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**A Method to the Madness:  
North Korean Negotiating Strategy in the Six-Party Talks**

## I. Introduction

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been a recurring thorn in America's side since the end of the Korean War. Not only is its military the world's largest in *per capita* terms, its forces near the Korean demilitarized zone represent the densest concentration of firepower on the globe.<sup>1</sup> But from an American national security perspective, more worrying than the DPRK's conventional arsenal is its nuclear capability. Indeed, just months before North Korea tested its first nuclear bomb, the Bush administration's National Security Strategy of 2006 charged Pyongyang with possession of an "illicit nuclear program ... in violation of its international obligations."<sup>2</sup> Kim Jong-il's nuclear ambitions remain a subject of contention to this day, as evinced by a speech delivered by President Barack Obama in which he warned Pyongyang that the "path to security" and "respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons."<sup>3</sup> Obama urged "all nations" to stand "shoulder to shoulder" and "pressure the North Koreans to change course."<sup>4</sup>

A robust understanding of North Korean negotiating strategy is integral to the success of the Obama administration's efforts on this front, and this case study represents my attempt to provide just such an understanding. I begin by drawing upon existing analyses of previous US-DPRK negotiations to identify specific tactics and strategic objectives used by the North during all such interactions. I then test my predictions against the Six-Party Talks (6PT), a series of negotiations to resolve the nuclear issue first convened in 2003 by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and including Japan, Russia, and South Korea (ROK) in addition to the United States and the DPRK. I conclude by deriving both specific and general lessons for American diplomats going forward into the twenty-first century.

## II. North Korean Negotiating Strategy: Erratic or Predictable?

Conventional wisdom regards North Korea's negotiating style to be unpredictable and irrational; indeed, the image of the DPRK as a backwards country ruled by an erratic despot recurs throughout American political discourse.<sup>5</sup> In 1986, Senator Frank Murkowski described the Kim Il-sung regime as capable of "desperate and irrational acts."<sup>6</sup> In 1999, the *Los Angeles Times'* editorial board echoed his words in its analysis of the DPRK's decision to provoke a confrontation with the ROK in the Yellow Sea. "North Korea," it wrote,

has reminded everyone how tough it can be, and also how irrational .... Impoverished and famine-stricken, North Korea can ill afford to further antagonize those on whose humanitarian aid it most depends. Yet, bizarrely, that is just what it is doing.<sup>7</sup>

And just this year, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that America would "not give in to the kind of back-and-forth, the unpredictable behavior of the North Korean regime."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michael O'Hanlon and Mike Mochizuki, "Economic Reform and Military Downsizing: A Key to Solving the North Korean Nuclear Crisis?", *The Brookings Review* 21, no. 4 (2003): 13.

<sup>2</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States: March 2006* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2006), 19-21.

<sup>3</sup> Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Barack Obama, Hradcany Square," April 5, 2009, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Scott Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), 143.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Murkowski, "S. Korea Can't Afford to Stumble: North Might Reignite War if Moves Toward Democracy Fail," *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 1986, ProQuest Research Library.

<sup>7</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Will North Korea Ever Learn?," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1999, ProQuest Research Library.

<sup>8</sup> Sue Fleming, "Clinton Says U.S. Ready for Talks with North Korea," *Reuters*, April 22, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSTRE53L4IT20090422>.

But even though Pyongyang's actions often run contrary to American expectations, a deeper examination of North Korean behavior reveals a method to their alleged madness. Consider the work of Scott Snyder, who finds that -- "contrary to the views of many external observers who evaluate North Korean behavior on the basis of their own expectations" -- the DPRK's approach to negotiations is "highly regularized and internally consistent" in both strategy and style.<sup>9</sup>

While Pyongyang's strategy is primarily shaped by the context in which negotiations occur, several strategic concerns remain foremost in its mind no matter what scenario it faces. The most important of these is the continued viability of its government, the reins of which were inherited by Kim Jong-il upon the death of Kim Il-sung, his father. North Korea's deteriorating economy and growing isolation have rendered increasingly infeasible the elder Kim's original dream of enforcing a "hegemonic" and "socialist unification" upon the South.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the "Dear Leader" must now look to "averting dominance by the South" and ensuring the "basic survival" of his imperiled regime.<sup>11</sup>

Second, North Korean strategy is built around maintaining the perception of equivalency, a desire stemming from considerations of "national face" so powerful that they can even take priority over the substance of the negotiation at hand.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the wording of concessions is sometimes more important to North Korean negotiators than the substance of those concessions, as illustrated by Pyongyang's refusal to accept a light water reactor (LWR) specified as a "South Korean standard model" during negotiations with the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).<sup>13</sup> Unlike the North's preoccupation with regime survival, this insistence that face be maintained has remained constant throughout its history: at the Korean War armistice negotiations, for instance, a DPRK reporter observed that the Kaesong meeting marked the "first time Oriental Communists have ever sat down at a conference table on terms of equality with Americans, and they intend to make the most of it."<sup>14</sup>

Finally, North Korea consistently rejects conditionality as a principle for "carrying out negotiations and implementing agreements," preferring instead a system in which all sides take simultaneous action.<sup>15</sup> US-DPRK negotiations have faltered whenever American diplomats employed a conditional approach in which "one side would have to take action in order to achieve progress without reciprocal measures by the other side."<sup>16</sup> The 1993 Geneva Talks provide a pertinent example: there, dialogue stalled until America withdrew its demand that the DPRK resume cooperation with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) weapons inspectors as a condition for restarting talks.<sup>17</sup>

When pursuing these three objectives, North Korean negotiators cleave to an established script to extract maximum concessions from their partners. They begin by presenting a firm, maximalist, and uncompromising initial position full of "expansive and rigid" demands, an opening salvo calculated to intimidate their counterparts and facilitate a settlement as close as

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<sup>9</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 43.

