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United States Multilateral Policy in Dealing with North Korea

Alex Guarino

August 2015

Master's Thesis

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Advisor: Jean Krasno

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Chapter 1: Introduction

North Korea's nuclear program continues to be one of the highest priority foreign policy agenda items for the United States. A major motivation for putting together this research is the importance of this topic, as a growing North Korean nuclear regime and the potential for nuclear proliferation will ultimately translate into a more dangerous world. The primary purpose of this research is to extrapolate the reasons why the United States has employed a multilateral approach to addressing North Korea's nuclear program and aggressive actions. Why has the United States chosen this approach? This research and conclusions will attempt to answer this key question and also take a careful look at the United States relationship with states in East Asia including North Korea, or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). There will also be a prescriptive section, providing policy recommendations that attempt to address this critical foreign policy challenge. This research will include a literature review, which will take a close look at several current pieces of literature. Some of the literature delves into American ambivalence or the mixed messages the United States sends by certain actions. Other literature focuses on the nuclear program in North Korea and analyzes the history and possible future paths of North Korea. International relations theory will also be explored including the topics of realism, liberalism, balance of power and American exceptionalism. My research will present a clear analysis of American foreign policy with the DPRK, as well as highlight the American inclination to pursue ambivalent engagement.

While the United States has generally employed this multilateral approach, there are cases in which the United States adopted bilateral or even unilateral strategies.

Therefore, I argue that while the United States is often ambivalent in its foreign policy, it has ultimately chosen a multilateral approach for dealing with North Korea and its nuclear weapons program. Some may argue that U.S. foreign policy principally yields to multilateral approaches and I would agree this is often the case. However, the United States at times remains sporadic in its foreign policy strategies and actions. I would argue that U.S. foreign policy in North Korea is a diversified approach, which involves a mixture of engagement such as unilateral, bilateral and multilateral. In today's climate, the pendulum tends to swing most often to a multilateral approach. I believe the main reason for this mix of strategies is attributable to domestic and international considerations that I will explore in my research. With these varied types of engagement, I then argue that this leads to confusion on policy, which is ultimately unproductive. Policymakers seem to be split on how to approach North Korea. More conservative hardliners want the United States to take more unilateral action and the more liberal moderates generally favor the idea of a coalition working together to deal with the DPRK. It should be noted that some analysts remind us that multilateral efforts can actually weaken American attempts at diplomacy. "While multilateral diplomacy is indispensable, involving more governments – with varying motives, interests, and objectives – at best it complicates and worst dilutes or even undermines US efforts."¹ In a globalized world that seems to shrink daily, the United States acting bilaterally is not as common as multilateral engagement and unilateralism is even more uncommon. However, a bilateral relationship allows either side to present their particular views and

¹ Gallucci, Robert; Poneman, Daniel; Wit, Joel S. *Seven Lessons for Dealing With Today's North Korea Nuclear Crisis*. Arms Control Today, Vol. 34, No. 3 (April 2004)

hear the other state's side, essentially allowing a more direct discussion without other states giving their two cents. Furthermore, the essence of a bilateral relationship implies equal footing and status for the two states present and this is why some analysts state that one of North Korea's main objectives is a bilateral relationship with the United States.

I will evaluate U.S. foreign policy approaches in dealing with North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and identify contributing variables to the U.S.'s multilateral approach in this regard. I shall argue that the use of multilateralism is the byproduct of liberalist theories or approaches. The United States is using multilateralism as a liberal means to reach its goals, and the U.S. sees multilateralism as the foreign policy tool that best serves its interests in this particular situation. Furthermore, I believe that the United States is exhibiting strategic restraint by investing in and advocating multilateral engagement, which contributes to stability in the region. The U.S. is illustrating its ability to work with other nations and be part of a grand strategy to curtail or stop North Korean aggression. In addition, the responsibility for peace and stability is shared among the states involved in the multilateral engagement and therefore, the risk is actually distributed among these states. A realist approach would advocate a military solution or perhaps the use of power or perceived threats to dictate policy and I believe the United States and its allies would not support such a tactic. In fact, a military solution or attempting to strong arm North Korea is perhaps the last thing the United States and its regional partners would want to do because of the possible escalation of hostilities on the peninsula. If anything, a realist approach risks the possibility of damaging the status and reputation of the United States and I believe this would translate into states moving away from past support or cordial communication. The idea of the U.S. using any force without

the tacit backing of South Korea is highly unlikely, but such a move would definitely be a point of contention between the two current close allies. Also, the Sino-American relationship is currently rather positive but China would strongly object any use of force against the DPRK without a serious justification.

This research will be a qualitative study and there are several methodologies I plan to use. I analyze my argument about American ambivalence and my feeling that the United States has widely favored multilateralism in dealing with the DPRK using historical archives and interviews. Other sources include books, articles, and reports, including primary sources such as United Nations documents and speeches such as those from the United Nations Security Council, the United States Mission to the United Nations, Department of State reports as well as presidential State of the Union addresses. Some of the primary sources will be from those who have been part of United States policymaking and especially those who have also been deeply involved in the American relationship with North Korea.

This research will explore the rationale for multilateralism, and most likely see it as a tool that helps to reassure other states and maintain them as allies. The U.S. wants these states to feel as though their opinions matter and to make certain they don't feel intimidated if they choose to oppose American proposals. This research will also look at certain aspects of liberalism including a focus on international law, which has been utilized to inhibit North Korean behavior. The United Nations Security Council has employed legal action through sanctions imposed on North Korea to attempt to stall its nuclear program. Another element in the liberal realm is the role of an international platform such as the Six-Party talks. The talks, along with the efforts of the United

Nations, the most prominent intergovernmental organization in the world, seek to work towards a peaceful resolution to the nuclear standoff and to end tensions on the Korean peninsula. The United States has dealt directly and frequently with each as a member and key player in both. The U.N. Security Council and the Six-Party talks are two examples of multilateral platforms that the U.S. utilizes to push for its foreign policy goals. Some goals include American and South Korean security on the peninsula and a focus on the denuclearization of North Korea.

There are several questions to consider when looking at US foreign policy in North Korea including:

- What unilateral action has the U.S. taken in North Korea, and has it been effective?
- What bilateral action has the U.S. taken in North Korea, and has it been effective?
- What multilateral action has the U.S. taken in North Korea, and has it been effective?
- Has the overall American strategy/policy in North Korea been effective? Has it been confusing?
- Is there evidence that the US prefers working alone, bilaterally or multilaterally?
- What is the evidence that the United States has utilized multiple forms of engagement?
- How much has changed from the administration of George W. Bush to the administration of Barack Obama?
- Does multilateralism add to the leveraging to change North Korea's behavior?
- How has the United States used the United Nations to achieve its goals?

There will also be several case studies in my research that take a closer look at bilateral engagement between the United States and the DPRK. These specific cases are

when notable Americans have visited North Korea and highlight the visits to the DPRK by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former President Bill Clinton. I will look at the issue or concern that brought these specific high-level individuals to North Korea, what action if any was taken, and what ultimately was the outcome. One source will be former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's memoir in which she not only speaks of her time in the day-to-day operations of American governance but also delves into her experience visiting North Korea and personally meeting with the late Kim Jong Il.

Some other primary sources that offer a window into US foreign policy include interviews that I have conducted with several individuals who have a wide breadth of experience in diplomacy and international relations. The interview subjects include Dr. Stephen Noerper, a specialist on North Korea who is currently the Senior Vice President at the Korea Society, Guillermo Rosa, a U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel (retired) who was a Deputy Military Advisor to Ambassador Susan Rice at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, and the third interviewee is Ana Escrogima, the current Diplomat in Residence at the City College of New York. All have graciously offered their valuable insight on diplomacy and the wisdom they have acquired through real world experience. Their assessments and revelations have added to both the quality and clarity of my research.

The importance of the global challenge of a nuclear North Korea cannot be overstated. The United States, its partners, other states and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have all attempted to stop North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons. "Thanks to the nonproliferation regime (under the auspices of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty), 184 nations, including more than 40 that have the technical

ability to build nuclear arsenals, have renounced nuclear weapons.”² Regrettably, over at least the last decade, the nuclear ambitions of North Korea have become more and more apparent while the attempts at stymying its acquisition of nuclear weapons have ultimately failed. If their acquisition of nuclear weapons is ultimately for global clout or purely defensive purposes, their goals remain unclear. Does the DPRK have more nefarious plans for its nuclear program such as proliferation or even a first strike scenario? Time will tell but the current world logic is to try and deescalate the current nuclear crisis. It seems that an aggressive North Korea only serves one nation well in the short run: North Korea. In the long run, this aggression further isolates North Korea while the other states in the region look on with worry and indignation at what seems like a never-ending litany of North Korean aggressive actions. As Lt. Col. Guillermo Rosa has stated, “China and Russia are not so different from us in many regards and they too are disturbed and perplexed by aggressive external and internal actions by the DPRK.”³ North Korean action, whether a missile test or building a nuclear weapon, makes the whole region less stable and therefore less safe. Furthermore, if two of our strongest allies (South Korea and Japan) in the region feel unsafe and threatened, then the United States feels unsafe and threatened.⁴ The graph on the next page illustrates how in depth the nuclear program of North Korea is and provides a disturbing visual of a North Korea that has locations for both light-water and gas-graphite reactors, research and development centers, a reprocessing plant and waste storage facility at Yongbyon, and several

² Allison, Graham. *Nuclear Disorder: Surveying Atomic Threats*, Foreign Affairs, 89 no. 1, 2010, Page 75

³ Interview with Lt. Col. Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

⁴ Ibid.

locations for uranium enrichment. It also identifies the locations of explosive test sites and missile launch sites. The article with this graph also relates how North Korea amended its constitution professing itself a nuclear power by adding the term ‘nuclear armed state.’⁵

Graph A –The Nuclear Realities of North Korea⁶



⁵ Watson, Leon. *We ARE A Nuclear Power: North Korea's Chilling Claim in New Constitution*, Daily Mail.com, May 31, 2012
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2152718/New-constitution-declares-North-Korea-nuclear-armed-nation-indomitable-military-power.html>

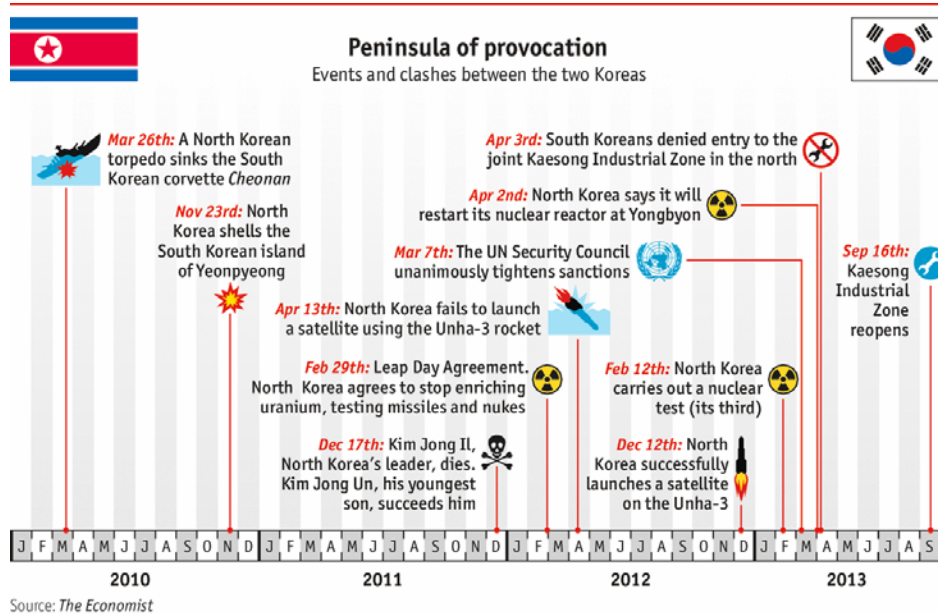
⁶ Ibid.

