chosen to initiate a preemptive or preventive war. However, given the military balance and the presence of U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula, this option must have been less attractive to Pyongyang because the North's domestic situation was still sustainable, as explained below. Kim Il Sung once expressed such an opinion: "Comrade Kim Il Sung affirmed that the DPRK does not intend to attack South Korea, nor could it. More than 1,000 US nuclear warheads are stored in South Korea, ostensibly for defense, and it would take only two of them to destroy the DPRK." See "Document No. 11: Report on the Visit by Erich Honecker to the DPRK, 18–21 October 1986," in *CWIHP*. Kim's pessimistic opinion of the military option was also confirmed by Hwang Jang-yup (2003: 113).

68. Text of Gallucci's letter to Kang in June 20, cited in Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004: 238).

69. Even Carter objected to the U.S. new demand, arguing that these new conditions had not been mentioned before his trip and that he had not presented them to Kim Il Sung and others in Pyongyang (Oberdorfer 2001: 332).

70. Text of Kang's reply to Gallucci's letter in June 22, cited in Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004: 239).

71. *Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 1994.

72. According to Hwang Jang-yup (2001: 72–73), there were two different police organizations in North Korea. One was the department of social security, which was known to the public, and the other was the department of national security protection, which was the secret police. The number of personnel in these two departments was 300 thousand in 1990, more than one percent of the total population.

73. "Q&A: We don't need nuclear weapons," *Washington Times*, April 15, 1992. Kim Yong-sun once said to American diplomats in early 1992 that Kim Jong Il was then in charge of North Korea's foreign relations as well as the military (Oberdorfer 2001: 266). North Korean chief nuclear negotiator Kang Sok-ju also made it clear to a Korean American journalist Myung-ja Moon (2000a), who asked him the prospect of negotiation between North Korea and the United States after Kim Il Sung's sudden

death that there would be no problem because Kim Jong Il had substantially taken care of the nuclear issue.

74. "Secret Meeting Between Suh Dong-kwon, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il," *Monthly Chosun*, August 1994.

75. Hwang Jang-yup says (1999a: 325–26) that a rumor of war was spread inside North Korea, not in 1994 but in 1996 when domestic situation suddenly became much worse due to floods, drought, and starvation.

Chapter 4

Kim Jong Il

From Engagement to Confrontation

After the grand deal between Kim Il Sung and Jimmy Carter in June 1994, the United States and North Korea resumed the third round of high-level talks in Geneva on July 8, signed the Agreed Statement on August 12, and finally the Agreed Framework on October 21.[1] In this accord, the United States and North Korea pledged to normalize political and economic relations and resolve the nuclear issues. The United States agreed to "provide formal assurances to the D.P.R.K. against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the U.S." to "undertake to make arrangements for the provision to the D.P.R.K. of an LWR [Light-Water Reactor] project" that would be financed and constructed through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), a multinational consortium, and to provide heavy fuel oil to offset the energy shortage due to the suspended operation of North Korea's existing nuclear reactors. In response, North Korea agreed to "freeze its graphite-moderated reactors," "remain a party to the NPT," and "allow implementation of its safeguard agreement" and to "implement the North–South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" concluded on December 31, 1991. Although the Agreed Framework was criticized as incomplete and flawed,[2] it was widely recognized that the North Korean nuclear crisis would have been worse without the Agreed Framework because it successfully froze North Korea's further production of plutonium.

THE AGREED FRAMEWORK, THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION, AND NORTH KOREA: POST-JUNE 1994

Pyongyang's Improving International Situation

The Agreed Framework

After North Korea resolved the first nuclear crisis peacefully in 1994, its perception of the international situation appeared to be improving in the second half of the 1990s, although it did not completely move to the domain of gains. Pyongyang believed that the Agreed Framework would help improve the North's international situation. North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator, Kang Sok-ju, stated that

> the Agreed Framework sufficiently includes our just position and active proposal to solve the nuclear issue, so we value the Agreed Framework positively. It is also a historical document that solves the abnormal hostile relations, builds trust between the two countries, and contributes to peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in Asia.Statement by North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator Kang Sok-ju in , October 24, 1994.[3]

Rodong Sinmun also expressed such hope in the 1995 Joint Editorial that

> if the U.S. gives up its hostile policy toward the North and sincerely implements the Agreed Framework, the abnormal hostile relations will be resolved and trust will be built, leading to the fundamental solution of the nuclear issue and the denuclearization on the Korean peninsula.[4]

Of course, the Agreed Framework did not completely change the U.S.–North Korean relations but did define the overall context of relations during the Clinton administration. Although North Korea continued to denounce America's Korea policy[5] and often complained about the delay in the implementation of the Agreed Framework,[6] its international situation in the second half of the 1990s was considerably different from what it had been before the nuclear deal in 1994. Given Pyongyang's previous statements and behaviors, a new situation that North Korean leaders perceived demonstrated Pyongyang's decreased threat perception and the improving relations between Pyongyang and Washington.

Improving Relations between Pyongyang and Washington

In particular, such a change was prominent in the late 1990s. Pyongyang began to view positively the Clinton administration's efforts to engage North Korea. When the United States agreed to lift some of its economic sanctions

on September 17, 1999, after a meeting with North Korean representatives in Berlin, Pyongyang welcomed the change and pledged that it would "respond to America's substantial moves in ending its hostile policy toward the North and improving relations."[7] North Korean leaders complained that "such a step seems a little late and not complete," but they recognized that easing economic sanctions "reflects America's political will to move toward ending its hostile policy and improving relations and creates a positive environment to solve the current issues between North Korea and the U.S. through negotiation." In response to Clinton's conciliatory policy, Pyongyang announced, "While North Korean-U.S. talks continued, we will not test-fire missiles for a better environment of the meeting."[8]

The environment of appeasement was cultivated by former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry's visit to Pyongyang in May 1999 as a designated U.S. presidential envoy to North Korea and his policy report in October 1999. During his visit to Pyongyang, Perry suggested several conciliatory proposals to North Korean leaders in order to achieve a breakthrough in relations and submitted his report to Congress in September. His report, released the next month, suggested a systematic testing of North Korean intentions by offering Kim Jong Il a choice between confrontation and engagement. The report recommended that the United States should "adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach to the DPRK's nuclear weapons- and ballistic missile-related programs" and "specifically initiate negotiations with the DPRK based on the concept of mutually reducing threat" in a "step-by-step and reciprocal fashion" (Perry 1999). Such an engagement mechanism might include the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea and the relaxation of trade sanctions. North Korean leaders seemed quite satisfied with Perry's visit and proposals, and their response was "positive" (Albright 2003: 458).[9]

The friendly environment continued in 2000, and Pyongyang's relations with Washington were never more propitious than they were in the final year of the Clinton administration. After the summit meeting between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong Il in June 2000, North Korea and the United States shared the view that the environment on the Korean peninsula had been greatly changed by the inter-Korean summit meeting. The new détente between Pyongyang and Washington led to the visit by Jo Myung-rok, the first deputy chairman of North Korea's National Defense Commission, to the White House in October 2000. In the Joint Communiqué issued after the meeting, both countries announced that "new opportunities for completely improving relations between North Korea and the U.S. have been created" and that each side "will have no hostile intention toward the other and will make every effort to establish a new relationship and get out of the past antagonism."[10]

Jo's visit to Washington was immediately followed by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit to Pyongyang and meeting with Kim Jong Il

in the same month in order to prepare the ground for Clinton's possible visit to Pyongyang. According to Albright (2003: 460–70), Kim Jong Il told her that North Korea would suspend its production and export of missiles if the United States guaranteed compensation. He said, "If there's no confrontation, there's no significance to weapons," so that "missiles are now insignificant." Albright herself believed that North Korea was willing to accept several significant restraints on its missile programs in exchange for the normalization of relations with the United States. Also, regarding the presence of American troops on the Korean peninsula, Kim said that because "American troops now played a stabilizing role," the North Korean government had changed its view after the Cold War, and "the solution rested with the normalization of relations." After meeting with Kim Jong Il, Albright described him as "very decisive and practical and serious." Contrary to American belief, he was "not irrational and unpredictable" but "a very good listener and a good interlocutor." She said that because Kim Jong Il "was quite clear in explaining his understanding of U.S. concerns," serious talks with him "were a very good way to learn more about his intentions," and they actually made "important progress."[11] Pyongyang was also quite satisfied with Albright's visit and the meeting with Kim Jong Il.[12]

In late December 2000, President Clinton decided not to go to Pyongyang due to the confrontations in the Middle East but invited Chairman Kim Jong Il to Washington. Although Kim did not accept this invitation, the Clinton administration's efforts to engage North Korea clearly made a positive impression. Thus, Pyongyang's improving security environment must have decreased its threat perception from the United States during the Clinton administration. Although North Korean leaders' perception of the relations with Washington cannot be said to have moved completely into the domain of gains, they were actually enjoying a relative gain in this period,[13] so their domain of action in this period was moving toward the domain of gains.

Pyongyang's Foreign Policy: Engaging the United States

North Korea's perception of decreasing threat led directly to its more conciliatory foreign policy in the second half of the 1990s. In fact, North Korea took several steps to avoid confrontation and engage the United States in this period.

Implementation of the Agreed Framework

During the Clinton administration, after the Agreed Framework was signed, North Korea sought to fulfill, or at least to appear externally to be fulfilling, its commitments under the accord. Pyongyang promised that it would sincerely implement the Agreed Framework and contended several times that it

had actually done so.[14] Reviewing the five-year implementation of the Agreed Framework, North Korea stated that it had "fulfilled our responsibility by immediately suspending all our nuclear activities and lifting the ban on economic relations with the U.S.," although "the U.S. has dealt with the Agreed Framework very unfaithfully."[15] In fact, the IAEA confirmed in November 1994 that North Korea had begun implementing the freeze.[16] In reality, North Korea could not be said to have completely fulfilled its responsibility[17] and suspicions of a new covert nuclear activity—a uranium enrichment program—that appeared to be under way in this period were confirmed later,[18] but North Korea did not reactivate the once-suspended nuclear reactors until the end of 2002 (IISS 2004).[19] Particularly in the late 1990s, North Korea began to question Washington's seriousness about the Agreed Framework and argued that the North was losing patience with American unwillingness to fulfill its commitments (Harrison 2002: 227), but it did not yet renounce the accord.

One of the most striking examples of the North's implementation of the Agreed Framework was its response to mounting U.S. concerns about a suspicious nuclear facility at Kumchangri. In the summer of 1998, U.S. intelligence reportedly began to suspect that North Korea appeared to have constructed a secret underground nuclear facility.[20] When the United States demanded to inspect the site, North Korea insisted that the United States would have to provide appropriate payment for a visit, but the North first permitted the U.S. inspection team to visit the suspected site in May 1999 before receiving 600,000 tons of food through the UN (Oberdorfer 2001a: 411–14). Although Pyongyang also had to receive the food through the UN because the United States continued to reject the requirement of direct compensation for the visit (Pollack 2003: 21), it seemed satisfied with the result, saying that "we permitted the U.S. visit to Kumchangri because the U.S. response corresponds to our interests." The U.S. inspection team visited Kumchangri again in May 2000 but found no evidence of nuclear activity or violation of the Agreed Framework. As a result, North Korea exploited the Kumchangri issue as propaganda to publicize its full implementation of the Agreed Framework as well as to get economic benefits from the United States.[21]

Missile Moratorium

On the other hand, Pyongyang negotiated missile issues with the United States and decided in September 1999 to suspend its testing for the duration of talks.[22] After North Korea successfully test-fired its Nodong-1 missile in the East Sea (Sea of Japan) in May 1993, the missile program surfaced as another issue, and North Korea began to negotiate with the United States early in 1996 toward a possible agreement, as it had on the nuclear issue. From the beginning of negotiations, Pyongyang demanded that the United

States make further financial compensation for the North's suspension of additional missile tests and weapons exports.[23] The Clinton administration repeatedly rejected Pyongyang's demand, so the missile issue became more serious after North Korea shot a three-stage Taepodong-1 ballistic missile over Japan on August 31, 1998, insisting that it was intended to carry an artificial satellite.[24] This led to Perry's visit to Pyongyang in May 1999 for a review of U.S. policy toward North Korea. His visit was followed by several serious discussions between Pyongyang and Washington that resulted in the North's missile moratorium in September 1999. During his visit to Pyongyang, Perry broached some proposals to address U.S. security concerns regarding North Korean nuclear activities outside the scope of the Agreed Framework and ballistic missile development and proliferation in exchange for the lifting of U.S. sanctions, the normalization of diplomatic relations, and potentially some form of security guarantee (Albright 2003: 458). North Korea showed strong interest in his proposal and held several serious talks with the United States in the following months.[25] As a result, in September 1999 in Berlin, the North agreed to a moratorium on further missile tests for the duration of talks with the United States, while the Clinton administration agreed to the lifting of sanctions.[26] Kim Jong Il also evaluated Perry's visit to Pyongyang very positively and stated his plan to send a high-level special envoy to the United States.[27]

Reaching out to Washington

Perry's visit to Pyongyang in May and his report in October 1999 accelerated the Clinton administration's active efforts to achieve a breakthrough in relations with North Korea. Such an environment of détente in the late 1990s produced Pyongyang's most conciliatory foreign policy gestures ever in the final year of the Clinton administration, including the first summit meeting between the two Koreas in June, Vice Chairman Jo's visit to the White House in October as Kim's special envoy, and finally Secretary of State Albright's visit to Pyongyang in the same month to prepare for a possible visit by President Clinton. In June 2000, North Korea reaffirmed its moratorium on missile tests after the summit meeting with South Korea and reconfirmed it in the joint communiqué that was signed in October when Vice Chairman Jo visited the United States, announcing that North Korea "will not test-fire any long-range missile for the duration of talks with the U.S. regarding missile issues."[28] In this communiqué, North Korea pledged to the United States that it would not only fulfill its responsibility in the Agreed Framework more sincerely but also fundamentally improve relations with the United States. In this visit, Vice Chairman Jo delivered a letter from Kim inviting Clinton to Pyongyang, and his delegation, in particular, First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Sok-ju, outlined some constructive proposals related to the

North's missile program, including restraints on future missile development and export (Albright 2003: 459–60).

When Albright visited Pyongyang, Kim informed her that North Korea would refrain from further tests of the Taepodong-1 missile. Moreover, he told her that North Korea would be prepared to negotiate an immediate freeze on long-range missile testing and development and to stop all exports of missiles and missile components, provided that the United States offered sufficient economic aid and other inducements in return, including arrangements to launch North Korean scientific research and communications satellites (Harrison 2002: 228). Regarding Kim's offer, Albright was at the time "reasonably confident that North Korea would agree to a deal ending the potential threat posed to us by long-range missiles and nuclear arms," that "they would agree to export restrictions that would make it harder for Iran and the DPRK's other customers to acquire weapons that threaten our allies," and that "North Korea would also agree not to deploy new missiles that could strike Japan and South Korea." Thus, she concluded, "North Korea seemed willing to accept more significant restraints on its missile programs than we had expected" (Albright 2003: 467–69). President Clinton decided not to visit Pyongyang in December but confirmed Kim's offer in public again, saying that during the Albright visit "Chairman Kim put forward a serious proposal concerning his missile program. Since then, we have discussed with North Korea proposals to eliminate its missile export program as well as halt further missile development."[29]

Avoiding Losses and Seeking Gains

North Korea did not practice a fully conciliatory policy during this period and was sometimes involved in confrontational activities. However, what was different in this period from the previous periods was the way in which North Korea dealt with those confrontations. Most of all, North Korean leaders tried to avoid escalating confrontations and damaging the improving relations with the United States, while they had previously been ready to take the risk of confronting the United States.

For instance, when the North Korean submarine incursion occurred on the east coast of South Korea in September 1996, North Korea initially argued that the submarine had developed engine trouble and drifted south and that there was no intention of armed conflict.[30] As the clash deepened, Pyongyang even threatened to retaliate against the South and resume its nuclear program. At length, it issued an unusual statement of deep regret for the submarine incursion and a pledge that such an incident would not occur again.[31] After this incident, North Korea cooperated to resume preserving the fuel rods that had been unloaded from its nuclear reactor and also agreed to attend the four-party peace talks, which began in December 1997 and were held again

in March 1998. In response, the United States agreed to resume the supply of heavy fuel oil, and South Korea permitted work to resume on the light-water nuclear reactors promised under the 1994 Agreed Framework (Oberdorfer 2001a: 389–93). Again, when serious naval clashes between the two Koreas occurred in the Yellow Sea in June 1999 over crab-fishing boats, North Korea tried not to escalate the clashes into a serious confrontation, although the United States quickly dispatched additional naval forces to the Korean peninsula to cope with the first serious naval altercations since the Korean War. Despite its fierce rhetoric, North Korea neither put its armed forces on alert nor reinforced them near the battle zone (Oberdorfer 2001a: 423–24) but instead promoted the North–U.S. talks, producing the Berlin talk in September, where the United States agreed to lift its economic sanctions on North Korea, and North Korea agreed to a moratorium on missile development.

In short, North Korea appeared in this period to be seeking to avoid confrontations in order not to hurt its improving relations with the United States. In fact, Pyongyang's perception of the international arena was improving in the late 1990s. Although Pyongyang's external situation was still in the domain of losses despite the nuclear deal, its situation was moving toward the domain of gains, and its risk-taking attitude changed into risk-averse, or at least less risk-acceptant with conciliatory foreign policy. As the situation improved, the North's foreign policy slowly shifted its focus from confrontation to engagement. In short, Pyongyang reached out to the Clinton administration in the second half of the 1990s because it perceived that the environment around the Korean peninsula was improving, so that their external situation was improving, though still in the domain of losses.

THE AGREED FRAMEWORK, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, AND NORTH KOREA: PRE-OCTOBER 2002

Pyongyang's Changing Situation: Returning to Losses

Pyongyang's Increasing Threat Perception

As explained above, North Korean leaders saw the North's external situation get better during the Clinton administration and hoped that such an improvement could continue.[32] However, the North's perception of the United States began to revert to the domain of losses after the Bush administration took office in January 2001. As opposed to the positive perception only a few months before,[33] Pyongyang began to demonstrate quite an aggressive attitude toward the United States from the beginning of the Bush administration, although it still maintained some expectation of improving relations. When

Secretary of State Colin Powell made a statement that described Kim Jong Il as "North Korea's dictator," a spokesman for the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced it, saying that "we cannot help but believe that this statement reflects American hawks' impure intention of getting benefits from fixing DPRK-U.S. relations in a state of hostility and belligerency. . . . We value the recent development of the DPRK–U.S. relations that we have achieved so far with rational Americans through negotiation, [but] we will not expect anything from those who do not like the development."[34] Also, regarding the Bush administration's overall attitude toward the North, North Korea responded very harshly, contending that

> the new U.S. administration's national security team is amplifying their hawkish attitudes toward us, saying that they will pursue a gradual approach and conditional and complete reciprocity contrary to the Clinton administration … and that they call us a rogue state and will advance their national missile defense system to defend against our missile threats.[35]

Kim Jong Il himself denounced the Bush administration as having resumed the once-scrapped hawkish and hostile policy against North Korea and blocked the improvement of DPRK-U.S. relations.[36]

On the other hand, the rate of North Korea's complaints about the U.S. delay in implementing the Agreed Framework accelerated during the Bush administration as the 2003 target date for installation of the first nuclear reactor approached. "Because of America's hardline and hawkish approach, the possibility of providing us with nuclear reactors according to the Agreed Framework is becoming smaller, so it is greatly threatening us who suffer from a serious shortage of electricity."[37] Although Pyongyang also complained of the delay during the Clinton administration, it now denounced the Bush administration for seeking to violate the accord intentionally because the administration argued that "North Korea should permit the special inspection right away even before the construction of light-water reactors."[38] Thus, North Korea threatened that "it would not be bound to the accord any more unless the United States honestly implements the Agreed Framework"[39] and declared that "the Agreed Framework is in danger of collapse due to the delay in the LWR provision."[40]

The Bush Administration's Perception of North Korea

In fact, the Bush administration appeared to have seen North Korea as a reckless and aggressive expansionist state with which the United States would not be able to negotiate and achieve a satisfactory result. While Secretary of State Albright described Kim Jong Il as a "very practical and serious" negotiating partner, as noted above, President Bush has had a deep animus toward Kim

and said that he loathes him and has a "visceral reaction" to him (Woodward 2002: 340). Bush did not trust North Korea's self-described peaceful intentions, and he clarified his position to South Korean president Kim Dae-jung in March 2001 when he visited Washington to persuade Bush to support his "Sunshine Policy," the South Korean policy of engagement with North Korea. Bush emphasized the need for a realistic view of North Korea and its leader. He said, "I do have some skepticism about the leader of North Korea. … I am concerned about the fact that the North Koreans are shipping weapons around the world. … There's no question in my mind that the President of the Republic of Korea is a realist."[41] In fact, Bush was somewhat skeptical about President Kim's Sunshine Policy and strongly emphasized at the meeting that the South Korean president should be "under no illusions, take a realistic view of Kim Jong Il, and make certain as to whether or not North Korea is keeping all terms of all agreements," because he was very skeptical about whether or not he could verify an agreement with a country that doesn't enjoy the freedoms and the free press that Americans have.

