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# Neoclassical realism and the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework

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**Neoclassical realism and the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework**

by

**Chase O. Davidson**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Ames, Iowa

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

“Seoul is not far away from here. If a war breaks out, Seoul will turn into a sea of fire.”

-Park Yong Soo, lead North Korean representative at the eighth working-level meeting between North and South Korea at Panmunjom, March 1994<sup>1</sup>

After uttering this now famous threat on South Korean television, Park became one of the most feared men on the Korean Peninsula. Open war between the two Koreas looked possible as the North appeared determined to acquire nuclear weapons at any cost, while the South openly pondered whether the time was right to translate their new strength, economically and militarily, into a drive for reunification. Facing the biggest crisis of his young presidency, Bill Clinton, contemplated how best to avoid a replay of the 1950 Korean War, a conflict largely neglected in American memory that left hundreds of thousands dead, the infrastructures of the two Koreas in rubble, and generated enough enmity between the North and South to justify four decades of division. Despite the dangers, a diplomatic breakthrough engineered by American and North Korean diplomats in Geneva, Switzerland derailed the potential for open conflict. The breakthrough came in the form of the Agreed Framework, which froze the North Korean nuclear program and promised Pyongyang a modern, American-constructed nuclear plant, less conducive to producing weapons-grade plutonium. While, the bilateral agreement was maligned by some as appeasement, it averted war and produced the breathing room needed to try to develop a peaceful relationship between the long-time enemies.

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<sup>1</sup> Minn Chung, “Seoul Will Become a Sea Fire...” *Critical Asian Studies* 26 (1994) 132

Less than ten years later, however, a new American President, George W. Bush, faced the prospect of American military intervention on the Korean peninsula. This came at a time when American foreign policy had taken a decidedly interventionist turn, following the al-Qaeda engineered terrorist attacks of September 2001. President Bush, armed with a new “preemptive doctrine” and a Republican-dominated Congress that was similarly skeptical of the merits of the Agreed Framework, felt strongly that North Korea was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup> For its part, Pyongyang believed that the US was failing to abide by its provisions of the framework, with the promised power plant plagued by increasing delays and still several years away from completion.<sup>3</sup> After a cryptic declaration by North Korean officials that apparently revealed the existence of a highly-enriched uranium (HEU) based nuclear program in October 2002, the Agreed Framework fell apart, North Korea officially reactivated its nuclear program, and armed conflict between the two states again seemed possible. In response to the breakdown in relations between the US and DPRK, China urged both parties to convene multilateral discussions, along with other regional powers Japan, South Korea, and Russia to resolve American grievances surrounding North Korea’s nuclear program. The resulting five rounds of talks starting in August 2003 provided a major breakthrough in September 2005. However, the talks ultimately failed to thwart North Korea’s acquisition of a nuclear capability, confirmed after a successful nuclear test in October 2006. The most recent sixth round of talks has attempted to resolve the new reality of a nuclear North Korea and in February 2007 as the DPRK accepted a proposal to freeze its Yongbyon reactor once again, in exchange for the resumption of heavy-oil shipments from the US.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Boucher, “North Korean Nuclear Program,” [United States Department of State](#), 16 Oct 2006

<sup>3</sup> Tim Beal, [North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power](#), (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2005) 81-83

This brief overview of events begs the following question that represents the major topic of the remainder of this study: What accounts for the collapse of the Agreed Framework and its ultimate failure in preventing the emergence of a nuclear North Korea?

## **The Plan**

The following four chapters will seek to address this question through the framework of system level and state-level international political theories based in the realist tradition. Through an examination of each of these theoretical constructs, represented by neorealist and neoclassical realist theory, it will be argued that the failure of the Agreed Framework is best explained through both international-level and domestic level factors that subverted the implementation of the specific provisions of the agreement by both the United States and North Korea. The dependent variable examined in this study is the foreign policy decisions of North Korea toward the pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, and the United States toward the prevention of this capability. First, utilizing the neorealist tradition in Chapter 3, I will explore the utility of relying on the material capabilities of a state and its relative place within the world system as the independent variable in determining the strategy that a state adopts toward an international threat. Second, utilizing neoclassical realism in Chapter 4, I shall explore the utility of examining domestic political institutions and domestic variables more generally for understanding a particular foreign policy strategy. A successful strategy, at both levels, is a strategy which minimizes the threat in question increases the security of the state in relative terms. It should be clear that the goal of this thesis is not to condemn the Agreed Framework, but to specifically explain that there were specific international and

state-level factors that contributed to its failure, ultimately allowing North Korea to obtain nuclear weapons.

Before embarking on a discussion of theory, however, Chapter 2 will issue an in-depth historical narrative of the evolution of American diplomacy toward the Korean peninsula since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter will outline the complex interaction of the American and Korean people over the past 150 years, in addition to a deeper investigation of the negotiation, implementation, and the collapse of the Agreed Framework. A thorough understanding of this historical relationship will enhance the reader's understanding of the current context of US and North Korean relations; a relationship marked by deep mistrust and enmity that appears to have acted in some ways as an impediment to the successful implementation of the Agreed Framework.

Chapters 3 and 4 will then move to examine two levels of analysis in the study of foreign policy relevant to the current relationship of the US and DPRK, with each issuing their own explanation regarding the failure of the Agreed Framework. Each of these levels will emphasize unique factors and events that frame foreign policy decision-making. Chapter 3 will focus on international, systemic factors based in neorealist theory, specifically the transformation of the distribution of capabilities and the polarity of the international system in the Post-Cold War world. While the architect of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz, has resisted the notion that his theory of international politics can be applied to the construction and implementation of foreign policy, many scholars have utilized the basic principles of neorealism at the system level of analysis to explain state behavior in the international system. I argue that when looking at the failure of the Agreed Framework, neorealists might assert that the collapse of the agreement came as a result of North Korea's continued desire



for a nuclear deterrent that would guarantee its regime survival against potential aggression from the system unipolar hegemon, the United States. With the loss of its hegemonic patron in 1991 and the lack of a legitimate balancing partner, the DPRK turned to nuclear weapons as a balancing mechanism against American hegemony in the Post-Cold War period. The Agreed Framework and the attempts to implement it from 1994 to 2002 failed to address North Korean fears that its survival as a state was in jeopardy, and thus persuaded it to secretly enrich uranium, leave the Agreed Framework, and successfully test a nuclear device. Additionally, the rise of China globally and regionally in the implementation period and American involvement in the global campaign against al-Qaeda played a role at the system level.