“North Korea surprised the world with its first nuclear test on Oct. 9, 2006.”⁷From that moment, the region became perhaps the least stable it has been since the Korean War. The fact is that an aggressive and nuclear-armed North Korea gives pause to the entire region. As the diplomat Ana Escrogima has stated, “North Korea is obviously on the wrong side of history on this, and will only come to see the pressure that is going to be brought to bear at some point or another because the world is going in a different direction.”⁸ While the United States has been working diligently to secure a deal on the nuclear issue with Iran and both the United States and Russia have continued to scale back their nuclear arsenals, North Korea continues to pursue more nuclear weapons. Sanctions and isolation have put pressure on the regime. However, it is apparent that both have not stopped the DPRK from not only going nuclear but also continuing to act provocatively (as illustrated in the graph on the next page).

⁷ Avni, Benny. *Nuke-Deal Pitfalls: Licensing an Iranian Bomb*, N.Y. Post, 11/24/14 <http://nypost.com/2014/11/23/nuke-deal-pitfalls-licensing-an-iranian-bomb/>

⁸ Interview with Ana Escrogima by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/20/15

Graph B – A Snapshot of Provocation on the Peninsula - 2010-2013⁹



The graph on provocation is a snapshot of these inflammatory actions and it aptly illustrates some of the serious challenges caused by North Korea. It is evident that over a selected four-year window, the DPRK has perpetrated multiple confrontational actions. During this period, the DPRK committed some of the most alarming actions, including the sinking of a South Korean naval ship (the *Cheonan*) and “the first shelling of South Korean territory since the end of the Korean War.”¹⁰

In speaking with a military expert who was at the United States Mission to the United Nations at the time, “the North Koreans took a huge risk in sinking the *Cheonan*.”¹¹ This could be considered an act of war but the ramifications of a conflict outweigh a serious counterattack. “The South’s armed forces are geared to defending

⁹ *Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?*, *The Economist*, October 26, 2013
<http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21588196-kim-jong-un-likely-realise-his-nuclear-ambitions-two-sides-already-face>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

itself or, if necessary, destroying the north – they are less well prepared to respond to the North’s pinpricks.”¹² While the sinking of a naval ship with nearly 50 soldiers killed is a tragic and barbaric attack, South Korea along with the US and its allies ultimately decided that a full retaliatory response was not warranted because of the possible runaway escalation that might occur between the two nations. The graph includes other provocative actions by the DPRK including launching satellites, restarting a nuclear reactor, denying entry to South Koreans at the joint South Korean/North Korean industrial park at Kaesong and conducting its third nuclear test on February 12, 2012. There are some other aspects of this graph that should be highlighted, including the Leap Day Agreement, which the DPRK ultimately violated, resulting in a unanimous tightening of sanctions by the United Nations.

To reiterate, my research will include a thorough literature review and take a closer look at one-on-one or bilateral engagement through several case studies. It will also explore multilateral engagement and highlight the significance of China’s role in the equation as well as the Six-Party talks and the United Nations, more specifically the UN Security Council. My research will also focus on the ambivalence of the United States in its foreign policy with North Korea and analyze my argument about this ambiguity to see if it is supported. In the end, I believe that U.S. foreign policy in the DPRK is overwhelmingly multilateral, utilizing a diverse strategy to deal with this critical foreign policy challenge. My research will also examine the leadership of the DPRK, shed light

¹² *Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?*, The Economist, October 26, 2013
<http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21588196-kim-jong-un-likely-realise-his-nuclear-ambitions-two-sides-already-face>

on its repeated ambiguity and explore why it has not stopped its provocations. Lastly, this research will include a final analysis of this topic and policy recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The United States government has employed a myriad of strategies in its approach to issues of foreign policy. These have included unilateral, bilateral and multilateral forms of engagement. However, in the text *Multilateralism & U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement*, Patrick and Forman state: “For the United States, multilateralism is no longer a choice - it’s a matter of necessity.”¹³ There are some in international relations, primarily subscribers to the theories of liberalism, who believe that multilateralism is swiftly becoming the only option in approaches to foreign policy for any state. However, the United States seems to wane back and forth with respect to these foreign policy approaches. Patrick and Forman go on to say “The United States is often ambivalent in terms of its broader foreign policy, which can seem to send mixed messages when unilateral action and multilateral strategies are engaged simultaneously.”¹⁴ Polling data suggests “the public would prefer to address foreign policy challenges through multilateral institutions and partnerships.”¹⁵ While it may be true that the general public supports this form of engagement, that does not necessarily ring true for American policymakers. I would argue that U.S. foreign policymakers tend to be consistently hawkish in spite of fluctuations of public sentiment on the topic of national security. Policymakers who favor the notion of American exceptionalism—where the US is ‘the’ superpower and must do whatever necessary for its security and survival—produce this tendency towards hawkishness. With that said, I still would argue that the

¹³ Patrick, Stewart and Forman, Shepard. *Multilateralism & U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2002, Page 38

¹⁴ Ibid. Page 38

¹⁵ Ibid. Page 28

United States has chosen an overwhelmingly multilateral approach to deal with North Korea and its nuclear program. This approach with the DPRK is interesting, as it represents a more subdued approach when compared to the U.S.'s more aggressive actions when faced with the belligerent regimes of other countries such as Iraq, Libya or groups such as ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman explore the U.S. relationship in the world and its place in American foreign policy as well as the U.S.'s often vacillating courses of action. The editors relate how "The 9-11 attacks made two things abundantly clear: The United States is vulnerable to international threats, and sustained multilateral cooperation will be essential in confronting those dangers."¹⁶ While the editors are advocates of multilateral cooperation, they do relate several justifications for taking the unilateral route including "freedom of action abroad," its ability to "exercise its largely unchallenged power to advance its interests" and an altruistic "American hegemony as the basis of world order."¹⁷ The reality is that the foreign policy trials of the modern era make it difficult to take concrete unilateral action without involving other states. This text looks at why the United States has been ambivalent and what have been the results of these mixed messages. By taking a look at the roots of this incongruity, it notes a certain discomfort with multilateralism but also the ironic point that the United States is the one that has led the charge on state-to-state cooperation. I would argue that this stated 'discomfort' is gradually fading away because I believe the policymakers of today generally understand that engagement is about communication and working with regional

¹⁶ Patrick and Forman, Page 1

¹⁷ Ibid. Page 2

partners and that utilizing a group-work mindset spreads out responsibilities and also puts other states skin in the game with the United States.

The authors ask a very interesting question: “What is the appropriate role of multilateral cooperation in pursuing the national interest?”¹⁸ I believe the United States is doing what is in its best interest and in this case, that would be multilateral engagement. The authors go on to explain how rare it is for unilateral action to be efficient and also that policymakers must be cognizant of how a multilateral approach can actually shore up American power. This is one of the main points of this book and it is important to relate it to the topic of North Korea. By choosing the multilateral track, the United States has illustrated its intent to cooperate with the key players in the region as well as show respect for these states as each member is on equal footing in the Six-Party talks. While there may be an extraordinary instance when the U.S. would take unilateral action with North Korea, it has a better hand working with the regional entities. Nuclear weapons policy is brought up in the ninth chapter of the book and the authors argue “A unilateral trend in U.S. nuclear weapons policy has dangerous implications for international peace and security.”¹⁹ This could be a possible reason for North Korean paranoia and worry regarding the intentions of the United States. Such a unilateral trend by the United States when these weapons were present also provided a possible subject for the North Koreans to exploit as a reason for them not engaging in diplomacy.

Patrick and Forman relate how some analysts believe that “The country is so powerful and seemingly invulnerable that entangling alliances and multilateral

¹⁸ Patrick and Forman, Page 25

¹⁹ Ibid. Page 32

commitments appear increasingly to be unjustified impositions on U.S. sovereignty and political autonomy.”²⁰ I would argue that in spite of this, the United States has realized in the case of North Korea that regional partnerships and a multilateral commitment to diplomacy among the nations in the area in such platforms as the Six-Party talks or at the U.N. Security Council are the most practical option. The text on *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy* relates how “Multilateralism can play a critical role, since it signals strategic restraint and the willingness of the United States to exercise its power within agreed-upon rules and institutions.”²¹ This is precisely part of my argument about multilateral engagement in that it implies a tactical check by the U.S. on its actions in dealing with the DPRK and the other states in the region. The U.S. illustrates this point by communicating with its two main East Asian regional partners (South Korea and Japan) before implementing policy concerning the DPRK and also seriously considering the ramifications of its actions and their effect on China and Russia.

The book *Mixed Messages: American Politics and International Organization 1919-1999* by Edward Luck also explores American ambivalence. He speaks of the reality that “Persistent strains of idealism and cynicism, multilateralism and unilateralism, internationalism and isolationism have long coexisted across the spectrum of American thinking.”²² This described reality is a clear example of an American ambivalent mindset. He also points out an occasional but critical impediment that manifests itself which is a stalemate that can occur between the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch. In the

²⁰ Patrick and Forman. Page 121

²¹ Ibid. Page 123

²² Luck, Edward C. *Mixed Messages: American Politics and International Organization – 1919-1999*. Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 1999, Page 3

same vein, he speaks of American ambivalence towards international organizations (and multilateralism) as stemming “from the nation’s political culture, from the structure of its institutions of government, and from its place in the hierarchy of nations, as well as from the values and attitudes of its people.”²³ This speaks to American exceptionalism and can help to describe how this mindset or perspective can inhibit U.S. foreign policymakers from openly and willingly embracing multilateral engagement. Luck relates how over time American ambivalence has caused several casualties including: “the integrity of international law, the viability of the global system, the credibility of American commitments to international undertakings, and relationships with key allies, whose often self-righteous reactions have contributed to a downward spiral of recriminations and mistrust.”²⁴ This list of casualties illustrates a serious threat to sound U.S. foreign policy. However, there is hope for United States foreign policy in dealing with North Korea and its nuclear program. It is important to highlight two very significant points, which are America’s continued commitment to multilateral platforms such as membership in the Six-Party talks along with the U.N. Security Council and also its relationships with two historical allies in the region, where interactions with South Korea and Japan can make a noteworthy difference in negotiations with the other three members of the Six-Party talks and the discussions among the members of the Security Council.