<sup>10</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Hawk Engagement and Preventive Defense on the Korean Peninsula," *International Security* 27, no. 1 (2002): 50.

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

<sup>12</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 91-2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>14</sup> C. Turner Joy, *How Communists Negotiate* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 92-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

possible to their bottom line.<sup>18</sup> Subsequent formal sessions are used to consolidate their position, establish a perception of “toughness,” and manipulate the record to obscure concessions made away from the table.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, they utilize informal working-level meetings to explore the potential for compromise.<sup>20</sup> And when the bargaining process concludes, DPRK negotiators harden their position once more to win last-minute concessions as the price for closing a deal.<sup>21</sup>

North Korean representatives demonstrate similar consistency on the tactical level as well, employing five primary techniques in the course of day-to-day negotiations. The first and most prominent of these is brinkmanship: that is, a commitment to the instigation of “drama” and “catastrophe” using “aggressive and provocative tactics.”<sup>22</sup> In practice, brinkmanship takes many forms: deploying threats and bluster (like Pyongyang’s declarations that any imposition of economic sanctions would be regarded as “act of war”<sup>23</sup>); deliberately manufacturing crises (like insisting that their Kaesong delegation had been bombed by American planes<sup>24</sup>); walking away from negotiations (like recalling most of their negotiating team at the 1995 Kuala Lumpur talks<sup>25</sup>); and demanding and then pocketing unilateral concessions before talks begin (like accepting 650,000 tons of South Korean and Japanese rice in the summer of 1995 without making a reciprocal gesture<sup>26</sup>). The DPRK’s behavior in this respect is reminiscent of hard-line tactics adopted by other states, most notably the Soviet Union. As one Soviet negotiator put it, Moscow’s main negotiating technique was to repeat its position *ad nauseam* until Washington caved -- the epitome of the philosophy that “it only takes one to tango.”<sup>27</sup>

Second, North Korean negotiators delay substantive negotiations as long as they believe the general atmosphere for talks -- the *punūigi* -- is unfavorable.<sup>28</sup> Under such circumstances, DPRK representatives will strive to demonstrate *kojip* -- “an unyielding attitude, stubbornness, or perseverance” -- until the *punūigi* shifts.<sup>29</sup> Admiral C. Turner Joy expresses immense frustration with the DPRK’s stalling tactics in his recollections of Kaesong, most significantly with respect to the fixing of an armistice line.<sup>30</sup> Though the Communists ultimately agreed to divide the Korean peninsula according to the line of armed contact, they withheld consent as long as possible “in the hope of realizing concessions” from the American delegation.<sup>31</sup>

Third, the DPRK pursues negotiations along multiple “tracks” to exploit divisions and weaknesses in the other side.<sup>32</sup> This permits Pyongyang to create “issue-specific negotiating leverage” that can be used to obtain concessions “far in excess of North Korea’s aggregate national strength.”<sup>33</sup> Bilateral discussions between the two Koreas have routinely consisted of public negotiations “backstopped or facilitated by secret channels and ... unofficial private emissaries.”<sup>34</sup> North Korea shows a similar predilection in talks with Japan: for instance, by

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 43, 76.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>24</sup> Joy, *How Communists Negotiate*, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Jerrold L. Schecter, *Russian Negotiating Behavior: Continuity and Transition* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 83-4.

<sup>28</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 66.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Joy, *How Communists Negotiate*, 40.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 45.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

exploiting both party and bureaucratic channels to convince Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president Shin Kanemaru to overreach and issue a statement “apologizing and compensating the DPRK for [the] Japanese occupation.”<sup>35</sup>

Fourth, DPRK diplomats attribute any lack of progress to their counterparts while they themselves play the part of innocent victims.<sup>36</sup> Pyongyang’s official news outlets have repeatedly blamed the other side’s “unreasonable position” for causing breakdowns in talks, accusing opposing negotiators of attempting to “dupe” and “hoodwink” their partners.<sup>37</sup> By “painting their enemies black and then blaming them for being black,” the North seeks to induce the other side to disprove the accusation by giving up more concessions than it otherwise would.<sup>38</sup> Joy recounts several incidents at Kaesong in which DPRK representatives did just that, casting themselves as good-faith negotiators double-crossed by perfidious Americans.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the DPRK considers all concessions and agreements to be open to reinterpretation and renegotiation as dictated by changing circumstances. Like their Soviet brethren, who saw themselves as free to “renegotiate, modify, ignore, modify, [and] abrogate” any pact at will, North Koreans often challenge the “interpretation ... of the most sensitive parts of an agreement, taking advantage of potential concessions in practice that could not be won at the negotiating table.”<sup>40</sup> This cyclical approach to negotiations is evident in the history of inter-Korean relations, of which even a cursory scan reveals several pacts Pyongyang has not honored; the 1992 denuclearization declaration in which North Korea agreed to forgo developing nuclear facilities and the ill-fated “peace initiative” Pyongyang proposed to the South on the eve of the Korean War are but two of the most prominent.<sup>41</sup>

Of course, these strategies and tactics do not in themselves comprise a comprehensive model of North Korean negotiating behavior. However, all of them have seen use during watershed moments in the history of US-DPRK dialogue, from the Korean Armistice Conference more than half a century ago to the Clinton administration’s several interactions with the North.<sup>42</sup> They therefore provide strong support for the thesis that North Korean behavior is both regularized and predictable. But does Pyongyang still adhere to these strategies and tactics now that the twentieth century has ended and the twenty-first has begun? To answer that question, we must analyze the major US-DPRK interactions during the relevant period, nearly all of which have fallen under the umbra of the Six-Party Talks: a single “super-negotiation” involving the United States, Japan, Russia, the PRC, and the two Koreas that has still not concluded (though the situation might change if Pyongyang’s recent insistence that it will “permanently pull out of nuclear disarmament talks and restart its nuclear program” is to be believed).<sup>43</sup> This understandably complicates any attempts to analyze the 6PT as a single monolithic process; thus, my case study frames the 6PT as a set of discrete negotiations punctuated by informal dialogue and capped by a pair of major intermediate agreements.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>39</sup> The alleged “bombing” of the Communist delegation at Kaesong is but the most powerful example of this tactic in action. The purpose of these “incidents,” Joy argues, is twofold: to gain advantage in both their propaganda and their negotiating efforts. For more, see Joy, *How Communists Negotiate*, 30-8.