Most officials of the Bush administration have also doubted whether North Korea could be induced to cooperate. Condoleezza Rice, who was the Bush administration's first National Security Advisor and later became Secretary of State, argued that "the North Korean regime is malign, and has little to gain and everything to lose from engagement in the international economy" (Rice 2000: 60–61). Robert B. Zoellick, who later became Deputy Secretary of State, wrote that because "North Korea is still evil, the United States needs to offer a consistent long-term strategy that will deter North Korea and even replace its brutal regime" (Zoellick 2000: 76). With regard to the Bush administration's North Korea policy, former Clinton administration officials observed that even before North Korea's revelation of its nuclear program in 2002, the Bush administration did not honor the Agreed Framework.[42] Indeed, Rice (2000: 60–61) contended that "the Agreed Framework attempted to bribe North Korea into forsaking nuclear weapons, but there is a trap inherent in this approach because the possibility for miscalculation is very high." Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (1996) also stated that the Agreed Framework "does not solve the North Korean nuclear problem" but "simply postpones that problem and may, in the process, make its solution ultimately more difficult." On the other hand, some conciliatory statements were made by Bush officials. In particular, Secretary of State Powell said that the Bush administration "does plan to engage with North Korea to pick up where President Clinton and his administration left off."[43] He also confirmed that the Bush administration was "continuing to live within the constraints of the Agreed Framework"[44] and saw "no reason to change their position right now."[45] In reality, the Bush administration continued to ship heavy fuel oil to North Korea according to the accord. However, given the

Bush administration's hardline approach toward North Korea, Pyongyang's perception of the United States in this period necessarily changed from that of the previous period.

September 11 and the "Axis of Evil"

Therefore, Pyongyang responded with much reservation to the Bush administration's announcement that it wished to resume talks with the North. President Bush announced in a statement that after a review of policy, the United States had decided to pursue bilateral talks with North Korea "in the context of a comprehensive approach to North Korea which will seek to encourage progress toward North–South reconciliation, peace on the Korean peninsula, a constructive relationship with the United States, and greater stability in the region."[46] Powell made clear at that time that the Bush administration did not set any preconditions on the talks and was prepared to "have an open dialogue on all of the issues that are of concern."[47] North Korea evaluated the U.S. decision but was still very suspicious of its intention. It stated that "considering that the U.S. suggests agenda that we can never accept, we are very suspicious of whether they truly want to talk and are willing to solve the problem through dialogue," and declared that "such a proposal is in nature one-sided and pre-conditional and intentionally hostile."[48]

Although Bush announced his decision to resume bilateral talks with the North, he did not engage in any constructive bilateral talks with North Korea, possibly under the influence of the terrorist attacks on September 11. In fact, President Bush's 2002 State of the Union address hinted that the administration would regard North Korea as an emergent and potentially much larger danger after the terrorist attacks and adopt a harder-line policy (Pollack 2003: 27–28). In this address, Bush announced that North Korea formed an "axis of evil" with Iraq and Iran because "North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction while starving its citizens" and might provide these arms to terrorist groups to threaten the peace of the world.[49] He suggested that the new national security strategy of the United States would also be applied to North Korea despite South Korea's strong opposition.[50] The Bush administration's view of North Korea turned even harsher with its new policy announcement. The "Nuclear Posture Review" included the prospective use of nuclear weapons in a major Korean contingency,[51] and the National Security Strategy of the United States described North Korea as one of the United States' defining national security threats (White House 2002: 13–16).

The Bush administration's hardline policy significantly altered Pyongyang's threat perception of the United States, causing a security dilemma on the Korean peninsula (Hwang 2003). In reference to Bush's State of the Union address, North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs complained

bitterly that "Bush's absurd speech of the axis of evil clearly shows why the Bush administration threw away the possibility of solving the nuclear and missile issues through the dialogue that the Clinton administration had constructed."[52] It claimed, moreover,

> President Bush seeks to forcefully link the countries that he does not like to terror and oppress them. … [But] it is well known that after the Bush administration took office, the U.S. has had increasing confrontations with other countries and that international relations has fallen into unprecedented disorder. This results completely from the Bush administration's one-sided and self-righteous foreign policy, political inexperience, and moral corruption.

In particular, Pyongyang claimed that "this time the U.S. demonstrated its reckless plan to attack the North militarily." Also, regarding the "Nuclear Posture Review," North Korea contended that the Bush administration was attempting "to throw away the bilateral agreements and use nuclear weapons against North Korea in order to remove regime and extinguish the entire Korean people."[53]

In short, North Korean leaders' perception of the United States deteriorated seriously after the Bush administration took office.[54] As noted above, Pyongyang clearly preferred the Clinton administration's policy to that of the Bush administration.[55] According to prospect theory, it is plausible to argue that after the conclusion of the Agreed Framework and the Clinton administration's engagement policy toward the North, Pyongyang renormalized its reference point around its new gains and began to feel the potential for more losses in the face of the Bush administration's hardline policy. As a result, Pyongyang's domain of action in this period was reverting to the domain of losses.

Pyongyang's Nuclear Policy: From Engagement to Restraint

As the situation deteriorated, so did Pyongyang's perception of threat. Although Pyongyang did not change its course of action at that time, its nuclear policy did become more aggressive.

In fact, even though the North Korean leaders did not like the Bush administration's North Korea policy, they were not going to throw away all agreements with the United States at once. Nevertheless, they did not wish to be bullied by the Bush administration. Thus, Pyongyang's initial approach to the Bush administration was to declare that North Korea was ready to respond to whatever policy the Bush administration adopted.[56] However, Pyongyang began to lose patience with America's unwillingness to engage in peaceful negotiation and threatened that it might not be willing to be bounded further by its agreement with the United States. Regarding the delay of the LWR

provision, Pyongyang contended that "it is clear that we can sustain indefinitely neither the fulfillment of the Agreed Framework nor the missile moratorium that we decided in good faith at the DPRK-U.S. talks."[57] With regard to bilateral talks, it declared, "If the Bush administration sets preconditions on the talks, it means in reality that they do not want talks. The U.S. should clearly recognize this and had better treat us with a proper attitude."[58] North Korean Foreign Minister Paik Nam-sun said in a personal meeting with Selig Harrison in May 2001,

> The mere fact that certain possibilities were explored in the context of the Clinton administration does not necessarily mean there is a basis for picking up where we left off then. We will have to take a fresh look at the whole missile issue in the context of the overall posture of the Bush administration toward us (Harrison 2002: 229).

Pyongyang implied that whether the North would engage or confront the United States depended upon the Bush administration's North Korea policy.

However, as the situation became worse following the terrorist attacks of September 11, the U.S. foreign policy approach became tougher, and so did Pyongyang's. Contrary to its conciliatory behavior during the previous period, North Korea began to threaten a military option after President Bush's "axis of evil" address, saying that it might consider a "military strike" against the United States[59] and would "make full preparations for war because to have to fight against the U.S. someday is inevitable."[60] Also, after the Bush administration released the Nuclear Posture Review, North Korea argued that it might reconsider completely all agreements with the United States and take substantial measures against America's plan for nuclear attack, implying that it might renounce the Agreed Framework and resume its nuclear program.[61]

Nevertheless, Pyongyang actually neither abandoned the Agreement Framework nor closed all doors to negotiations with Washington. Right after the Bush administration announced its decision to resume bilateral talks with Pyongyang, North Korea decided to resume its involvement in the talks. Although Pyongyang expressed much reservation, the North Korean representative to the UN, Li Hyong-chol, met with U.S. special envoy Jack Pritchard in New York on June 13, 2001, to make arrangements for bilateral talks.[62] Pyongyang also sought not to irritate the United States, informing a visiting European Union delegation in early May that it would extend its promised missile moratorium until 2003.[63] Kim Jong Il reiterated this pledge in a meeting with Russian president Putin on August 4, 2001.[64] Furthermore, after September 11, North Korea very quickly issued unprecedented official condolences and declared its anti-terrorist position, signing several international anti-terrorist protocols to prove that it had no relation to any terrorist groups.[65] North Korea continued to threaten to walk away from its obligation

under the Agreed Framework due to the unwillingness of the United States to fulfill its commitments, but it was not going to abandon the accord unilaterally and resume its suspended nuclear program.

North Korea still engaged in talks with the United States in April 2002 about the provision of the LWRs,[66] and Secretary of State Powell also confirmed at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in early February 2002 that Pyongyang continued to "comply with the moratorium that they placed upon themselves, and they stay with the KEDO Agreement," that is, the Agreed Framework.[67] Moreover, on July 31, 2002, North Korean Foreign Minister Paik Nam-sun met Powell briefly in Brunei, possibly to arrange for the visit of a U.S. envoy to North Korea,[68] and on August 7, Pritchard visited Kumho, the site of the LWR project, to attend a ceremony to mark the pouring of the concrete for the first LWR. He was the highest U.S. official in the Bush administration to visit North Korea.[69] On the other hand, one of the most striking events in this period was Japanese prime minister Koizumi Junichiro's surprise visit to Pyongyang and meeting with Kim Jong Il in September 2002. In this meeting, Kim unprecedentedly admitted and apologized for the North's past abductions of Japanese citizens and expressed his aspirations for diplomatic normalization. Moreover, Kim promised that North Korea would indefinitely extend its moratorium on missile testing as part of the North Korea–Japan Pyongyang Declaration.[70]

In short, Pyongyang did not substantially change its course of action in this period. It neither walked away from the Agreed Framework nor broke its promise of a missile moratorium. However, it was evident that Pyongyang was losing patience and restraining itself at most, denouncing the uncooperative attitude of the United States toward the North. Although North Korea did not yet completely switch its U.S. policy to confrontation, it threatened that it would abandon its commitments at any time if the United States failed to take its commitments seriously. Thus, North Korea's foreign policy in this period can be said to have moved from engagement to restraint.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE AGREED FRAMEWORK: OCTOBER 2002

Reframing Pyongyang's Domain of Action: Losses

The Kelly Visit and the Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) Program

Pyongyang's perception of its external situation turned conclusively from bad to worse and clearly reverted to the domain of losses after Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly's visit to Pyongyang in early October 2002. Pyongyang originally anticipated that his visit might lead to a breakthrough

for U.S.–DPRK relations because the Bush administration told Pyongyang that it would discuss its comprehensive policy approach to the North,[71] but Kelly's visit resulted in a complete breakdown of relations. Kelly confronted North Korean officials with U.S. intelligence findings that North Korea had been pursuing an HEU program for more than two years.[72] If U.S. intelligence findings were accurate, Pyongyang had clearly been violating not only the NPT and the IAEA safeguards agreement but also the 1994 Agreed Framework that Pyongyang had always claimed to value. According to Kelly,[73] North Korean officials initially denied that Pyongyang had any HEU program, claiming that it was a U.S. fabrication, but soon admitted that the North "was proceeding with an HEU program and that it considered the Agreement Framework to be nullified," blaming this situation on U.S. policy under the Bush administration. However, North Korean officials denied to a private U.S. delegation that they had admitted to Kelly that they had an HEU program, although they never denied seeking such a program. According to Oberdorfer, who visited Pyongyang and talked with North Korean officials in early November,[74] "First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju told Kelly and the U.S. delegation that the reclusive nation is entitled to have nuclear weapons to safeguard its security in the face of a growing U.S. threat. After a debate of their own, the Americans interpreted the statement to be an admission that Kelly's charge was true."

Pyongyang did not initially publicize the detailed information of Kelly's insistence on the existence of a new covert nuclear program but just denounced the Bush administration's hostile North Korea policy as usual.[75] After the United States released the information later in mid-October, however, Pyongyang provided its own version of the meeting. Pyongyang claimed that "U.S. special envoy argued with no evidence that we have pursued the highly enriched uranium program and violated the Agreed Framework, and that if we do not suspend it, there will be no North Korea-U.S. talks, and especially both the North Korea-Japan and the North-South relations will lead to catastrophe. . . . We clearly informed U.S. special envoy that we are supposed to have not only nuclear weapons but also something more than them in order to defend our sovereignty and security against the mounting U.S. nuclear threat."[76] Pyongyang announced that "it was the Bush administration that nullified the Agreed Framework and the Joint Communiqué by characterizing North Korea as part of the 'axis of evil' and as a prospective target for preemptive nuclear strike that clearly implied a declaration of war against the North." In this sense, Pyongyang perceived the Bush administration as having prepared a "hostile plan to oppress us by force" and argued, "Our survival has been threatened the worst in history due to the Bush administration's reckless maneuver of political, economic and military pressure, so a serious situation was created on the Korean peninsula."

Pyongyang's Subsequent Perception of the United States

After the Kelly visit, many officials in the Bush administration, including President Bush himself, reiterated that the United States had neither hostile intent nor intention to invade North Korea and that they would pursue a peaceful resolution through diplomatic channels,[77] but Pyongyang's perception of the United States became much worse after Kelly's confrontation. In subsequent statements, Pyongyang argued that "distrust and confrontation between North Korea and the U.S. became extremely acute after the current administration took office," so that "the North Korea-U.S. relationship is at its worst. . . . The U.S. demand that we give up the nuclear program first causes a new confrontation and pushes us to pursue the response comparable to it."[78] Especially after the KEDO, pressured by the United States, suspended further delivery of heavy fuel oil to North Korea beginning in December,[79] Pyongyang declared that the Agreed Framework had completely collapsed, arguing that the oil delivery was only part of the four articles in the accord that the United States had ever carried out.[80] The KEDO decision must have had a huge impact on North Korea, which was already suffering from a serious energy shortage.[81] After the Kelly visit, Pyongyang perceived that such confrontational policies obviously demonstrated that the Bush administration was trying "to disarm us by force and overthrow our system in an overt way."[82] Pyongyang also believed that the United States had threatened it with a blockade and military strike and so had, in effect, made a declaration of war, so the last chance to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully had disappeared, and it would not simply accept the situation and wait to be attacked without taking countermeasures.[83]

Pyongyang Changes Its Course of Action: From Restraint to Confrontation

Oberdorfer wrote after his visit in November 2002 that he got the distinct impression that Pyongyang still "wishes to end the conflict and would give up its uranium program if face-saving arrangements could be made."[84] However, the Bush administration showed its unwillingness to resume direct negotiations with North Korea, and Pyongyang was equally unwilling to resolve the new confrontation first. As it became evident that the Bush administration regarded the Agreed Framework to be "dead,"[85] Pyongyang also put an end to its eight years of engagement and restraint and resumed its nuclear confrontation with the United States, claiming that the United States "wants us to give in, but that means death, so this inevitably leads to confrontation."[86]

Consequently, Pyongyang began deliberately to escalate the crisis again step by step. First of all, in a retaliatory measure against the KEDO's decision to suspend fuel oil delivery, North Korea announced on December

12 that it would "end the nuclear suspension and immediately resume the activity and construction of nuclear facilities necessary for electric power production," claiming acute energy shortages following the suspension of the oil shipments.[87] This December 12 announcement initiated a succession of aggressive policy decisions that brought Pyongyang back into nuclear confrontation, ending the restraint it had been practicing since 1994. On the same day, North Korea sent a letter to the IAEA and requested that the IAEA "remove the seals and monitoring equipment from its nuclear facilities as soon as possible," and also warned on December 14 that it "would take unilateral action" and remove the seals and monitoring cameras "if the IAEA does not act," arguing that "reactivating the nuclear activity is a serious and special measure to defend our sovereignty and survival against U.S. threats."[88] As the IAEA did not accept the North's demand, Pyongyang finally announced on December 22 that it had begun to remove all seals and disrupt IAEA surveillance equipment and to reactivate its nuclear facilities.[89] An IAEA spokesman confirmed on December 26 that North Korea was removing spent plutonium fuel rods from their storage pond at Yongbyon and moving fresh fuel rods into the reactor, suggesting that the reactor might be restarted soon.[90] North Korea sent another letter to the IAEA on December 27, notifying it of the decision "to expel the IAEA inspectors because their responsibility came to an end after the suspension of the nuclear facilities was over."[91] The IAEA inspectors actually left North Korea on December 31. After gradually stepping up the nuclear confrontation, North Korea at last announced, on January 10, 2003, its "automatic and immediate" effectuation of its withdrawal from the NPT and its "complete freedom from the restrictions of the IAEA safeguards agreement."[92] Although North Korea promised that it "does not intend to make nuclear weapons, but that the nuclear activity at this stage will be limited only to the peaceful purpose of producing electric power," it made clear that its decision was a necessary measure for self-defense against a mounting U.S. nuclear threat. Pyongyang continued to denounce the United States, claiming that "it is only the U.S. that threatens our sovereignty and survival and is responsible for and capable of removing it."[93]

In short, the renewed nuclear confrontation was Pyongyang's aggressive response to the deteriorating situation after Kelly's visit and subsequent U.S. decisions. Pyongyang's policy change resulted from the Bush administration's hostile policy toward North Korea, whose purpose in reviving the confrontation was to effect change in the U.S. administration's policy. Pyongyang is said to have started the HEU program well before the beginning of the Bush administration, as U.S. officials contended (Kelly 2002), and Hwang Jang-yup had made the same claim long before Kelly's visit, arguing that North Korea "continued to develop nuclear weapons using the uranium-235 isotope since 1996 even after suspending the graphite-moderated

reactors" (Hwang 2001: 218). However, after 1994, North Korea had actually exercised restraint regarding the nuclear issue and had sought to avoid confrontation with the United States for the sake of gaining some benefit, although it seems to have been cheating during those years. After Kelly's visit, however, Pyongyang resumed the nuclear confrontation, making an open and intentional policy change.

As prospect theory predicts, Pyongyang must have seen the end of American fuel oil deliveries and the collapse of the Agreed Framework as a serious loss, given that since 1994, North Korea had reframed its reference point around the realization of the Agreed Framework. Thus, after suffering a loss, North Korean leaders must have been ready to become risk-acceptant in a desire to return to that reference point, even at the risk of suffering a greater loss in the future.

THE SECOND NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS: POST-OCTOBER 2002

Pyongyang's Domain of Action: Growing Losses

After the second North Korean nuclear crisis began with the Bush administration's revelation of the new, covert HEU program, Pyongyang's perception of the United States went from bad to worse. The United States continued to refuse to negotiate directly with North Korea unless it first abandoned the nuclear program and disarmed itself, and often warned Pyongyang that it would "keep all military options open," although it also stated that it had "no intention of invading" North Korea.[94] Furthermore, the United States asked the IAEA to find Pyongyang in violation of international nuclear agreements, whereupon the IAEA adopted a resolution that accused Pyongyang of noncompliance with its obligations under the NPT and reported the problem to the UN Security Council,[95] taking the first step toward possible UN sanctions and U.S. military action. Pyongyang accused the IAEA of interfering in the North's domestic affairs.[96] In this situation, Pyongyang, while never willing to move first, perceived the Bush administration's military threats as increasingly serious.

The Iraq War

Pyongyang must have perceived the Bush administration's military intention as even more serious after the assault on Iraq in March 2003. Well before the invasion, North Korea had developed a heightened suspicion of U.S. military movements. When U.S. secretary of defense Donald H. Rumsfeld described North Korea as a "terrorist regime" that might sell nuclear

weapons technology and materials to terrorists and rogue nations,[97] Pyongyang responded very harshly, claiming that "this statement shows that the U.S. decided unofficially to invade us as the next target of its anti-terrorist campaign," and that in this situation "our course becomes more and more clear,"[98] possibly implying nuclear armament. Pyongyang compared Iraq's situation with its own and hinted strongly at its need for nuclear weapons, stating that the situation "informs us of what we should do more, while we prepare what we can do for self-defense."[99] What made the war in Iraq especially more threatening to North Korea was that "the U.S. made it clear that the main purpose of the war is to remove the Iraqi leadership."[100] North Korean leaders could not overlook the implication that the United States was ready to wage war to change a regime that it did not like. Therefore, Pyongyang concluded that "the Iraq war taught us that it is inevitable that we will possess strong material deterrence in order to prevent war and defend the country's security and national sovereignty."[101]

Six-Party Talks

While Pyongyang perceived an increased threat, the Bush administration was still unwilling to engage in bilateral negotiations with North Korea. The trilateral talks, including the United States, China, and North Korea, were held in April 2003 in Beijing but ended in an impasse without any agreement. In this meeting, North Korean officials are reported to have privately told the U.S. delegation that North Korea had reprocessed the spent fuel rods from the nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, already possessed nuclear weapons, and might test and export them.[102] However, North Korea did not comment on this issue in public but continued to denounce the United States for reiterating its previous demand.[103]

On the other hand, the first round of Six-Party Talks was held in Beijing in late August 2003 for a possible resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue among six neighboring nations: the United States, Japan, Russia, China, and the two Koreas. The United States reconfirmed that it had no intention of invading North Korea, but North Korea did not trust the U.S. promise and warned that unless the United States agreed to a non-aggression pact, it would continue to build a nuclear deterrent. In fact, the Bush administration held to its previous position that North Korea must first dismantle its nuclear program before starting any serious negotiations, stressing a "complete, verifiable and irrevocable" dismantlement (CVID) of Pyongyang's nuclear program.[104] Pyongyang proposed the "principle of simultaneous actions based on a package deal" in this meeting, but the United States rejected it and adhered to the precondition of CVID. Consequently, Pyongyang viewed this meeting as negative, denounced the Bush administration for its continued rigid position, and declared that the North "is no longer interested in such useless

talks" because the United States "has no willingness to improve relations and change its policy but continuously seeks to disarm us."[105] At the end of the meeting, China, as a host country, intended to issue a joint statement signed by all six nations, but North Korea reportedly refused to sign it at the last minute.