Chapter 4 will then turn to the second perspective, embodied in neoclassical realist theory, with special attention to the ideas put forth by political scientists Randall Schweller, Fareed Zakaria, Gideon Rose, and Thomas Christensen. Neoclassical realism has emerged as a response to the predominance of neorealist theory in the study of international politics and seeks to reemphasize state-level factors that influence foreign policy decision-making.

Scholar Gideon Rose explains that neoclassical realism:

...explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its relative material capabilities...They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level.<sup>4</sup>

In his own research, Schweller underlines the important roles that state-level influences, such as the preferences of elite policy-makers and domestic political constraints

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<sup>4</sup> Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51.1 (1998) 146

play in the construction and implementation of foreign policy. I will argue that when looking at the failure of the Agreed Framework neoclassical realists would emphasize state-level factors within the American political system as a driving force behind the agreements collapse. This neoclassical realist theory will argue that the Clinton Administration did not properly mobilize American domestic political support for the Agreed Framework. Additionally, the election of a new wave of conservative Republicans to the US House of Representative and Senate in 1994, which were openly hostile to the framework undermined and slowed Clinton attempts to implement it. However, this did not result in the immediate dissolution of the agreement. It took both the election of George W. Bush to the presidency in 2000 and the belief that North Korea was cheating on the agreement in 2002, to sufficiently weaken American domestic and institutional support.

More specifically this neoclassical realist theory argues, at the systems level, that the United States' place as the hegemon of a unipolar system and North Korea's lack of a legitimate balancing partner propelled the DPRK to pursue a nuclear deterrent to prevent American interference and to address the growing security dilemma between the two states. To prevent the emergence of a North Korean nuclear deterrent, a capability that threatened the American preponderance of power in the world, specifically in East Asia, the US negotiated and signed the Agreed Framework. North Korea acquiesced to the agreement as its successful implementation would decrease the security dilemma between the two states and provide for the survival of the Kim regime.

Furthermore, the political institutions of the United States served as an intervening domestic level variable that worked to prevent the successful implementation of this agreement. Primarily the impediment of American political institutions manifested itself in

congressional and presidential elections where dramatic partisan change occurred and worked to prevent a cohesive policy toward North Korea, specifically in the implementation of the Agreed Framework's specific provisions, starting with the 1994 midterm elections and later the 2000 presidential election. These changes disrupted American financial commitments for the construction project and heavy-oil shipments managed by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and disturbed progress in other bilateral areas. Consequently, the failure to implement the framework exacerbated North Korean fears of a security dilemma with the US, pushing them to disregard the framework in early 2003. In the case of the Agreed Framework, American political institutions impeded the successful implementation of an agreement with the expressed goal to increase the security of the United States and its interests in East Asia, leading to its collapse and failure to prevent the emergence of a nuclear North Korea. While no theory will be able to explain each idiosyncratic factor that contributed to the agreements collapse, this theory exhibits strong explanatory power for the major systemic and domestic variables that interacted in the failure of the Agreed Framework and allows a blueprint for the Six-Party Talks to construct a lasting agreement that will peacefully strip North Korea of its nuclear capability and is able to sustain American domestic political support.

In the end, the reader will have a strong grasp of the evolution of American foreign policy toward North Korea and the failure of the Agreed Framework, in addition to the relevance of neorealist and neoclassical realist theory to the case. The Korean Peninsula is of major strategic importance for the security of American interests in East Asia and a nuclear North Korea acts as a destabilizing force against these interests. Understanding the mechanisms that are best able to produce a successful agreement to denuclearize the

peninsula is of considerable importance for American, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and both North and South Korean policy makers alike. Outside of the Northeast Asian framework, this study may also shed some light on the difficulty that the United States has had in negotiating with autocratic states in the post-Cold War period, manifested in recent attempts to prevent an Iranian nuclear capability. The following chapters will exhibit both the diplomatic successes and failures the United States has experienced in its negotiations with the DPRK and provides future policy-makers and diplomats a guide to how best to avoid the mistakes that appeared in the construction and implementation of the Agreed Framework. They will also reveal that system level analysis, despite its importance in constraining and shaping foreign policy options, cannot account for some behaviors when domestic level factors impede the implementation of successful policy choices.

## Chapter 2: The Historical Evolution of US-DPRK Relations

“This agreement is good for the United States, good for our allies, and good for the safety of the entire world. It reduces the danger of the threat of nuclear spreading in the region. It's a crucial step toward drawing North Korea into the global community...This agreement represents the first step on the road to a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.”

-President Bill Clinton, from the White House after the signing of the Agreed Framework, October 18, 1994<sup>1</sup>

“But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens...States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an *axis of evil*, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.”

-President George W. Bush, Second State of the Union Address, January 2002<sup>2</sup>

What happened in the eight years separating these presidential statements to transform relations between the United States and North Korea from one of potential peace to one of outright hostility? The negotiation, construction, implementation, and the ultimate collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework constitutes a complex story. Despite the intricacy involved in its construction, one must fully understand this process to be able to formulate a legitimate explanation for its failure. The following chapter will first seek to explain the historical evolution of the United States relationship with the Korean peninsula over the past 150 years. It will then move to explain the negotiation, signing, and

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Clinton, “Remarks on the Nuclear Agreement with North Korea - Bill Clinton speech – Transcript,” [BNet](#), 18 Oct 1994

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, “President Delivers State of the Union Address,” [The White House](#), 11 Jan 2008

implementation of the Agreed Framework that sought to address the first nuclear crisis that covered much of 1993-1994. It will conclude with a discussion of the events surrounding the collapse of the framework in 2003, the move to the Six-Party Talks, and North Korea's eventual acquisition of nuclear weapons. As a transition to the theoretical portions of this thesis, the chapter will conclude with a brief assessment of the body of scholarly literature on the collapse and failure of the 1994 Agreed Framework. In the end, the reader will have obtained an intimate knowledge of the evolution of American-North Korean relations, particularly in-regard to the Agreed Framework, over the past 15 years, in addition to some of the major scholarly theories that seek to explain it.