Edward Luck relates another aspect of American exceptionalism when he states that, “All too often, we have no interest in multinationalism; to us, all relationships are

²³ Luck, Page 280

²⁴ Ibid. Page 4

bilateral in the sense that it is us and them – whether they be one or a hundred nations.”²⁵

This statement speaks volumes on a rather frequent theme where American policymakers are historically not necessarily interested in a multilateral relationship. He further comments that, “Surely Americans are not the only nationalistic people in the world, yet the nation’s history, geography, power, and political culture do work to set it apart.”²⁶

While some say the United States should stay out of foreign predicaments, other policymakers speak of the burden of exceptionalism, whereby the United States has a responsibility to be a leader in global relations because of its vast wealth and power. “To maintain its privileged position in a dynamic world, they would argue, the United States should actively work to build those international institutions and norms that can reinforce peace, stability, and democratic values.”²⁷ This camp would be supportive of the Six Party talks and Security Council platform, and the United States taking the lead in discussions. Balance of power theory is clearly at play with North Korea feeling threatened and flexing its muscles by ultimately acquiring nuclear weapons. This would explain their pursuit of nuclear weapons as more of a defensive mechanism or deterrent and a wild card to protect their sovereignty and also better their hand at the negotiating table.

There is a reference by Edward Luck in *Mixed Messages* that shines a strong light on where he stands on multilateralism in U.S. foreign policy. At one point in his book, he relates how there was a point during the start of the Cold War when some in the United States called for a formation of an all democratic club of nations and a break from the

²⁵ Luck, Page xiii

²⁶ Ibid. Page 7

²⁷ Ibid. Page 20

United Nations.²⁸ He notes how it was Secretary of State George C. Marshall “who recognized, unlike many of his contemporaries, that for America’s friends and allies, participation in strong multilateral organizations and arrangements was a matter of necessity, not choice.”²⁹ This highlighting of Marshall’s apt comprehension of the essential need to welcome and pursue multilateral engagement show that Edward Luck strongly supports this approach.

The book “Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea,” by Leon V. Sigal focuses on the crisis in the 1990s where there was nearly a major conflict (perhaps even war) between the United States and the DPRK. It is important to take a look at Sigal’s text because he lays out what happened and what lessons can be learned from this near catastrophe. While the events he discusses did occur in the early 1990s, they do offer valuable lessons that can be applied to the present day. Sigal relates at the beginning of his book how at the New York Times in June of 1990 he wrote an editorial in which he had urged the United States to ‘help the Koreans in from the cold’ by “coaxing them into military disengagement and diplomatic reengagement.”³⁰ This action would be the promotion of bilateral engagement between North Korea and South Korea. I would argue that if such a thaw occurred, it would be highly unlikely not to have involved the United States and the other key players in the region such as China, Russia and Japan, thereby implying Sigal’s support for multilateral engagement. He also discusses another editorial that he wrote in late 1990, where he “urged diplomatic and economic ties with

²⁸ Luck, Page 23

²⁹ Ibid. Page 24

³⁰ Sigal, Leon V. *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998, Preface

the North” and while it was cut during editing, he did originally include a proposal for the “unilateral withdrawal of U.S. nuclear arms from the peninsula.”³¹ Once again, this ‘unilateral withdrawal’ would most likely not occur without at least the bilateral consultation of the United States and South Korea. There is a strong argument that can be made that any major alterations of the security posture by the United States in South Korea (such as the introduction or removal of nuclear weapons) would be closely coordinated in a bilateral discussion with South Korea and in addition with Japan, America’s other strong ally in the region. Such a scenario would support my argument of America’s ultimate choice of multilateral engagement in the region. With these proposals, Sigal at that time not only got the ear of many officials familiar with the regional dynamics but also illustrated a forward-thinking mindset in diplomacy with North Korea. This is a compelling reason to analyze his book and see what can be helpful to my research on U.S. ambivalence and American multilateralism in North Korea.

In his book, Leon Sigal discusses an “American unwillingness to cooperate with strangers.”³² It is an interesting statement because the United States not only was integral to the creation of the precursor of what would become the United Nations, that leading intergovernmental organization that focuses on cooperation, but also as the sole global superpower and so-called leader of the free world, the United States is deeply involved throughout the globe in numerous missions. Therefore, I would disagree with Sigal’s assertion of America’s reluctance to work with others. With that said and in light of this involvement and visible cooperation, this unwillingness that Sigal is talking about and

³¹ Sigal, Preface

³² Ibid. Page 3

believes is the reality clearly illustrates an aspect of the ambiguity of the United States. Sigal mentions certain states that we have “recoiled from giving cooperation a chance” including ‘Cuba’ and the ‘Palestinians’ but I would argue that the United States does reach out to these so-called ‘strangers’ and this is evident with the recent talks to gain diplomatic relations with Cuba, current negotiations with Iran as well as the history of working with Israel and the Palestinians to broker peace, which is a clear example of American multilateral diplomacy.³³

Multilateralism does not always necessarily bring positive results. Sigal aptly mentions how “A strategy of cooperative security, not coercive diplomacy, accounts for the success of diplomacy in Korea.”³⁴ He relates how certain displays of coercive diplomacy have basically infuriated North Korea. Examples of these include sanctions and U.S./South Korea regional Team Spirit joint military exercises that have actually led to North Korea heightening its defense posture and becoming agitated. Therefore, these multilateral tools of sanctions and military exercises actually have a direct negative effect on North Korea. While these actions may be completely warranted, the agitation and aggressive rhetoric is the chosen reaction by the DPRK and those who implement these tools must take this into account.

The book “Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle,” edited by David Albright and Kevin O’Neill, looks at the work done to stop North Korea from attaining nuclear weapons during the 1990s up until the year 2000. It accurately describes the situation as attempting to solve a puzzle which is a clear reference to one of the most complex foreign

³³ Sigal, Page 3

³⁴ Ibid. Page 9

policy challenges for the United States and perhaps the world: a nuclear North Korea. The book is basically divided into five sections with the first looking at the history of the North Korean nuclear program, the status of the Agreed Framework at that time (in 2000), and an overhead look at the Yongbyon nuclear site. The second section takes a technical approach to the nuclear challenge that includes discussions on IAEA inspections and the plutonium quantities present in the DPRK. The third section looks at the bilateral Agreed Framework closely and what may be in store for the future of the agreement. It also looks at challenges and progress on the peninsula and the methodology utilized by the Clinton administration. I would argue that the best times in U.S./DPRK relations in recent memory were during this time because of the bilateral engagement that was occurring, especially with the trip which I highlight in my research, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with Kim Jong Il in North Korea. Section Four examines the sunshine policy implemented by Kim Dae Jung and the topic of the importance of a more unambiguous North Korea. This implies that North Korea has not been transparent and supports my argument that the DPRK is also ambivalent in its actions.

Toward the end of this book on the North Korean puzzle, there is a statement that should be highlighted. The peninsula is described as a place where each side realizes the magnitude and potential destruction of an armed conflict and “This relative stability, if not disturbed, can provide the time and conditions for all sides to pursue a permanent peace on the peninsula, ending at last the Korean War and perhaps ultimately leading to the peaceful unification of the Korean people – this is the lasting goal of U.S. policy.”³⁵

³⁵ Albright, David and O’Neill, Kevin. *Solving the North Korean Puzzle*. Washington, DC: Institute for Science and International Security Press, 2000, Page 302

The significance of this sentence cannot be overstated because it identifies a major foreign policy objective of the United States in Korea and I would agree with this assertion. When this paramount goal of U.S. policy is discussed, the presence of U.S. troops on the peninsula comes to mind because one may wonder if they are there to keep the peace or if there are ulterior motives such as keeping American boots on the ground at the doorstep of China and Russia. I asked Lt. Col. Rosa about the troop presence in Korea and his answer helps to shed light on the main reason. He said, “The United States does not want to have troops anywhere where they are not needed and that they are there to keep the peace between these two countries.”³⁶ It is a basic but superb answer because I would argue that it illustrates how the United States does play a stabilizing role in the region and also that this continued peace and eventual peaceful reunification would most likely involve the assistance of U.S. troops. Also, part of my takeaway from his statement is that they are not there to check China and Russia because their goal is to stop any conflict specifically on the peninsula.

It is helpful to consider if the works I focus on in my literature review address my main argument and if so, how do they do this? The books on *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy* as well as *Mixed Messages* support my main argument that the United States is ambivalent in its foreign policy, with an ultimate preference for multilateral engagement. Each goes into great detail on how the United States is ambiguous in its foreign policy. One example expresses this simply by noting that “By 2001, the United States was a member of hundreds of intergovernmental multilateral organizations and part to hundreds of treaties and this thickening web of multilateral ‘contracts’ provides

³⁶ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

the United States with more opportunities to express its ambivalence.”³⁷ Another example relates how former Secretary of State Dean Acheson discussed two schools of thought were prevalent in America, isolation and a dream of universal law and that “much of his career was devoted to finding a third way, a more pragmatic blend of idealism, national interests, and realistic tactics, whether through unilateral action, ad hoc coalitions, standing alliances, or international institutions.”³⁸ I believe this is still the case today and this statement supports my argument of ambivalence because it describes different tactics by the United States that might appear to be ambiguous to an observer who sees a diverse set of actions by the U.S. With that said, it is important to note that three of the four blends are forms of multilateral engagement and that I do contend that unilateral engagement still exists in U.S. policy but is quite rare because of its potentially negative consequences.

While I disagree with Leon Sigal’s contention in *Disarming Strangers* that the U.S. utilizes coercive diplomacy especially when looking through a contemporary lens, he does address how the U.S. must focus on engagement and cooperation, which I believe currently is and should be a priority in American foreign policy. My research will analyze this engagement, provide examples and also illustrate a challenge that faces American policymakers, which is a tendency to be ambiguous. The research will delve into foreign policy under the last three administrations, which will help shed a light on and provide examples of this tendency. It will also show that the United States is committed to multilateral diplomacy, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

³⁷ Patrick and Forman, Page 12

³⁸ Luck, Page 19

In *Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle*, David Albright and Kevin O’Neill bring to light the efforts to stop North Korea from going nuclear which we now know were ultimately unsuccessful. It relates a struggle between the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the North Koreans where the North Koreans eventually withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). At the time, this struggle led to some in the United States calling for military action to stop the DPRK’s acquisition of nuclear weapons and later a visit from former President Jimmy Carter that ultimately lowered tensions through the Agreed Framework. I argue that the U.S. has been a key player in bringing about multilateral engagement and the history related in this literature supports this. The U.S. was the one who proposed discussions that started as the Four-Party talks (North Korea, South Korea, China and the U.S.) and that eventually became the Six Party talks, which also included Russia and Japan.³⁹ My research will take a close look at the Six-Party talks and other multilateral platforms including the U.N. Security Council at the United Nations.

An important aspect to consider is what my research will add to the literature? A considerable part of this is the information gleaned from primary sources, especially my interviews with seasoned professionals of diplomacy. A close look at my sources and discussions with the interviewees has helped clarify my arguments. In addition, they have provided some interesting revelations and inquiries to consider. These include the idea of utilizing mid-level diplomacy such as the type South Korea tends to employ, more discussions on solutions for unification, and candid conversations with contingency plans

³⁹ Albright and O’Neill, Page 46

regarding a theoretical major change in North Korea such as collapse or regime change.⁴⁰ Another aspect is looking at the situation from a military perspective, which from my discussions with a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, actually translates into a strong focus on diplomacy and avoiding a military solution at nearly all costs.⁴¹ I believe that my research will ultimately support continued emphasis on diplomacy to work towards a resolution on the Korean peninsula and also that the U.S. must be cognizant that ambivalence can end up hampering its long term goals.