Because of the hardline U.S. position and Pyongyang's strong reservation about U.S. preconditions, the second round of Six-Party Talks could not be held until late February 2004. In the meantime, the KEDO decided to suspend the LWR project in North Korea for one year under the influence of the Bush administration, beginning December 1, 2003. This decision made Pyongyang very angry, so it demanded compensation for the breaking of the Agreed Framework and declared that it would not allow any facilities in the construction site to be taken out before the United States and the KEDO provided such compensation.[106] In the second round of talks, however, the six nations made some progress by agreeing to hold a third round by the end of June and to form a working group to discuss technical matters for subsequent talks.[107] Although the atmosphere of this meeting was less hostile than that of the first round six months earlier, they still failed to reach any substantial agreement on the nuclear issue. According to some media reports, President Bush himself instructed the U.S. delegation in Beijing to make it clear that the administration's patience in diplomacy could run out,[108] so Bush's personal intervention reportedly halted the Chinese effort to issue a joint statement. North Korea again disapproved of the rigid U.S. position and complained that the Bush administration "seeks to keep putting pressure upon us and buy time, waiting for our collapse."[109]

Although two working group meetings made no serious progress, the third round of Six-Party Talks was held in late June 2004 as scheduled. In this meeting, the United States softened its hardline stance by offering North Korea fuel oil for its energy needs, a provisional security guarantee, and the lifting of some sanctions, but the offer was provisional because, under the American plan, North Korea would have had to disclose its nuclear program fully, submit to inspections, and pledge to begin eliminating the program after a "preparatory period" of three months.[110] On the other hand, Pyongyang demanded that the United States should give up the precondition of CVID, lift sanctions, and provide substantial energy aid as compensation for loss from its nuclear freeze. Although the six nations again failed to issue a joint statement, they made some progress by agreeing to regard the North's nuclear freeze as the initial step toward its nuclear dismantlement and to hold the fourth round of talks by the end of September. North Korea also regarded this meeting as somewhat "constructive," stating that "this meeting was different from previous ones" because "each provided several proposals and found something in common that might lead to progress."[111]

In particular, North Korea thought much of the U.S. statement that it would carefully study the North's proposal of "freeze versus compensation," saying that "this agreement regarding simultaneous action is a positive progress in this meeting," though still expressing reservations about the U.S. proposal.

Deepening Crisis

The conciliatory environment of the third round of the Six-Party Talks was not sustained long but moved into a confrontational impasse in the second half of 2004, producing no fourth round of talks scheduled in the fall (Park 2005). After a mid-August informal talk in New York, North Korea declared that "the U.S. reversed all agreements and common understanding and brought back its precondition of CVID . . . and actually has no interest in making the dialogue fruitful but only tries to look as though it is making efforts to resolve the issue."[112] Furthermore, the stalemate was accentuated by the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 in the U.S. Congress and President Bush's signing of the Act into law on October 18, 2004. According to this Act, the United States authorizes up to $24 million annually through 2008 to promote North Korea's human rights through humanitarian aid and to protect North Korean refugees by providing humanitarian and legal assistance and helping them obtain political asylum in the United States.[113] North Korea denounced the United States harshly, arguing that this Act was the legalization of the U.S. intention to topple the North Korean regime so that it made all dialogue on the nuclear issue meaningless.[114]

At the same time, Secretary of State Rice identified North Korea as one of the "outposts of tyranny" to which the United States must help bring freedom.[115] To North Korea, Rice's comment was not only reminiscent of President Bush's characterization of North Korea as one of the "axis of evil" in 2002 but also a reflection of a statement in his second inaugural address that "it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. . . . We will defend ourselves and our friends by force of arms when necessary."[116] Pyongyang argued that Rice's comment made clear what "tyranny" Bush was referring to.[117] To Pyongyang, Bush's statement and Rice's comment were much more hostile than any earlier statements by the administration because it ignored North Korea as a negotiating partner in the Six-Party Talks. Pyongyang consequently became much more suspicious that the United States was not interested in negotiating with the North but just sought to isolate the North in the following Six-Party Talks. In this situation, Pyongyang announced, "We have no reason to go back to the six-party talks."[118]

Likewise, Pyongyang argued that due to the Bush administration's hardline North Korea policy, the threat from the United States was getting worse. Declaring that "another acute nuclear crisis was created due to the hostile U.S. policy against North Korea," Pyongyang emphasized that the North should not have any illusions about the United States but be prepared to counter American forces with its own.[119] Compared with the North's increasingly positive perception of the Clinton administration just a few years before, its view of the Bush administration was continuously deteriorating, especially after Kelly's confrontation in October 2002, bringing Pyongyang back to the domain of losses.

Pyongyang's Nuclear Policy: Deepening Nuclear Confrontation

The second North Korean nuclear crisis after October 2002 is quite similar to the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s in terms of Pyongyang's perception of the United States and its policies. Washington would not accept Pyongyang's proposal of a nuclear freeze unless Pyongyang dismantled its nuclear program first in a "complete, verifiable and irreversible" manner, and Pyongyang would not act first. Also, during the first North Korean nuclear crisis, Washington was not willing to accept Pyongyang's proposal of a freeze without filling in the gap in Pyongyang's nuclear history that the IAEA had found, and Pyongyang was never willing to accept U.S. demands without U.S. obvious security guarantee and economic compensation. In both crises, as Pyongyang's perception of threat intensified, so did its policy of nuclear confrontation.

As it had in the early 1990s, Pyongyang began to escalate the nuclear crisis again step by step beginning in October 2002. After the United States terminated the provision of fuel oil under the Agreed Framework, Pyongyang quickly declared the collapse of the Agreed Framework and subsequently announced the reactivation of the suspended nuclear program and the expulsion of the IAEA inspectors. Pyongyang also announced that it would withdraw from the NPT and be completely free from the IAEA safeguards agreement. Although Pyongyang was involved in several nuclear talks, including the Six-Party Talks, it was continuously unwilling to accept the U.S. demand for "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement" of its nuclear program before its demand for a security guarantee and economic compensation was accepted by the United States. In this stalemate, as Pyongyang's view of U.S. policy toward North Korea became more negative, its policy attitude toward the United States also became much more aggressive and confrontational. Pyongyang argued, "When U.S. hostile policy toward the North is dissolved, we can also freeze and give up our nuclear program.

Because U.S. hostile action is increasing, however, we cannot freeze our nuclear program, not to speak of giving it up,"[120] and pledged that it would "take any necessary steps more quickly."[121] As it perceived the situation to be deteriorating, it escalated the nuclear confrontation, finally declaring in public on February 10, 2005, that it possessed nuclear weapons.[122]

In fact, neither side acted in a vacuum. As Cha and Kang (2003: 135) have acknowledged, both the United States and North Korea reacted to each other's position, and the interaction produced a spiral of mistrust and misunderstandings, although the interaction was not necessarily a simple matter of give-and-take. Washington's threat has always had a negative influence on Pyongyang's perception, and this has led to Pyongyang's hardline nuclear policy, which in turn has had a negative impact on the U.S. side. According to Harrison (2005b), who visited Pyongyang in April 2005, North Korean officials told him that Pyongyang would "no longer prepared to discuss the dismantlement of its existing nuclear weapons as part of the six-party process in Beijing until the United States normalizes its economic and political relations with Pyongyang and makes a credible commitment not to continue promoting regime change." This implies that as the Bush administration raises its pressure on the North, Pyongyang is also likely to continue escalating the nuclear crisis.

THE SIX-PARTY TALKS AGREEMENTS AND NUCLEAR TESTS: 2005–2011

Pyongyang's Perception of Threat

The Six-Party Talks Agreements and U.S. Policy toward North Korea

Although Pyongyang defied the United States, it continuously participated in the Six-Party Talks and produced three nuclear agreements: "Joint Statements" on September 19, 2005, "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement," on February 13, 2007, and "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement," on October 3, 2007. Although Pyongyang's view of U.S. policy was still negative, it had shown a short period of policy change to engagement by agreeing to the Joint Statement.

At the Joint Statement, North Korea "committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards," and "the United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons."[123] The six parties agreed to take coordinated steps to implement the consensus in a phased manner in line with the

principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action." In fact, the Joint Statement provided Pyongyang with a face-saving option with which it could give diplomacy another chance during the nuclear crisis.[124] The concept of face-saving has often been discussed in explaining North Korea's negotiating behavior (Snyder 1999; Zissis 2007; Hwang 2009). The North Korean regime is understood to have fought in an unfavorable situation because it prefers saving face to being bullied, which somewhat explains Pyongyang's aggressiveness and brinkmanship even at a disadvantageous position. Because the North Korean people are those of great self-respect, they are said to extremely hate to be humiliated. The significance of saving face can be seen most strongly in the North Korean attitude toward "sovereign rights." Because the concept of sovereign rights has been closely connected to *Juche* ideology and critically influenced North Korea's policy decisions, the violation of its sovereign rights by foreign countries is regarded as a humiliation that makes them lose face. In this sense, the Six-Party Talks gave North Korea an opportunity to save face and agree to the Joint Statement.

In particular, the Joint Statement mentioned the peace regime on the Korean peninsula that North Korea had long insisted. It said that "The Six Parties committed to joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum." Although the Joint Statement could not be implemented for one and half year due to the U.S. financial sanction on presumably Kim Jong Il's secret fund in Macau's Banco Delta Asia (BDA)[125] and North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006, the six parties finally agreed to the initial actions for the implementation of the Joint Statement in February 13, 2007. The Korean peace regime was also discussed in this agreement. The six parties agreed that "The DPRK and the US will start bilateral talks aimed at resolving pending bilateral issues and moving toward full diplomatic relations" and also that "The US will begin the process of removing the designation of the DPRK as a state-sponsor of terrorism and advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to the DPRK."[126] The six parties also affirmed that "they will take positive steps to increase mutual trust, and will make joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia" and that "The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum."

Pyongyang's improving perception resulted largely from the policy change by the Bush administration. According to Philip Zelikow, who played a critical role in drafting a new North Korean policy for the Bush administration, the United States was preparing for a long-term vision for the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula.[127] President Bush's top foreign policy advisers reportedly recommended a broad new approach to dealing

with North Korea, and it included beginning negotiations on a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula even while efforts to dismantle Pyongyang's nuclear program are still underway.[128] It was a surprising change given that the Bush administration had insisted on North Korea's dismantling of its nuclear program first in a "complete, verifiable and irreversible" manner. Zelikow acknowledged that the Bush administration sought to move simultaneously on multiple fronts, such as "scrapping the nuclear program, building normal economic cooperation, tackling the normalization of relations and—perhaps most engaging—getting at the unresolved issues of the Korean War."[129] In this vein, President Bush discussed the North Korean issue with Chinese president Hu Jintao in April 2006 and asked him whether Kim Jong Il would receive a positive signal if the United States offered a peace treaty.[130] White House officially confirmed that the United States would be able to announce an official end to the Korean War and also the way forward in terms of economic and other cooperation.[131] Such a policy change led the Bush administration to agree in the Six-Party Talks in February and October 2007.

However, the situation quickly deteriorated after the Six-Party Talks came to a deadlock and North Korea testified a ballistic missile in April 2009 and conducted the second nuclear test next month. In fact, North Korea had complained of the U.S. failure to implement the promises of removing the designation as a state-sponsor of terrorism and terminating the application of the Trading with Enemy Act that the United States agreed in the Six-Party Talks.[132] Even when the United States later rescinded the designation as a state-sponsor of terrorism after North Korea agreed to a series of verification measures and resumed the disablement of its nuclear facilities,[133] the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized more U.S. responsibility of fulfilling the political and economic reward described in the Six-Party Talks agreement on October 3, 2007.[134] North Korea meant that it agreed to the verification measures and disablement with the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action" because the United States accepted its demand. The different positions on the Joint Statement made it difficult for the United States and North Korea to resolve the nuclear issue, and the Six-Party Talks finally collapsed at the end of 2008. Despite all those agreements, the Six-Party Talks did not resume.

The Obama Administration and Pyongyang's Perception

After the Obama administration took office, Pyongyang believed that it was still being bullied in an unfavorable situation by the United States. The North Korean media insisted that "Infringing our sovereign rights and dignity is an act of insult and crime that can never be tolerated"[135] so that "we are always ready to chastise ruthlessly those who provoke us."[136] In fact, U.S. officials and media have acknowledged the North Korean negative perception of the

situation. For example, regarding North Korea's rocket launch, U.S. officials analyzed that "North Koreans have pretty much backed themselves into a corner," so "they are certain to go ahead with the launch" because "it is now an issue of saving face."[137] Policy analysts on North Korea also emphasized the significance of saving face in understanding its foreign policy, saying that it would be difficult for the North to back down from its threat unless a face-saving solution can be found.[138]

During the Obama administration, North Korea continued to refer to the nuclear issue as a U.S. hostile policy. Even after its nuclear test, North Korea contended that "We will not need nuclear weapons any longer when America's nuclear threat on North Korea is removed and its nuclear umbrella on South Korea does not exist." It argued that North Korea possessed nuclear weapons not because it really wanted but because the United States pursued a hostile policy with nuclear threat, so that it was an inevitable situation in which any nation in North Korea's place would understand. North Korea implied that it would never give up its nuclear weapons without the fundamental clearance of U.S. hostility and nuclear threat.[139] North Korea's position in this period was never different from that of Kim Il Sung. It argued that "The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula was produced by U.S. hostility and nuclear threat toward North Korea, not vice versa."[140] So, the possession of nuclear weapons was the last resort to its state and regime security. It was improbable that Kim Jong Il would move first and make a concession on the nuclear issue. If North Korea moved first, it would not only destabilize its state and regime but also make them lose face by appearing as a surrender to the United States. Thus, North Korea said that it "can live without the diplomatic normalization with the U.S. but cannot live without the nuclear deterrence."[141]

From the American perspective, however, whether Republican or Democratic, resolving the North Korean nuclear issue was a prerequisite for diplomatic normalization and the transformation of U.S.–North Korea relations. The Obama administration continued to impose diplomatic and economic sanctions on North Korea to punish its rogue behaviors. The United States did not start talking with North Korea despite its initial statement that it would sit face-to-face to resolve the nuclear issue, which is also contrary to the U.S. effort to accommodate other nations.[142] Obama's North Korea policy was "strategic patience,"[143] with which the United States would not return to diplomatic outreach until North Korea changed its bad behavior. The Obama administration was not likely to accept North Korea as a nuclear weapon state. This could be easily seen from President Obama's speech in Prague right after North Korea's rocket launch on April 5, 2009. He said,

> We were reminded again of why we need a new and more rigorous approach to address this threat. North Korea broke the rules once again by testing a rocket

> that could be used for long-range missiles. This provocation underscores the need for action—not just this afternoon at the U.N. Security Council, but in our determination to prevent the spread of these weapons. Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. The world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons. Now is the time for a strong international response, and North Korea must know that the path to security and respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons. All nations must come together to build a stronger, global regime. And that's why we must stand shoulder to shoulder to pressure the North Koreans to change course.[144]

In response, North Korea argued that the Obama administration was not different from the former Bush administration,[145] although some Americans, particularly President Obama, might expect it in a different way. U.S. governments had labeled Iran and North Korea as rogue regimes, but President Obama started seeking to change U.S. policy toward these nations. During his presidential campaign, Obama surprisingly mentioned about his willingness to meet leaders of enemy nations. When he was asked, "Would you be willing to meet separately, without precondition, during the first year of your administration, in Washington or anywhere else, with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea in order to bridge the gap that divides our countries?" Obama answered, "I would."[146] In fact, the Obama administration initiated the engagement diplomacy toward former rogue regimes during his tenure. Obama became the first American president to visit Myanmar in 2012.[147] The United States established diplomatic normalization with Cuba in 2015, 54 years after severing the bilateral relations in 1961 following the revolution of 1959, and Obama became the first American president in 88 years to visit Cuba in 2016.[148] The Obama administration also concluded the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) in 2015 to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.[149] Obama's engagement diplomacy toward rogue regimes was a fundamental foreign policy change and could become the source of stable peace by making enemies become friends (Kupchan 2010: 2). However, North Korea was one of the few unresolved foreign policy issues for Obama and remained a rogue regime. Despite all the efforts, the Obama administration failed in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and improving the bilateral relations. When President Obama was preparing for the historic speech of "a world without nuclear weapons" in Prague on April 5, 2009, North Korea test-fired its long-range ballistic missile and conducted the second nuclear test the next month.

When the Six-Party Talks were suspended during the first year of the Obama administration, North Korea insisted on negotiating with the United States bilaterally rather than returning to the Six-Party Talks. North Korea believed that the Six-Party Talks trampled on its sovereign rights and dignity by its participants joining the UN Security Council sanctions on the North's

satellite launch and nuclear test.[150] Particularly, North Korea's Foreign Minister Pak Ui-Chun stated that North Korea would neither come back to the Six-Party Talks nor be bound by any agreement of the talks.[151] The North Koreans argued that "the six-party talks agreed on the denuclearization of the whole Korean peninsula, not the northern part of it" and that what they agreed in the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005, was "not the improvement of relations through denuclearization but the denuclearization through the normalization of relations."[152] It implied that the United States and North Korea agreed to the documents of the Six-Party Talks but interpreted them in a completely different way, which was closely related to the different perspectives on the origin of the nuclear issue. North Korea felt its face lost because the U.S. interpretation of statements in the Six-Party Talks fell short of the reference point that the North Koreans expected. In fact, the agreements of the Six-Party Talks stated ambiguously to avoid conflicts among participating nations, but the reality was not ready to accept the ambiguity. So, the North Koreans continuously insisted that the nuclear issue should be negotiated bilaterally with the United States because it was the United States that threatened them. In this sense, North Korea tried to continuously exclude South Korea from the nuclear talks.[153] Even when North Korea once showed its willingness to participate in the multi-party talks, including the Six-Party Talks, it had strong priority on the U.S.–North Korean bilateral talk. Kim Jong Il made it clear when he met with Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao by saying that North Korea might return to the six-party talk on the condition that the U.S.–North Korean negotiation went smoothly.[154] Anyway, North Korea did not return to the Six-Party Talks, which led to the collapse of the framework.

North Korea also attempted to make its position as a nuclear weapons state fait accompli in this period. North Korea declared that "the essence of nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is U.S. nuclear weapons versus our nuclear weapons."[155] It implied that North Korea was a nuclear weapons state, irrespective of whether the United States and international society accepted it or not.[156] It also stated that North Korea would not give up nuclear weapons even if the U.S.–North Korean relation was diplomatically normalized. This statement was somewhat different from its previous official position that it might give up its nuclear weapons program if the United States promised not to use nuclear threats and guaranteed its security assurance.[157] North Korea tried to deal with the nuclear issue as a nuclear weapons state. North Korea did not intend to give up nuclear weapons in return for U.S. diplomatic normalization and economic assistance. It rather insisted that nuclear disarmament talks among nuclear weapons states, including North Korea, were the only means to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.[158] In this sense, North Korea attempted to negotiate the nuclear issue with a same status

as the United States. Because North Korea saw the issue from the perspective of equal sovereign rights,[159] the nuclear issue was getting much harder to resolve. From this perspective, North Korea justified its second nuclear test as a legitimate right from a nuclear weapons state.[160] So, North Korea's reference point rose from the previous abandonment of the nuclear program to the nuclear disarmament as a nuclear weapons state. Because North Korea perceived that only nuclear weapons could guarantee its sovereign rights in the international arena, it would not intend to abandon nuclear weapons.[161] However, the United States was not likely to accept North Korea as a nuclear weapon state. Rather, the Obama administration set out a plan to reinforce the global non-proliferation regime.[162]

Pyongyang's Nuclear Policy: Conducting Two Nuclear Tests amid Six-Party Talks

For the period between 2005 and 2008, North Korea participated in the Six-Party Talks and agreed to three nuclear agreements, but it still defied the United States and showed a confrontational foreign policy in the domain of losses. Even after the Joint Statement was signed at the six-party talk in September 2005, North Korea refused to fulfill any substantial obligations, and Six-Party Talks produced no progress until February 2007 because North Korea was provoked by U.S. financial sanctions on its leader's secret fund in BDA.[163] Pyongyang's confrontation policy was clearly seen from its first nuclear test in October 2006. North Korea conducted the first nuclear test while the Six-Party Talks went nowhere in a hostile atmosphere. North Korea originally declared the possession of nuclear weapons in February 2005, but few believed its claim because there was no nuclear test. On October 3, 2006, however, the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a week's advance warning, saying that "the declaration in 2005 was premised on the nuclear test."[164] North Korea declared on October 9 that it successfully conducted its first underground nuclear test.[165] North Korea stated that the nuclear test was conducted only by its own knowledge and technology and was a very safe one without any radiation leak. The South Korean Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources initially reported that the blast yield was estimated at 0.8 kilotons, which was equivalent to an earthquake registering 3.58 on the Richter scale.[166] The low yield of the blast initially raised questions about whether the test was really a nuclear explosion, but the United States confirmed that it had found radioactive gas compatible with a nuclear explosion.[167]

Pyongyang made it clear that the nuclear test was to strengthen its nuclear deterrence capability against the United States. The North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that they could not help but conduct nuclear tests

to secure nuclear deterrence as a defensive measure against U.S. threats of nuclear war and sanctions.[168] Pyongyang emphasized that it would neither use nuclear weapons first nor transfer them to others and that it would make efforts to pursue the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and global nuclear disarmament and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Although Pyongyang still mentioned about the denuclearization through dialogue and negotiation,[169] what it demanded was not the North Korean denuclearization but the end of U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat. It meant that U.S. policy change was Pyongyang's unchangeable precondition for giving up its nuclear weapons. The UN Security Council passed a new resolution 1718 condemning the test.

Although North Korea came back to the Six-Party Talks in early 2007 and agreed to the initial actions on February 13 and the second-phase actions on October 3, the Joint Statement of 2005 could not be implemented, and the Six-Party Talks finally collapsed at the end of 2008. The Joint Statement might have given Pyongyang a face-saving situation in which it could compromise in the negotiation, but the agreement partially resulted from the somewhat softened U.S. policy.[170] Although Pyongyang responded positively to changes in the external situation, this did not mean that its domain of action completely shifted to the domain of gains. Pyongyang was still suspicious of the Bush administration's real intention, and the North Korean leaders remained in the domain of losses. The situation went through ups and downs but did not change fundamentally because neither the Bush administration nor Pyongyang intended to lead a meaningful transformation of the relationship between the two nations.