It is important to note that throughout the following paragraphs I will occasionally utilize the term "nuclear crisis" to describe periods in which actions by one actor possessed the potential to fundamentally alter the context of the relationship between North Korea and the United States. In each of these three crises, armed conflict was a distinct possibility, but never occurred. The first of these crisis periods emerged in June 1994 after the DPRK unilaterally withdrew from the NPT and was ultimately resolved with the Agreed Framework. The second occurred in October 2002 when North Korea supposedly revealed the existence of a secret uranium enrichment program, precipitating the collapse of the framework and creating the impetus for the formation of the Six-Party Talks. The final crisis occurred when North Korea successfully detonated a nuclear device in October 2006.

## **A Complex Relationship: The US and Korea from the 1880-1991**

For Koreans, their historical association with the United States is one fraught with violence, interventionism, and broken promises, all of which contribute to negative perceptions today.<sup>3</sup> The US embarked upon a more robust foreign policy in East Asia in the wake of increased frontier settlement of the Pacific coast throughout the 1840s and 1850s, and, consequently, became increasingly involved in the attempts by the European Great Powers to open closed Asian societies to free trade and commerce. Historian Walter LaFeber explains the American urge to move even further west, arguing:

By 1850, this landed West had largely been claimed by the Americans... Suddenly possessing some of the world's finest harbors on the Pacific Ocean's eastern rim, Americans now looked toward a new West – the islands of the Pacific and the countries of East Asia, where vast populations promised opportunity for trade and profit.<sup>4</sup>

While, initially, this led the US to pursue the larger markets of China and Japan, by the late 1860s, the US joined British, French, and Russian attempts to enforce favorable economic treaties, akin to those imposed on the Chinese and Japanese, upon the Chosun rulers of the Korean state. At the time, Korea was still technically a tributary to the once powerful Qing Dynasty of China. However, as Western imperialism weakened the Chinese Empire throughout the latter stages of the nineteenth century, this relationship featured less direct Chinese interference in Korean affairs.<sup>5</sup> Though peaceful at first, eventually American incursions into the “Hermit Kingdom” led to direct confrontation between the American

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Beal, North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power, (Ann Arbor, Pluto Press, 2005) 29-30

<sup>4</sup> Walter LaFeber, The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History, (New York, Norton & Company, 1997) 1

<sup>5</sup> Yur-Bok Lee, West Goes East: Paul Georg Von Möllendorff and Great Power Imperialism in Late Yi Korea, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988) 15

Navy and the Korean people. The first of these occurred in 1866, when Korean troops and angry civilians destroyed the USS General Sherman and killed the ship's entire crew.

In 1871, the US dispatched a retaliatory expedition, with a mandate to investigate the demise of the *General Sherman* and to coerce the Chosun dynasty into opening diplomatic and economic relations with the US. The invasion, referred to in the American press as the "The Little War with the Heathens," led to the destruction of several coastal garrisons and the deaths of 650 Korean soldiers and civilians; however, it failed in its primary goal to open Korea to trade.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, with the more direct threat of the modernizing and strengthening Meiji Japanese Empire and the continued decline of the Qing Dynasty in China, Korea entered into the Western treaty port system as a defensive mechanism against future Japanese incursion.<sup>7</sup> The United States and Korea signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1882, an agreement that established the first official economic and political ties between the two states and called for the Americans and Koreans to act, "...If other Powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert its good offices...to bring about an amicable arrangement."<sup>8</sup> Chinese diplomats, led by influential General Li Hongzhang, who craved an increased American presence in Korean affairs as a counter to the rise of Japanese influence in the region, which, in the future, could allow the Qing to reassert their dominance over the peninsula, pushed both Korean and the United States to sign the agreement.<sup>9</sup>

However, historian Yur-Bok Lee argues:

From the viewpoint of the system of traditional East Asian world order, the Korean-American Treaty of 1882 proved to be one of the severest blows that China had suffered...After 1882, Kojong [the Emperor of Korea] and his adherents came to

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, (New York: Norton & Company, 2005) 97

<sup>7</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001) 4

<sup>8</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Clash*, 85

<sup>9</sup> Lee, *West Goes East*, 23



understand the implications of the treaty with the United States and realized that its provisions could be employed to gain more independence from China and to work toward the modernization of Korea.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the introduction of the Americans and Europeans into Korean affairs, Japanese expansion progressed unchecked on the peninsula after a string of victories in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Each conflict gradually eroded Korean sovereignty and removed the influence of key Chinese and Russian allies.<sup>11</sup> Korean political independence disappeared completely in 1910, as Japan officially annexed Korea as a colony. Emperor Kojong repeatedly requested American military assistance throughout the early years of the twentieth century to thwart Japanese expansionism, citing the “good offices” portion of the 1882 treaty.<sup>12</sup> However, American President Theodore Roosevelt, who harbored an affinity for the Japanese people for their military prowess and swift modernization, declined to intervene against Japanese aggression citing both, American strategic interests in the Philippines, the home to a key American naval base vital to the establishment of American strategic power in East Asia, and his racial view of imperialism.<sup>13</sup> According to scholar David Burton, for Roosevelt, “The Koreans and the Chinese appeared to be stationary races and Roosevelt was not minded to help them against Japanese domination. A country without the spirit or force to defend itself deserved to go under.”<sup>14</sup> American compliance was codified in 1905 with the secretly negotiated Taft-Katsura Agreement, in which the US recognized the establishment of a Japanese suzerainty over the Korean state, while Japan recognized the American right to utilize the Philippines as