<sup>40</sup> Schechter, *Russian Negotiating Behavior: Continuity and Transition*, 109. Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 62-3.

<sup>41</sup> Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, “The Korea Crisis,” *Foreign Policy* no. 136 (2003): 22.

<sup>42</sup> Eric G. John, *Riding a Submarine to the Conference Table* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 2003), 1. Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 43.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Landler, “North Korea Says It Will Halt Talks and Restart Its Nuclear Program,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2009, LexisNexis.

### III. Pre-Negotiation: Setting the Stage (Oct. 2002 - Aug. 2003)

President Kim Il-sung initiated North Korea's nuclear program in the 1960s, claiming that the DPRK needed nuclear power to compensate for its dearth of natural energy resources.<sup>44</sup> Though Kim signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, the undeclared construction of a nuclear waste reprocessing facility in the 1980s raised suspicions that the DPRK intended to become a nuclear state.<sup>45</sup> When the IAEA demanded access to two buildings suspected to contain evidence of an illegal nuclear program in 1993, Pyongyang announced its withdrawal from the NPT.<sup>46</sup> After months of negotiations produced no compromise acceptable to both sides, Washington signaled its intent to ask the United Nations (UN) to impose economic sanctions on North Korea; in response, the DPRK ended all ongoing talks and threatened to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire."<sup>47</sup> The crisis was averted with the signing of the US-DPRK Agreed Framework in 1994 (1994 AF), which "froze North Korea's existing plutonium-based nuclear program and promised its eventual dismantlement in exchange for U.S.-provided energy and movement toward normalizing diplomatic relations."<sup>48</sup>

Implementation of the 1994 AF through the KEDO process was slowed by Pyongyang's decision to wait until the very end of the Clinton administration before attempting to solidify the accord.<sup>49</sup> The Bush administration inherited the issue when those eleventh-hour deliberations concluded without a lasting agreement; however, the new president ignored Secretary of State Colin Powell's advice to continue where Clinton had left off, choosing instead to pursue a hard-line policy in line with more hawkish members of his Cabinet.<sup>50</sup> In January 2002, Bush's State of the Union went so far as to group North Korea with Iran and Iraq in the so-called "Axis of Evil."<sup>51</sup> As such, US-DPRK relations were already quite frosty when America dropped a bombshell in October 2002: American intelligence had discovered a secret North Korean program to develop highly-enriched uranium (HEU) that existed in parallel to its very public plutonium-based efforts.<sup>52</sup>

In response, Pyongyang expressed its willingness to renounce its nuclear program in return for a nonaggression treaty between the DPRK and the US, stating in early November that "Our government will resolve all US security concerns through the talks if your government has a will to end its hostile policy."<sup>53</sup> Bush rejected North Korea's offer, declared it in violation of its AF obligations, suspended the ongoing LWR project, and ended shipments of HFO to North Korea.<sup>54</sup> Pyongyang's reaction was decisive and provocative: on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003, it declared its intent to withdraw from the NPT once again.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Paul F. Chamberlin, "The Six-Party Talks: Time For Change," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2007): 61.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> David E. Sanger, "North Korea, Fighting Inspection, Renounces Nuclear Arms Treaty," March 12, 1993, *The New York Times*, LexisNexis.

<sup>47</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Will Urge U.N. to Plan Sanctions for North Korea," March 20, 1994, *The New York Times*, LexisNexis.

<sup>48</sup> Chamberlin, "The Six-Party Talks: Time For Change," 61.

<sup>49</sup> Alan Romberg, "Negotiating with North Korea: Bridging the Differences Among the Key Parties," Stimson, *The Henry L. Stimson Center*, [http://www.stimson.org/eastasia/pdf/Alan\\_Romberg-Negotiating\\_with\\_North\\_%20Korea.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/eastasia/pdf/Alan_Romberg-Negotiating_with_North_%20Korea.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> President Bush also harbored a well-known loathing for Kim Jong-il, going so far as to refer to the North Korean dictator as "pygmy." For more, see Chamberlin, "The Six-Party Talks: Time For Change," 62.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Yinhay Ahn, "North Korea in 2002: A Survival Game," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 1 (2002): 58.

<sup>53</sup> Leon V. Sigal, "North Korea is No Iraq: Pyongyang's Negotiating Strategy," *Arms Control Today* 32 (December 2002), [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002\\_12/sigal\\_dec02](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_12/sigal_dec02).

<sup>54</sup> Chamberlin, "The Six-Party Talks: Time For Change," 62.

<sup>55</sup> Kyung-Ae Park, "North Korea in 2003: Pendulum Swing between Crisis and Diplomacy," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 1 (2004): 139.