North Korea test-fired a long-range ballistic missile on April 5, 2009, before the new Obama administration initiated a new North Korean policy, and the relations went from bad to worse. North Korea went further to issue a statement of one-month advance warning that it was preparing for a nuclear test as a response to the imposition of sanctions by the United Nations Security Council.[171] North Korea soon announced on May 25 that it had conducted one more successful underground nuclear test. It claimed that

> The current nuclear test was safely conducted on a new higher level in terms of its explosive power and technology of its control and the results of the test helped satisfactorily settle the scientific and technological problems arising in further increasing the power of nuclear weapons and steadily developing nuclear technology.[172]

Pyongyang might be conscious of the disputes over the low yield of the previous test in 2006.[173] Analysts generally agreed that this nuclear test was quite successful despite the uncertainty of the exact yield. Estimates of the explosion yield ranged from 2 to 7 kilotons, but it was about five times

stronger than the previous test in 2006,[174] with which the U.S. Geological Survey reported a 4.7 magnitude earthquake.[175]

North Korea claimed that it tested as part of the measures to bolster up its nuclear deterrent for self-defense and that the test would contribute to safeguarding its sovereignty and socialism and guaranteeing peace and safety on the Korean peninsula and the surrounding region.[176] Following the test, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1874 on June 12, 2009, and further tightened arms embargos and economic sanctions against North Korea, particularly by including a new measure for countries to interdict North Korean ships at sea suspected of carrying banned items.[177]

Pyongyang's confrontational move was also seen in a surprising disclosure of a new uranium enrichment program.[178] When a small group of American nuclear experts, including Dr. Siegfried S. Hecker, former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, visited the Yongbyon nuclear complex in November 2010, North Korea showed them a recently completed industrial-scale uranium enrichment facility with 2,000 centrifuges in two cascade halls and an ultramodern control room.[179] Although the international community had been suspicious of North Korea's possessing a uranium enrichment program, its scale and sophistication were stunning because it was not a few dozen first-generation centrifuges but rows of fully operational advanced centrifuges. Pyongyang's disclosure of a new uranium enrichment program meant that its plutonium program was no longer the only North Korean nuclear program. The United States once confronted North Korea with an HEU program in the fall of 2002, which led to the collapse of the Geneva Agreed Framework. Pyongyang's revelation of these facilities meant that it was moving further to pressure the United States in a way that would influence the situation in its favor. The North Korean issue was more difficult to resolve due to the worsening relations between the United States and China in 2010.[180] U.S. president Obama agreed with Chinese president Hu Jintao in a summit to call for the necessary steps for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks process,[181] but North Korea did not come back to the multilateral framework.

DOMESTIC SITUATION AND NUCLEAR POLICY: 1995–2011

Again, North Korea's domestic stability was a concern to the outside world throughout the Kim Jong Il era, particularly in the second half of the 1990s and the late 2000s. Because Pyongyang's risk-taking attitude might be strongly influenced by its domestic situation, it is important to examine the North's domestic stability in this period. In particular, the sudden death of

Kim Il Sung in July 1994 raised fundamental questions about the continuity of the North Korean regime under Kim Jong Il. Many believed that the leader's death would eventually lead to the collapse of the North Korean regime and the reunification of the two Koreas (S. Kim 1995; Eberstadt 1999). The same situation happened again when Kim Jong Il suffered a stroke in the summer of 2008 and died in December 2011.[182] In fact, the North's domestic situation went from bad to worse very quickly after 1995 and might have threatened the regime's survival from the inside (Eberstadt 1999; Noland 2000). The sudden death of Kim Jong Il, who left a young and inexperienced successor, Kim Jong Un, at the end of 2011 might also destabilize the North Korean domestic situation. The questions here are how the deteriorating domestic situation in North Korea influenced its foreign policy in this period and also how the international environment affected its domestic stability.

Food Crisis and "Arduous March": Seeking Help and Saving the Regime

Although North Korea's domestic situation had already gone bad in the early 1990s, it became dramatically worse during the second half of the 1990s, mainly due to consecutive natural disasters, which Pyongyang called a period of "arduous march."[183] In the early fall of 1995, Pyongyang informed the international community that severe floods had devastated its agricultural production and caused widespread food shortages (S. Kim 1996: 61). What made matters worse was that this flood was followed by another great flood and drought in the subsequent years, resulting in a serious food crisis. North Korea had long suffered from food shortages, which had, in general, resulted from the North's dysfunctional economic system and policy, but the consecutive natural calamities made the food shortage especially acute. Kim Jong Il himself candidly described this food shortage as a serious threat to the North Korean regime. In a speech delivered on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Kim Il Sung University on December 7, 1996, Kim emphasized that "the most urgent issue to be solved at present is the food problem."[184] He warned that "a state of anarchy" had arisen in the North due to the food problem. "Streets are crowded with people who are looking for food. . . . Due to the bad harvest for the past three years, we have received food from international agencies, and we are having a very hard time due to the food problem."

The food crisis led directly to the worst humanitarian disaster ever in North Korean history, seriously threatening the stability of the regime. Due to the food shortage, appalling numbers of North Korean people died of starvation in this period. Although North Korean officials stated that only 220 thousand people had died between 1995 and 1998,[185] the estimated number of deaths reportedly rose to three million, which corresponds to more than one-tenth

of the North's total population. According to one estimate based on surveys near the North Korean border in China (Natsios 2001: 201–6), approximately two or three million North Korean people were believed to have died in this period. The South Korean intelligence agency also reported in February 1999 that North Korea's total population had fallen by 2.5 to 3 million.[186] The estimated numbers of deaths varied, but such estimation was largely confirmed by Hwang Jang-yup, who claimed that according to the North Korean statistical agency, approximately 1.5 million people were reported to have died from starvation in 1995 and 1996 only, and more than two million were presumed to have died in 1997 and 1998 (Hwang 1999a: 305–6).

Such a serious food crisis and famine must have been a great threat to the North Korean regime, as Kim Jong Il himself described it as "a state of anarchy." In order to control the chaotic situation from the food crisis, the North Korean department of social security issued a decree on hoarding and the theft of food on August 5, 1997, declaring that "those who steal grain shall be executed by shooting . . . and those who engage in trade using grain shall be executed by shooting" (Natsios 2001: 119). Kim warned that in the present situation, "we cannot be sure that there will be no riot" and emphasized the importance of the political and ideological education of the people.[187] Also, regarding the military, Kim stressed that "it is more important than anything to strengthen the military in the present complex situation … but we are not able to send rice to the army because we do not have sufficient rice."

In such a desperate situation in which Pyongyang was seriously troubled by growing instability in domestic politics, North Korean leaders might have been strongly tempted to adopt a risky foreign policy in an attempt to restore the domestic status quo, as prospect theory explains. In fact, Hwang Jang-yup observed that war was seriously emphasized more in this period than before, mostly due to the economic difficulties (Hwang 2001: 156, 1999a: 293). North Korean military leaders even claimed that "it is advantageous to start a war as soon as possible because it would be more difficult as time goes by."

However, it appeared that North Korea was actually in no position to take a confrontational stance against the international community. Far from planning to lash out against the outside world, North Korea appeared to have actively pursued engagement with the international community to alleviate its domestic pressure, asking for international aid. As explained earlier, Pyongyang's perception of external affairs had been improving following the nuclear deal in 1994, and in this period, Pyongyang sought to bring in as much international aid as possible.[188] Depending on the improving relations with the outside world, Pyongyang seemed to have chosen to safeguard the regime from the prospect of domestic revolt. In fact, North Korea had put into practice a number of diplomatic measures that showed good faith in the second half of the 1990s.

Its conciliatory moves included the continued suspension of the nuclear program under the Agreed Framework, the moratorium on missile development, and diplomatic overtures to Washington, as noted above. With a policy of engagement, North Korea could secure plentiful aid from South Korea and the United States, as well as China (Oberdorfer 2001a: 398). Kim Jong Il himself expressed "high gratitude for the humanitarian assistance received from the peoples of the world including South Korea, the U.S., Japan, and so forth" (Moon 2000b). Hwang Jang-yup (2003: 64–65) also contended that the North Korean regime "was nearly on the point of collapse between 1995 and 1998." Owing to the Clinton administration's engagement policy and South Korea's sunshine policy, he argued, North Korea could avoid regime collapse and reduce its domestic pressure, so it could not help but continue to depend on the United States and South Korea rather than lash out (Hwang: 2003: 113).

In short, during the second half of the 1990s, North Korea was domestically situated in the domain of extreme losses mainly due to the food crisis and famine resulting from consecutive natural calamities. In its desperate domestic situation, North Korea might have lashed out on the Korean peninsula. However, it did not pursue a risk-acceptant confrontational foreign policy but rather chose a risk-averse move, possibly because the North Korean leaders still perceived their domestic regime to be sustainable and also because they intended to depend on improving relations with the outside world to restore domestic stability. If Pyongyang's perception of the external situation had been situated in the domain of losses in this period, Pyongyang might have become much more risk-acceptant in its foreign policy decision than it was in the early 1990s, but it did not have in mind the logic of "double or nothing."

Regime Stability under Kim Jong Il

As noted, Kim Jong Il himself was concerned about the possibility of political chaos during the food crisis, but no obvious internal disorder occurred. Experts on North Korea discussed several scenarios for the country's future (Oh and Hassig 1999), but the regime turned out to be strong enough still to "muddle through" its domestic crisis (Noland 1997, 1998). Although hundreds of thousands of people starved to death in only a few years, and rumors spread of purges and executions (Brown 1999), there was neither an apparent popular uprising nor a military coup. The regime continued to focus on political education and the exertion of systematic social control,[189] so much of the domestic pressure was managed quite efficiently (Hwang 1999a: 364; Oh and Hassig 2000: 127–47). As Kim wished, his regime was also strong enough to control the military, and several times, he overweighed the military in his economic and diplomatic efforts in this period (Oberdorfer 2001a: 375). Kim

strongly implied that he had a complete hold over the military when he met U.S. secretary of state Albright in October 2000, saying that "the military wants to update its equipment, but we won't give them new equipment. If there's no confrontation, there's no significance to weapons. Missiles are now insignificant" (Albright 2003: 463). When he met South Korea's media executives in August 2000, he reportedly told them very confidently, "I decide of my own will regarding the military."[190] Especially with regard to connecting the inter-Korean railway, Kim even stated that he would "pull out two army divisions of 35,000 troops near the DMZ and put them in the construction site."[191] In fact, the North Korean People's Army continued to express its strong support for Kim, emphasizing that it would continue to favor his military-first policy and follow him,[192] and Kim also stressed the importance of the military, saying that "my power comes from the military."[193]

On the other hand, in the midst of the food crisis, Kim began to officially centralize the power he had inherited from his father.[194] In October 1997, he was elected general secretary of the North Korean Workers' Party and, on September 5, 1998, he was also named Chairman of the National Defense Commission, which was declared to be the nation's highest post. This meant that Kim had gained complete control of both the party and the military. This was exactly what Hwang Jang-yup (1999a: 308–9) confirmed and what U.S. special envoy William Perry (1999) also recognized after his trip to Pyongyang. It implies that Kim demonstrated strong leadership to his own nation and to the world during the difficulties of the "arduous march." When Albright met Kim, she observed that "he didn't seem a desperate or even a worried man," but rather "confident" despite North Korea's wretched condition and believed that Kim "was not going to go away and his country, though weak, was not about to fall apart" (Albright 2003: 467).

As Kim told Albright in October 2000, North Korea was still internally "in dire straits, trapped in a vicious circle," ruined by flood, drought, and famine from the second half of the 1990s along with the continuing economic difficulties (Albright 2003: 466). However, the North's domestic politics appeared to have passed through the worst of the "arduous march" by the end of the 1990s. According to the Bank of Korea, North Korea's annual economic growth rate turned to the plus in 1999, getting out of the long depression of the 1990s.[195] Kim himself expressed a strong interest in the North's economic development and visited China in May 2000, praising its rapid economic growth (Moon 2000b).[196] However, he seemed to be more interested in the Swedish and Thai models of economic development than the Chinese one because the former is basically a socialist model, and the latter seeks to combine its political tradition with the market economy (Albright 2003: 466). His opinion implied that he wished to reform North Korean society and open its economy while preserving its sovereignty and its regime.

Therefore, while undertaking large-scale construction in order to minimize the damages of flood and drought and to restructure the agricultural area to resolve the food shortages, the North Korean government began to pursue several new policies to reform and stabilize its domestic politics (Noland 2004; Ahn 2002, 2003). The so-called economic management improvement measure was introduced on July 1, 2002, in an attempt to overcome economic difficulties by improving economic management.[197] Furthermore, Pyongyang decided to construct several new industrial zones. North Korea not only agreed with the South Korean conglomerate Hyundai in 2000 to construct an industrial park in Kaesong that is located near the Demilitarized Zone but also, in September 2002, announced the establishment of a special district in Sinuiju, a border town near China, and declared that the zone would lie completely outside North Korea's usual legal structures.[198] In September 2003, the North Korean government sought to step up its economic reform, recruiting younger and reform-minded technocrats into the leadership. These changes in political leadership also signaled that Pyongyang's reform drive would be accelerated by younger, well-educated, and pragmatic technocrats (Park 2004: 145).

In short, Pyongyang's domestic situation was in the domain of extreme losses in the late 1990s, but the regime seemed to have escaped the worst-case scenario in the 2000s. As David Kang (2003d: 116) argued, a country falling to pieces would not be able to engage in such long-term planning. The North Korean regime still faced difficulties, but the signs of imminent collapse from the inside were absent. Rather, the Kim Jong Il regime was still strong enough to manage many domestic challenges. Thus, North Korean leaders would not make risk-acceptant foreign policy moves influenced by their unstable domestic politics unless the country's domestic structure is aggravated extremely.

Leadership Succession to Kim Jong Un

Since the mid-1990s, many scholars and policy analysts have believed that the North Korean regime was eventually about to collapse (Eberstadt 1999; Stares and Wit 2009). However, North Korea was as extremely controlled and closed as any other society in history, so its leaders might be able to control the domestic situation in a relatively easy way (Bennett and Lind 2011). The regime has continued to focus on political education and the exertion of systematic social control, so much of the domestic pressure was managed quite efficiently (Oh and Hassig 2000: 127–47). Leadership succession was still an important test case for the Kim Jong Il regime. North Korea saw leadership succession as a key to regime stability and was again prepared for another change from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un. In particular, after Kim

Jong Il suffered a stroke in the summer of 2008, arrangements were made for his third son, Kim Jong Un, to take power upon his death.[199] Although the designated successor, Kim Jong Un, was too young and inexperienced for a leader and almost never known to the North Korean people compared to Kim Jong Il in the mid-1990s, the leadership succession did not have much difficulty this time again. Many analysts discussed the possibility of regime collapse or sudden change in North Korea, which did not happen. Kim Jong Un was promoted to general and named Deputy Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the North Korean Workers' Party in September 2010.[200]

On the other hand, North Korea's economic recession was also an obstacle to regime security amid leadership succession. Its economic situation appeared to have passed through the worst of the "arduous march" by the end of the 1990s but turned downward again in the last years of the Kim Jong Il era. According to the Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS),[201] North Korea suffered consecutive years of economic decline from 2006 to 2010, its GDP growth rate falling by 1.0 percent in 2006 and 0.5 percent in 2010, although the decline was not big. In particular, after the conservative Lee Myung-bak government took office in 2008, the North's main sources of income from South Korea, such as the Mt. Kumgang tour and the Kaesong Industrial Complex, had much difficulty. The Mt. Kumgang tour stopped after one Korean woman was assassinated in June 2008, and the Kaesong Industrial Complex was not working well. Moreover, after North Korea's rocket launch and nuclear test in 2009, international sanctions were reinforced and the inter-Korean economic cooperation project was getting much harder.

In this vein, the North Korean regime made more efforts to stabilize its domestic situation. It was widely believed that rocket launch and nuclear test were conducted as a result of the succession crisis in the country.[202] Pyongyang conducted the nuclear test to show that it did not intend to give up its nuclear weapons program even in a time of possible weakness. The regime might hope that a nuclear test might ensure a smooth transition of power to Kim Jong Un by strengthening solidarity with the powerful military group. A display of technological prowess might also serve domestic stability by securing the North Korean people's support for the regime. In fact, the North Korean media repeatedly praised highly for the accomplishments of the regime,[203] and the regime held mass rallies in Pyongyang to celebrate the successful nuclear test.[204] In this rally, participants praised that the successful nuclear test was such an achievement of the regime's military-first policy that defended North Korea's dignity and sovereign rights. In short, domestic stability and stable leadership succession were one of the most important reference points for the North Korean regime. The North Korean media often emphasized that its dignity and honor are at once Kim Jong Il's authority.[205] The North Korean domestic situation was managed quite efficiently and sustainably in this

period. The challenge for the Kim Jong Il regime was the unpardonable crime that infringes the nation's highest dignity and sovereign rights.[206]

SUMMARY

During the second half of the 1990s, after the nuclear deal with the United States in 1994, North Korean leaders perceived Pyongyang's external situation as improving, so their domain of action was moving toward gains. Thus, North Korean leaders became risk-averse rather than risk-acceptant and did not take a risky foreign policy option but rather sought to engage the United States in an attempt to avoid losses and improve the status quo. After the Bush administration took office, however, Pyongyang's domain of action began to deteriorate again and finally returned to the domain of losses after October 2002. In this losing situation, North Korean leaders began to express a risk-acceptant attitude again and resumed confrontation with the international community with its nuclear program to restore the status quo. North Korea participated in the Six-Party Talks and agreed to the Joint Statement in 2005 and moved to the domain of gains temporarily in 2007, but the Six-Party Talks collapsed in late 2008, and the North's perception quickly deteriorated, producing the confrontational nuclear policy, including nuclear tests and rocket launches.

On the other hand, North Korea's domestic situation went from bad to worse during the second half of the 1990s, mainly due to the food crisis arising from the subsequent natural calamities. In the worsening domestic situation, North Korean leaders might have been tempted to adopt a risky foreign policy if the domestic situation had become extremely worse, but Pyongyang instead chose to improve relations with the international community because the regime was still strong enough to muddle through the domestic crisis. In this domestic situation, North Korea could seek another leadership succession to Kim Jong Un without much difficulty.

Table 4.1 Pyongyang's Nuclear Risk-Taking Attitudes under Kim Jong Il

		International situation	
		Growing gains	*Losses*
Domestic situation	Sustainable	A (Risk-averse: 1995~2002, 2007–2008)	B (Risk-acceptant: 2002–2011)
	Unsustainable	D (Risk-acceptant/ Risk-averse)	E (Highly risk-acceptant)

Source: Created by author.

Finally, Table 4.1 summarizes North Korea's risk-taking attitudes during the Kim Jong Il era. In the matrix, North Korea's risk-taking attitude has shifted from A during the Clinton administration to B after the Bush administration took office in terms of changes in its domestic and international situations, although it moved to A temporarily.

NOTES

1. Its official title is the "Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Geneva, October 21, 1994." The full text of the Agreed Framework can be found on KEDO's webpage. <http://www.kedo.org>.

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Korea's development of conventional weapons like the Taepodong missiles (Armitage 1999). The Clinton administration did not deny such limitations of the Agreed Framework (Perry 1999).

3. Statement by North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator Kang Sok-ju in *Rodong Sinmun*, October 24, 1994.

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13. Even a personal commentary in Rodong Sinmun that had been consistently used to denounce the U.S. in spite of changes in other North Korean statements rated the North Korea–U.S. relations very positively. "Our Principal Position Regarding the Issue between North Korea and the U.S.," *Rodong Sinmun*, November 7, 2000.

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27. Kim Jong Il made this clear in his interview with Myung-ja Moon (2000b). Moon was a Korean-American journalist who interviewed Kim for the first time on June 30, 2000.

28. "Joint Communiqué between Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America, October 12, 2000."

29. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, DC, December 28, 2000.

30. "Statement by North Korea's Armed Forces Ministry Spokesman," *Rodong Sinmun,* September 24, 1996.

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34. Statement by a North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, "We Are Fully Ready to Cope with Whatever Policy the U.S. Administration Adopts," *KCNA*, January 25, 2001.

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52. Statement by a North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, "We will Closely Observe America's Suspicious Move," *Rodong Sinmun*, February 1, 2002.

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Chapter 5

Kim Jong Un

Between Confrontation and Engagement

THE "BYUNGJIN" AND NUCLEAR DETERRENCE STRATEGY: 2012–2017

Pyongyang's Perception: A New Leadership and the Need for Nuclear Deterrence

China and Kim Jong Un Regime

When Kim Jong Il died in December 2011, North Korea was more dependent on China than before. In particular, its economic dependence was growing fast. China was quickly replacing South Korea as a trade partner, and the North's trade volume with China had tripled for the last five years of the Kim Jong Il era and became more than three times that of the South, reaching 5.6 billion US dollars in 2011.[1] In fact, North Korea had made up for the decrement from South Korea with an increment from China. As a result, the new leader, Kim Jong Un, could not help but seek Chinese support for the regime's security. Furthermore, the changing balance of power between the United States and China had a strong influence on the North Korean nuclear issue.[2] China's growing influence over North Korea would inevitably lead to increasing leverage, but Kim Jong Un did not want China to have a strong influence on his country. Rather, he would seek to make use of the Chinese influence to confront South Korea and the United States. North Korea wanted to change the unfavorable security environment by taking advantage of the new balance of power in Northeast Asia caused by the rise of China. Against this backdrop, North Korea was not an isolated nation any longer, strongly dependent on and supported by a rising China.[3] Although China did not perceive North Korea as it had done during the Cold War, China still understood

the strategic importance of the North Korean issues in dealing with the United States.[4]

Given the Chinese–North Korean relations, China's joining in UN sanctions must have come as a surprise to North Korea. Although China often had some reservation about what the United States drafted, it did not veto Resolutions 2087 and 2094, new and tightened economic sanctions in the UN Security Council. In particular, criticism from China continued while North Korea conducted its third nuclear test in February 2013. China's state-run *Global Times* published an editorial explicitly warning that "If North Korea insists on a third nuclear test despite attempts to dissuade it, it must pay a heavy price" and that "The assistance it will be able to receive from China should be reduced."[5] A Chinese scholar also criticized North Korea in the American foreign policy magazine following the third nuclear test.[6] Although the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs called for a calm reaction and denuclearization talk, these could be interpreted as reflections of some voices within China calling for a strong warning to North Korea to break the regime's illusions about China's support.[7]

North Korea strongly protested China's approval of the UN sanctions. In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately after the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution, North Korea condemned China, saying, "Those who repeat wrong actions without the courage or responsibility to correct the UN sanctions, even though they clearly know that the sanctions are wrong, are mean cowards who deceive themselves and others."[8] The National Defense Commission also criticized in a statement, "Even the big countries who should take the lead in establishing a fair order in the world failed to come to their senses, and gave up the basic principles without hesitation pressed by the U.S. dominance and force."[9] Although North Korea's criticism did not explicitly mention China, it was understood to have expressed its disappointment toward China.