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<sup>10</sup> Lee, *West Goes East*, 29

<sup>11</sup> Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle Against*, 33

<sup>12</sup> Lee, *West Goes East*, 195

<sup>13</sup> David H. Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt: Confident Imperialist,” *The Review of Politics* 23.3 (1961) 362-363

<sup>14</sup> Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt,” 362-363

a military outpost.<sup>15</sup> According to Korean scholar Don Oberdorfer, historians and critics in both North and South Korea, commonly attribute the Taft-Katsura Agreement as the first of two major betrayals committed by the United States against the Korean state.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that in this period there existed another influential group of individuals in Korea outside the traditional American foreign policy apparatus, embodied in the American Christian missionaries that openly proselytized across the peninsula starting from 1884-1885.<sup>17</sup> While the first Christian missionaries arrived in Korea in 1594, their presence on the peninsula was banned and their adherent actively repressed by the Chosun hierarchy. Korean leaders believed that Christianity undermined the state's traditional political and religious values grounded in Confucian moral tenants and posed a threat to their continued rule.<sup>18</sup> With the completion of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and the establishment of an American embassy in Seoul, American Presbyterian and Episcopal churches established missions seeking to propagate their own unique brands of American Christianity among the Korean people. These missions founded Western schools, hospitals, and orphanages, where they distributed the first Korean language Bibles, but refrained from more direct evangelist activities in face of resistance from the Chosun government.<sup>19</sup>

American missionary work provided the first substantial interactions between the United States and the mass of Korean people and, according to Korean scholar L. George Paik, initially provided those that listened, "...new ideals and new standards of life."<sup>20</sup> However,

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<sup>15</sup> LaFeber, The Clash, 85-86

<sup>16</sup> Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas, 5

<sup>17</sup> L. George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea: Third Edition, (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1980) 91

<sup>18</sup> Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 35

<sup>19</sup> Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 135

<sup>20</sup> Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 420

missionary neutrality in the colonization of Korea by Japan and its insistence that its adherent refrain from armed resistance against the occupation, might constitute another, more passive example of American duplicity in the face of Japanese aggression.

The years spanning from 1910 to 1945 constituted a dark period in Korean history, as the peninsula, now under direct Japanese control, suffered the pains of war, political repression, and economic exploitation. However, the eventual defeat and dismantlement of the Japanese Empire through the efforts of the United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union, and Korean guerilla forces during the Second World War left many with hope for the future. This optimism would be short-lived, as divergent strategic interest between the US and the USSR drove the political division of the Korean peninsula into two hostile, ideologically opposed states. This division, breaking 1300 years of political continuity, for Oberdorfer, would constitute the second major American betrayal of Korean political independence, further straining the perception of the United States on the peninsula.<sup>21</sup>

The dismantlement of the Japanese empire, especially Korea, left postwar American policymakers in East Asia with a dilemma centering on whether principles of political self-determination or American strategic interests should play a primary role. Initially, at the Cairo Conference in November 1943, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Chinese Nationalist Party President Chiang Kai-shek vaguely committed "...that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."<sup>22</sup> Later at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, President Roosevelt supported a temporary, cooperative trusteeship with the Soviet Union, who had been absent from the Cairo talks, and Chinese Nationalists over a new Korean state. However, the final agreement that ended the

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<sup>21</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 5

<sup>22</sup> "Cairo Conference: 1943," [The Avalon Project at Yale Law School](#), 1 Dec 1943

conference included no specific implementation plan.<sup>23</sup> The rapid advance of Soviet troops through Manchuria into Northern Korea in August 1945, coupled with death of President Roosevelt and the emergence of increased suspicion between the US and USSR, pushed the Americans to propose a separately administered, divided Korea. This hasty decision, made without consulting influential Korean political figures, was widely opposed by those in the resistance movement against Japan.<sup>24</sup> The proposal called for the Soviets to administer north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, while the US would manage the reconstruction of the Southern portion that importantly contained the capital of Seoul.

Over the next three years of Soviet and American occupation, promised political unification and democratic elections never materialized. In December 1945, the US and USSR agreed to an occupation period that would not exceed five years, while committing to the establishment of a unified provisional government.<sup>25</sup> Despite these promises, both the Americans and Soviets were cultivating separate provisional regimes conducive to each of their conflicting ideologies, in addition to both states' strategic interests on the peninsula.<sup>26</sup> In the North, the Soviets groomed former guerilla leader Kim Il-Sung and the cadre of leaders who composed the North Korean Provisional People's Committee for the eventual leadership of a unified, communist leaning Korea. Meanwhile in the South, the Americans looked to the stridently anti-Communist Syngman Rhee to stabilize the South. Rhee was familiar to American occupation administration, as he was educated in the United States and served as the President of the exiled Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai throughout much of the war. Both interim regimes rooted out opposition, with the

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<sup>23</sup> Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas, 5

<sup>24</sup> Cumings, Korea's Place in the Sun, 188-190

<sup>25</sup> Cumings, Korea's Place in the Sun, 190

<sup>26</sup> Cumings, Korea's Place in the Sun, 190

Kim led North focusing on those that had collaborated with the Japanese colonial administration, as well as the landed aristocracy, while Rhee in the South sought to stifle leftist opposition using many of the same authoritarian institutions that the Japanese utilized to control Korea during the colonial period.<sup>27</sup>

In November 1947, after the failure of numerous bilateral meetings between American and Soviet occupation officials seeking an acceptable unification plan, the United Nations passed a US backed resolution calling for a free election in 1948 to establish a unified Korean National Assembly to construct a constitution and elect a President.<sup>28</sup> The plan also called for the complete withdrawal of all American and Soviet military forces in the wake of the elections, in addition to the establishment of a UN commission to supervise the election and the eventual transition of power from the occupation administrations. Fearing UN supervised elections would be unfair to the North, the Soviet Union boycotted the resolution vote and subsequently barred the entry of UN election officials into North Korea. Despite, the lack of Northern participation and a boycott by leftist parties in the South, the election continued as scheduled on May 10, 1948. Rhee and his band of supporters, with the lack of any legitimate opposition, won a landslide victory and on August 15 declared the creation of the Republic of Korea, with Rhee serving as its President.<sup>29</sup> In response, Kim declared the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on September 9, 1948. Both the US and USSR began troop withdrawals immediately in compliance with the UN resolution, with