Pyongyang's second withdrawal from the NPT triggered a flurry of diplomacy. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, Beijing offered to host bilateral talks between America and the DPRK, but its diplomatic overtures were rebuffed by an administration that regarded the North's nuclear program as a "regional matter" best addressed multilaterally.<sup>56</sup> To Bush, multilateral talks would give America more leverage with which to "isolate and pressure" Kim Jong-il's regime.<sup>57</sup> For its part, the DPRK reiterated its demand that America sign a nonaggression treaty as the price of solving the nuclear problem.<sup>58</sup> Over the next two months, it also reactivated its five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon and tested a pair of missiles, justifying its actions on the grounds of "self-defense."<sup>59</sup>

It took a concerted effort by the PRC to break through the impasse. Strongly encouraged by Washington to serve as an intermediary, the Chinese government convinced North Korea to accept bilateral discussions in the context of a multilateral framework.<sup>60</sup> On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003, North Korea and the United States announced their decision to hold Six-Party Talks tasked with resolving the nuclear issue, with the first session scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> of August.<sup>61</sup> In a face-saving gesture, the DPRK claimed authorship of the idea and asserted that the group talks would be a mere fig leaf for bilateral talks.<sup>62</sup>

#### **IV. The 6PT, Rounds 1-4: Painful Progress (Aug. 2003 - Sep. 2005)**

The first round of the 6PT did not begin auspiciously. On August 27<sup>th</sup>, the DPRK proposed a "package solution" that traded a commitment to allow IAEA inspections and dismantle nuclear facilities for a US-DPRK nonaggression treaty, the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, economic cooperation, and the completion of the LWR project.<sup>63</sup> American negotiators flatly rejected these ambitious demands, at which point Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Yong Il accused the United States of "refusing to abandon its hostile policy" toward his country.<sup>64</sup> He then declared North Korea's intent to "become a nuclear power" and threatened to test an atomic bomb in the near future to prove it.<sup>65</sup> The first round ended on August 29<sup>th</sup> with nothing but a symbolic joint statement calling for "continued dialogue, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, the consideration of the security concerns of North Korea, and the avoidance of any action that might aggravate the situation."<sup>66</sup> Even as the Chinese announced an agreement to meet within the next two months, a DPRK spokesman distanced Pyongyang from the 6PT, condemning them as a "trick" intended to disarm North Korea unfairly.<sup>67</sup> "We are not interested at all in this kind of talks," he said, and "do not have any hopes" for continuing the negotiations.<sup>68</sup> To back up its tough rhetoric, North Korea announced on October 1<sup>st</sup> that it had

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> James T. Laney and Jason T. Shaplen, "How to Deal with North Korea," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 2 (2003): 16. Park, "North Korea in 2003," 140.

<sup>60</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2003," 142.

<sup>61</sup> James Brooke, "U.S. and North Korea Announce Accord on Wider Atom Talks," *The New York Times*, August 2, 2003, LexisNexis.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2003," 144.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Kahn and David E. Sanger, "North Korea Says It May Test an A-Bomb," *The New York Times*, August 29, 2003, LexisNexis.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2003," 143.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Kahn and David E. Sanger, "North Korea Disdains More Nuclear Talks," *The New York Times*, August 31, 2003, LexisNexis.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

reprocessed 8,000 spent plutonium fuel rods -- enough, some experts suggested, to create six nuclear weapons.<sup>69</sup>

Pyongyang's escalation worked. In mid-October, Bush indicated his willingness to deal by offering North Korea a substantive concession in the form of a "written security guarantee."<sup>70</sup> The DPRK rejected that specific concession but expressed its willingness to rejoin the 6PT as long as all parties remained committed to "putting into practice the proposal for a package solution based on the principle of simultaneous actions."<sup>71</sup> Pyongyang clarified its proposal in January 2004 by offering what it called a "bold concession": a freeze on the production and testing of nuclear weapons in exchange for America removing Pyongyang from its list of state sponsors of terror, lifting economic sanctions, and providing the DPRK with energy resources in conjunction with other states.<sup>72</sup> That gesture, which Powell called "interesting" and "encouraging," paved the way for the second round to begin on February 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, American diplomats left Beijing empty-handed after four days of dialogue. North Korea found unacceptable Washington's insistence on the "complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement" (CVID) of its nuclear program, a demand Pyongyang considered suitable only for a "defeated, servant country"; instead, it advocated its own formulation of a "freeze for compensation."<sup>74</sup> While Japan sided with the United States, South Korea joined Russia and the PRC in supporting the North Korean plan.<sup>75</sup> At the end of the talks, the six parties could not even agree on the text of a joint declaration, leaving it to China to issue a Chairman's Statement agreeing to convene a third round of talks in Beijing "no later than the second quarter of 2004."<sup>76</sup>

Pyongyang took advantage of the delay by seeking to convince Japan to sign onto the concept of a "freeze for compensation" as the 6PT's primary goal.<sup>77</sup> The Japanese government's eventual and surprising acquiescence left the United States the odd country out and rendered Bush vulnerable to mounting international pressure to make a "serious offer" in place of "vague statements that if the North Koreans disarm, something good might happen."<sup>78</sup> Washington therefore instructed its diplomats to propose a detailed but highly conditional set of incentives during the third round of talks, in which economic aid would begin flowing as soon as Kim Jong-il publicly acknowledged and committed to dismantling both his plutonium and HEU programs.<sup>79</sup> In return, America would provide a "provisional guarantee" not to topple Kim's regime while the four other parties would immediately begin monthly deliveries of thousands of tons of HFO.<sup>80</sup> Washington also committed to beginning direct talks about the lifting of sanctions, the provision of long-term energy aid, and the retraining of North Korean nuclear

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<sup>69</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2003," 143.