⁴⁰ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/8/15

⁴¹ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

Chapter 3: One-on-One Description / Bilateral Engagement

One-on-One talks between the United States and the DPRK have the potential to produce results. After all, “Bilateral talks are not merely a ‘gift’ to be conferred on other governments, but a vector to convey US perspectives unalloyed and undiluted by multilateral engagement.”⁴² These discussions can illustrate American foreign policy objectives clearly and allow for moving forward with resolutions. It appears that this type of engagement is a priority for the DPRK. History has made this apparent because on multiple occasions, when Americans have been held captive, securing their release has involved high-level American leaders such as former Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter or former Governor Bill Richardson visiting the DPRK to meet with North Korean officials to negotiate for their release. These One-on-One, bilateral talks imply respect for the other party’s status and legitimacy as a state and although they go unofficially to secure the release of Americans, I believe North Korea sees these negotiations as an opportunity to show the world that they engaged (in their view) in direct talks with the United States.

One example of direct bilateral talks occurred in the early 1990s when Representative Stephen Solarz, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs spoke with Kim Il Sung about nuclear weapons. Interestingly, the founder of North Korea, Kim Il Sung asked Solarz “What’s the use of a few nuclear weapons?”⁴³

⁴² Gallucci, Robert; Poneman, Daniel; Wit, Joel S. *Seven Lessons for Dealing With Today’s North Korea Nuclear Crisis*. Arms Control Today, Vol. 34, No. 3 (April 2004) 20

⁴³ Sigal, Page 34

He then said “They’d be useless – if we fire them, they will kill the Korean people.”⁴⁴ This can be interpreted to mean that North Korea understands that any nuclear attack by North Korea on the South, would result in the United States and its allies initiating a full retaliatory response, ultimately destroying North Korea. Such a scenario would prove catastrophic for the peninsula, with substantial losses in the South from the first strike, compounded by severe or near total losses in the North from counter strikes. Essentially, beyond the extreme loss of life and property, the North Korean regime would lose its grip on power as South Korea and its allies under the US nuclear umbrella responded to the initial attack.

Another intriguing takeaway from the exchange between Representative Solarz and Kim Il Sung was that after the meeting, Solarz landed in Seoul to speak with President Roh Tae Woo, who at that time, favored taking the lead in conferring with the North. Roh was against direct American dialogue with North Korea on the nuclear subject.⁴⁵ Whether or not such opposition to direct US/North Korean talks exists in today’s South Korean administration is something that should be considered.

To shed light on bilateral engagement between the United States and North Korea, I would like to look at two case studies when such engagement occurred. It must be noted that one of the examples was not officially sanctioned by the U.S. administration at the time. However, in that case, it is difficult to imagine that it did not have the unofficial blessing of the U.S. leadership because the primary purpose was rescuing Americans from confinement in North Korea.

⁴⁴ Sigal, Pages 12, 34

⁴⁵ Ibid. Page 12

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright traveled to North Korea at a time of warming relations in an often-frosty historical relationship. This was the highest-level official visit by the United States that had ever occurred. It was the year 2000 and the groundwork was laid by a visit to Pyongyang by former Defense Secretary William Perry and State Department Counselor Wendy Sherman. Their positive meeting, Kim Dae-jung's sunshine policy which included a bilateral face-to-face meeting between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il as well as a reciprocal visit by the DPRK's second in command of the military Vice Marshal Jo Myong Rok, all contributed to a situation where the next step was a high level American visit. While Vice Marshal Rok personally invited President Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright relates how "The President suggested I go first to prepare the ground."⁴⁶ Secretary of State Albright's trip to Pyongyang was a significant step for both sides and this would most likely explain North Korea's acceptance of her visit before the requested Presidential visit. Secretary of State Albright did bring a letter from President Clinton regarding "the expectation of further developing relations" between the two nations and in a toast at dinner with Kim Jong Il, Dr. Albright spoke of the process of engagement, stating "It can lead to reconciliation and reunification of the peninsula and to more normal and prosperous relations between your government and others in the region and world."⁴⁷ The dinner appeared to bear fruit as there was talk on a moratorium on nuclear weapons. However, Madeleine Albright related "We were in the process of testing North Korean intentions when the Clinton

⁴⁶ Albright, Madeleine. *Madam Secretary*. New York: Miramax Books, 2003, Page 460

⁴⁷ Perlez, Jane. *Albright Greeted with Fanfare by North Korea*, The New York Times, October 24, 2000

<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/24/world/albright-greeted-with-a-fanfare-by-north-korea.html>

Administration's time ran out."⁴⁸ With the new administration, the torch was not picked up where the Clinton administration left it and the U.S./DPRK relationship unfortunately faltered once again.

In 2009, journalists Lisa Ling and Euna Lee were filming a documentary and had crossed over the North Korean border where they were actually arrested by North Korea. Former Obama administration Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Jeffrey Bader recalled the moment when the revelation came that the two journalists had been detained:

Our team knew immediately that the North Koreans would hold the journalists and use them for leverage on political and security issues before considering their release, probably when a senior U.S. politician was dispatched to pick them up (such was their history). We were determined not to accept North Korean extortion and its linkage to other issues.⁴⁹

While Washington demanded their release, the women were sentenced to eight years hard labor. The Obama administration offered a visit from former President Bill Clinton only after they refused an offer to send Al Gore who also happened to be the employer of the two journalists at the time of their arrest. The Obama administration took pains to illustrate that this was not an officially sanctioned trip but actually a humanitarian mission. This included Clinton traveling there in an unmarked jet, denying that Clinton carried a message from the sitting President (as the North Koreans asserted),

⁴⁸ Albright, Page 435

⁴⁹ Bader, Jeffrey A. *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy*, Brookings Institution Press, 2012, Page 34

and the White House describing the visit as ‘private.’⁵⁰ In the end, the North Koreans basically exploited a nice photo opportunity with the American contingent and DPRK leadership. The journalist Jack Kim notes how “It allows the government to show to a domestic audience, facing deepening poverty, that the nuclear weapons program is making the outside world take it more seriously and the visit will be certain to be portrayed as tribute by the United States.”⁵¹ With that taken into account, Clinton’s visit did ultimately secure the release of the journalists.

As noted before, there is notable merit in the ability of direct dialogue between the two nations to make progress in a way that cannot be achieved through other states. In regards to North Korea, I agree with analysts who believe that bilateral talks with the United States is one of North Korea’s ultimate goals, in that such negotiations are seen as elevating the status of the North Korean leadership on the world stage. The argument can be made that bilateral talks have proven somewhat fruitful. In the case studies above when all was said and done, North Korea ultimately acquiesced to American overtures to release captive American citizens and it can be argued in the case of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s visit to North Korea, sitting down with Kim Jong Il for a face-to-face meeting and the revelations that came out of it were itself a new step in U.S./DPRK relations.

⁵⁰ Kim, Jack. *Bill Clinton in North Korea - Meets Kim Jong Il*, Reuters, August 4, 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/08/04/us-korea-north-idUSSP47880420090804>

⁵¹ Ibid.

Chapter 4: Multilateral Engagement

In an ever-growing interconnected and globalized world, multilateral engagement increasingly becomes an important tool for diplomacy. Concerns about the DPRK's growing nuclear program and nuclear proliferation are heightened among its regional neighbors, especially the historic foes of the DPRK (Japan and South Korea). The United States cannot be excluded from this list because while its nearest territory is a considerable distance away, the presence of military bases in South Korea, Japan and surrounding territories as well as the Korean War legacy mean that it is undoubtedly present in this group. In addition, the current U.S. official policy places South Korea and Japan under the protection of the U.S. nuclear umbrella and therefore any action against South Korea or Japan would most likely draw in the United States. American forward deployed troops in both nations also translate into the U.S. being very concerned about any North Korean provocations. The importance of the American relationship with South Korea and Japan is paramount for East Asian security and stability as well as American defense. Strong bilateral relationships with these two allies are part of the multilateral framework and will continue to be a part of the American security posture and foreign policy for the foreseeable future. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has noted that "Helping other countries better provide for their own security will be a key and enduring test of U.S. global leadership and a critical part of protecting U.S. security as well."⁵²

⁵² Gates, Robert M. *Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance*, Foreign Affairs 89, no. 3, 2010, Page 6

China Counts

China has been the closest ally of the DPRK for at least half a century. The former Soviet Union or modern day Russia has also been a historic ally of the DPRK. In spite of these formidable historic ties, Russia and China are deeply concerned about what an aggressive North Korea could mean for the region as well as one that is a nuclear proliferator. They most likely realize that the DPRK could make the region less safe, in essence directly affecting their own security. Such was the case in 2009 when Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg “argued persuasively that the Chinese would be unlikely to put sufficient pressure on Pyongyang unless they calculated that North Korean behavior was affecting their own security interests.”⁵³ The Obama administration heeded Steinberg’s advice, which included sending a delegation to Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo to explain basically that North Korea’s aggression and pursuit of nuclear weapons “would inevitably cause the United States and its allies to alter their security posture to respond to the emerging threat.”⁵⁴ This delegation was an illustrative example of multilateral engagement at work, where Washington wanted to make sure its two traditional allies in the region (South Korea and Japan) were on board (which they were) and then presented their case to Beijing. Former Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Jeffrey Bader writes “Eventually, our visit and discussions bore fruit and we worked closely with the Chinese and Russians to pass a UN Security Council resolution that imposed the most draconian sanctions ever placed on North Korea.”⁵⁵ Some of the highlights of this resolution included stopping any exports of arms and a groundbreaking inclusion of a ship

⁵³ Bader, Pages 36-37

⁵⁴ Ibid. Page 37

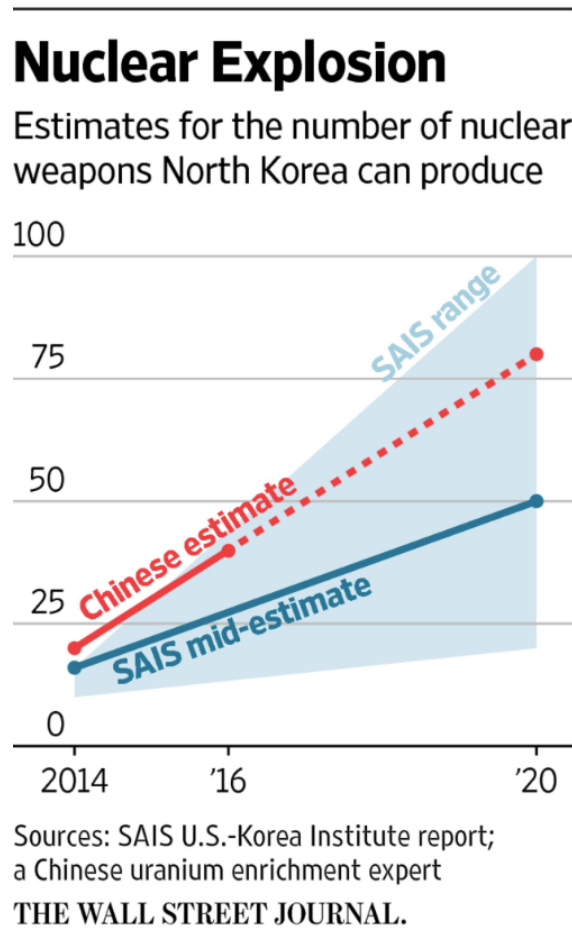
⁵⁵ Ibid. Page 38

inspection process to make sure North Korean vessels were not transporting arms.⁵⁶ The above situation is a prime example of the United States using liberal means through bilateral and multilateral engagement to have other states help put pressure on Pyongyang to stifle its aggression and ultimately shore up the security of the U.S. and its allies. It illustrates the diversification of U.S. foreign policy practices to achieve U.S. goals. Furthermore, the U.S. cleverly communicated an implicit warning to China and Russia that they may not like what was going to happen if the U.S. and its partners felt the need to increase their security posture. In the end, this was a win for the U.S. and its allies because China and Russia felt compelled to get on board in isolating the DPRK by helping to diffuse the situation and not provide a justification for the United States and its allies to strengthen their security posture.