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<sup>27</sup> Cumings, Korea's Place in the Sun, 203, 209, 232

<sup>28</sup> Bonnie B.C. Oh, ed., Korea Under the American Military Government, 1945-1948, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002) 9

<sup>29</sup> Oh, Korea Under the American Military Government, 9

the last Soviet troops leaving Korea in December 1948, while the final vestiges of the American Military Government departed the peninsula in June 1949.<sup>30</sup>

In 1950, after a year of border skirmishes between North and South Korea, the DPRK decided to take unification into its own hands and launched a full scale invasion of the South. The three year long conflict saw direct intervention by the American military, along with several allies under a United Nations mandate and the recently established People's Republic of China (PRC). The Soviets, while offering implicit approval of the invasion, provided no official direct military support of the Kim regime, committing to an early pledge to abstain from intervention in an internal Korean conflict.<sup>31</sup> Despite the devastation of the peninsula by bombing and artillery fire, leaving an estimated 1.82 million casualties, neither the US-backed South nor the Chinese-backed North were able to gain a clear advantage. Thus, the Korean War ended in stalemate at its starting point: the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel where a heavily fortified 151 mile long Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) divided the two Koreas.<sup>32</sup> Division became the status-quo for the next fifty years, during which, hatred and mistrust of the United States grew exponentially within North Korean society and for Korean historian Bruce Cumings fostered the garrison mentality now at play in the DPRK.<sup>33</sup>

Over the next four decades, North and South Korea, according to scholar Tim Beal, pursued the similar goals of economic growth, modernization, the solidification of domestic stability, and recognition internationally.<sup>34</sup> In the DPRK, Kim undertook an ambitious campaign to purge the remaining opposition against his regime, while concurrently

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<sup>30</sup> Chi Young Pak, Korea and the United Nations, (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2000) 38

<sup>31</sup> Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas, 8

<sup>32</sup> Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas, 8

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Cumings, North Korea, (New York: The New Press, 2004) 1-3

<sup>34</sup> Beal, North Korea, 57

cultivating a state ideology, known in Korean as *juche*, from which he could mobilize and control all facets of North Korean society, while also distinguishing the DPRK and its brand of communism from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic.<sup>35</sup> From 1957 to 1960, scholar Andrei Lankov argued that:

The country emerged from the purges a few years later as, perhaps, one of the most efficient Stalinist regimes ever to have existed. Domestically, Kim Il Sung held virtually unrestricted sway over the country, while internationally the earlier North Korean political dependence on Soviet and Chinese sponsorship had greatly diminished.<sup>36</sup>

Despite attaining political autonomy from the Soviets and Chinese, the North Korean economy, which initially was more vibrant than its southern competitor, was still highly dependent on assistance and trade with the two powers.<sup>37</sup> To this end, Kim negotiated economic assistance packages and trade agreements with both the Soviet Union and China in 1961 by shrewdly exploiting the diplomatic tension that existed between the two over border and ideological disagreements.<sup>38</sup> Kim's unchallenged rule over North Korea extended until his death in July 1994. His legacy continued through the leadership of his son and successor, Kim Jong-Il.

Meanwhile, South Korea in the aftermath of the war became firmly ensconced in the American alliance system and reaped the benefit of direct American financial and military assistance. Park Chung-hee, a Major General in the ROK Army, with a murky past that included a stint as an officer in the Japanese military and a brief flirtation with communism, emerged as the most influential South Korean leader in the postwar period. After seizing

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<sup>35</sup> Young Whan Kihl. "Staying Power of the Socialist 'Hermit Kingdom,'" North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival, ed. Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2006) 8

<sup>36</sup> Andrei N. Lankov, "Kim Takes Control: The "Great Purge" in North Korea, 1956-1960," *Korean Studies* 26.1 (2002) 89

<sup>37</sup> Beal, North Korea, 59

<sup>38</sup> Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas, 11

control of South Korea in 1961 in a bloodless coup, Park, using at times repressive and violent means, undertook ambitious industrialization and modernization programs that transformed the country over the period of his 18 year rule and laid the groundwork for the prosperity the country would experience in the 1990s.<sup>39</sup> This era was also witness to the first rapprochement between North and South since the end of the war, embodied in the Joint North-South Communiqué of July 1972, which outlined the three principles that future unification should be based on:

1. Reunification should be achieved independently, without reliance upon outside force or its interference.
2. Reunification should be achieved by peaceful means, without recourse to the use of arms against the other side.
3. Great national unity should be promoted first of all as one nation, transcending the differences of ideology, ideal and system.<sup>40</sup>

The communiqué represented a direct response by both North and South Korea, at American President Richard Nixon's visit to China earlier in the year and the warming of relations between the formerly adversarial states.<sup>41</sup> Despite the promise it provided for future cooperation, the communiqué provided very little substantive change and hostility between North and South Korea continued well into the 1990s.<sup>42</sup>

## **The Emergence of the Nuclear Issue**

The period of diplomatic interaction between the United States and the Korean peninsula most relevant to the ideas presented in this thesis is that of the post-Cold War era when North Korea's nuclear program emerged as a principal concern for the United States.