<sup>70</sup> Joseph Kahn, "North Korea Agrees to Nuclear Talks, China Says," *The New York Times*, October 31, 2003, LexisNexis.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Kyung-Ae Park, "North Korea in 2004: From Brisk Diplomacy to Impasse," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 1 (2005): 15.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* Christopher Marquis and Norimitsu Onishi, "North Korea Agrees to Resume Talks With U.S. Over Arms," *The New York Times*, February 4, 2004, LexisNexis.

<sup>74</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2004," 16.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> "Chairman's Statement for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Six-Party Talks," *Xinhua*, February 28, 2004, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2004/Feb/88774.htm>.

<sup>77</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2004," 18.

<sup>78</sup> David E. Sanger, "U.S. to Offer North Korea Incentives in Nuclear Talks," *The New York Times*, June 23, 2004, LexisNexis. Park, "North Korea in 2004," 18.

<sup>79</sup> Sanger, "U.S. to Offer North Korea Incentives in Nuclear Talks," LexisNexis.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

scientists.<sup>81</sup> But Bush's conditional proposal met solid opposition from the North, which countered by asking for more up-front economic compensation in addition to its original demands.<sup>82</sup> It also continued to deny in public the existence of its HEU program.<sup>83</sup> The third round of the 6PT thus ended on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, with little progress to show for its efforts; meanwhile, Pyongyang threatened to conduct a nuclear test if its demands were not met.<sup>84</sup>

During the third round, American negotiators had noticed their DPRK counterparts' extreme interest in the politics of the nuclear issue in the States, where Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry had been challenging Bush's North Korea policy by advocating direct bilateral talks.<sup>85</sup> The reason for those questions became clear in August, when a DPRK spokesman released a statement calling Bush's aides and allies a "typical gang of political gangsters." He reserved the most virulent insults for the president himself: not only was Bush an "imbecile, ignorant, a tyrant and a man-killer," the spokesman stated, he was also a "bad guy."<sup>86</sup> Analysts characterized this rhetorical shift as signifying Pyongyang's decision to suspend serious talks until the results of the upcoming American presidential election were announced.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, the DPRK's uncompromising stance became even more so after Kerry's defeat. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Pyongyang reiterated its unwillingness to rejoin the 6PT on account of the Bush administration's "brazen-faced, double-dealing tactics" and declared for the first time that it possessed nuclear weapons (as opposed to a "deterrent force" of some unspecified kind).<sup>88</sup> Three months later, in a now-familiar move, North Korea removed 8,000 spent fuel rods from its Yongbyon reactor.<sup>89</sup>

Only the ROK's decision to offer the North a new energy assistance package in June 2005 brought Pyongyang back to the table.<sup>90</sup> Following an informal meeting between chief American negotiator Christopher Hill and his DPRK counterpart, the 6PT's fourth round took place between July 26<sup>th</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup>; after a brief recess, negotiators met once more between September 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.<sup>91</sup> This time, the talks culminated in a landmark Statement of Principles in which

North Korea undertook to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs; the United States agreed to take steps to normalize relations with North Korea; and the other parties undertook to provide economic aid, including at some "appropriate time" to discuss the provision of a new light-water reactor for electrical power generation.<sup>92</sup>

But just twenty-four hours after the September agreement was finalized, North Korea issued a press release stating that America "should not even dream" that Pyongyang would dismantle its

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Park, "North Korea in 2004," 18.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Joseph Kahn, "U.S. Cites Scant Progress in Nuclear Talks With North Korea," *The New York Times*, June 26, 2004, LexisNexis.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> James Brooke, "North Korea, Eyeing Election, Issues Stream of Insults at Bush," *The New York Times*, August 24, 2004, LexisNexis.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> James Brooke and David E. Sanger, "North Koreans Say They Hold Nuclear Arms," *The New York Times*, February 11, 2005, LexisNexis.

<sup>89</sup> James Brooke, "North Koreans Claim to Extract Fuel For Bombs," *The New York Times*, May 12, 2005, LexisNexis.

<sup>90</sup> Joel Brinkley and David E. Sanger, "North Koreans Agree to Resume Nuclear Talks," *The New York Times*, July 10, 2005, LexisNexis.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* "U.S. and Other Powers Reach Tentative Understanding on North Korea's Nuclear Program," *The American Journal of International Law* 99, no. 4 (2005): 915.

<sup>92</sup> "U.S. and Other Powers Reach Tentative Understanding on North Korea's Nuclear Program," 915.

nuclear program before receiving a LWR reactor -- a last-ditch effort to extract in the implementation stage what negotiations had failed to achieve.<sup>93</sup>

## V. The 6PT, Rounds 5-7: Implementation Issues (Oct. 2005 - Dec. 2008)

Pyongyang's objection notwithstanding, the September 2005 Statement of Principles suffered from other problems as well, most notably the fact that it left intentionally vague the date of total North Korean disarmament. The 6PT's fifth round, held between November 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, was the six parties' attempt to translate the Statement's broad prescriptions into a concrete actionable agreement.<sup>94</sup> There, DPRK negotiators pushed for a slower and "more deliberate" implementation process, but any chance of making progress on that issue soon evaporated in light of North Korea's newest demand: that America lift a recently-imposed crackdown on the small Macao bank Banco Delta Asia (BDA), which held roughly \$25 million (USD) in DPRK assets.<sup>95</sup> Washington refused, stating that the crackdown had been put in place to mitigate Pyongyang's money laundering and counterfeiting activities.<sup>96</sup> A second session between December 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> only exacerbated the logjam; indeed, the participants could not even agree on a date to reconvene, resolving instead to meet at the "earliest possible opportunity."<sup>97</sup>