As you can see from the graph on the next page, there has been a recent startling revelation by China about what they believe are the accurate numbers and projected figures of North Korean nuclear weapons.

⁵⁶ Bader, Pages 38-39

Graph C: “China Warns Nuclear Threat is Rising: Pyongyang Could Double Nuclear Arsenal by Next Year, According to Latest Beijing Estimates”⁵⁷



“The latest Chinese estimates, relayed in a closed-door meeting with U.S. nuclear specialists, showed that North Korea may already have 20 warheads, as well as the capability of producing enough weapons-grade uranium to double its arsenal next year,

⁵⁷ Page, Jeremy and Solomon, Jay. *China Warns North Korean Nuclear Threat is Rising: Pyongyang Could Double Nuclear Weapons Arsenal by Next Year, According to Latest Beijing Estimates*. The Wall Street Journal, April 22, 2015.
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/china-warns-north-korean-nuclear-threat-is-rising-1429745706>

according to people briefed on the matter.”⁵⁸ Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton highlights how “Beijing’s judgment may be imperfect, but its enormous presence and influence in the North make it far likelier to be accurate than US, Japanese, or South Korean estimates.”⁵⁹ Therefore, China’s revelation about opaque North Korea should not be taken lightly. China’s priority is its security and the last thing it wants to do is put out information that may put the region on edge. Therefore, China coming out with this revelation about the DPRK’s increasing nuclear capability may illustrate that they are equally as stunned and concerned. Dr. Stephen Noerper has stated that “When it comes to missile and nuclear issues the Chinese are the big losers because it draws great attention to the area and also raises the risk of safety concerns and mishaps and creates a lot of concern in China.”⁶⁰

China does play an important role in dealing with North Korean aggression and nuclear proliferation because of its close historical ties to North Korea. “It has loosened its ties but remains more closely involved with Pyongyang than any other player and also retains the most leverage of any outsider, as the provider of the majority of North Korea’s fuel and food, without which Pyongyang’s economy could not survive.”⁶¹ It can be a bridge between the United States and North Korea and serve as an intermediary between the two nations to work towards a peaceful resolution in the region. This ‘bridge’ would be a clear example of multilateralism at work. However, the United States must be cautious about the perceived leverage China has on the DPRK as they may overplay their

⁵⁸ Page and Solomon.

⁵⁹ Bolton, John. *Focus on North Korea to Stop Iran*. New York Post, 4/30/15
<http://nypost.com/2015/04/30/focus-on-north-korea-to-stop-iran/>

⁶⁰ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

⁶¹ Gallucci, Poneman, Wit, Page 20

ability to influence the DPRK. With that said, the fact is that China has kept North Korea alive in a sense and this cannot be discounted. Dr. Noerper notes that “with fuel, food stuffs and an active Chinese business community, China has propped up the North Korean economy significantly.”⁶² The U.S. economy is also deeply connected to China and it has been said that “The U.S.-China relationship is the most important bilateral economic relationship in the world.”⁶³ While this statement focuses on the economic connection, the exchange between China and the United States on security and other sectors has far-reaching ramifications for the future of both nations, East Asia and our world. It is also in the strategic interest of arguably the number two world power of China to keep the peace in the region. For a nation that has seen a rapid rise in the last few decades, perhaps the last thing it wants to do is get embroiled in a situation that may lead to a conflict with the United States. Furthermore, China may be fearful of or against the idea of a robust democracy being on its doorstep should North Korea collapse or be overrun. Therefore, China may see North Korea as a contentious but necessary buffer state.

Six-Party Talks and the United Nations

“American foreign policy on North Korea is not conducted in a vacuum, considering that South Korea, China, Japan, and even Russia have vital interests on the Korean peninsula, and have the potential to play an important role in either resolving or

⁶² Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

⁶³ Scissors, Derek. *Deng Undone: The Costs of Halting Market Reform in China*, Foreign Affairs 88, no. 3, 2009 Page 45

sustaining the situation.”⁶⁴ A large piece of the puzzle in addressing the North Korean nuclear program is the main platform where discussion has taken place among these key regional players; the Six-Party talks. The Six-Party talks can be considered an international entity that consists of the United States, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and North Korea. The talks were born out of the DPRK leaving the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, which caused an immediate heightening of tension in the region and world. In mentioning its sporadic refusal to cooperate in these talks, it should be noted that North Korea also often sends mixed signals and this ambivalence will also be examined. In the end, the Six-Party talks are one of the most important pieces in the nuclear puzzle and its success or failure can have immediate and grave consequences.

Former Special Representative for North Korean Policy at the State Department and senior diplomat Glynn Davies argues, “North Korea is responsible for North Korean actions, and resolving the DPRK problem is a multilateral task, just as the DPRK’s original aggression against the South was met with a strong response from the United Nations.”⁶⁵ Looking at the historical background, the challenges encountered with the DPRK do go back to the unified repudiation by the coordination of a United Nations cooperative. This may help explain what some perceive as the DPRK feeling slighted in diplomatic circles compared to South Korea. Dr. Stephen Noerper relates how “North Korea never felt that it received the same kind of international respect or recognition and

⁶⁴ Cha, Victor D. and Kang, David C. *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, Page 121

⁶⁵ Davies, Glyn. “U.S. Policy Towards North Korea by Glyn Davies Special Representative for North Korea Policy,” *U.S. Department of State*, July 30, 2014 <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2014/07/229936.htm>

it didn't and after the Cold War, you see a dramatic dropoff compared to South Korea's heady rise in diplomatic circles."⁶⁶ Davies also stated in 2014 that "Standing up to North Korea requires a sustained and concerted effort by all of the countries in the Six-Party process, and indeed the entire international community."⁶⁷ This is a clear endorsement of utilizing multilateral engagement to deal with an aggressive North Korea and description by Davies essentially describes the DPRK as a bully that the other five members and indeed the world community must defend against. Interestingly, if the North Koreans could give their perspective, they would most likely say that they are the ones being bullied and painted into a corner. The fact is that the DMZ is the most heavily fortified border in the world and that alone leads it to be a possible devastating powder keg in the event of any misstep or misunderstanding. This helps explain the significance of and need for sound diplomacy and using the many items in the tool kit including an entity such as the Six-Party talks. The danger of another armed conflict in the region and its global security ramifications also explain why four other nations are involved in the talks between the Koreas and why it is a topic of great importance at the United Nations.

Another concern is that working with regional partners and showing that the United States is committed to working on a solution help give it a stronger hand. The former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice spoke of this strength in a unified response when she said in February of 2013 after a recent North Korean missile test, "We have been very clear and united in demanding North Korea comply with its international obligations" and "The aim that we share is the denuclearization of

⁶⁶ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

⁶⁷ Davies

the Korean peninsula.”⁶⁸ The United States actually strengthens its position by agreeing to work with those in the area and that it is invested in reaching a solution through the Six Party Talks. Ambassador Rice said “We continue to work with our Six-Party partners to find a diplomatic path that protects peace and stability on the peninsula.”⁶⁹

When asked how the United States uses the United Nations to achieve its goals, Lt. Col. Rosa said that “the Six Party talks generate there and that a significant amount of the quasi-bilateral help that assists the population in North Korea especially with food shortages generates from the relationships with the ambassadors at the United Nations.”⁷⁰ The importance of the Security Council cannot be overstated. Interestingly, but not surprising, Lt. Col. Rosa stated that “North Korea is a common topic among the 15 member Security Council and if it wasn’t for the relationships of those 15 members, he thinks we would see much more risky behavior by the North Korean government.”⁷¹ Therefore the Security Council serves as a multilateral vanguard to stave off or deescalate North Korean aggression.

The United Nations is a global instrument that plays a pivotal role in dealing with North Korea. It offers a platform for all sides to voice concerns and objections. It also provides the United States with a potential pool of allies who can advance its position. As

⁶⁸ Rice, Susan. “Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the Security Council Stakeout,” *United States Mission to the United Nations*, February 12, 2013 <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/204033.htm>

⁶⁹ Rice, Susan. “Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Meeting on the Situation on the Korean Peninsula,” *United States Mission to the United Nations*, December 19, 2010 <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/2010/153128.htm>

⁷⁰ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

⁷¹ Ibid.

a core member of the United Nations Security Council, the United States can use its influence to offer North Korea both carrots and sticks. While the veto power of Security Council members can override American proposals, on several occasions the Security Council has been unified in its response (sanctions, maritime searches, etc.) to North Korea, especially responding to its provocations, which must send a strong message to Pyongyang. North Korea faces a much harder fight alone and sanctions can bite harder with a coalition backing them.

A clear example of the U.N. Security Council uniting to work against North Korean brinkmanship was U.N. Resolution 2087 in 2013 which basically condemned at that time the latest missile test in December of 2012. This multilateral resolution “took direct aim at key figures and trading companies involved in North Korea’s nuclear and space programs, froze the country’s assets, and banned the trade of relevant technologies.”⁷² These hardline sanctions and unanimous resolution were meant to deter North Korea from further provocation. Unfortunately, it seemed to have the opposite effect with North Korea carrying out its third nuclear test in February 2013. Therefore, this multilateral resolution had good intentions to curtail North Korean behavior but the result was ultimately negative with the nuclear test.

There does seem to be an ongoing debate intensifying on the pros and cons of multilateralism. While the above statements illustrate the United States approach and merits of multilateral engagement, there are some who see otherwise. Domestic concerns cannot be ignored and while there appears to be a majority of the public in favor of

⁷² Lee, Hong Yung. *North Korea in 2013: Economy, Executions, and Nuclear Brinkmanship*. Asian Survey, Vol. 54, No. 1, A Survey of Asia in 2013 – University of California Press (January/February 2014), Page 91

multilateralism, policy makers and those in control on the home front have illustrated that they not only don't always prefer multilateral engagement but are actually wary of it in many cases, preferring a unilateral or even isolationist approach. Patrick and Forman claim,

Policymakers in Washington are often critical of what they see as possible pitfalls of multilateralism: 'free riding' (on public goods that the US may provide), 'buck passing' (since responsibility tends to be diffused), and the premium on consensus can slow decisions, dilute objectives, constrain instruments, and culminate in policies of the lowest common denominator.⁷³

These same critics also worry that multilateral engagement may ensnare the United States in ventures far from its shores or not necessarily in the best interest of the nation.