The Obama Administration and Kim Jong Un Regime

Under this circumstance, the Obama administration continued the policy of "strategic patience" toward North Korea, which was a kind of benign neglect, not actively addressing the North Korean issue unless there was a change in North Korea's behavior. The Obama administration improved relations with Myanmar, Cuba, and Iran after their domestic political changes, which suggested that domestic political changes in the North Korean regime might be an important variable in Obama's North Korea policy.

For example, while the Obama administration proposed new principles on the use of nuclear weapons and declared the principle of Negative Security Assurance (NSA), which means that the United States would "not use or

threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations,"[10] North Korea was not included in this principle. It was because North Korea was a party to the NPT but conducted nuclear tests. Its nuclear tests and aggressive military provocations made it difficult for the United States to engage North Korea.

Although Washington and Pyongyang agreed to the leap-day agreement on February 29, 2012, in which North Korea agreed to implement a moratorium on long-range missile launches, nuclear tests, and nuclear activities at the Yongbyon nuclear site, Pyongyang's threat perception to Washington was getting worse and the agreement was short-lived due to Pyongyang's rocket launch in April that celebrated the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth. Since then, Obama's North Korea policy focused on pressure rather than dialogue. In particular, Obama signed an Executive Order (E.O. 13687) on January 2, 2015, that granted the Treasury Department the authority to impose sanctions against the North Korean officials and agencies,[11] which was in response to North Korea's cyber-attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment as well as numerous other egregious acts. In a testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Sung Kim, Special Representative for North Korea Policy, said, "We are under no illusions about the DPRK's willingness to abandon its illicit weapons, provocations, and human rights abuses on its own," and that "We will apply pressure both multilaterally and unilaterally to increase the costs to the DPRK of its destructive policy choices."[12] The Obama administration also announced that it will mobilize all available means and pushed for extensive financial sanctions against North Korea. Daniel Glaser, assistant secretary of treasury, also said in the testimony that the United States will "increase financial pressure on the Government of the DPRK and to further isolate the DPRK form the international financial system."[13]

Pyongyang's Threat Perception

North Korea gave a positive evaluation of the U.S.–DPRK relationship after the leap-day agreement in February 2012, but the atmosphere rapidly deteriorated after the rocket launch in April. A spokesperson for the North Korean Foreign Ministry said, "North Korea and the United States have agreed to take a series of confidence-building measures simultaneously as part of an effort to improve relations" and announced that "while the talks are in progress, we have decided temporarily suspend nuclear tests, long-range missile launches, Yongbyon uranium enrichment activities and allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor it."[14] North Korea protested that the rocket launch in April was for a satellite, not a long-range missile. It criticized the United

States and continued its claim by launching another rocket in the form of a satellite in December 2012.[15] However, the United States accused the rocket launch of using ballistic missile technology, a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions.[16]

After the rocket launch in April, Pyongyang declared a full review of its foreign policy. In particular, Pyongyang suggested "two paths" and demanded the United States to choose one.[17] The first path was that the United States should give up its hostile policy toward North Korea and contribute to peace and security on the Korean peninsula. The second path was that it would continue to strengthen its nuclear weapons capabilities if the United States would not give up its hostile policy. North Korea expressed disappointment with the United States, insisting that it now started strengthening its national defense capabilities, including nuclear weapons, because no progress had been made despite nuclear talks with the United States and South Korea.

As Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il maintained, the Kim Jong Un regime continuously insisted that nuclear weapons were developed inevitably because of the United States' hostile policy toward North Korea and the threat of nuclear attack. The North Korean Foreign Ministry claimed that "The US' hostile policy toward Korea has deep roots" and that "It is not that the US became hostile to us because we developed nuclear weapons, but that because the United States, the world's largest nuclear power, was hostile to us, so we inevitably had to possess nuclear weapons."[18] From this point of view, North Korea insisted on the denuclearization of the great powers, not the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. It concluded that "The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is possible only when the global denuclearization is carried out including the denuclearization of the United States,"[19] which meant that the North Korean negotiation tactic changed from the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula to disarmament negotiations with the United States.

North Korea briefly offered to negotiate in June 2013. North Korea proposed inter-Korean talks and high-level talks with the United States.[20] However, North Korea soon withdrew the negotiation proposal and soon again showed conflicting policies. In 2014, North Korea continued to criticize the military threats from South Korea and the United States. In his 2014 New Year's Address, Kim Jong Un strongly criticized South Korea and the United States for bringing nuclear warfare equipment to the Korean peninsula to practice nuclear war against North Korea and create a crisis. He warned that "A dangerous situation is being created where even a minor accidental military clash can turn into an all-out war" and that "If a war broke out again, it will bring about a huge nuclear disaster."[21]

Pyongyang's Nuclear Policy: *Byungjin* and Acquiring Nuclear Deterrence Capability

Despite international sanctions against North Korea, the Kim Jong Un regime acted hard and escalated the crisis. When the UN Security Council resolution on sanctions against long-range rocket launches in December 2012 came out, North Korea immediately protested. The North Korean National Defense Commission announced in a statement that "The satellites and long-range rockets that we will launch in an all-out war and the high-level nuclear tests that we will conduct will target the United States."[22] In particular, North Korea challenged not only the US but also the Chinese government, referring to the "high-level nuclear test" at the time. It was a direct confrontation with the Chinese government's North Korea policy, which maintained the basic principle of denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. Despite China's objection, North Korea raised tensions by expressing its willingness to give up denuclearization, discarding the Six-Party Talks, and denunciating the armistice treaty in turn. As such, North Korea responded with a crisis-escalating strategy by heightening the nuclear issue in response to sanctions against it, despite official and unofficial pressure from China. North Korea actually pushed ahead with its third nuclear test and vehemently opposed international sanctions. North Korea's third nuclear test, despite China's severe warning, was to overshadow the so-called blood alliance between the two countries.

Byungjin and Nuclear Tests

Defying warnings from the international community, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, one year after Kim Jong Un took power. According to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), the seismic activity of this test was 4.9 magnitude, which made the explosion about twice as large as the second test in 2009.[23] It was also equivalent to half the power of the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945. North Korea insisted that the third nuclear test "was conducted safely and perfectly at a high level using a smaller and lighter atomic bomb with greater explosive power than before."[24] In particular, North Korea mentioned that the excellent performance of the diversified nuclear deterrent was physically demonstrated but that it has not been confirmed whether this test was the device made from highly enriched uranium (HEU). Contrary to North Korea's claim, the third nuclear test aroused considerable questions due to its explosive power of less than 10 kilotons. North Korea mentioned that this test used a miniaturized device and that it would continue testing and building its nuclear arsenals unless the United States recognized its right to launch satellites and develop its nuclear program.

After the third nuclear test, North Korea continued to show an aggressive nuclear policy. Most of all, North Korea made it clear that the nuclear test was a means of self-defense against the U.S. hostile policy toward North Korea. North Korea insisted that the nuclear test and nuclear armament are "part of practical countermeasures to protect the safety and sovereignty of the country in response to the heinous hostilities of the United States."[25] The Policy Bureau of the National Defense Commission issued a statement saying that "Our legitimate self-defense nuclear force is what we have inevitably equipped to deal with the continued aggravation of the US policy of hostility to the DPRK and such nuclear intimidation."[26] The Supreme Command of the North Korean People's Army issued a very aggressive statement that "We will demonstrate through practical military actions the resolute will of our army and people to defend the sovereignty and supreme dignity of the country" and threatened that the United States "has to keep in mind that everything is blown away and burns to ashes without anything at the first blow."[27]

In nuclear policy, Kim Jong Un was not much different from his grandfather Kim Il Sung and his father Kim Jong Il. After the third nuclear test, Kim Jong Un announced his new nuclear strategy, *Byungjin* (parallel), which sought to develop nuclear capability and economy simultaneously. On March 31, 2013, he declared *Byungjin* as the new national strategy, which was "a glorious succession of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il's unique *Byungjin* of developing national defense and economy."[28] However, Kim Jong Un's *Byungjin* has focused on building nuclear capability rather than the economy. He later said that North Korea "will sustain *Byungjin*, become a nuclear great power in the East, repeal America's hostile policy toward the North, and transform the armistice treaty into peace treaty."[29] It implied that with nuclear weapons, North Korea wanted to change the balance of power that was favorable to Seoul. While the international community viewed Pyongyang's nuclear program as threatening peace in the region, Pyongyang stressed that its nuclear weapons clear the way for peace by preventing Washington's attempt to use force. This was how the North Koreans saw their nuclear weapons program and why they regarded it legitimate.

North Korea conducted the fourth nuclear test on January 6, 2016, three years after the third nuclear test in February 2013. According to the United States Geological Survey, the fourth nuclear test showed a 5.1 magnitude earthquake with an explosive power of 6 kiloton.[30] In terms of explosive power, the scale was not significantly different from that of the third, but North Korea claimed in a government statement that it was the first hydrogen bomb test.[31] North Korea stated, "We have fully confirmed that the technical specifications of the newly developed hydrogen bomb are accurate and scientifically elucidated the power of the miniaturized hydrogen bomb." Despite its claim, the fourth test was unlikely to be regarded as a hydrogen bomb test

since the hydrogen bomb has a power of hundreds of thousands of TNT tons. Some analyzed that this test was more likely to be a fission bomb, such as a boosted fission weapon.[32]

North Korea repeated the previous claim in a government statement that the fourth nuclear test was "a self-defense measure to protect the sovereignty of the country and the right to live from the intensifying nuclear threats and intimidation from the United States and other enemies and to reliably secure peace and security on the Korean peninsula."[33] It also mentioned that as a responsible nuclear weapons state, it would not use nuclear weapons first unless an aggressive hostile force infringes on our sovereignty, and it would not transfer related means and technology under any circumstances.

In particular, regarding the United States, the North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman argued that "Just as the U.S. hostile acts against the DPRK became routine, so did our self-defense *Byungjin* line, so the United States will have to get used to our status as a nuclear weapons state, whether the U.S. likes it or not."[34] He also demanded that the United States negotiate with North Korea on the suspension of joint military exercises versus a moratorium on nuclear tests and the signing of a peace treaty.

The Kim Jong Un regime's nuclear strategy was further embodied at the seventh Congress of the North Korean Workers' Party. According to the decision of the seventh Party Congress, North Korea had a strategy to maintain the *Byungjin* line of nuclear weapons and economy, become a "nuclear great power" in the East, end the U.S. hostile policy, and convert the armistice treaty into a peace treaty.[35] To this end, North Korea specifically insisted on the U.S. withdrawal of forces and war equipment from South Korea and the complete suspension of U.S.–ROK joint military exercises. North Korea showed its intention to change the U.S. policy and to make the balance of power on the Korean peninsula favorable to the North. Pyongyang's continued offensive nuclear strategy made U.S.–North Korean relations more difficult during the Obama administration.

North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test on September 9, 2016, the sixty-eighth anniversary of the founding of North Korea. The fifth test showed a 5.3 magnitude tremor.[36] Estimates of the explosive yield varied, but it was reportedly about a power of 10 kilotons, which was twice the size of the explosion compared to the fourth test. North Korea surprised the world by showing a fairly advanced explosive power just less than a year after its fourth test.

North Korea claimed in the statement by the Nuclear Weapons Institute that the fifth test was of a nuclear warhead that was standardized to be able to be mounted on strategic ballistic rockets.[37] North Korea claimed that by standardizing nuclear weapons, it could produce various types of miniaturized, lightweight, and diversified nuclear warheads as needed. It was not

clear whether the fifth test was a nuclear warhead test, but if North Korea's claim is correct, it is presumed that the test was carried out using the nuclear warhead model that North Korea unveiled on March 9, 2016.[38] This might be one step closer to the nuclear weapons state and be evaluated as a new and great advancement in North Korea's nuclear capabilities.

North Korea described the fifth test as "a part of practical countermeasures against threats and sanctions from hostile forces, including the United States, who denies our strategic status as a nuclear weapons state and viciously infringes our right to self-defense."[39] The North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman also threatened the international community, saying that "if the enemy touches us, we are ready to counter it."[40] The North's remarks meant that it would solidify its strategic position as a nuclear weapons state and pursue an offensive nuclear strategy externally. North Korea expressed its will to pursue a nuclear balance around the Korean peninsula based on its nuclear deterrence capability.

Acquiring Nuclear Deterrence Capability

North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test on September 3, 2017, a year after its fifth nuclear test, and claimed that it was also a hydrogen bomb test. This test showed a 6.3 magnitude earthquake with a yield of more than 100 kilotons TNT equivalent, which was incomparably powerful than the previous ones.[41] North Korea said that this test was a "hydrogen bomb test for intercontinental ballistic rockets" and was "a very meaningful opportunity to achieve the goal of completing the national nuclear force."[42] The North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs made it clear that it was a nuclear power that possessed intercontinental ballistic rockets along with atomic and hydrogen bombs.[43] It meant that North Korea was not far away from acquiring nuclear deterrence capability against the United States.

The claim of the completion of nuclear deterrence was made more concretely in the launch of the Hwasong-15, which was carried out three months later. In a government statement, North Korea claimed that "the historic cause of completing the national nuclear force and becoming a rocket great power has been realized."[44] It also argued that "the development of strategic weapons is solely to protect the sovereignty and territory of the country from the U.S. imperialist nuclear blackmail" and that its nuclear weapons are for self-defense and it would not pose a threat to any country and region as long as they did not infringe on the North's national interests." The North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs also stated that the purpose of their nuclear armament was "to deter and repel U.S. aggression and aggression against the DPRK, as stipulated in the statute of the Supreme People's Assembly," and that "the reality once again clearly shows that we can defend the peace and

security of the Korean peninsula and the world when we achieve a substantial balance of power with the United States."[45]

INTER-KOREAN AND U.S.–NORTH KOREAN SUMMITS: 2018–2019

Pyongyang's Perception: Self-Confidence in Nuclear Deterrence

The year 2018 meant a lot to North Korea. In fact, there was a new shift in its foreign policy. North Korean athletes and delegations attended the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, and the inter-Korean joint team of women's ice hockey made the Olympic Games a rare show of unity.[46] After the Olympics, South Korean president Moon Jae-in sent special envoys to Pyongyang, which led to the inter-Korean and U.S.–North Korea summits. In fact, the peace movement on the Korean peninsula in 2018 was not expected in advance. The Trump administration made it clear in late 2017 and early 2018 that it would put "maximum pressure" on North Korea in a variety of national strategy reports such as the State of the Union (SOTU),[47] National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS),[48] National Defense Strategy (NDS),[49] and Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).[50] On the other hand, Pyongyang conducted the sixth nuclear test and the ICBM-class "Hwasong-15" rocket launch in November and declared in late 2017 that it had completed nuclear deterrence capability against the United States.

Surprisingly, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for a new transformation of inter-Korean relations in his 2018 New Year's Address, and Pyongyang participated in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. Kim Jong Un mentioned in his New Year's Address that "Through inter-Korean contacts, cooperation and exchanges, it is necessary to solve misunderstandings and mistrusts. If we really want national reconciliation and unity, we will open the way to dialogue and contact."[51] From the beginning of 2018, North Korea sought to change the order of the peninsula through a new charm offensive. The South Korean government was happy to accept Pyongyang's peace initiative. The Trump administration also welcomed and showed a policy change to meet with North Koreans. Then, why did Kim Jong Un suddenly change his course while he was concentrating on nuclear development?

Self-Confidence in Nuclear Deterrence Capability

One important reason for Pyongyang's policy change was its confidence in nuclear capability, which placed its situation in the domain of gains. Pyongyang has sought to acquire nuclear weapons for the past three decades. It has

long insisted that the purpose of its nuclear program is to deter the United States from invading. For instance, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un once mentioned that "everyone should take pride in having consolidated firmly the powerful nuclear war deterrent despite the hostile forces' persistent pressure and sanctions."[52] Pyongyang may want to keep nukes as a type of insurance card against the U.S. intervention. Pyongyang finally announced the completion of nuclear deterrence after the launch of ICBM-class Hwasong-15. The North Korean government claimed that it had completed the national nuclear force and become a rocket great power.[53] It noted that it could defend the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the world by achieving a substantial balance of power with the United States.[54]

In fact, North Korea has long believed in the power of nuclear deterrence and sought to possess its own against the United States. The logic of nuclear deterrence explains that nuclear weapons may guarantee mutual assured destruction (MAD) between nuclear-armed powers. Pyongyang appeared to believe that MAD had started working against Washington from 2017. Kim Jong Un himself once said that "now that the DPRK's capability to strike the very heart of the United States at any given time has been physically proved, the United States would find it more difficult to dare attack the DPRK."[55] Although nobody can be sure of whether Pyongyang has really completed the technology to capability needed for MAD, with which it can launch a devastating nuclear second strike even after a massive nuclear first strike by Washington, Pyongyang declared that it achieved its own nuclear deterrence capability. North Koreans appeared to believe that nuclear weapons would give them freedom of action and make Washington and Seoul more hesitant in a crisis on the Korean peninsula. Kim Jong Un mentioned that "Even though the U.S. is wielding the nuclear stick and going wild for another war, it will not dare to invade us because we currently have a powerful nuclear deterrent."[56] In this sense, Kim himself declared the no-first-use policy, confirming that North Korea "will not abuse nuclear weapons as a responsible nuclear power if the aggressive enemy does not use it against us."[57]

Having self-confidence in its own nuclear deterrence capability, North Korea declared a "new strategic line" at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party on April 20, one week before the inter-Korean Summit.[58] It aimed at economic development based on its self-declared nuclear capability. It meant a partial amendment to the *Byungjin* line declared in March 2013 that sought the nuclear capability and economy simultaneously. In this meeting, Kim Jong Un announced that the historical tasks by the *Byungjin* had been achieved and that it was time for a new strategic line to concentrate all efforts to build a socialist economy in line with the new high-level demands of the revolutionary development.

The Trump Administration and "America First"

The other reason for Pyongyang's policy change in 2018 appeared to be the Trump administration's new foreign policy based on the "America First" slogan. When President Trump took office in January 2017, he declared that "America First" is the new decree, which represented the idea of U.S. retrenchment from the world. He mentioned in his inaugural address that "From this moment on, it's going to be America First. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families."[59] He meant that he would put American interests first in pursuing his foreign policy toward other nations, irrespective of previous relations with them, whether they were allies or enemies. As is well known, Trump, unlike Obama, escalated tensions with his European and East Asian allies while emphasizing relations with Russia.[60]

Trump also made it clear to the international community that he would always put America first. He spoke at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017 that "The United States will forever be a great friend to the world, and especially to its allies," but that "we can no longer be taken advantage of, or enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return."[61] He would pursue a completely different foreign policy from previous administrations by defending America's interests above all else. Again, he delivered a surprising speech on U.S. foreign policy at the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018. He spoke:

> America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism. Here in the Western Hemisphere, we are committed to maintaining our independence from the encroachment of expansionist foreign powers. It has been the formal policy of our country since President Monroe that we reject the interference of foreign nations in this hemisphere and in our own affairs.[62]

His speech was shocking. In fact, Trump's global strategy initiated by the "America First" policy was quite a challenge to the Korean peninsula. The Trump administration was seeking for a retrenchment or isolationist strategy, which might affect the security environment a lot on the Korean peninsula. As President Trump emphasized the "America First," the United States was more likely to relocate its troops and resources dispatched overseas. It could raise not only the status of the U.S. military presence in Korea but also the possibility of the additional burdens on South Korea's contributions to the USFK in dealing with the North Korea issue. As a result, South Korea was faced with considerable difficulty in operating the U.S.–ROK alliance. Although Trump made harsh comments in 2017 that "we will have no choice

but to totally destroy North Korea," calling Kim Jong Un a rocket man on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime,[63] his foreign policy was a welcome change for North Korea, which moved its situation to the domain of gains. Particularly in his 2018 UN General Assembly address after meeting with Kim Jong Un, Trump praised himself for the historic foreign policy progress achieved with North Korea. He stressed that "We have engaged with North Korea to replace the specter of conflict with a bold and new push for peace."[64]

Trump's foreign policy change on the Korean peninsula by the "America First" policy was revealed more in detail in the historic summit meeting with Kim Jong Un. He implied in Singapore the possibility of a new policy change in the U.S.–ROK alliance with the weakening of the U.S. security pledge on the Korean peninsula. In his press conference, Trump showed clearly how his "America First" could be applied to the Korean peninsula. He said,

> The past does not have to define the future. Yesterday's conflict does not have to be tomorrow's war. And as history has proven over and over again, adversaries can indeed become friends. We can honor the sacrifice of our forefathers by replacing the horrors of battle with the blessings of peace. And that's what we're doing and that's what we have done. There is no limit to what North Korea can achieve when it gives up its nuclear weapons and embraces commerce and engagement with the rest of the world that really wants to engage. Chairman Kim has before him an opportunity like no other: to be remembered as the leader who ushered in a glorious new era of security and prosperity for his people.[65]

He went further to say about U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK) and joint military exercises.[66] Although he admitted that it was not part of the equation right now, he wanted to get U.S. soldiers out and bring them back home at some point. He also mentioned about stopping the U.S.–Korea joint military exercises, calling it "war games," with which the United States would save a tremendous amount of money. He really stopped the joint military exercise in 2018 and also downsized other exercises the next year.[67] In Singapore, Trump was thinking about a negotiation card for South Korea as well as for North Korea. When President Moon visited Washington, D.C., in September to discuss the Joint Declaration of Pyongyang and the second U.S.–North Koran summit, President Trump raised the issue of the unfair trade agreement with South Korea and signed a new one.[68] Indeed, Trump's "America First" policy changed a lot U.S. foreign policy toward the Korean peninsula, and Pyongyang welcomed Trump's new foreign policy. Kim Jong Un said that he highly appreciated Trump's will and aspiration to solve problems in a realistic way through dialogue and negotiations, regardless of the hostile past.[69]

Of course, Kim Jong Un warned in his 2019 New Year's Address that if the United States would not keep its promises to the world and unilaterally impose sanctions and pressure on North Korea, North Korea would have to seek a new path.[70] However, he said that it was his firm will and position to establish new relations with the United States, establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean peninsula, and achieve complete denuclearization, as declared in the North Korea–United States. Joint Statement in Singapore.