As the fifth round collapsed under the weight of mutual recriminations, Kim Jong-il raised the stakes. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006 -- Independence Day in the US, a fact certainly not lost on Pyongyang -- North Korea test-fired seven missiles (including the intercontinental *Taepodong II*) into the Sea of Japan.<sup>98</sup> An outraged Japan joined with the United Kingdom, France, and America at the UN Security Council to introduce a resolution invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter and calling for sanctions against North Korea.<sup>99</sup> Kim remained defiant, threatening to declare "all-out war" if sanctions were imposed and reiterating his position that "even a small concession wouldn't be made to the sworn enemy U.S. imperialist aggressors." However, his bluster was not put to the test, as the threat of a Chinese veto forced the United States to compromise. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, the Bush administration reluctantly threw its support to the PRC-sponsored Resolution 1695, which dropped the Chapter VII language but retained its demand that the DPRK halt its missile program.<sup>100</sup>

The dust from that dispute had hardly settled when Pyongyang instigated another crisis: on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006, North Korea tested its first ever nuclear bomb, citing as justification the "extreme threat of a nuclear war" from the United States.<sup>101</sup> This time, even China signed onto UNSC Resolution 1718, which cited the Security Council's authority under Chapter VII to condemn North Korea's nuclear test, impose sanctions on Kim Jong-il's regime, and ban

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Norimitsu Onishi, "Key Diplomats Together Again, But Not Meeting On North Korea," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2006, LexisNexis.

<sup>94</sup> Jim Yardley, "Six-Nation Talks on North Korea Resume in China," *The New York Times*, November 10, 2005, LexisNexis.

<sup>95</sup> Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "North Korea in 2007: Shuffling in from the Cold," *Asian Survey* 48, no. 1 (2008): 108. Onishi, "Key Diplomats Together Again, But Not Meeting On North Korea," LexisNexis.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> "Full Text of Chairman's Statement of Six-Party Talks," *Xinhua*, December 22, 2005, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-12/22/content\\_5521504.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-12/22/content_5521504.htm).

<sup>98</sup> Norimitsu Onishi and David E. Sanger, "6 Missiles Fired By North Korea; Tests Protested," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2006, LexisNexis.

<sup>99</sup> Warren Hoge and Norimitsu Onishi, "China Fights Sanctions To Punish North Korea," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2006, LexisNexis.

<sup>100</sup> The Associated Press, "Chronology of NKorea's Nuclear, Missile Programs," *The Associated Press*, April 25, 2009, LexisNexis. Warren Hoge, "U.N. Council, in Weakened Resolution, Demands End to North Korean Missile Program," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2006, LexisNexis.

<sup>101</sup> The Associated Press, "Chronology of NKorea's Nuclear, Missile Programs," LexisNexis.

Pyongyang from conducting any and all activities related to its nuclear weapons program.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, the PRC -- traditionally reluctant to take Chapter VII action -- pursued a diplomatic solution to the crisis.<sup>103</sup> In October, Beijing requested a trilateral meeting between Chinese, North Korean, and American diplomats, which Bush surprisingly approved despite his reluctance to conduct direct talks with the DPRK.<sup>104</sup> Seven hours of negotiation produced a crucial concession: in return for enticing North Korea back to the 6PT, the United States agreed to put the release of BDA's \$25 million on the table.<sup>105</sup>

That informal accord cleared the way for the 6PT's fifth round to resume on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006, but it soon became clear that some movement on the BDA issue was necessary before North Korea would make any more concessions.<sup>106</sup> To that end, Bush authorized the Treasury Department to hold substantive one-on-one discussions with North Korea in January of 2007, the results of which allowed a breakthrough Joint Agreement to be reached during the second session of the 6PT's fifth round (from February 8<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>).<sup>107</sup> In the initial phase, to be completed within sixty days, the DPRK would shut down Yongbyon and resume full cooperation with IAEA inspectors; meanwhile, the United States would begin bilateral talks to resolve the financial issue and initiate steps to remove North Korea from the terrorism list.<sup>108</sup> North Korea would also receive fifty thousand tons of HFO in emergency energy assistance.<sup>109</sup> In the second phase, the implementation of which was left up to future working-group discussions, the DPRK would fully disclose and permanently disable all of its nuclear programs in exchange for a million tons of HFO.<sup>110</sup>

A sixth round of the 6PT was scheduled for March 19<sup>th</sup> to flesh out those implementation issues, but DPRK negotiators walked away when protests from foreign banks led the transfer of BDA's \$25 million to be delayed.<sup>111</sup> In June, the frozen assets were finally wired to a DPRK account in a Russian bank, an action soon followed by the delivery of 6,200 tons of the promised HFO.<sup>112</sup> North Korea thus permitted weapons inspectors to reenter the country, and on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the IAEA confirmed the shutdown of the Yongbyon reactor.<sup>113</sup>

North Korea's apparent willingness to comply with its first-phase obligations allowed negotiators to begin discussing the implementation of the second phase in more detail.<sup>114</sup> To that end, the aborted sixth round restarted on July 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, a dialogue soon followed by another unilateral session between Hill and his DPRK counterparts where the latter recommitted to disclosing and permanently disabling their country's nuclear programs by the end of 2007.<sup>115</sup> Pyongyang's informal agreement was formalized between September 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> at the second session of the 6PT's sixth round, which laid out the first specific timeline for the North's dual

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Helene Cooper, "North Korea Talks: Back to the Table, Some Reluctantly," *The New York Times*, November 2, 2006, LexisNexis.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Joseph Kahn, "Talks End on North Korea's Nuclear Weapons," *The New York Times*, December 23, 2006, LexisNexis.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Landler and Thom Shanker, "North Korea and U.S. Envoys Meet in Berlin," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2007, LexisNexis.