As stated, multilateralism can "dilute objectives" as noted by Patrick and Forman and this is evident in an incident that occurred in 2010.⁷⁴ Looking at the case of the sinking of the Cheonan, a South Korean naval ship that was attacked in 2010 with many pointing the finger at North Korea, Lt. Col. Guillermo Rosa stated that "The Russians said that there is not definite evidence that the North Koreans did it and the fact is in multilateral engagement, the more parties you involve, the more opinions you are going to find."⁷⁵ In this case, Russia spoke out basically in defense of North Korea when the allegations against the DPRK came out. Whether or not North Korea had spoken to Russia about this and/or knew this would be the case, we may never know. In the end,

⁷³ Patrick and Forman, Page 10

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

even after an investigative panel was launched with evidence indicating it was the North Koreans, the findings were ultimately not accepted by the Russians who rendered the panel's finding inconclusive. The Security Council did issue a presidential statement condemning the attack but as it did not name the attacker and was not a Security Council resolution, it lacked any substantial clout.

Historically, there were politicians in the United States who resented America being placed on the same footing as what they think are inferior nations. A platform such as the Six-Party talks and the UN Security Council give each member an equal vote, which implies equal authority among each member. I believe the bulk of U.S. officials no longer feel this way. I believe the majority of Americans want a peaceful resolution to conflict or disagreement and would prefer diplomacy in mitigating these challenges. One example of diplomacy in action are the bilateral meetings that have taken place between the U.S. and the DPRK on the sidelines of the UN summits. Another is the continual discussions that occur before and after meetings at the UN as well as the frank discussion that occurs during meetings. Former Deputy Military Advisor to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Lt. Col. Rosa explained how many discussions are occurring officially and unofficially at the United Nations and even in such a platform as the Six-Party Talks.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

Chapter 5: Ambivalence / Confusion

In his seminal book, Edward Luck “marshals overwhelming evidence of public support for the United Nations and international engagement through multinational organizations.”⁷⁷ In spite of its ambivalence, the American people overwhelmingly support a multilateral approach in dealing with North Korea and its nuclear program. While the public appears to be very supportive of multilateralism, there are skeptics, especially in policymaking circles. As these men and women formulate U.S. foreign policy, it seems logical that their skepticism contributes to this ambivalence. I am arguing that the United States is using liberalism because it feels that multilateralism is the most rational option and ultimately in the best interest of the United States. I’d like to propose that the United States continue on the multilateral track as well as keep open the door to bilateral negotiations with North Korea. Of course in reality, any talks that are bilateral in nature would include keeping the other members of the Six-Party talks in the loop with special attention and information flowing to the U.S.’s two main East Asian allies, South Korea and Japan.

American ambivalence or ambiguity was on display during two actions taken at nearly the same time by the U.S. in 2005. “In the immediate wake of the 2005 joint statement, and seemingly in a manner not fully coordinated within the U.S. government, Washington froze North Korean accounts in a bank in Macau, Banco Delta Asia, believing it was a primary means for North Korean international proliferation activity and money laundering.”⁷⁸ On one hand, the U.S. had just achieved a milestone through the

⁷⁷ Luck, Page xiii

⁷⁸ Bader, Page 27

Six-Party mechanism in the joint statement where “North Korea agreed to a staged elimination of ‘all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs’ and to return ‘at an early date’ to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards.”⁷⁹ On the American side, the U.S. would move towards setting up normal relations with the DPRK, guarantee that they would not attack the DPRK and also help get in motion shipments of heavy fuel oil.⁸⁰ All this sounded like a huge step forward in the foreign policy quagmire of North Korea and its nuclear program. However, the freezing of North Korean assets infuriated the regime and ‘in response, the North launched a Taepodong-2 (TPD-2) intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test in July 2006 and detonated a nuclear device for the first time three months later.”⁸¹ In this example, these two different signals from the United States came with a high cost. While the North Korean aggressive actions cannot be justified, this was most likely retribution for the American asset freeze and a feeling that the United States had violated the feeling of progress and moving forward achieved with the joint statement.

Another side of this ambivalence that must not be ignored can be attributed to Pyongyang. In 2010, Peter Crail notes that “Despite Pyongyang’s willingness to continue discussions on the possibility of returning to negotiations it abandoned last year, it appears to be sending mixed messages to the international community.”⁸² The article goes on to describe how Chinese media relate that North Korea was ready to resume discussions while UN undersecretary-general for political affairs B. Lynn Pascoe who visited North Korea at a very similar time as the Chinese delegation said that “the North

⁷⁹ Bader, Page 27

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Crail, Peter. *Outreach to North Korea Continues*. Arms Control Today, Vol. 40. No. 2 (March 2010), Page 53

Koreans were certainly not eager to return to the Six-Party talks, although they have not ruled out a return.”⁸³ Two basically opposite revelations of North Korea’s stance reveal how cloudy diplomacy can get and both sides may actually have been off the mark because neither were a North Korean official statement.

Lee Hong Yung describes North Korea foreign policy behavior as “schizophrenic,” as Pyongyang went from declaring the ceasefire of 1953 invalid and threatening preemptive nuclear attack to saying that it would be agreeable to return to the Six Party Talks.⁸⁴ Preemptive nuclear attacks are a bit much even for North Korean standards but such bellicose threats are sure to get attention and basically guarantee a response from the sole superpower in concert with its regional partners. The United States reacted with defensive maneuvering including flying B-2 stealth bombers over South Korea in a military exercise.⁸⁵ While the essence of power is known as the ability to influence the behavior of others, these threats by North Korea did get American attention but ultimately prompted the United States to display its military prowess and therefore backfired. These threats also do not illustrate North Korea as a state that is mature or sure of itself.

The notion of a watershed moment or considerable change in policy under the new administration of Barack Obama in 2009 compared to that of George W. Bush was tangible at the time of President Obama’s election. Scott Snyder, the Senior Fellow for Korea Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and Director of the Program on U.S.

⁸³ Crail, Page 53

⁸⁴ Lee, Page 90

⁸⁵ Mullen, Jethro. *U.S. Says It Sent B-2 Stealth Bombers Over Korea*. CNN, March 28, 2013

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/28/world/asia/korea-us-b2-flights/>

Korea Policy has stated that “At the start of the Obama administration’s first term in 2009, there were many expectations that the United States might pursue direct talks with North Korea in order to break a two decade-long standoff over its nuclear program.”⁸⁶ As there was a palpable tendency for a possible opening with President Obama’s declaration to “offer an outstretched hand to those who will unclench their fists,”⁸⁷ North Korea replied to this proposal “with a multi-stage rocket launch and a nuclear test in April and May of 2009.”⁸⁸ In a way, the DPRK seemed to say that they will not be dictated policy and will continue to do whatever they would like to, even with the expected American and world condemnation. This is exactly what occurred through the UN Security Council’s Resolution 1874, which “condemned North Korea’s nuclear and multi-stage rocket tests and subjected suspected North Korean nuclear-related shipments to international inspections.”⁸⁹ It must be acknowledged that this was not the best start to a supposed reset relationship with North Korea under the new Obama administration.

The situation under the administration of George W. Bush had been especially frosty. In what would be a serious blow to the U.S.–DPRK relationship, during President George W. Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address, he said “North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), while starving its citizens” and “states like these (North Korea, Iran and Iraq) and their terrorist allies

⁸⁶ Snyder, Scott A. *U.S. Policy Toward North Korea*, SERI Quarterly, Council on Foreign Relations, January 2013

<http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/us-policy-toward-north-korea/p29962>

⁸⁷ *Full Transcript - President Obama’s Inaugural Address*

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Inauguration/president-obama-inauguration-speech-transcript/story?id=6689022&page=3>

⁸⁸ Snyder

⁸⁹ Snyder

constitute an axis of evil arming to threaten the peace of the world by seeking Weapons of Mass Destruction.”⁹⁰ The situation was further exacerbated in that same year when Bush was quoted in a book by Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward as saying “I loathe Kim Jong Il, I’ve got a visceral reaction to this guy because he is starving his people.”⁹¹ It is necessary to take a step back and consider the ramifications of what President Bush stated officially in his State of the Union address and publicly in his interview for the book. He basically said North Korea is evil, a terrorist regime that starves its people and is in pursuit of WMD. Furthermore, he related personal hatred for the leader of the DPRK. Many analysts in diplomacy most likely cringed at Bush’s statements. Dr. Stephen Noerper of the Korea Society, who was at the U.S. State Department at the time of Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ speech, states “the North Koreans basically wrote off dealing with the Americans for eight years.”⁹² Therefore, this drove a direct wedge between the U.S. and DPRK relationship and was basically a nonstarter for any diplomatic efforts between the two nations. While it is impossible to know how the DPRK regime feels toward the United States, I believe they respect the U.S. because of its hard power and global reach. With that said, I don’t think they are necessarily very fond of the United States and during the Bush years, the US/DPRK relationship was perhaps at one of its lowest points. It is worth noting as described earlier with then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s official visit to Pyongyang and her one-on-one

⁹⁰ Gilmore, Gerry J. *Bush’s ‘Axis of Evil’ Speech Put Iraq on Notice*, American Forces Press Service, US Department of Defense, March 18, 2005

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=31166>

⁹¹ Holguin, Jaime. *A Rare Glimpse Inside Bush’s Cabinet: As He Speaks Frankly About Early Days of War on Terror*, CBS News – 60 Minutes, November 17, 2002

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-rare-glimpse-inside-bushs-cabinet/>

⁹² Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

meeting with Kim Jong Il, the U.S./DPRK relationship seemed to be going in a positive direction, but ultimately under President Bush the momentum stalled.

The presence of American troops has been a sticking point for the North as well as some in the South. China and Russia are also most likely not thrilled to have American troops on their doorstep. When questioned about the U.S. troop presence by Madeleine Albright, Kim Jong Il stated that “his government’s view has changed since the Cold War: American troops now played a stabilizing role.”⁹³ While this answer probably came as a surprise to Dr. Albright and the U.S. administration at the time, an advisor to then South Korean President Kim Dae Jung said that Kim Jong Il had said “he was not totally opposed” while another South Korean official said North Korea “wants to retain some strategic ambiguity on this matter.”⁹⁴ It would appear that ‘strategic ambiguity’ might actually strengthen a nation’s hand in diplomacy. By not being crystal clear, a state can walk back its statements and choose another path.

A conversation I had with Lt. Col. Guillermo Rosa about diplomacy comes to mind when the notion of “strategic ambiguity” is mentioned. Lt. Col. Rosa stated that:

In the Obama administration, a large amount of the foreign policy is rehearsed, meaning foreign policy statements are well-crafted and put out in a way that leaves enough room for the administration to say for example, ‘Well here is what we meant or actually, we’re going in a

⁹³ Albright, Page 465

⁹⁴ Harrison, Page 172

different direction,' in essence being very diplomatic or utilizing legalese.⁹⁵

The Obama administration appears to be more cautious and calculated in its actions than the previous administration. Also, it has the advantage of learning from what resulted from different actions from the Bush administration. The caveat here is that the Obama administration has employed a policy of 'strategic patience.' When asked about the policies under the previous two administrations, Dr. Noerper of the Korea Society has stated that:

On North Korea, there has been no substantial progress; there was this sole notion of 'strategic patience' or in other words, perhaps 'strategic ambiguity' but it didn't really see any types of options for creative engagement and during this entirety of the 15-16 year process now under two administrations, the DPRK appears to have done a little more than up its ability with missiles and nuclear development and that's really very worrying.⁹⁶

This is indeed worrying and actually highlights that in all actuality, not much has changed under the last two administrations. It is interesting to note that Dr. Noerper used the same phrase of "strategic ambiguity" to describe U.S. foreign policy that the South Korean official of Kim Dae-jung's administration used in describing North Korean foreign policy.