Pyongyang's Foreign Policy: Summits with South Korea and the United States

The Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity, and Unification of the Korean Peninsula

Kim Jong Un's nuclear policy change in 2018 produced three Inter-Korean and two U.S.–North Korean Summits. Kim agreed with South Korean president Moon the Panmunjom Declaration in April and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration in September. The Panmunjom Declaration embodied the two Koreas' peace initiative as an advanced declaration compared to the two former inter-Korean summits in 2000 and 2007.[71] In this declaration, Kim and Moon agreed that

> South and North Korea will actively cooperate to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. Bringing an end to the current unnatural state of armistice and establishing a robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is a historical mission that must not be delayed any further.[72]

Regarding the nuclear issue, "South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula."

Given Pyongyang's previous policy toward Seoul, the Panmunjom Declaration was a tremendous policy change by North Korea because it included issues of denuclearization, disarmament, the end of the Korean War declaration, and the peace treaty that Pyongyang was unwilling to discuss in the two previous inter-Korean summits. In particular, Kim agreed in detail on the development of inter-Korean relations, the resolution of war risks and the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula. Kim also agreed to convert the armistice treaty into a peace treaty in order to build "a permanent and solid peace regime."

Of course, the Panmunjom Declaration left many pitfalls regarding denuclearization. Although it referred to "complete denuclearization," it was not clear whether the conceptual difference between the two Koreas had been

resolved, which implied the imperfection of "complete denuclearization."[73] It was regrettable that the only C of the "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement (CVID)" was included. Because V and I were technological and detailed issues, they were difficult to discuss at the inter-Korean summit. It was also unclear what "the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula" and "the Korean peninsula without nuclear weapons" meant. It was not clear whether the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula meant denuclearizing North Korea or both the North Korean nuclear program and U.S. nuclear umbrella and strategic assets.

Given the actions and strategies of North Korea by 2017, however, the content of the Panmunjom Declaration was a tremendous change. In particular, the change and the reconciliation are striking in the inter-Korean military cooperation. The two leaders "solemnly declared before the 80 million Korean people and the whole world that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun." They also "shared the firm commitment to bring a swift end to the Cold War relic of longstanding division and confrontation" and agreed to the military de-escalation, disarmament and peace regime building on the Korean peninsula in Articles 2 and 3 of the Panmunjom Declaration.

In Article 2, the two Koreas agreed to alleviate the military tension and eliminate the danger of war. They promised that they would "make joint efforts to alleviate the acute military tension and practically eliminate the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula." As a first step for military de-escalation, two Koreas "agreed to completely cease all hostile acts against each other in every domain, including land, air and sea that are the source of military tension and conflict." In this vein, "the two sides agreed to transform the demilitarized zone into a peace zone in a genuine sense by ceasing as of May 1 this year all hostile acts and eliminating their means, including broadcasting through loudspeakers and distribution of leaflets, in the areas along the Military Demarcation Line." The two Koreas decided "to devise a practical scheme to turn the areas around the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone in order to prevent accidental military clashes and guarantee safe fishing activities." In order to "take various military measures to ensure active mutual cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts," the two Koreas also "agreed to hold frequent meetings between military authorities, including the Defense Ministers Meeting, in order to immediately discuss and solve military issues that arise between them." In this regard, the two sides agreed to first convene military talks at the rank of general in May.

On the other hand, the two Koreas "reaffirmed the Non-Aggression Agreement that precludes the use of force in any form against each other, and agreed to strictly adhere to this Agreement," and agreed to "carry out disarmament in a phased manner, as military tension is alleviated and substantial progress is

made in military confidence-building." Importantly, the two Koreas agreed to actively "pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to declaring an end to the War" in order to turn the armistice into a peace treaty during this year that marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Armistice.

In fact, the Panmunjom Declaration was a comprehensive one and included diverse aspects of military cooperation between the two Koreas. Only if the agreement were implemented fully, it might be able to decrease the military tension on the Korean peninsula so much as nobody has ever expected. It was quite different from the previous experiences of inter-Korean cooperation because the non-military cooperation was followed by military cooperation during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments. However, the Panmunjom Declaration reversed the sequence and produced the military agreement first without specific economic, social, and cultural exchanges and cooperation. It meant a lot to the North Korean policy change.

Trump-Kim Summit in Singapore

Kim Jong Un's peace initiative in 2018 was not only with South Korea but also with the United States. The United States and North Korea held a first and historic summit in Singapore on June 12, 2018. When Kim met with President Trump in Singapore, he expressed, "It was not easy to get here. The past worked as fetters on our limbs, and the old prejudices and practices worked as obstacles on our way forward. But we overcame all of them, and we are here today."[74] Trump and Kim acknowledged that the first summit in history between the United States and North Korea was "an epochal event of great significance in overcoming decades of tensions and hostilities between the two countries and for the opening up of a new future."[75]

In the Joint Statement of the Singapore Summit, Kim Jong Un and Trump exchanged opinions on the issues related to the establishment of new U.S.–North Korean relations and the building of a lasting, stable, and robust peace regime on the Korean peninsula. Regarding nuclear issue, Kim "reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," while Trump committed to providing security guarantees to North Korea. They recognized that mutual confidence building would be able to promote the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and North Korea reaffirmed the Panmunjom Declaration and committed to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Kim Jong Un and Trump made a new history in U.S.–DPRK relations by holding the first summit meeting. In particular, Kim showed a new foreign policy toward the United States by reaching an agreement on denuclearization and a peace regime not only with the South Korean government but also

with the Trump administration. Considering that North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test and the ICBM-class rocket launch of a Hwasong-15 in the previous year, his policy change was a surprising event. In late 2017, the Trump administration reportedly envisioned the "bloody nose" strategy, a military operation of preemptive and targeted strike against North Korea,[76] but Kim's new foreign policy also changed Trump's course of action on North Korea in 2018.

Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018

North Korea's peace initiative in 2018 continued in the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September. Kim met with Moon in Pyongyang and reconfirmed that "The Korean Peninsula must be turned into a land of peace free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats, and that substantial progress toward this end must be made in a prompt manner."[77] In this regard, Kim promised that North Korea would permanently dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site and launch the platform under the observation of experts from relevant countries. North Korea also "expressed its willingness to continue to take additional measures, such as the permanent dismantlement of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, as the United States takes corresponding measures in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 US–DPRK Joint Statement." It meant that North Korea would cooperate closely in the process of pursuing complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Moreover, the two leaders agreed that the two sides would make efforts to take several measures to defuse military tension on the Korean peninsula. Most of all, the two Koreas "agreed to expand the cessation of military hostility in regions of confrontation such as the DMZ into the substantial removal of the danger of war across the entire Korean Peninsula and a fundamental resolution of the hostile relations." In this vein, the two Koreas "agreed to adopt the 'Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain'"[78] as an annex to the Pyongyang Declaration. They promised that they would thoroughly abide by and faithfully implement it and to actively take practical measures to transform the Korean peninsula into a land of permanent peace. In the agreement on the military domain, the two Koreas "agreed to completely cease all hostile acts against each other in every domain, including land, air and sea that are the source of military tension and conflict." They also "agreed to devise military assurance measures necessary for invigorating exchanges, cooperation, contacts and visits" and "to devise various measures for mutual military confidence building."

In fact, such an inter-Korean agreement in the military domain of the Pyongyang Joint Declaration was quite surprising and unprecedented. Although there have been several inter-Korean military agreements for the

past three decades, economic cooperation and social-cultural exchanges have been followed by most agreements in military affairs between the two Koreas. Economic and social domains are normally regarded as soft issues and relatively easier to agree on than hard issues such as political and military ones. So, most cooperation and integration are first led by cooperation from the economic and social-cultural exchanges, as the functionalist approach suggests (Haas 1958, 1961, 1964; Mitrany 1966, 1975; Hwang and Kim 2015). In this vein, the inter-Korean military agreement in 2018 was quite interesting and surprising because they were not preceded by inter-Korean economic cooperation, if any, as opposed to the cases of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments in the 2000s.

Of course, the Moon Jae-in government did not seem to originally want to put first priority on the military agreement rather than the inter-Korean economic cooperation. The main reason for the failure of producing any serious inter-Korean economic cooperation was the economic sanctions on North Korea by the international community. Any serious economic cooperation with North Korea could violate the UN Security Council Resolutions, so the South Korean government could not seek inter-Korean economic cooperation projects. However, it still meant that Kim Jong Un showed a very different approach to inter-Korean relations from the previous periods.

THE COLLAPSE OF SUMMITS AND "HEAD-ON BREAKTHROUGH": AFTER 2020

Pyongyang's Perception: Returning to the Past

Between Denuclearization and Peace Regime

President Trump and Chairman Kim met again and held the second summit in Hanoi at the end of February 2019, but it failed to produce any agreement as opposed to the first summit in Singapore. After the failure of the Hanoi Summit, Pyongyang's perception started returning to the past, a domain of loss. In fact, there is a dilemma between denuclearization and a peace regime on the Korean peninsula. North Korea has played an exchange game with the United States (Hwang 2018). The main difficulty in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue was the intrinsic dilemma between denuclearization and peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

Pyongyang has consistently made Kim Il Sung's old claim that the United States had caused the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula during the Cold War by deploying nuclear weapons in Korea. Pyongyang never accepted the nuclear issue as a North Korean problem but has recognized it as a problem of the entire Korean peninsula, including the United States. In addition, North

Korea has argued that their nuclear weapons are protecting rather than threatening the peace on the Korean peninsula. For North Korea, it is the United States that threatens the peace on the Korean peninsula, and they believe that North Korea has prevented a war on the Korean peninsula through nuclear deterrence. Therefore, North Korea believes that complete guarantees of the North Korean regime should go first before the complete denuclearization. In the end, North Korea's concept of denuclearization means that nuclear disarmament should be implemented not only by North Korea but also by other nuclear powers, including the United States. In the end, North Korea has the idea that they can denuclearize only when the hostile relations between the United States and North Korea fundamentally change and a peace regime on the Korean peninsula is achieved.

This is why Pyongyang has contended so far that a security guarantee and a peace treaty should be established first before any measure on North Korean denuclearization. Although the United States has believed that a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula would be meaningless unless North Korea gave up its nuclear weapons program, Pyongyang has been very reluctant to denuclearize without any guarantee by the United States. When the United States demanded the CVID (complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization), what Pyongyang wanted was the complete, verifiable, and irreversible security guarantee, which can be labeled as CVIG. Kim Jong Un once complained at the Trump-Kim summit that North Korea had no legal guarantees to safeguard its security. When Trump asked what kind of guarantees the North wanted, Kim did not respond with specifics (Bolton 2020: Ch. 11). It would include not only a peace treaty or diplomatic normalization with the United States but also the end of the hostile relations between the United States and North Korea, which required the fundamental transformation of security environment around the Korean peninsula.

It is not an easy task. Building a peace regime on the Korean peninsula is to dismantle the hostile security environment of the cold war between the two Koreas and U.S.–North Korean relations. This eventually required not only the development of inter-Korean relations but also progress in U.S.–North relations. From the American perspective, the establishment of a peace regime would presuppose the North Korean denuclearization. From the North Korean viewpoint, however, the resolution of the nuclear issue would be possible only when a certain degree of peace settlement on the Korean peninsula is achieved. So, there is a real dilemma between denuclearization and a peace regime: Which one should go first? Furthermore, in order to resolve this dilemma, it is also important to persuade neighboring powers such as China, Russia, and Japan. In particular, it can be realized under a scenario where the United States and China cooperated with each other.[79] With this dilemma between denuclearization and peace regime still going on, however,

U.S.–North Korean relations would not change much. Without any substantial change in U.S.–North Korean relations, there would be no solution for the North Korean issue. Pyongyang has played a negotiation game with the United States between denuclearization and a peace regime. Kim Jong Un appeared to believe that he could persuade Trump in Singapore, but it turned out in Hanoi that he failed in achieving a U.S. security guarantee and a peace regime. This is the reason for Kim's return to the past.

Pyongyang's Perception at Hanoi and After

Pyongyang has had a perception that security guarantee and peace regime should be ahead of denuclearization and that peace leads to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. In fact, Pyongyang appeared to note that the Singapore Joint Statement also reflected such sequence and the "action for action" approach because it stated first about President Trump's commitment to providing security guarantees to the DPRK and then stated about Chairman Kim Jong Un's reaffirmation on the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.[80] Pyongyang understood at the summit that

> President Trump would suspend the U.S.-ROK joint military exercise, which the DPRK considers a provocation, provide a security guarantee while the good-natured dialogue between the U.S. and the DPRK is in progress, and express his intention to lift sanctions as relations improve through dialogue and negotiations.[81]

Kim also told Trump that if the United States took genuine confidence-building measures to improve relations between the two countries, they could continue to take the next level of additional good-faith measures accordingly. Furthermore, there was a hint that the United States would accept such a deal at Hanoi. Stephen Biegun, then-U.S. Special Representative for North Korea, implied in his speech at Stanford University that the Trump administration was prepared to pursue "simultaneously and in parallel" all of the commitments outlined at the Trump-Kim Singapore summit in June 2018.[82]

However, there was a perception gap between Trump and Kim, and it was the main reason for the failure at the Hanoi summit. Trump mentioned in his press conference that there was a gap and that Kim Jong Un wanted to just do areas that were less important than the areas that the United States wanted. Trump also hinted that there were other things that the U.S. found but the media did not talk about and write about, including the uranium enrichment program, missiles, warheads, and weapons system.[83] After Biegun spoke about the "action for action" formula at Stanford, then-National Security Advisor John Bolton persuaded Trump not to agree to it at Hanoi. So, Kim Jong Un was frustrated when President Trump demanded

an agreement on complete denuclearization at once, including all North Korean nuclear programs, ballistic missiles, and chemical and biological weapons (Bolton 2020: Ch. 11). Kim expected at Hanoi that Trump would agree to Pyongyang's first step of a partial denuclearization measure. He sought to persuade Trump to lift the main economic sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council in 2016 and 2017 in return for the promise to dismantle its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. This can be seen from Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho's statement in a press conference shortly after the summit that "it was the most measures that North Korean can at the present state."[84]

Kim Jong Un refused to accept what Trump proposed at Hanoi because Trump had set the frame of negotiation in a different way than he expected: Washington's gradual security guarantee vs. Pyongyang's complete denuclearization at once.[85] Even if Kim made a strategic decision on denuclearization, he had a strategy of negotiating with the United States by a step-by-step approach simultaneously and in parallel. When Trump demanded a bigger deal, it was much more than Kim expected.[86] After the Singapore summit in June 2018, Pyongyang understood that Washington also agreed to the North Korean approach of the "action for action." John Bolton, then-U.S. National Security Advisor, also noted that Trump agreed to the "action for action" at Singapore.[87] This was why Choi Sun-hee, vice minister of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated at the press conference that Kim did not understand America's way of calculating the denuclearization at the Hanoi summit.[88] For Kim Jong Un, it was unacceptable to completely denuclearize only with the lifting of economic sanctions. Because Pyongyang wanted to secure its complete regime guarantee in return for complete denuclearization, it demanded a step-by-step approach rather than a big deal at once. Since Pyongyang's security concerns are focused on how to end U.S. hostile policy, it will continuously seek to change U.S. policy toward the Korean peninsula.

Pyongyang's security problems do not come to an end with the lifting of economic sanctions, or the declaration of the end of the Korean War, or the conclusion of a peace treaty. Pyongyang has hoped to fundamentally change the unfavorable security environment around the Korean peninsula. Although it is unclear what kind of security guarantee Pyongyang will be satisfied with, it might be something like the Vietnamese case. Vietnam now seeks security cooperation with the United States even though it waged a war in the twentieth century. Vietnam has gone through a great change in its security environment and now has to deal with the rising threat from China.[89] The Vietnamese case may tell what a completely different security environment would be like for North Korea. Of course, it is not easy to think about Pyongyang's seeking security cooperation with Washington to deal with the threat from Beijing in the foreseeable future. It means that the nuclear deal is very fragile and easy

to collapse. In fact, Kim Jong Un expressed his regrets about the Hanoi summit in his administrative policy speech in April. He said:

> The second North Korea-U.S. summit in Hanoi last February raised a strong question as to whether our strategic determination and courageous steps were the right one. It was an opportunity to be wary of whether the United States has any genuine intention to improve relations between the two countries. We set the necessary steps and paths that must be taken for the implementation of the June 12 DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement and expressed our determination to take serious and reliable measures, and we expected a response from the United States. However, the United States came to the summit with only thinking about ways that were completely impossible to achieve. In other words, the United States was not ready to sit face to face and solve problems with us, and did not have clever directions and methodologies. With that thought, the United States will not be able to move us even if they sit face to face with us a hundred or a thousand times again, and they will not be able to take any interests of their own at all. Now in the United States, hostile movements that go against the spirit of the June 12 DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement are being taken, such as a test simulation of intercepting our intercontinental ballistic rocket and the resumption of military exercises that the U.S. President himself promised to suspend. I find this flow very offensive. Just as when the wind blows, there are waves, so the more U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK becomes more logical, the more our actions in response are bound to follow.
>
> In order to implement the June 12 DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement under the condition of deep-rooted hostility between the DPRK and the US, both sides must put down each other's unilateral demands and find a constructive solution that meets their respective interests. To do this, it is necessary for the United States to stop the current calculation and approach us with a new calculation. In the current situation, however, I think that there is no need to stick to a summit with the U.S. to lift sanctions.[90]

Kim Jong Un said that he would be patient and wait for the courageous resolve of the United States until the end of 2019, but added that it would definitely be difficult to get another good opportunity like last time. In this sense, even after the failure at Hanoi, Kim Jong Un met Trump at the Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on June 30. The reunion of the two leaders, which began with Trump's tweet, was not a short two-minute meeting that Trump suggested, but the third summit with more than 50 minutes of talk. This sudden encounter was a surprise, and even North Korea hoped it might be a new turning point after the failure of the Hanoi summit.[91] Two leaders agreed to resume negotiations with the working-level officials, but no agreement could be reached at the following meeting at Stockholm in October. The difference between the two was still large, and the pessimistic outlook for U.S.–North Korean relations prevailed. North Korea argued that the United States was

not ready for the nuclear negotiation at all but sought to use the dialogue in domestic politics.[92] So, Pyongyang's perception was getting worse, and its frame went back to the domain of losses.

Pyongyang's Foreign Policy: Returning to Confrontation

As Pyongyang's perception started deteriorating in 2019 and moved back to the past, its nuclear policy toward the United States also became risk-acceptant and confrontational. In fact, Pyongyang came up with a long-term survival strategy against the United States in 2020 as U.S.–North Korea nuclear negotiations ran into difficulties. Pyongyang's strategy toward the United States was well reflected in the fifth Plenary Session of the seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party held in December 2019.[93] At this session, North Korea emphasized self-reliance, demonstrating the seriousness of the security situation it has faced since 2019 and a sense of crisis for the U.S.–DPRK relationship. The session's slogan was "Let's overcome all obstacles that impede our progress through a head-on breakthrough." It meant that Pyongyang would pursue an aggressive policy toward the United States. Kim Jong Un emphasized.

The meeting also warned that the Workers' Party should not even dream of the United States and hostile forces allowing North Korea to live comfortably and should overcome the difficulties posed in the path of socialist construction only through the power of self-reliance. In addition, it also noted that the party would move on with a strong political, diplomatic, and military offensive. On the other hand, the party also demanded the United States a policy change regarding the nuclear negotiations. North Korea criticized that the United States had its strategy of pressing the North and seeking its collapse from the inside. The U.S. intention was to keep strengthening sanctions against North Korea, gradually weakening its power. Recognizing that the nuclear stalemate would inevitably prolong, North Korea made clear that it would not come back to the negotiation table in the way the United States wanted.

Pyongyang's offensive policy toward Washington was embodied at the eighth Congress of Workers' Party of DPRK in January 2021. In particular, Pyongyang emphasized the "strategic deterrence" by the "nuclear shield" related to its nuclear strategy. Kim Jong Un made clear North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state with the Hwasong series of medium-range and intercontinental ballistic rockets and the Pukguksong series of underwater and ground-launched ballistic rockets. He emphasized that those weapons allowed us to solidify a strong and reliable strategic deterrent.[94] In addition, Kim Jong Un did not mention at all about nuclear negotiation and peace regime but talked only about military deterrence through strong national

defense as the basis of his policy toward the United States. Kim Jong Un said, "There is nothing more foolish and dangerous than standing indifferently without constantly increasing one's strength while observing that the enemy's advanced weapons targeting our country are increasing."