<sup>108</sup> "Text of the February 13, 2007, Six-Party Agreement," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, February 13, 2007, [http://www.stratfor.com/text\\_feb\\_13\\_2007\\_six\\_party\\_agreement](http://www.stratfor.com/text_feb_13_2007_six_party_agreement).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Haggard and Noland, "North Korea in 2007," 108.

<sup>111</sup> Donald Greenlees, "Bank Blocks Plan to Release Frozen Funds to North Korea," *The New York Times*, March 27, 2007, LexisNexis.

<sup>112</sup> Choe Sang-hun, "Oil is Shipped to North Korea Under Nuclear Shutdown Pact," *The New York Times*, July 13, 2007, LexisNexis.

<sup>113</sup> Choe Sang-hun, "U.N. Inspectors Confirm Shutdown of North Korean Reactor," *The New York Times*, July 17, 2007, LexisNexis.

<sup>114</sup> Haggard and Noland, "North Korea in 2007," 109.

<sup>115</sup> David E. Sanger, "Nuclear Pact Broadening, North Korea and U.S. Say," *The New York Times*, September 3, 2007, LexisNexis.

commitments.<sup>116</sup> However, the DPRK permitted the New Year's Eve deadline to lapse, blaming its noncompliance on the fact that the United States had yet to remove it from the terrorism list.<sup>117</sup> These differences were only overcome in another bilateral meeting held in April of 2008, when the Bush administration secretly committed to that removal in return for complete disclosure.<sup>118</sup> On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the DPRK provided the United States with 18,000 pages of documents on its plutonium program dating back to the time of the first nuclear crisis; two months later, it released a declaration outlining its nuclear program, and in a bonus symbolic gesture it detonated the cooling towers at Yongbyon.<sup>119</sup> As promised, Bush lifted sanctions on DPRK under the Trading with the Enemy Act and notified Congress of his intent to delist the North by August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008.<sup>120</sup>

Bush's decision was immediately condemned as giving away too much too quickly; thus, to ward against a domestic conservative backlash, the president elected to press for a harsher verification mechanism at a July round of the 6PT.<sup>121</sup> He instructed American negotiators to make official delisting contingent on North Korean agreement to a strict verification protocol, which the DPRK negotiating team refused to give.<sup>122</sup> When August 11<sup>th</sup> passed without movement by either side, the North's Foreign Minister announced that the disablement of Yongbyon would cease.<sup>123</sup> By September, Pyongyang had ejected all IAEA inspectors and removed the seals and surveillance cameras at its nuclear facilities.<sup>124</sup> A DPRK-US bilateral negotiation in early October came close to resolving the verification issue, as North Korean diplomats reportedly agreed to permit foreign inspectors to conduct comprehensive sampling procedures at Yongbyon during the meeting.<sup>125</sup> But American attempts to formalize that verbal agreement through the 6PT framework broke down on December 11<sup>th</sup> after Pyongyang refused to provide consent in writing.<sup>126</sup> With the failure of the 6PT's seventh round, Bush had no choice but to defer a final solution to the North Korean nuclear issue to Barack Obama's incoming administration.

## VI. Analysis: Whither North Korean Strategy?

North Korean behavior during the 6PT conforms to the general pattern of behavior posited as the foundation of North Korean negotiating strategy in the second section of this case study. In each negotiation's initial stage, DPRK diplomats led off with uncompromising and maximalist demands, the most radical of which they moderated when American inflexibility became evident. In the middle game, the DPRK took advantage of bilateral dialogue and informal discussions to float possible compromises, fracture opposing coalitions, and obtain additional concessions. And after both the September 2005 Statement of Principles and the February 2007 Joint Agreement were approved, Pyongyang demonstrated the frustrating power

<sup>116</sup> Helene Cooper, "North Koreans in Nuclear Pact," *The New York Times*, October 4, 2007, LexisNexis.

<sup>117</sup> Choe Sang-hun and Steven Lee Myers, "North Korea Says It Met Nuclear Disclosure Deadline in Previous Declaration," *The New York Times*, January 5, 2008, LexisNexis.

<sup>118</sup> Stephen Haggard and Marcus Noland, "North Korea in 2008: Twilight of the God?," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 1 (2009): 103.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* Jim Yardley and Jake Hooker, "Nuclear Negotiators Reach Accord on Verifying North Korean Disarmament," *The New York Times*, July 13, 2008, LexisNexis.

<sup>120</sup> Haggard and Noland, "North Korea in 2008," 104.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Elaine Sciolino, "North Korea Moves Closer to Restarting Its Nuclear Program, Atomic Agency Says," *The New York Times*, September 23, 2008, LexisNexis.

<sup>125</sup> Peter Crail, "Six-Party Talks Stall Over Sampling," *Arms Control Today* 39 (January/February 2009), [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009\\_01-02/sixpartytalksstall](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_01-02/sixpartytalksstall).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

of cyclical negotiation tactics by leveraging its noncompliance to win accelerated commitments and still more concessions as the price for continued cooperation.