⁹⁵ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

⁹⁶ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As the senior diplomat Glyn Davies outlined in 2014, there is a prerogative to shift Pyongyang's focus "from believing that a nuclear program is necessary for regime survival to understanding that such a program is incompatible with national interests."⁹⁷ Realist dimensions explain why North Korea has nuclear ambitions. It wants to be powerful in a neighborhood of formidable states. It can be argued that nuclear weapons provide it with the wherewithal to make an attack or infringement on its soil too costly and therefore serve as a deterrent. "The majority of international relations theories conclude that the source of threats is clear: power is threatening."⁹⁸ Balance of power theory dictates that a country can be intimidated by another's capabilities and therefore will do its best to try to even the playing field. This theory helps explain why the bulk of North Korean forces are near the border with South Korea and the majority of North Korean artillery is pointed squarely at the heart of South Korea; the capital of Seoul. Also, it is important to note that Dr. Noerper of the Korea Society has stated that "There's a stated U.S. official goal of denuclearization but most people in the analytical community have written that off a long time ago and therefore nonproliferation is probably the hoped for goal at this point."⁹⁹

The DPRK Leadership

An important factor to consider is who makes up the leadership of the DPRK. This boils down to who is at the helm of North Korea; Kim Jong Un. Kim Jong Un is a

⁹⁷ Davies

⁹⁸ Cha and Kang, Page 45

⁹⁹ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

very young, inexperienced leader who has been chosen to promulgate the Kim family dynasty and it appears that preserving the prestige and sustainability of his position may trump all other interests. It should be noted that the leader of North Korea has made no official foreign trips since he came to power in 2011.¹⁰⁰ Looking at the leader of one of the DPRK's closest historical allies, Chinese President Xi Jinping in his inaugural presidential year alone, traveled to Russia, the United States, Latin America and Africa all in 2013.¹⁰¹ This lack of foreign trips by Kim Jong Un contributes to the overall opaqueness of the North Korean regime and while North Korea accepted the invitation to attend the 70th Anniversary May Victory Day celebrations in Moscow, Kim Jong Un ultimately decided to not attend with the reason given by Russian officials that it had to do with "North Korea's internal affairs."¹⁰² What that actually means is hard to tell but the reality is that his grip on power is questionable and his insecurity has been on full display through several actions during his brief rule. One such example was in late 2013 concerning his uncle. "The ruthless purge and execution of Jang Song-taek revealed the structural weakness of the ruling system."¹⁰³ For Kim to get rid of a relative and official (who dealt closely with China, the DPRK's strongest ally) implies that he felt extremely threatened by Jang and wanted to make an example of him. In a region where saving face is paramount, this public purge was the ultimate insult. More recently in late April of 2015, there have been reports of the purge and brutal execution by anti-aircraft gunfire of

¹⁰⁰ Lackey, Katharine. *Kim Jong Un Cancels Russia Trip*, USA Today, April 30, 2015 <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/04/30/kim-jong-un-russia-trip/26625429/>

¹⁰¹ President Xi Jinping Foreign Trip Summary, CCTV.com English, March 9, 2013 <http://english.cntv.cn/program/newshour/20130903/103023.shtml>

¹⁰² Lackey

¹⁰³ Lee, Page 89

Defense Minister Hyon Yong-chol who was “as defense minister as close to Kim Jong Il as it is possible to get.”¹⁰⁴ How Kim Jong Un can purge and execute his own uncle in 2013 and one of his father’s closest confidante’s is quite troubling. Even more disconcerting is the revelation by the South Korean National Intelligence Agency (NIS) that “senior officials were being executed at the rate of one per week” and Stephen Evans of BBC News sums it up succinctly by stating “It all adds up to a picture of a leader in Pyongyang who feels very insecure and who is dangerous in his insecurity.”¹⁰⁵ A leader of a regime with one of the largest standing militaries in the world and one that has an apparent internal power or administrative struggle is indeed dangerous and actually alarming. He appears to have no tolerance for dissent or the slightest insubordination, which may imply in his mind disrespect. “The over-the-top execution of a defense minister (Hyon Yong-chol) who slept through dictator Kim Jong Un’s speech brings North Korea’s brutal death-penalty count to at least 70 since he took power in 2011 and Kim has been accused of ordering the executions of as many as 15 top officials so far this year.”¹⁰⁶ It seems that Kim Jong Un is continually trying to shore up his power and eliminate any threats to his leadership he may perceive at all costs.

The image of an ambivalent North Korean regime is heightened by the fact that what is known of its leader’s life history is rather obscure and this further exacerbates this confusion. On one side, the common story includes that he was Western-educated in

¹⁰⁴ Evans, Stephen. *North Korea Defence Chief Hyon Yong-chol Executed*, BBC News, May 12, 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32716749>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Greene, Leonard, *Kim Jong Un Sends Brutal Message with Grisly Executions*, New York Post, May 13, 2015 <http://nypost.com/2015/05/13/kim-jong-un-sending-brutal-message-with-grisly-executions/>

Switzerland under an assumed name and loves basketball. This is evident in his invitation to and hosting of former NBA player Dennis Rodman where he has been photographed with a big smile on his face with Rodman. On the other side is the leader of one of the poorest nations on the planet that spends the majority of its capital on its military and makes numerous threats to its neighbors and the United States. In numerous press photos, Kim Jong Un can be seen smiling with a cigarette gripped in his left hand, which to some Western observers makes him appear cavalier and actually not threatening. However, his actions illustrate a man who is capable of being very dangerous and this is one of the main reasons the neighboring states are worried because of the arsenal behind the throne. His ambivalent nature may be explained by the dynamic of Kim Jong Un's inexperience and also his insecurity. The ambivalence of the regime is noted by Madeleine Albright in her memoir when she relates a distinct trait of the North Koreans who were "unused to consulting with a democracy, they had the habit of doing nothing for months, then making a decision and expecting an immediate response."¹⁰⁷ Therefore, a regime that has a reputation for being opaque and unpredictable and takes however long to respond to an inquiry makes it quite challenging to predict what their reply might be in any given situation.

Another aspect of the North Korean regime under Kim Jong Un that must be explored is the need to create an enemy as an excuse to hold onto power, even as many of the North Korean people are starving. Kim Jong Un commands one of the largest militaries in the world, many of which are forward deployed near the DMZ. If he does not have a clearly named enemy like the United States and the 'puppet regime' of South

¹⁰⁷ Albright, Page 459

Korea, then the problems of the nation cannot be blamed on others. Scott Snyder states that “The North Korean regime thrives on crisis and gains international support from crisis situations; for this reason, the regime mobilizes its people in a state of seemingly perpetual crisis.”¹⁰⁸ If there is a stated and apparent strong enemy threat, this military first defensive and offensive posture can be more readily justified. Dr. Stephen Noerper of the Korea Society has stated that “Increasingly, South Korea wants to see some forward progress on inter-Korean relations but the North Koreans use the problems with the U.S. as an excuse for not moving forward in that area.”¹⁰⁹ North Korea also frequently criticizes South Korea such as referring to it as a ‘puppet regime’ of the United States. Recent revelations in May 2015 relate how “the North’s official Korean Central News Agency lashed out at (President) Park over her comments on the reported execution of North Korea’s defense minister, calling the South Korean leader a ‘reckless viper’” and stating that “She is making a flurry of reckless remarks to escalate confrontation.”¹¹⁰ Such pejorative statements about another state’s leader cannot help diplomatic engagement.

Unilateral Engagement

One type of engagement that has not been highlighted in this research is unilateral engagement. The United States has to walk a fine line when taking any unilateral action

¹⁰⁸ Snyder

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

¹¹⁰ Han, Sang Mi. *North Korea Criticized for Rants Against South Korean President.* Voice of America, May 18, 2015

<http://www.voanews.com/content/north-korea-criticized-for-rants-against-south-korean-president/2776845.html>

in world affairs. American unilateral action in 2003 in Iraq is one example that comes to mind when our policy had detrimental consequences. On the other hand, unilateral action can be positive and a clear example is when the United States can help deescalate a situation by offering a level-head especially in times of crisis, such as being in constant communication with the South Koreans when the Cheonan was sunk and the Yeongpyong Islands were shelled. In both instances, the United States helped deescalate the situation by being there for support and to offer prudent advice to the South Koreans.

Unilateral action can prove to be imprudent at times and one example was the American decision to introduce nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula in the late 1950s that escalated tensions in the region. However, the climate on the peninsula and in the region was deescalated decades later in 1991, “when President George H.W. Bush unilaterally decided to withdraw all remaining tactical nuclear weapons from Korea and to remove all nuclear weapons from the U.S. Navy’s surface fleet.¹¹¹ The implications of these nuclear weapons is rather alarming because they must have been incorporated into American war planning and therefore heighten any conflict by the risk of their use. Another more recent example occurred in the first day of the Obama administration in 2009, when someone from Secretary of State Clinton’s office requested approval for a draft of a message that would be read by her to the North Korean people basically reiterating the former President Bush’s North Korean policies in the twilight of his administration, apparently “to provide the North Koreans with a sense of continuity in

¹¹¹ Pollack, Jonathan D. *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons and International Security*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011, Page 46

policy.”¹¹² Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Jeffrey Bader responded to this request stating “The new President and the new national security team deserved a chance to consider the direction we were going in before the bureaucracy attempted to tie us to existing processes and policies” and “that we would not communicate with the North Koreans without first coordinating with Seoul, Tokyo, and ideally with Beijing and Moscow.”¹¹³ Mr. Bader is basically reiterating the U.S. policy of multilateral engagement and I do believe working with our partners and neighbors in the region gives us a stronger hand and also leads to less chance of conflict or misunderstanding. In addition, it takes vigilance by our foreign policymakers to take a step back sometimes and think about the implications of a press release or oral statement from a high level official such as the Secretary of State. When that message is directed at another state’s citizenry, then there should be even more caution. Lastly, in today’s globalized world, the United States should be consulting with its partners on the majority of issues.