Another important aspect of Pyongyang's confrontation against the United States was to strengthen North Korea–China relations. Kim Jong Un noted, "Through five rounds of DPRK-China summit, the Workers' Party has deepened strategic communication and mutual understanding between the two parties, thereby providing a firm guarantee for further strengthening and developing the DPRK-China relationship." Pyongyang's policy toward China was also evident in the congratulatory message of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China introduced during the eighth Party Congress and the congratulations of President Xi Jinping on the appointment of Kim Jong Un as general secretary.[95]

Against this backdrop, Pyongyang started heightening its confrontational policy. In particular, Pyongyang restarted Yongbyon nuclear facilities. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, "Application of Safeguards in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," submitted to the IAEA Board of Governors by the director general,[96] North Korea appeared to have restarted its Yongbyon nuclear facility since early July in 2021. The report confirmed that the 5-megawatt nuclear reactor had remained inactive between December 2018 and January 2021. However, "there have been indications, including the discharge of cooling water, consistent with the operation" since early July. Additionally, there were indications that Yongbyon's radiochemical laboratory had been in operation for five months, from mid-February to mid-July, much longer than the time it took for facility maintenance in the past. The five-month operation time was equal to the time it takes for a 5-megawatt reactor to reprocess spent fuel. It was also the same as when North Korea announced in 2003, 2005, and 2009 that it had begun reprocessing activities. IAEA reported that further indications that the Pyongsan Uranium Mine and Concentration Plant was in operation confirmed that the Yongbyon nuclear facility was, in fact, restarted.

The restarting of the Yongbyon facility was a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions. It might be an effort to put into motion what Kim Jong Un had mentioned in his report during the eighth Party Congress in January. In the report, Kim demanded that North Korea continue to strengthen its nuclear forces without delay. He also said that North Korea must deter, regulate, and manage potential military threats by "further advancing nuclear technologies, including miniaturization and tacticalization of nuclear weapons, that can be applied in different means in the modern war depending on the purpose of operational missions and targets, and continue to push ahead with the production of super-large nuclear warheads."[97] Interestingly, the

report also contained plans to develop a nuclear power industry, in earnest, to provide the country with a mid- to long-term strategy for energy supply. Kim's report emphasized the importance of continuing its nuclear activities, both from a military and energy supply perspective.

Because the IAEA has not been able to implement any nuclear safeguards in North Korea since March 2009 following the suspension of Six-Party Talks, the restarting of the Yongbyon nuclear facility has great implications. In April 2013, North Korea announced that it would restart its Yongbyon uranium enrichment facility and 5-megawatt power plant. In September 2015, it declared that all of the Yongbyon facilities were fully operational. Following these announcements, North Korea conducted the fourth, fifth, and sixth nuclear tests in 2016 and 2017, making leaps in terms of its nuclear technologies and capabilities. As such, the restarting of Yongbyon in 2021 could prove to be an important turning point for the North Korean nuclear issue and its confrontational behavior.

North Korea's restarting of its nuclear activities may negatively influence U.S.–DPRK negotiations in the coming years. Since the breakdown of the Trump–Kim summit meeting in Hanoi, the two sides have criticized each other and have failed to return to the negotiating table. The restarting of Yongbyon has added more uncertainty to the prospect of future negotiations. Following a review of its North Korea policy, the Biden administration described its North Korea policy as a "calibrated and practical approach"—different from Trump's summit diplomacy and Obama's strategic patience.[98] However, given the lack of details of this approach, including a specific agenda as well as the conditions in which negotiations will take place, there are concerns about just how calibrated the Biden administration's approach will be. Biden appeared unlikely to undertake a change in policy unless North Korea makes the first move.[99] However, North Korea will find it more difficult to engage with Biden because it has been very critical of his policy.[100] Since December 2019, North Korea has suspended its negotiations with the United States, announcing that it would pursue a strategy of "head-on breakthrough." With U.S.–DPRK negotiations deadlocked, North Korea seems to have started raising tensions. As mentioned earlier, North Korea announced during the fifth Plenary Meeting of the seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party of DPRK in December 2019 and the eighth Party Congress in January 2021 that it would deal with the United States through a "head-on breakthrough." While it may not create a crisis in the short term, it has a worsening perception and will more likely prepare for a long-term confrontation with the United States by raising tensions.

In this vein, Pyongyang has sought for a transition of nuclear strategy. Kim Jong Un mentioned in April 2022 that deterrence would be the first mission but that the nuclear forces would have no choice but to carry out its second

mission unexpectedly if enemies try to usurp the DPRK's fundamental interests.[101] The second mission was released in more detail later when North Korea promulgated the Nuclear Forces Policy Law in September 2022.[102] The law prescribed deterrence as the first mission and the use of nuclear weapons as the second mission, but it also stipulated five conditions for nuclear first use. Three of them are the situations of nuclear or non-nuclear preemptive attack by hostile forces on North Korea, and the other two are situations of wartime operation and inevitable catastrophic crisis. The law includes an aggressive nuclear first-use policy, possibly with short-range missiles and tactical nuclear weapons (Panda 2021: 7–24). In fact, North Korea has planned to develop small tactical nuclear weapons, medium-range and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. It may imply that Pyongyang is seeking a transition of nuclear strategy from assured retaliation to asymmetric escalation, which would carry extreme risks. While the strategy of assured retaliation needs secure second-strike capabilities that can credibly threaten nuclear retaliation, the asymmetric escalation strategy intends to present a credible threat of a first nuclear strike against military and civilian targets and respond to rapid and asymmetric escalation (Narang 2014: 8, 14–21). Under this strategy, Pyongyang will more likely predelegate the authority of nuclear strike to lower-level commanders in the field to make the threat of nuclear first-use more credible and deter the American and South Korean conventional invasion (Narang 2014: 78–79, 84–85). In fact, North Korea's Nuclear Forces Policy Law includes the predelegation of a nuclear first strike. Pyongyang would likely operationalize nuclear weapons as war-fighting for deterrence credibility.

DOMESTIC SITUATION AND NUCLEAR POLICY IN THE KIM JONG UN ERA

Regime Stability under Kim Jong Un

Looking back on North Korean history since 1945, North Korea has made great efforts with regard to regime stability. North Korean leaders have appeared to be men of a long-term and cautious national strategy and not reckless men of impulse. They have been evil but very good at calculating their benefits and costs and are clear in understanding their place in the world. More than seven decades of rule under Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un and quite stable leadership successions clearly showed the durability of the North Korean system. The leaders know how to control the nation as dictators (Byman and Lind 2010). They are malign but not mad, rather quite rational in managing the domestic situation. In this sense, Kim Jong Un is not

an exception. If he were a reckless man, he would more likely gamble, but he has rather shown the capability of strengthening his power as a dictator.

After Kim Jong Il died in December 2011, many analysts believed that Kim Jong Un, then a 27-year-old young and inexperienced leader, would not be able to save the regime. However, none of the predictions have been realized. Many unification scenarios by the United States and South Korea are based on the regime collapse of North Korea, but there has been no report of the North Korean regime being threatened by a popular revolution or by a military coup. With North Korea being a typical dictatorship, Kim Jong Un has made use of the dictator's control toolbox (Hwang 2020). In order to prevent a military coup, Kim Jong Un, like his grandfather and father, has heavily relied on security forces, restrictive social policies, and manipulation of ideas and information. Even if the military conducts a coup, it would be very difficult for them to take power in North Korea because they do not have political legitimacy. Kim Jong Un has executed many military and political figures since he took power, even killing his uncle, Jang Song-thaek.[103] If Kim Jong Un had failed in consolidating his power, he would not be able to execute him.

To a certain extent, North Korea's domestic political and economic situations are expected to impact the North Korean nuclear problem. Throughout the Kim Jong Un era, there have been serious concerns that North Korea has experienced grave domestic difficulties caused by international sanctions, shut down of its borders to deal with COVID-19, and natural disasters, including typhoons and floods. In the recent Voluntary National Review (VNR) submitted to the United Nations,[104] North Korea acknowledged that it was experiencing difficulties with cereal production as well as medical supplies, including COVID-19 vaccines. During the eighth Party Congress, Kim Jong Un even admitted that the 5-year economic development plan had failed.[105] Even though North Korea announced its first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in early May 2022,[106] it has been pulling all resources to prevent the spread of the pandemic. If North Korea's domestic difficulties persist, North Korea might be forced to engage in an aggressive foreign policy aimed at garnering attention from the international community. If the domestic predicament continues, North Korea may produce other provocative measures, including dealing with its domestic difficulties. However, the Kim Jong Un regime turned out to be sustainable enough to go through all the difficulties.

COVID-19 and the Kim Jong Un Regime

In the nuclear deadlock, COVID-19 made the North Korean domestic situation even more difficult. In fact, the global pandemic has caused severe damage to North Korean society. Pyongyang had closed its borders and was not confident in its internal security, so it could not open the door to the outside

world (Hwang 2020). Even before COVID-19 started spreading globally, North Korea had a hard time because of the international sanctions. The problem is that North Korea suffered from a new self-imposed sanction in the shape of COVID-19. As soon as COVID-19 started spreading globally, the Politburo of the North Korean Workers' Party discussed issues of internal stability probably related to COVID-19.[107] The pandemic even made Kim Jong Un disappear for a period of time, sparking a number of personal rumors.[108] In fact, the pandemic crisis was a good opportunity to evaluate the Kim regime's crisis management capabilities and national governance system. If the vulnerabilities of the regime were exposed due to the spread of the coronavirus, the Kim regime may not be sustainable domestically and reach out to the international community for help as it did in the era of the "arduous march" in the second half of the 1990s.

Although there was officially no COVID-19 case confirmed in North Korea until early May 2022,[109] North Korea was not indifferent to COVID-19. The North Korean media reported the spread of the pandemic disease worldwide and the South Korean situation every day. The *Rodong Shinmun* had been arousing awareness among the North Korean people with several articles on aggressive prevention measures. The quarantine measures were taken against foreigners in South Pyeongan Province, North Hwanghae Province, and Raseon City, and quarantine measures have been strengthened by observing them with a medical surveillance period of 30 days even after the quarantine was lifted.[110] The media also reported that North Korea has started constructing Pyongyang General Hospital and planned to complete it in only 200 days, although there was no report of the hospital completed as of 2022.[111] When one North Korean defector to the South, who was suspected to be a confirmed case, crossed the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and returned to North Korea in July 2020, a lockdown was put in place in Kaesong City, but he was reported not to be infected.[112]

On the other hand, North Korea held the expansion meeting of the fourteenth Politburo of the seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party. The agenda of this meeting was to "debate and decide on the current projects and important policy issues of the party and the state," and the 'current projects' and 'important policy issues' were the response to Covid-19.[113] While reporting the main contents of this meeting, the first agenda, "Summary of the six-month project structure to prevent malignant epidemics and to reinforce the national emergency quarantine project, discussed the issue of further consolidating the current quarantine situation." The second agenda, "the issue of advancing the construction of the Pyongyang General Hospital and devising measures to guarantee human and material technology for medical service," was also related to COVID-19. In this meeting, Kim Jong Un said, "It is the fact that we thoroughly defend against the invasion of malicious viruses and

maintain a stable quarantine regime despite the global health crisis. It was a proud achievement achieved by the highly conscious unity of the whole people in motion." This meeting clearly showed how serious North Korea's awareness of the situation regarding COVID-19 was, although the coronavirus did not spread in North Korea at the time.

When the coronavirus was spreading in China and South Korea in early 2020, it was unclear whether a diagnostic kit existed in North Korea. Because inter-Korean relations have been in a deadlock since 2019, North Korea did not even respond to South Korea's offer to aid diagnostic kits. Instead, North Korea requested assistance from the international community from a relatively early stage. The North Korean Ministry of Health requested support for the procurement of personal protective equipment related to the prevention of infectious diseases to international organizations and non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, International Red Cross Federation (IFRC), World Health Organization (WHO), and MSF. They reportedly provided related goods to North Korea. China and Russia also provided diagnostic reagents and kits to North Korea.[114]

It appears that the COVID-19 did not spread severely and the quarantine activities in North Korea were relatively successful. Considering North Korea's poor health infrastructure, if coronavirus had spread inside North Korea, it would have become a serious pandemic crisis that North Korea could not control. If so, it would have requested emergency assistance from the international community, including China and Russia. Rather, in dealing with COVID-19, the Kim Jong Un regime has shown various aspects of the internal and external response strategies. This can be summarized as an anti-globalization strategy, a state-centered control strategy, and a mobilization strategy.

First of all, North Korea has shown its anti-globalization strategy in responding to infectious diseases. North Korea has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in the same way it has resisted the trend of globalization while maintaining a closed society (Hwang 2020). The spread of COVID-19 around the world has become a typical phenomenon of globalization, and ironically, North Korea, which showed an anti-globalization strategy, has relatively succeeded in quarantine against COVID-19. As coronavirus started spreading globally, what North Korea did first was to close its borders.[115] It even blocked the border with China where North Korea relies on more than 90% of its trade and most of its energy resources in the face of international sanctions. As a closed and isolated country, North Korea chose to close further, which shows how much of a threat the spread of infectious diseases would pose to both the health care and the political stability of the North Korean regime because North Korea has a very poor health care and medical system. Just as the globalization wave was a threat to the North Korean regime, the globalization of COVID-19 would have been recognized as a great threat to

the North Korean regime. It is a point to recognize how big the threat of the spread of COVID-19 has come to North Korea, where the healthcare system is so vulnerable. Given that nations depended on a self-help system during the first stage of the pandemic, North Korea's counter-globalization response strategy was a relatively effective response in securing its regime.

Second, North Korea has adopted a state-centered control strategy. Although there was no confirmed case in 2020, quarantine activities have been carried out as strongly as in China and other authoritarian regimes with state-centered control. At the Politburo Expansion Meeting held in February 2020, Kim Jong Un said that all sectors of the country and all units of the country must be unconditionally obedient to the command and control of the central command in relation to emergency quarantine projects, with no special conditions allowed within the national prevention effort system. He emphasized that the government should establish strict rules that are thoroughly enforced and to further strengthen the reporting of party control and legal surveillance.[116] In this meeting, it is particularly remarkable that a strong punishment and response to corruption were discussed along with the response to COVID-19. It noted that the ideology, leadership features, and project methods of the Party Central Committee must be learned and implemented from the forefront. The corruption activities were intensively criticized, and the severity and consequences were analyzed seriously. If corruption prevails amid the spread of infectious diseases, it would pose a great threat to the North Korean system. Kim Jong Un also warned in a later Politburo meeting in July that "The easing of emergency quarantine measures will lead to a fatal crisis that cannot be recovered, so, all sectors and all units should not be confused that today's quarantine situation is good."[117]

Third, North Korea has concentrated its policies and resources on infectious disease prevention and quarantine activities through excessively powerful public mobilization. The North Korean media has been aware of the dangers of infectious diseases by conveying the spread of COVID-19 patients around the world day after day. In particular, the North Korean media reported the trend and spread of the number of infected people in the United States and South Korea almost every day, which seemed to promote the excellence and legitimacy of the North Korean regime. In the early days of the pandemic, about half of the articles in the *Rodong Shinmun* viewed by North Koreans were filled with articles related to COVID-19. Considering the nature of the North Korean media, it is very unusual to inform North Korean people of foreign news in such an intensive manner. This must have contributed to a certain extent to raise awareness of the dangers of COVID-19 and to prepare North Koreans to respond in advance. On the other hand, North Korean media, particularly *Rodong Sinmun*, has repeatedly sent out articles on active quarantine work in North Korea, raising awareness among North

Korean people. The state-centered quarantine control system was established, and at the same time, strong quarantine activities were carried out by mobilizing North Korean people. The quarantine project to thoroughly prevent the new coronavirus infection continued as a nationwide and whole-popular project.[118] North Korea completely blocked all passages, including the border, sea, and air, through which viruses could enter, under the unified command of the Emergency Central People's Health Guidance Committee Projects for containment. This project further strengthened water quality inspection and quarantine measures in coastal lines and border areas for strict disinfection of imported goods according to the regulations, and to prepare thoroughly to respond quickly are being carried out seamlessly nationwide.[119] In addition, the North Korean media criticized some negative phenomena of chronic treatment of quarantine projects, commenting that there was special emphasis on maintaining the national emergency quarantine system until the virus epidemic was completely eliminated worldwide and strengthening the epidemic quarantine project through consistent action across society and people.[120]

The COVID-19 has affected the North Korean society in many ways and tested the stability of the regime. Politically, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the domestic governance of the North Korean regime. The Kim Jong Un regime has taken various physical and institutional measures to stabilize the regime amid the spread of infectious diseases. North Korea has focused on mobilizing residents through a state-centered control strategy to prevent the possibility of system instability caused by COVID-19. They also showed efforts to prevent corruption and bureaucratic problems from occurring during the severe period of the infectious disease crisis. COVID-19 has also had a big impact on North Korean society economically. According to satellite images, it appears that major port facilities in North Korea have been stopped for a considerable period of time since the outbreak of coronavirus in China, and most of the imports and exports have been halted when the border is closed.[121] In addition to imports of daily necessities from China and Russia, imports of energy resources such as oil have been blocked, and confusion in North Korean society seems to be inevitable for a certain period of time. This would be a huge blow to the North Korean leadership and also have a significant impact on the North Korean market.

To overcome the crisis of COVID-19, North Korean leadership has responded by maximizing political and economic control. The situation of coping with infectious diseases was an opportunity to show the Kim Jong Un regime's crisis management capabilities and governance system internally and externally. North Korea responded and moved relatively quickly, and in this process, it has been systematically refining the legal norms and making efforts to reorganize the national crisis management regulations, using physical control to stabilize the system. How Kim Jong Un's leadership was

embodied in the crisis of COVID-19 and how efficiently North Korea's laws and institutions achieved results have shown significant implications for the analysis of the durability of the regime.

SUMMARY

When Kim Jong Un took power after his father, Kim Jong Il, died in December 2011, he perceived Pyongyang's external status quo as deteriorating, so his domain of action was situated in that of losses. So, Kim Jong Un had shown risk-acceptant attitude and continued to build up the North Korean nuclear capability. However, after Pyongyang declared the completion of nuclear deterrence against the United States after successfully conducting six nuclear tests and ICBM-class rocket in November 2017, the domain of action shifted to that of gains. Starting from January 2018, Kim Jong Un had shown a risk-averse attitude and did not take a risky foreign policy but rather had summits with U.S. president Trump. After the Trump–Kim summit failed at Hanoi in February 2019, however, Pyongyang's domain of action began to deteriorate again and finally returned to the domain of losses since 2020. In the losing situation, Pyongyang gain started showing a risk-acceptant attitude and took confrontational policy toward the United States. Pyongyang declared the "heads-on breakthrough" strategy and decided to keep up its nuclear capability rather than participate in the nuclear negotiation.

North Korea's economic situation under Kim Jong Un was not improving, but the domestic situation was not to the extent that it could threaten the stability of the regime. In particular, the Kim regime had serious challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the international sanctions and natural disasters, but it went through all the difficulties. If the coronavirus had spread in North Korea and the domestic situation had become extremely worse, it might have made the regime unsustainable, but the regime was still quite strong enough to muddle through the pandemic.

Table 5.1 Pyongyang's Nuclear Risk-Taking Attitudes under Kim Jong Un

		International situation	
		Growing gains	*Losses*
Domestic situation	Sustainable	*A* (Risk-averse: 2018–2019)	*B* (Risk-acceptant: 2012–2017, 2020–)
	Unsustainable	*D* (Risk-acceptant/Risk-averse)	*E* (Highly risk-acceptant)

Source: Created by author.

Table 5.1 summarizes North Korea's risk-taking attitudes during the Kim Jong Un era. In the matrix, Pyongyang's risk-taking attitude has shifted from *B* during the period of nuclear arms build-up to *A* during the Trump–Kim summits and moved back to *B* after 2020.

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Conclusion

This book started by proposing three questions for the purpose of analyzing North Korea's nuclear policy and policy change for the past three decades under Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un. Why did weaker North Korea choose to take the risk of standing up against the much stronger United States with its nuclear weapons program, even escalating the crisis to the point of risking a war rather than engaging the United States? Then, why did North Korea change its course of action in the midst of the crisis even though the security environment that led to the nuclear weapons program remained essentially the same? What does this study imply for North Korea's future nuclear policy and other potential international crises involving weaker states?

In the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, North Korean leaders perceived the North's status quo to be deteriorating on the Korean peninsula, so they began to frame their external situation in the domain of losses, became risk-acceptant, and confronted the United States, taking a riskier foreign policy option in an attempt to restore the status quo. In June 1994, North Korean leaders began to feel that a U.S. military strike on North Korea might be imminent, and in the military confrontation with the United States, their domain of action suddenly shifted from loss to extreme loss. Because military conflict with the United States would probably lead to the end of the North Korean regime, North Korean leaders became risk-averse and sought to avoid the certainly catastrophic outcome of war. If North Korean leaders perceived a serious threat to the regime's survival from domestic politics in the early 1990s and believed when the domestic regime could not be sustained, they might have become highly risk-acceptant and might have sought to externalize the domestic discontent in the mindset of "double-or-nothing." However, because they perceived that the regime was strong enough to manage the

domestic issues, they did not choose to lash out in June 1994 but instead tried to resolve the crisis when they saw the international situation becoming extremely worse.