Throughout the Six-Party Talks, North Korea repeatedly deployed each of the four other tactics described above as well. Pyongyang demanded (and sometimes received) unilateral concessions to get stalled talks restarted, walked away from negotiations, threatened dire consequences should a certain action be taken, and manipulated its nuclear program to send tensions in the region to the brink. Whenever the DPRK judged the *punŭŭgi* to be unfavorable, as it did during the tail end of the 2004 presidential campaign, it delayed serious negotiations in the hopes of restarting them under more favorable circumstances. North Korean negotiators adroitly exploited divisions among the other five parties to the point at which they sometimes managed to align five states against the United States, most notably by winning an implicit consensus in favor of a “freeze for compromise” solution. And every time they walked away from the table, they issued accusatory statements blaming other parties for the lack of progress, even going so far as to project their own concerns onto their counterparts like in the following statement from March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008:

We have done our best in sincerely holding negotiations, in order to save face for the US side. However, the more we hold negotiations, the more disappointed we have become at the attitude of the Bush administration. In order to save its face, the US side is persistently clinging to shabby tricks (*nojolhan yosul*) of trying to accuse us as criminals.<sup>127</sup>

Lastly, North Korea’s behavior during the 6PT demonstrates the applicability of the three basic objectives outlined earlier to the negotiating strategy Pyongyang adopted in this specific case. Time and time again, the North stubbornly refused to accept conditional agreements like the one Bush proposed in October 2003, instead reserving its approval for accords constructed upon roughly simultaneous action (like the February plan’s first phase). The DPRK’s demands, for their part, depict a state obsessed with obtaining lasting regime security by ending its economic and diplomatic isolation -- by pushing for a US-DPRK nonaggression treaty, requesting removal from trade and terrorism blacklists, and stipulating that the pace of normalization talks with Japan and America be accelerated, among other things. Its official pronouncements even characterize its nuclear program as a purely defensive measure, claiming that its arsenal is merely intended to shield against the “Bush administration’s undisguised policy to isolate and stifle” it.<sup>128</sup> Of course, these propagandistic announcements must be taken with a grain of salt, as it is likely that Pyongyang assumes such positions to reinforce its desired image as a peaceful state unjustly victimized by its enemies. But they also undoubtedly reflect the worldview of a regime that perceives itself as assailed on all sides by hostile powers. Finally, North Korea’s demands reveal its need to appear as negotiating “on the same footing” as the world’s sole superpower, a point more explicitly illustrated by its repeated appeals -- some successful, others less so -- to meet with the United States on bilateral terms.<sup>129</sup>

For these reasons, my case study shows DPRK behavior during the 6PT to be consistent with the model of North Korean negotiating strategy developed above. This consistency is attributable to several aspects of the North Korean regime: its relatively immutable leadership structure, which has remained in essentially the same hands for the entirety of its history; the influence of the elder Kim’s guerilla legacy, which has provided the DPRK with a “ready model

<sup>127</sup> “DPRK FM Spokesman ‘Press Statement’ of 28 March on 6-Party Talks ‘Stalemate’,” *Korean Central News Agency*, March 28, 2008, World News Connection.

<sup>128</sup> Brooke and Sanger, “North Koreans Say They Hold Nuclear Arms,” LexisNexis.

<sup>129</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 53.

for how a relatively weak ... state might maximize its negotiating advantages by pursuing unconventional tactics”; lingering memories of imperialist oppression, which has convinced North Korean negotiators to “defend national sovereignty at any cost”; and the influence of long-standing Confucian norms, which has instilled within the DPRK regime a commitment to equivalency and reciprocity.<sup>130</sup> As long as these internal conditions persist, we can expect the DPRK to adhere to past behavior as 6PT negotiations move forward.

With this conclusion in mind, we can interpret North Korea’s most recent provocations -- its decision to launch a three-stage rocket, its first public acknowledgement of its HEU program, and its refusal to engage in more 6PT discussions -- as just the latest in the long series of crisis-instigating actions it has undertaken throughout the six-party process.<sup>131</sup> In the absence of internal changes that could disrupt the DPRK’s longstanding behavioral patterns, the Obama administration must continue applying the “North Korean discount” to Pyongyang’s bluster and recognize that the current crisis, while serious, may not be as serious as it seems: that is, the diplomatic road has not yet been closed.<sup>132</sup>

This case study also provides two key insights into the practice of international diplomacy as a whole. First, the 6PT illuminate both the promise and the peril of multilateralism as a negotiating strategy. Certainly, multilateralism can blunt the effects of brinkmanship tactics by giving states more to lose when they induce a crisis in lieu of facilitating cooperation.<sup>133</sup> The unified criticism the DPRK sustained after its 2006 nuclear test translated into a landmark UNSC resolution placing sanctions on Kim’s regime, the pressure from which helped convince North Korea to come to a substantive accord after months of delay. However, multilateral negotiations are quite vulnerable to coalition-cracking tactics like those Pyongyang routinely employ, the successful use of which can reduce a coalition’s effectiveness by fostering inter-ally disagreements that prevent a solution acceptable to all parties from being reached.

Second, North Korea is an object lesson to small states seeking to transform their weaknesses into strengths. Because the nuclear issue is one of only a few foreign policy questions with which the DPRK must cope, it can afford to concentrate on a “narrow range of vital interests” while ignoring everything else; moreover, it can “heavily discount the effects of its actions on the stability of international politics in general.<sup>134</sup>” By contrast, America must disperse its attention over a wide band of issues, and its status as the world’s sole superpower requires it to consider not just its own interest but the “divergent interests of other states” when making policy decisions.<sup>135</sup> By demonstrating a disregard for the impact of its behavior on global stability, a weak power can take advantage of other countries’ interests to restrain the United States and exert influence on the international stage far disproportionate to its size and power. At the end of the day, the Obama administration would be wise to heed these lessons as it moves to resolve the foreign policy challenges that will surely arise in this decade and the next.

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>131</sup> Landler, “North Korea Says It Will Halt Talks and Restart Its Nuclear Program,” LexisNexis. Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Threatens to Enrich Uranium,” *The New York Times*, April 30, 2009, LexisNexis.

<sup>132</sup> Joel Brinkley, “North Korea Said to Reject China’s Bid on Nuclear Talks,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 2005, LexisNexis.

<sup>133</sup> Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge*, 151.

<sup>134</sup> Kyung-Ae Park, “North Korea’s Defensive Power and U.S.-North Korea Relations,” *Pacific Affairs* 73, no. 4 (2000-1): 550.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

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