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<sup>39</sup> Beal, North Korea, 57

<sup>40</sup> "North-South Joint Communiqué," The Nautilus Institute, 4 Jul 1972

<sup>41</sup> Beal, North Korea, 61

<sup>42</sup> Oberdorfer, 46



With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and its Eastern European satellites in the years proceeding, North Korea lost vital strategic and economic partners, and as a consequence, found itself isolated in a changing world where an autocratic, communist dictatorship was no longer a welcome member. In addition, the US ascended to new heights, establishing itself as the world's lone superpower with military might unprecedented in modern history. At the same time, the ROK continued to reap the rewards of economic growth, modernization, warm relations with the PRC, and political reform. All of these factors worked to transform South Korea's once weak strategic position vis-à-vis the North into one of strength. It might be argued that these factors may have contributed to a perception of vulnerability among the North Korean leadership, where the survival of the communist regime seemed at danger, pushing the DPRK to engage in a drive to secure nuclear weapons as a deterrent against potential American interference such as was suffered by Iraq (in 1991), the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia.<sup>43</sup>

This quest for a nuclear weapons capability, covering much of the past decade and a half has presented a serious obstacle for the foreign policy carried out by the administrations of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and has also worked to endanger the stability of the East Asian security order. Most dangerously, a North Korea with a reliable nuclear capability enables a highly unpredictable and hostile state the ability to wreak unprecedented damage upon American interests throughout East Asia and the Pacific Ocean, thus undermining American defense commitments to the ROK and Japan.<sup>44</sup> There is the additional danger that North Korea might resort to selling their nuclear technology abroad to

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<sup>43</sup> Beal, North Korea, 72-73

<sup>44</sup> William J. Perry, "Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations," United States Department of State, 12 Oct 1999, p. 4-5

states hostile to the United States or to terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda.<sup>45</sup> A fear that has manifested itself in claims by some US intelligence officials in April 2008 that North Korea facilitated Syria in its own drive for a nuclear capability, after the Israeli Air Force bombed a partially constructed nuclear reactor within Syrian borders believed to be built with North Korean assistance, a claim that North Korean officials vehemently denied.<sup>46</sup> In the past, the DPRK has also engaged in missile and nuclear technology exchanges with Pakistan, as was confirmed by the confession of notorious Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan in 2004.<sup>47</sup> It is believed that Khan transferred warhead development expertise and centrifuge designs conducive to the processing of highly enriched-uranium, in exchange for North Korean missile technology.<sup>48</sup> North Korea's dealings with Khan, and more recently with Syria, exhibit its participation in the illicit trade of weapons and nuclear technology globally with state's pursuing goals counter to American interests.

The fear of North Korea with a reliable nuclear capability could also ignite a nuclear arms-race involving South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, all states potentially within the range of a North Korean first strike capability.<sup>49</sup> Nuclear capabilities for all of these states would leave East Asia with seven nuclear states, including the United States, China, and Russia, resulting in an unprecedented and unstable period of diplomacy for the region. Jonathon Pollack, director of the Asia-Pacific Studies Group at the US Naval War College, explains:

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<sup>45</sup> Jonathon Pollack, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program to 2015: Three Scenarios," *Asia Policy* 3 (2007) 107

<sup>46</sup> David E. Sanger and Mark Mazzetti, "Israel Struck Syrian Nuclear Project, Analyst Say," *The New York Times* 14 Oct 2007

<sup>47</sup> David Rohde and David E. Sanger, "Key Pakistani Is Said to Admit Atom Transfers," *The New York Times* 2 Feb 2004, 1

<sup>48</sup> Rohde and Sanger, "Key Pakistani..."

Larry A. Nicksch, "North Korea's Weapons of Mass Destruction," North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival, ed. Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2006) 103

<sup>49</sup> Kihl, "Staying Power," 18

...the regional consequences are also highly worrisome....with nuclear weapons, the potential consequences of renewed conflict for the Republic of Korea, Japan, and for U.S. forces are incalculably greater. Quite apart from the potential for armed conflict, North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons seems very likely to prompt major security reassessments on the part of all the states of Northeast Asia.<sup>50</sup>

### **The First Nuclear Crisis: The Establishment of the Agreed Framework**

The first attempt to curb the North Korean nuclear weapons program came in response to the crisis that emerged in March 1993 after North Korea threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and lasted until the completion of the Agreed Framework in October 1994. The DPRK became a signatory of the NPT in 1985 at the insistence of the USSR, who had faced diplomatic pressure from the United States following the American discovery of a secret nuclear research facility in North Korea.<sup>51</sup> Later in 1992, in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, North Korea ratified a specific agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to submit to ad hoc inspections of its nuclear facilities in order to ease American fears that they were actively pursuing nuclear weapons.<sup>52</sup> Throughout 1992 and early 1993, IAEA inspectors were plagued by the limited access they were allowed at North Korean nuclear facilities and the emergence of discrepancies in the inventory of nuclear materials submitted by the DPRK to the agency.<sup>53</sup> In February 1993, the IAEA adopted a resolution, which demanded that the DPRK to comply to "special" inspections that would provide inspector with more complete access to North Korean nuclear facilities or face the threat of economic sanctions. In

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<sup>50</sup> Pollack, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program to 2015," 107

<sup>51</sup> Michael Gordon, "North Korea Joins Pact to Prevent the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *The New York Times* 27 Dec 1985, A3

<sup>52</sup> John Ridding, "North Korea Takes Steps to Ease Nuclear Tension," *Financial Times* 7 Jan 1992, 4

<sup>53</sup> Michael Gordon, "North Korea Rebuffs Nuclear Inspectors, Reviving U.S. Nervousness," *The New York Times* 1 Feb 1993, A9

response, North Korea announced its intentions to terminate its obligations to the treaty in June 1993 initiating the first phase of the crisis.<sup>54</sup>

President Clinton quickly dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Robert L. Gallucci to engage the DPRK in bilateral negotiations with the goal of preventing their withdrawal from the treaty. Gallucci persuaded North Korea to remain party to the treaty and laid the groundwork for “high-level” discussions in Geneva, Switzerland and later New York City. Initially the talks yielded the potential for a comprehensive agreement, as North Korea agreed to allow IAEA inspectors unfettered access to seven declared nuclear sites and the resumption of bilateral negotiations with South Korea, both to take place in March 1994, as the United States agreed to suspend Team Spirit, an annual joint military exercise and war-game held by the American and South Korean armed forces that the DPRK feared could be used as a springboard for a covert, preemptive American invasion of the North.<sup>55</sup> Despite the optimism that this breakthrough provided, North Korea again prevented IAEA inspectors from determining whether they were processing spent plutonium fuel rods and dramatically ended bilateral negotiations with the ROK by threatening to destroy Seoul in March 1994.<sup>56</sup>