During the second half of the 1990s, after the nuclear deal with the United States in 1994, North Korean leaders perceived that Pyongyang's status quo in international politics was improving. As North Korean leaders perceived that their domain of action was moving toward gain, they began to show a risk-averse foreign policy attitude and sought to engage the United States in an attempt to avoid loss and improve the status quo. On the other hand, because North Korea's domestic situation went from bad to worse due to the food crisis, North Korean leaders might have become more willing to adopt a risky foreign policy. However, they did not become risk-acceptant in an attempt to externalize domestic unrest but rather decided to use the improving international situation and restore the status quo of domestic politics because the regime was still sustainable enough to muddle through the domestic crisis.

However, after the Bush administration took office and continued a hard-line policy toward North Korea, North Korean leaders began to perceive the international situation as deteriorating. North Korea was also losing patience regarding America's unwillingness to fulfill the Agreed Framework. After the Bush administration revealed the North's new covert nuclear program in October 2002 and renounced the Agreed Framework, Pyongyang's domain of action finally returned to losses. In the newly established losing situation, North Korean leaders began to demonstrate their risk-acceptant attitude again and resumed the confrontation with an aggressive nuclear policy in an effort to restore their external status quo. After 2003, North Korea participated in the six-party talks and agreed to three agreements in 2005 and 2007, but the six-party talks collapsed in late 2008, and the North's perception quickly deteriorated, producing a confrontational nuclear policy including nuclear tests and rocket launches. On the other hand, the North avoided a worst-case domestic scenario of the second half of the 1990s, and its domestic situation did not strongly influence foreign policy decision-making.

When Kim Jong Un took power, he perceived his situation as deteriorating and thought that he was placed in a losing situation. So, Kim Jong Un had been risk-acceptant for several years and chose the confrontational policy toward the United States with several nuclear and ICBM-class rocket tests. After 2018, however, Kim perceived his situation as improving with the nuclear deterrence against the United States. So, he reached out to South Korea and the United States for summits between 2018 and 2019. However, his perception went back to the past after the Hanoi summit with Trump failed and recognized that the United States was not ready to compromise on the nuclear issue. Kim Jong Un again perceived his situation to be getting worse than before and moved back to the confrontational policy toward the

United States. North Korea's economic situation was not good enough during the Kim Jong Un era, either, but the domestic situation was not to the extent that it could make the regime unstable. Even under the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Korean regime could control the domestic situation and go through all the challenges.

Table C.1 is a summary of North Korean leaders' domain of action and nuclear risk-taking attitudes. North Korea was initially situated in *B* and showed a risk-acceptant foreign policy attitude during the first half of the 1990s, but its situation moved to *C* in June 1994 and changed its attitude to risk-averse. During the second half of the 1990s, North Korea's situation might have moved to *D* if its domestic situation had become worse to the point of being unsustainable, but because the North's domestic politics did not collapse and also because the regime used the improving external relations to resolve the domestic situation, Pyongyang's domain of action moved to *A* in the second half of the 1990s. However, in the early 2000s, after the Bush administration took office, Pyongyang's situation moved into *B* again after October 2002. During the Kim Jong Un era, Pyongyang's situation was shifting between *A* and *B*. In the first several years, its situation was still located in *B*, but it moved to *A* in 2018 and 2019. However, the situation went back to *B* again after 2020.

Table C.2 summarizes Pyongyang's nuclear policy depending on its domain of action under three leaders. It demonstrates that when North Korea was situated in the domain of loss, it became risk-acceptant and showed confrontational policy regarding its nuclear program. Conversely, when North Korea's domain of action was moving toward gain, it became risk-averse and showed conciliatory engagement policy. It shows how Pyongyang's nuclear policy shifted between confrontation and engagement when its domain of action shifted between loss and gain.

Table C.1 Pyongyang's Nuclear Risk-Taking Attitudes 1990–2022

		International situation		
		Growing gains	*Losses*	*Extreme Losses*
Domestic situation	Sustainable	*A* (Risk-averse: 1995~2002, 2007–2008, 2018–2019)	*B* (Risk-acceptant: pre-June 1994, 2002–2017, 2020–)	*C* (Risk-averse: June 1994)
	Unsustainable	*D* (Risk-acceptant/ Risk-averse)	*E* (Highly risk-acceptant)	*F* (Highly risk-acceptant)

Source: Created by author.

Table C.2 Pyongyang's Domain of Action and Nuclear Policy

Periods		*Domain*	*Pyongyang's Policy*
Kim Il Sung	first nuclear crisis (pre-1994)	Loss	Confrontation
	nuclear deal (June 1994)	Extreme loss	Confrontation → Engagement
Kim Jong Il	Agreed Framework (1995–2002)	Growing gain	Engagement
	Abandonment of the Agreed Framework and nuclear tests (2003–2011)	loss	Confrontation
Kim Jong Un	Nuclear tests (2012–2017)	Loss	Confrontation
	Inter-Korean and U.S.-DPRK summits (2018–2019)	Growing gain	Engagement
	Nuclear deadlock (2020–)	Deteriorating loss	Confrontation

Source: Created by author.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS

This book has demonstrated that the domestic–international model based on the North's domain of action explains Pyongyang's nuclear policy and policy change throughout the crisis. This section compares this book's argument with other competing explanations noted in the literature review and discusses the particular value that this book adds to the analysis. Alternative explanations of Pyongyang's nuclear policy may be divided into three broad groups and also be broken down into several different explanations, as summarized in table C.3.

Security-based explanations include three different groups of a realist approach and two different liberal approaches. The first group is the Waltzian realist approach, which argues that North Korea has always been determined to go nuclear and will eventually possess nuclear weapons, although they cannot be used for any purpose other than deterrence (Mack 1991, 1993; Waltz 1995). This approach suggests that North Korea may have a deception plan to hide its nuclear capability and to complete its nuclear weapons, but the policy prediction is always "going nuclear," explaining neither confrontation nor engagement. The second group is the offensive realist approach, which focuses on the North's expansionist ambition. Thus, this approach predicts that due to its expansionist ambition on the Korean peninsula, North Korea will continue to confront the United States with its nuclear weapons program (Spector and Smith 1991; Bracken 1993; Downs 1999). Thus, the most serious weakness of these two approaches is that they are static and do not explain why North Korea's nuclear policy changes from one to the other. The third group is the defensive realist approach, which argues that North

Table C.3 Competing Explanations of Pyongyang's Nuclear Policy

Competing Explanations		*Kim Il Sung Era*	*Kim Jong Il Era*	*Kim Jong Un Era*
Security-Based	Waltzian realism	Go nuclear	Go nuclear	Go nuclear
	Offensive realism	Confrontation	Confrontation	Confrontation
	Defensive realism	Tit-for-tat (engagement)	Tit-for-tat (engagement)	Tit-for-tat (engagement)
	Reciprocity	Reciprocation (engagement)	Reciprocation (engagement)	Reciprocation (engagement)
	Changed nature	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement
Domestic-Based	Domestic political structure	Alternation	Alternation	Alternation
	History and Culture	Alternation	Alternation	Alternation
Prospect theory	Preventive motivation	Confrontation	Confrontation	Confrontation
	This book	Confrontation → Engagement	Engagement → Confrontation	Confrontation → Engagement → Confrontation

Source: Created by author.

Korea can change its course of action if the security dilemma is resolved (Kang 1994/95, 1995, 2003b, 2003d; Mazarr 1995a, 1995b; E. Kang 2003; Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci 2004). According to this group, because North Korea's goal is not military confrontation but the persistence of the regime, it is more likely to engage the international community insofar as its security concerns are addressed and economic rewards offered. This implies that Pyongyang's basic nuclear policy is one of tit-for-tat but that the purpose of its policy is always engagement. Although its policy changes are explained by the reciprocal sequence of diplomatic moves, it is doubtful whether Pyongyang changed its policy because it received the security guarantee and economic benefits. In reality, its policy change appears to have been influenced more by U.S. diplomatic and military pressure than by any desire for engagement. Moreover, if Pyongyang's policy preference had been one of engagement, it might have accepted U.S. offers earlier and not escalated the crisis unilaterally.

On the other hand, liberal approaches to Pyongyang's nuclear policy posited that North Korean leaders are more likely to engage the United States rather than confront it. Because North Korea wants to improve relations with the United States, Pyongyang is ready to give up its nuclear weapons programs in a diplomatic give-and-take (Sigal 1998; Smithson 1999; Newnham 2004; Cumings 1997, 2004). Those who claim that Pyongyang's attitude has changed argue that Pyongyang has a more active intention of engaging the United States than some American experts believe (Harrison 1994, 2002; Oberdorfer 2001a, 2001b). Thus, in the liberal view, Pyongyang's default policy is that of engagement only if it can get military and economic benefits from the outside, so the United States is mainly responsible for the confrontation. However, this view underestimates Pyongyang's tendency to change its attitude depending on the situation, so it is basically static and does not explain Pyongyang's internal logic of policy change. If this view were valid, the possibility of cooperation should have been enhanced when the United States offered some political and economic benefits in the early stage of the nuclear crisis, but Pyongyang did not always choose to engage the United States.

Explanations focusing on domestic determinants termed Pyongyang's nuclear policy as reflecting its changing domestic situations (Mansourov 1994a; Park 1997; Snyder 1999, 2000; Harrison 1994, 2002; Park 1996, 2002). This approach may explain Pyongyang's policy changes in terms of the domestic political dynamics. However, it does not explain Pyongyang's policy changes in terms of the international determinants when domestic factors were constants. Moreover, if North Korean leaders had focused on domestic factors only, their foreign policy would have been even more aggressive during the second half of the 1990s because its domestic politics became much worse, although the international situation improved.

Victor Cha (1999, 2002, 2003) applied prospect theory to North Korea's foreign policy. He based his argument on prospect theory and the motivation for preventive war and argued that the North Korean leadership might deem some limited use of force as rational despite the recognition that they had little chance of winning. Although he perceived North Korea's decisional frame to have been long throughout the post–Cold War period and that its nuclear weapons program had much to do with its motivation for preventive war, his model could not explain Pyongyang's policy changes at all. Although he acknowledged that Pyongyang's strategy changed from prevailing on the Korean peninsula during the Cold War to ensuring regime survival after the end of the Cold War, he believed that its nuclear policy had not changed at all but continuously emphasized the need to acquire nuclear weapons and then confront the United States and South Korea from a stronger position.

In short, most competing explanations of Pyongyang's nuclear policy did not succeed in accounting for Pyongyang's policy changes for three decades. Although North Korea has apparently shifted its policy from confrontation to engagement and vice versa, the theories do not explain such dynamics. Even if some explanations do account for the policy changes, they do not succeed in providing a causal mechanism for those policy changes. For this reason, this book adds explanatory power to prospect theory and explains Pyongyang's nuclear policy better.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The Current North Korean Nuclear Crisis

What does this book imply for Pyongyang's future nuclear policy and other potential international crises involving weaker states? First of all, this book suggests a model of Pyongyang's nuclear policy based on prospect theory and domestic–international interactions. If North Korean leaders perceive that the North's domestic situation is not so sustainable as to handle its internal challenges, they are more likely to become risk-acceptant and choose a risky foreign policy option irrespective of their perception of international politics. However, as long as the North Korean regime is strong enough to muddle through the domestic pressures, Pyongyang's nuclear policy is more likely to be influenced by its leaders' perception of the international situation, whether the situation is in the domain of losses or gains (McDermott 2004b: 295–96). In this sense, the North Korean nuclear crisis is more likely to keep deteriorating during the Kim Jong Un era unless his perception of the United States does not improve in the future, although the situation may go through further ups and downs. Because Pyongyang will continue to respond to changes in the international situation, U.S. foreign policy will be a critical variable in the

understanding of North Korean leaders' future perception of the international situation. Thus, if the United States continues its policy, Pyongyang will see the situation as deteriorating, and its nuclear policy will become more aggressive and confrontational.

On the other hand, if North Korean leaders perceive direct military confrontation with the United States to be imminent and the regime continues to be sustainable in domestic politics, as seen in June 1994, they will be more likely to be risk-averse in the domain of extreme losses to avoid the certainly catastrophic outcome of war. In this vein, this book presumes that North Korea will also become risk-averse and try to avoid a worst-case scenario if the situation deteriorates further and it perceives military confrontation to be impending. However, such a presumption does not directly lead to a simple conclusion that all that the United States has to do to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis is to exacerbate the crisis to the point where North Korean leaders perceive that the United States is on the brink of launching a military strike. Although this book does not exclude such a coercive approach to resolving the crisis, it is not a desirable policy option either for the two Koreas or for East Asia.

If the North Korean regime weakens further and its domestic situation grows extremely worse, its leaders may become risk-acceptant and choose a riskier foreign policy. If they perceive that the North's domestic situation is unsustainable, they may begin to believe that they had better start a war rather than allow the regime to collapse under internal pressure. As McDermott (2004a: 150) explained, this situation would be very similar to the mindset of terrorists who resort to suicide bombing, believing that they have nothing to lose. If the North Korean domestic situation gets much worse, it is more likely to backfire and lead to another major military conflict on the Korean peninsula. Such a result will never be desirable for the United States or for the two Koreas. The case of Iraq and Afghanistan clearly demonstrated how hard it is for the international community to handle the situation if domestic politics in a troubled state worsens. Furthermore, given the regional security dynamics in East Asia, a military conflict on the Korean peninsula would create much more difficult and complicated problems for the United States than the other cases involving several great powers such as China, Japan, and Russia. Thus, the stability of the North Korean domestic situation must be much more significant than anything else for the East Asian regional stability as well as for the stability of the Korean peninsula.

Second, even if North Korea's domestic situation does not deteriorate to the point of threatening the survival of the current regime, the international situation may have seriously negative influences on East Asian relations. If the United States threatens sanctions and a military strike on the North, serious tension among regional powers will inevitably arise, and such tension

will make East Asian relations much more unstable, given the current great power rivalry between the United States and China. In fact, Pyongyang has accelerated its nuclear program and conducted six nuclear tests. Its possession of nuclear weapons may exacerbate the security dilemma in East Asia by forcing other regional powers—South Korea, Japan, and possibly Taiwan—to follow suit. Such a vicious cycle could perpetuate the negative spiral of relations among regional powers. Every policy option has a risk associated with it: a downside cost despite an upside benefit. Such cost increases mistrust and leads to a spiral of hostility and, subsequently, a greater chance of inadvertent military clashes among nations, as Copeland (2001: 14) emphasized. In short, it is necessary that the international community continue to display the will and capability to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis and hold back military options as a last resort. Of course, if whatever makes international situations worse, North Korean leaders likely adopt a more risk-acceptant strategy, and then eventually backfire.

Recent developments in U.S.–North Korean relations highlight the difficulty of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. In 2018, Kim Jong Un had inter-Korean and U.S.–North Korean summits and agreed that North Korea would commit to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and make efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime. Kim signed two joint declarations with South Korean president Moon Jae-in in April and September and also signed a joint statement with U.S. president Donald Trump in June. The agreements partially resulted from the somewhat softened U.S. policy toward North Korea because Pyongyang responded mostly to changes in the external situation. However, North Korea's domain of action shifted back to that of losses in late 2019. After the collapse of the U.S.–North Korean summit in Hanoi in February 2019, Pyongyang became quite suspicious of U.S. intention, and its perception shifted back to the domain of losses. The situation may go through ups and downs in the future but will not change fundamentally because neither Washington nor Pyongyang intend to produce a meaningful transformation of the relationship between the two nations. As North Korea declared in the eighth Party Congress in January 2021, it is not likely to fulfill any substantial obligations before it receives what it seeks from the United States, while the United States will not accept these demands from the North. As a result, the nuclear talks came to a deadlock without any progress. North Korea still remains in the domain of losses and is more likely to choose a risk-acceptant nuclear policy in the near future.

Implications for Other Cases

As Alexander George (1979: 43–49) noted, one can draw some lessons from a single historical case by applying theory and identifying the causal

mechanism connecting variables and outcomes. In this sense, the significance of the North Korean case is that in the application of prospect theory to a weaker nation's decision-making, North Korea is a "least-likely" case with regard to the explanation of policy change. A "least-likely" case strengthens the explanatory power of the theory by fitting the theory to a case where it should be weak (George and Bennett 2005: 120–23). In fact, other theories of international relations, including realism or rational choice, have been criticized as having some difficulty in accounting for changes over time. However, prospect theory explains that as the domain of action shifts back and forth, national leaders' risk-taking attitude is also expected to shift in response to changes in the environment, producing policy changes (McDermott 2004b: 292). Because North Korea has been far more self-assertive and defiant than most other nations in the world, it has not been expected to change its course of action during confrontations with its enemies (Newnham 2004). Therefore, if North Korea's policy change can be explained, cases of less defiant and threatening nations may also be explained.

In summary, the implications of the North Korean nuclear crisis for other possible cases are as follows. First, when a weaker nation is situated in the domain of loss, it is more likely to become risk-acceptant and choose a riskier foreign policy than when it is in the domain of gain. Second, although leaders of a weaker nation will be less likely to engage in a major war that may lead to the extinction of the regime or nation, they may rather escalate a crisis into war if their regime is not strong enough to weather domestic challenges. Third, for this reason, the hardline policy of a stronger state toward such a nation is likely to lead to a greater risk than a conciliatory policy, producing a greater negative downside cost of security dilemma and military confrontation despite achieving its positive upside policy objective of removing the present threat.

However, these policy implications may not simply be replicated for other weaker nations because every nation has different conditions and objectives. Thus, the model of this book appears to have more explanatory power for nations that have been characterized by the United States as rogue regimes. Because rogue regimes have not only accepted the risk of defying the much stronger United States, which they perceive to threaten the security of the nation and survival of the regime, but also have continuously been troubled by problems of domestic stability and regime legitimacy, their foreign policy decision-making has been influenced much more by the leaders' internal and external considerations. In this sense, the Iraqi foreign policy under Saddam Hussein and Iran's recent nuclear policy will be good candidates for the model this book proposes.

Theoretical Implications

As McDermott (2004a: 160) noted, one of the central benefits of prospect theory is that it helps one see the world in a new, different way and observe what one would not otherwise be able to. This is certainly the case with the North Korean nuclear crisis. One of the most significant benefits of this book is that by combining prospect theory and domestic–international interactions, it can explain North Korean policy changes that competing explanations have failed to. After the end of the Cold War, theories of international relations, including realism, have been criticized as having difficulty in accounting for dynamic change in world politics (Wohlforth 1994/95). This book seeks to overcome such a limitation of theory by adopting prospect theory, which allows for an explanation of dynamic change within the theory itself because it focuses on the importance of situation in decision-making: As the situation changes, so do the risk-taking attitude and the policy.

Second, this book introduces the analysis of domestic–international interactions into the framework of prospect theory and increases the explanatory power of the theory. Many models of international relations place explanatory emphasis on structural factors, such as the balance of power between states, and domestic factors, such as regime type. On the other hand, prospect theory starts at the individual level of analysis. By contrast, this book integrates all these structural and domestic factors as well as the individual level. In particular, few empirical studies of prospect theory have placed sufficient emphasis on the role of domestic politics in the decision process.[1] Although scholars of prospect theory have discussed domestic politics in theory, they have focused mostly on the individual and international levels of analysis. In this sense, this book provides an important step toward bridging a gap between the theoretical explanation of domestic politics in prospect theory and its empirical studies.

Third, this book emphasizes the importance of resolving the security dilemma, even in relations with rogue nations. The North Korean case demonstrates that Pyongyang's nuclear policies—confrontation and engagement—have been strongly influenced by its perception of threat in the changing situations of international relations rather than an aggressive desire to threaten and conquer the Korean peninsula. Although North Korea has also pursued its own political and economic aims through the nuclear program, its main concern was how to stabilize its regime internally and defend its sovereignty and security externally in the face of the deteriorating situation. In fact, this is exactly what prospect theory explains regarding a nation's behavior: A nation pursues risky foreign policies to avert perceived loss. In this sense, the observation of prospect theory regarding a nation's motivation and behavior is somewhat consistent with defensive realism (Levy 2000; Taliaferro

2004b), which posits that nations maximize security by aiming to preserve the status quo rather than pursuing expansionist goals in the international system. As Waltz (1979: 126) observed, "In anarchy, security is the highest end," the North Korean case demonstrates that even rogue nations, which are normally characterized as showing the most threatening behavior in the current world politics, are driven more by the desire to secure the survival of regime and independence, so that the security dilemma may arise in the relations with rogue regimes and make the resolution of crises more difficult.

Prospect theory implies that a nation's behavior is more likely to be determined by the concern about losses than the desire for gains. The North Korean case lends some credit to the argument of prospect theory that what you end up with is more important than how much you gain. As McDermott (2004a: 149–50, 2004b: 298) explained, this is often represented in theories of international relations as the difference between absolute gains and relative gains. While liberals are concerned with absolute gains that make every nation happy, realists emphasize the importance of relative gains that make nations worry about the relative strength of others (Baldwin 1993). In this debate, prospect theory supports the realist argument by stressing relative positioning. However, this book argues that given the importance of loss aversion in prospect theory, more attention should be paid to relative losses than relative gains. This is why a nation's status quo matters in the discussion of prospect theory, as in defensive realism. With regard to understanding a nation's behavior, this book agrees with the emphasis of defensive realism on the status quo and relative losses rather than that of offensive realism on relative gains and that of liberalism on absolute gains, as Jervis (1999) demonstrated.

This book has explained Pyongyang's nuclear policies and policy changes on the basis of prospect theory in international relations by tracing North Korean leaders' change of perception over time. North Korea's nuclear policy has changed as the leaders' perception has changed. When they were situated in the domain of losses, they adopted a more confrontational nuclear policy, but when their situation moved toward gains, their nuclear policy also became conciliatory. Although this book has illustrated Pyongyang's policy changes, more work may be needed to clarify its behavior in the future. Because North Korea is still a closed society, it is inevitable that there are certain limitations in understanding its motivations and behavior. As North Korean society eventually becomes more open, a clearer picture of the North Korean decision-making process will be provided.

NOTE

1. McDermott's works on the Carter administration during the Iranian hostage crisis present an exception to this.

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