With North Korea and the aspect of integration, the implications of ‘going it alone’ for the United States would be daunting. This is another reason why a multilateral approach is sensible. Dr. Noerper of the Korea Society states “I think the U.S. has neither the will nor the financial means to go it alone, so probably either under a UN cap, or a UN cap that’s notionally run by South Korea and the integration process will tend to focus on multilateral.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Bader, Page 29

¹¹³ Ibid. Pages 29-30

¹¹⁴ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

Policy Recommendations

Director-General for National Security and Unification Studies at South Korea's Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security Jun Bong-Geun has stated, "Since 1991, Washington and Seoul have generally pursued four schools of thought and approaches to the North Korean nuclear issue: collapse, non-engagement, negotiation, and sunshine."¹¹⁵ The latter two provide the most practical and forward-thinking options. The collapse of North Korea has been predicted for decades and has not come to pass. Believing it is imminent has unfortunately produced inaction and illustrated a surprising naivety of US foreign policymakers. Also, it has been noted that some policy thinkers believe that certain US action can help this collapse occur. Selig Harrison spoke of this in 1994 "in a revealing exchange with a retired senior US diplomat who argued that instead of propping it up by extending economic help and normalizing relations, Washington, Seoul and Tokyo should pursue policies of pressure and isolation to hasten its demise."¹¹⁶ While Mr. Harrison was speaking of offering more incentives or carrots to North Korea, this diplomat was focused on a realist approach through a hard line policy. Such a tough stance could push North Korea over the edge and lead to a grave misunderstanding and perhaps even war if North Korea feels cornered and desperate enough. A war is the worst option and would translate into a tragedy of epic proportions because it would cause

¹¹⁵ Bong-Geun, Jun. *North Korean Crises: An End in Sight?* Arms Control Today, Vol. 36, No. 1 (January/February 2006). Page 7

¹¹⁶ Harrison, Selig S. *The North Korean Nuclear Crisis: From Stalemate to Breakthrough*. Arms Control Today, Vol. 24, No. 9, NE Asia Special Issue (November 1994), Page 18

“immense destruction and lead to an untold number of deaths of South Korean, North Korean, and U.S. personnel.”¹¹⁷

The collapse of North Korea has been predicted for decades and the nation has illustrated a resiliency that has surprised many doomsayers. Even when there was mass-starvation and death in the 1990s, the regime held on to power. The leadership and military get the lion’s share of resources and this combined with their grip on power by force basically ensure regime survival. There is also the risk that thinking North Korea will collapse may translate into a lack of diplomatic efforts. I contend that this is one of the reasons for American ambivalence because policymakers believed the DPRK was on the brink of ruin and therefore dealing with them was not necessary and therefore practiced a policy of non-engagement. However, the possibility of the DPRK collapsing or a sudden regime change should concern the United States and its allies. Dr. Noerper of the Korea Society asks “What if things happen quickly and spiral out of control?”¹¹⁸ He elaborates by stating that “What concerns me is neither the United States or the international community has coordinated its contingency planning and dialogue to the extent that they need to.”¹¹⁹ There should be a frank discussion of the entire spectrum of possibilities one can conceive so that the U.S. and the world community are better prepared to deal with such a scenario. The need for an in-depth coordinated policy should be a priority.

¹¹⁷ Albright, David and O’Neill, Kevin. *Solving the North Korean Puzzle*. Washington, DC: Institute for Science and International Security Press, 2000, Page 2

¹¹⁸ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/8/15

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Another aspect of non-engagement is that such a practice appears to aggravate the DPRK and they often take certain actions in what appears to be an attempt to refocus attention on them. Some of these actions have been tragic, such as the torpedo attack of the Cheonan (which the DPRK denies) or the shelling of Yongpyeong Island. It seems that they are looking for a reaction from the U.S. and/or South Korea and realize that ultimately neither nation will risk starting a devastating war. This in turn gives the DPRK not only leeway in its actions but also leverage against other states like the U.S. and South Korea. It is difficult to argue that this action was not an act of war and although they vehemently deny it, the evidence points to the DPRK. However, once again the North Koreans believe that South Korea and the United States will hold off on starting a major conflict at nearly all costs. This begs the question “Where does South Korea and the United States draw a line in the sand?” This is a query beyond the purview of this research but the short answer I believe is that short of a direct attack that causes a serious loss of life that can be traced unquestionably back to the DPRK, the U.S., South Korea and its allies will have to hold off any major counterattacks because they could escalate into a disastrous full-fledged conflict.

Sincere negotiation and sunshine are closely related and the late South Korean President Kim Dae Jung is credited with implementing the sunshine policy. One of the major successes of this policy was a summit between the two presidents, which was a clear example of diplomacy in action. The sunshine policy relies heavily on mediation and looks at the Korean peninsula as a fraternal country divided by a chaotic and tragic event. During the time of Kim Dae Jung’s sunshine policy, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met personally with Kim Jong Il and this meeting gives a glimmer of

hope to future discussions between the two countries and suggests that maybe through mutual respect and frank conversation these talks could possibly bear fruit. Secretary Albright said something quite powerful that gives us an important glimpse into what Kim Jong Il wanted; “Above all, normal relations with the United States; that would shield his country from the threat he saw posed by American power and help him to be taken seriously in the eyes of the world.”¹²⁰ Another poignant statement by Kim during their meeting was “If both sides are genuine and serious, there is nothing we will not be able to do.”¹²¹ Both of these statements by the Kim Jong Il speak volumes of the potential for progress with the United States leading the way to move the peace process forward. Additionally, it lays bare how North Korea sees the United States as not only a nation with great power but also reveals how bilateral engagement can be used as leverage because this is one of North Korea’s ultimate foreign policy goals. It is worth noting that before returning to the United States, Madeleine Albright stopped in Seoul to confer with President Kim Dae Jung and the Japanese foreign minister.¹²² While the United States must always consult with its partners in the region, especially these two main allies, statements like the ones Kim Jong Il had made do offer hope that bilateral engagement might bear fruit. However, his son seems to take a different view than his father with continual provocation, saber rattling and doubling down on their constitution being amended to include the DPRK as a “nuclear-armed state.”¹²³ Kim Jong Un appears to be

¹²⁰ Albright, Madeleine. *Madam Secretary*. New York: Miramax Books, 2003, Page 467

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Page 463

¹²² *Ibid.* Page 467

¹²³ Watson, Leon. *We ARE A Nuclear Power: North Korea’s Chilling Claim in New Constitution*, Daily Mail.com, May 31, 2012

about survival at all costs. The situation is not ripe for one-on-one engagement and therefore the chances of a bilateral meeting between the U.S. Secretary of State and the leader of North Korea does not appear to be likely any time soon under the current climate. Furthermore, the normalization of relations appears to be even more remote in the near future.

As alluded to earlier in my research, I believe that the United States has been ambivalent in its foreign policy with North Korea. However, it has recently tended to utilize a multilateral approach and the reasoning behind this can be found in a mix of domestic and international considerations. The first consideration is that the United States feels that this is the best alternative in the current climate. Isolation is not a policy of the modern era and therefore multilateral engagement is the most sensible option. The second is that the United States most likely has a stronger hand when coming to the table if appearing to be on the same page as the other powers in the Six-Party Talks, especially the DPRK's historical allies China and Russia. As an equal partner, the United States illustrates its respect for the other parties and shows that it is a reasonable actor. The third is that if the United States is viewed as working with the other powers including having a serious conversation with the DPRK, it most likely saves face because it appears to be a team player. The other regional players, especially China and Russia, want the United States to communicate with North Korea. A fourth reason is that the U.S. feels like it has no choice because of the current climate and therefore must pursue multilateral engagement. Unilateral action is many times out of the question because it can be risky or

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2152718/New-constitution-declares-North-Korea-nuclear-armed-nation-indomitable-military-power.html>

not sensible. Also, there are many states in the region and it is difficult to deal with just one or two. A fifth reason is domestic considerations as a probable reason for both American multilateralism and at times ambivalence. The majority of the citizenry would most likely want the United States to work cooperatively with other nations, promoting peace, freedom and economic prosperity. However, at other times there are some citizens who prefer that the United States disengage or take certain actions that may upset the status quo and also make the U.S. appear ambivalent. In the case of North Korea, more conservative hardliners in the U.S. feel a certain animosity towards the DPRK. Very interestingly, in the bilateral one-on-one discussion between Madeleine Albright and Kim Jong Il, he had said that:

There was a fifty-fifty split within his military on whether or not to improve relations with the United States and that there were people in the foreign ministry who had opposed even his decision to talk to us. As in the U.S., there are people here with views different from mine, although they don't amount to the level of opposition you have.¹²⁴

This illustrates a leader who was adeptly aware of the perception among a certain contingent in the U.S. who were against dealing with the DPRK on nearly any level.

Ultimately, I'd like to propose that the United States continue on the multilateral track but keep open the door to bilateral negotiations. We live in a multipolar globalized world where no nation should favor unilateralism. Negotiation under the auspices of the Six-Party talks offers a promising option for US foreign policy. Continual discussions at the U.N. Security Council also may bear fruit by a collective body attempting to find

¹²⁴ Albright, Page 465

solutions on the North Korean challenge. Multilateralism is emerging as the US's foremost tool in diplomacy in the modern era and the Six-Party talks and U.N. Security Council discussions are a clear display of this. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter stated in Seoul on April 10, 2015 "Everything we do in the Asia-Pacific region is done with our strong network of allies" and "the biggest part of the rebalance (to Asia) is our continued work with our colleagues and our security alliances and partnerships."¹²⁵ However, as Dr. Stephen Noerper stated, "We (the United States and its partners) have to be more creative in approaching the North Korean challenge."¹²⁶ What this creativity translates into may include serious discussions with "those entities talking about solutions for unification and given South Korea's emphasis on utilizing mid-level diplomacy, a look at how other mid-level powers come into play such as Canada, Australia and others who can be very useful to Korea on agriculture, energy and confidence building."¹²⁷

One of my final thoughts in this research is that I feel compelled to mention an astute statement by Lt. Col. Rosa about force and diplomacy. Close to the end of our conversation, he stated that "The military should always be the weapon of last resort and we should try to give diplomacy a shot every day, day in and day out. Force should always be the last option."¹²⁸ Lt. Col. Rosa also stated that "Every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs will say that we are just one part of the foreign policy strategy and that in the military, we often use the acronym DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Military and

¹²⁵ Joint Press Conference with Secretary Carter and Defense Minister Han in Seoul, April 10, 2015

<http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=5618>

¹²⁶ Interview with Stephen Noerper by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/7/15

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

Economics).”¹²⁹ Basically, these are main aspects of the foreign policy mindset and the military is always the last one that is utilized. An economic example might be an embargo while information can be what intelligence is out there. Diplomacy is an integral part of this DIME paradigm and it was very interesting to learn of this strategy from a seasoned military officer.

“Dreams of Asia rising must pay respect to a strategic reality centered on the United States as the underwriter of regional security.”¹³⁰ In other words, the United States helps play the integral role of promoting peace and stabilization in Asia. I think the United States is indeed a “Pacific Power” as President Obama has stated and that the U.S. is “leading to promote shared security and shared economic growth this century, just as the U.S. did in the last.”¹³¹ As Kofi Annan said in his final speech as Secretary General of the United Nations, “None of our global institutions can accomplish much when the US remains aloof; but when it is fully engaged, the sky is the limit.”¹³² Such a poignant statement gives hope for the future and illustrates how the United States must continue to be engaged in one of the most important security issues in East Asia and beyond. The urgency of a growing nuclear North Korea and one that is increasingly provocative is a situation that the United States must face and be ready to utilize the different tools in its toolbox. This challenge will require the cooperative efforts of the United States with its

¹²⁹ Interview with Guillermo Rosa by Alex Guarino in New York on 5/18/15

¹³⁰ Joffe, Josef. *The Default Power: The False Prophecy of American Decline*, Foreign Affairs 88, no. 5, 2009, 35

¹³¹ *Remarks by President Obama at APEC CEO Summit*. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 10, 2014
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/10/remarks-president-obama-apec-ceo-summit>

¹³² *Full Text: Kofi Annan's Final Speech*. BBC News, December 11, 2006
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6170089.stm>

partners in the region. The United States must be clear that it is pursuing a policy of multilateral engagement with both its allies and historic foes. This will reassure America's allies and illustrate to the global community that the U.S. is a partner for peace and security. As June of this year marked the 65th Anniversary of the start of the destructive and tragic Korean War, diplomacy must be an enduring priority. A peaceful solution to the heavily militarized divided Korean peninsula may be the most important goal of the 21st Century.

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