The crisis reached its pinnacle in June 1994 when the DPRK officially withdrew from the NPT and began to rapidly discharge spent fuel at the Yongbyon facility. In response, the Clinton Administration undertook a two-pronged strategy. Diplomatically, Clinton covertly endorsed a trip by former President Jimmy Carter to North Korea to directly engage the DPRK leadership on the nuclear issue, while concurrently administration officials put

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<sup>54</sup> R. Jeffrey Smith, “N. Korea Quitting Arms Pact,” *The Washington Post* 12 Mar 1993, A16

<sup>55</sup> William Drozdiak, “U.S., N. Korea Reach Compromise On Nuclear-Arms Inspection Crisis,” *The Washington Post* 20 Jul 1993, A14

<sup>56</sup> Martin Walker, “Korea Bomb Fears Stymie US Asia Policy,” *The Guardian* 21 Mar 1994, 1

together the text for a stringent draft UN sanctions resolution.<sup>57</sup> Militarily, the administration constructed plans for a military buildup in the region that called for the injection of 50,000 group troops, 400 aircraft, and 50 warships in and around the Korean peninsula and actively debated whether to undertake preemptive air strikes of the Yongbyon facility.<sup>58</sup> Carter's intervention, while opposed by Secretary of State Warren Christopher and National Security Advisor Tony Lake, who each feared that he would be far too conciliatory, temporarily diffused the crisis and paved the way for the resumption of bilateral negotiations in Geneva in July 1994.<sup>59</sup> These negotiations suffered a minor setback on 9 July 1994, following the sudden death of Kim Il-Sung leading to the suspension of bilateral talks until August.

Despite fears that Kim's death would derail the process, the August negotiations proceeded as scheduled and generated the basic structure of the Agreed Framework. After further negotiations in September, Gallucci and North Korean First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Sok-ju officially signed the Agreed Framework on 21 October 1994. In the end, the agreement sought the expressed aim of the "full resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula" and required that both the US and North Korea work toward the full normalization of political and economic relations and the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Specifically, the US agreed to lead an international consortium, later known as the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), in the construction of a light-water reactor (LWR) nuclear plant with the capacity to generate 2000 MW by 2003. In response to this pledge, North Korea would shut down its heavy-water reactors (HWR) and freeze plutonium processing indefinitely, while agreeing to complete

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<sup>57</sup> Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, Robert L. Gallucci, Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis, (Washington DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2004), 211-212

<sup>58</sup> Wit, Poneman, Gallucci, Going Critical, 204-205, 210-211

<sup>59</sup> Wit, Poneman, Gallucci, Going Critical, 202-204

dismantlement of these reactors once the completion of construction on the LWR. To supplement the energy lost from the shutdown of its HWR, the US would provide North Korea with 500,000 tons of oil annually. Additionally, the DRPK rejoined the NPT, agreeing to the implementation of IAEA safeguards and future inspections. Upon the near completion of the LWR, North Korea pledged to come under total compliance of the IAEA safeguards agreement.<sup>60</sup>

Conservative critics in the United States initially derided the Agreed Framework as “blackmail” and “appeasement.”<sup>61</sup> The new Republican Congress, swept into power in the November midterm elections following the signing of the framework, made it clear that it would resist efforts by the Clinton administration to fund American commitments. GOP leaders such as Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, argued that the Clinton Administration had taken an untenably weak position in negotiations, claiming that the accord exhibited how, “...it is always possible to get an agreement when you give enough away.”<sup>62</sup> Senator John McCain, a strong critic throughout the negotiation process, claimed that “North Korea has consistently intimidated administration diplomacy.”<sup>63</sup> Over the final six years of the Clinton administration, legislative resistance became a consistent feature plaguing the funding of American financial commitments to KEDO and delaying heavy oil shipments, regularly upsetting “Dear Leader” Kim Jong-Il and his communist cadre.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “Agreed Framework Between the United States of America and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” Korean Energy Development Organization, 21 Oct 1994

<sup>61</sup> Terence Roehrig, From Deterrence to Engagement: the U.S. Defense Commitment to South Korea, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 208

<sup>62</sup> Wit, Poneman, Gallucci, Going Critical, 336

<sup>63</sup> John McCain, “The Crisis in Korea,” *Congressional Record*, 23 Jun 1994

<sup>64</sup> Beal, North Korea, 84-85

In 1998, President Clinton commissioned outgoing Secretary of Defense William Perry to undertake the first extensive overview of the effectiveness of the Agreed Framework. When published in October 1999, Perry credited the success of the Agreed Framework in freezing North Korea's nuclear program, which prevented any further development toward a nuclear capability in the five years it had been in force. However, he also outlined fears that the failure to fully implement its provisions in a timely manner, particularly those provisions concerning the construction of the LWR and the normalization of relations, both well behind schedule, could result in the framework's eventual disintegration. Perry explains:

Unfreezing Yongbyon is North Korea's quickest and surest path to acquisition of nuclear weapons. The Agreed Framework, therefore, should be preserved and implemented by the United States and its allies. With the Agreed Framework, the DPRK's ability to produce plutonium at Yongbyon is verifiably frozen. Without the Agreed Framework, however, it is estimated that the North could reprocess enough plutonium to produce a significant number of nuclear weapons per year.<sup>65</sup>

To this end, in October 2000 Clinton dispatched Secretary of State Madeline Albright to North Korea in a visit that resulted in the highest-level diplomatic contacts between the two states in their respective histories. The major goals of Albright's trip were to address the emerging missile proliferation issue and to lay the groundwork for a potential trip by Clinton himself in the DPRK in November.<sup>66</sup> However, the controversial and divisive nature of the 2000 election, as well as intense pressure from the transition team of President-elect George W. Bush persuaded Clinton to completely abandon what might have been a groundbreaking trip.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Perry, "Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea," 6

<sup>66</sup> Shin Yong-bae, "Kim Hints at Korea-U.S.-Japan summit after Clinton's N.K. Visit," *The Korean Herald* 30 Oct 2000, 7

<sup>67</sup> Beal, North Korea, 96

## **The Second Nuclear Crisis: The Collapse of the Agreed Framework**

The election of President Bush and the rise to prominence of several vocal critics of the Clinton administration policy toward North Korea, including Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Undersecretary of State for Arms Control John Bolton brought increased scrutiny for the Agreed Framework. Upon his inauguration, President Bush ordered a thorough review of its effectiveness and implementation.<sup>68</sup> In March 2001, President Bush, in remarks made to the press during an official visit by ROK President Kim Dae-jung, questioned North Korea's commitment to the Agreed Framework and demanded "complete verification," of North Korean compliance, making any future bilateral negotiations between the US and DPRK contingent on these conditions being met.<sup>69</sup> North Korea condemned the President's comments and the deviation from the policy of President Clinton by claiming that it was "fully prepared for both dialogue and war."<sup>70</sup> The September 2001 terrorist attacks strained relations further, as Pollack explains:

The terrorist attacks of 11 September further reaffirmed the diminished U.S. policy priority attached to engaging North Korea and strengthened the administration's predisposition to view Pyongyang as a looming danger, not a negotiating partner.<sup>71</sup>

Evidence of Pollack's argument can be found in the branding of North Korea as one of the members of the infamous "Axis of Evil" in President Bush's 2002 State of the Union

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<sup>68</sup> Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement*, 79

<sup>69</sup> Jonathon D. Pollack, "The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework," *Naval War College Review* 56.3 (2003) 25

<sup>70</sup> Pollack, "The United States, North Korea," 25

<sup>71</sup> Pollack, "The United States, North Korea," 27



Address and the prominent inclusion of the DPRK in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review compiled by the Department of Defense, both of which disturbed North Korean leaders.<sup>72</sup>

With President Bush's insistence that "complete verification" dictate the resumption of future talks, direct negotiations between the United States and North Korea were suspended until October 2002, when an American delegation led by Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly arrived in Pyongyang, intending to confront North Korea with allegations, based on CIA intelligence, that the DPRK was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons through a covert highly enriched uranium (HEU) program, in violation of the Agreed Framework.<sup>73</sup> Despite initial denials, Assistant Secretary Kelly and his delegation were stunned on the final day of negotiations by a perceived direct admission by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Sok-ju that the DPRK did possess an HEU program, which served as a deterrent against hostile American foreign policy.<sup>74</sup> It is important to note that this "nuclear admission" has undergone scrutiny from critics who argue that there could have been a mistake in translation at the actual meeting and the American intelligence that supposedly confirmed the admission was flawed.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, the DPRK issued an official statement refuting that they possessed an HEU program, asserting that they had only claimed that they had the legal right to possess one.<sup>76</sup> In 2007 the Bush administration recognized these criticisms, confirming that there were numerous questions surrounding the veracity of

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<sup>72</sup> Yoichi Funabashi, The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis, (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2007) 94

<sup>73</sup> "Timeline: N Korea Nuclear Stand-Off: 2002-present," BBC News: Asia Pacific, 6 Dec 2007

<sup>74</sup> Funabashi, The Peninsula Question, 94

<sup>75</sup> Beal, North Korea, 210

<sup>76</sup> Beal, North Korea, 264

American intelligence surrounding the existence of a covert North Korean heavy uranium program.<sup>77</sup>

Despite these questions, within three weeks of the admission, unnamed senior members of the Bush Administration announced in *The New York Times* that the Agreed Framework was “dead” and that heavy oil shipments mandated in the framework were to be indefinitely suspended.<sup>78</sup> The suspension of oil shipments became official following a vote of the executive board of KEDO in November, while the IAEA adopted its own resolution calling on the DPRK to clarify its so-called confession to Kelly. The DPRK reacted in December 2002 by declaring that it was ending its commitment to the Agreed Framework by reactivating the Yongbyon plutonium reactor, as a result of energy shortages produced by the suspension of American oil shipments.<sup>79</sup> They also removed all IAEA seals and surveillance cameras from monitored nuclear facilities and expelled IAEA inspectors from the country. North Korea delivered another blow to the agreement by withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in January 2003 and officially announcing in February that it had reactivated all of its nuclear power facilities.<sup>80</sup> The Bush administration issued a statement of condemnation concerning North Korea’s decisions to suspend its compliance to the framework, however, the administration was deeply divided on how best to address the North Korean threat, as some advocated a continuation of diplomacy and negotiations, while others sought the continuation of the hard-line, isolationist approach.<sup>81</sup> With North Korea openly

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<sup>77</sup> Glenn Kessler, “New Doubts On Nuclear Efforts by North Korea,” *The Washington Post* 1 Mar 2007, A1

<sup>78</sup> David E Sanger, “U.S. to Withdraw From Arms Accord with North Korea,” *The New York Times* 20 Oct 2002

<sup>79</sup> Pollack, “The United States, North Korea,” 41

<sup>80</sup> Seth Mydans, “Threats and Responses: Nuclear Standoff,” *The New York Times* 10 Jan 2003, p.1

<sup>81</sup> Glenn Kessler, “U.S. Plays Down North Korean Move, Reaction Reveals Debate on Isolation Vs. Engagement,” *The Washington Post* 11 Jan 2003, A1

defying its provisions and the United States unable to formulate a cohesive policy to enforce them, the Agreed Framework, for all intent and purpose, was dead.

### **The Third Nuclear Crisis: The Failure of the Agreed Framework**

Throughout March 2003, despite its preoccupation with the military invasion and occupation of Iraq, the United States lobbied South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia to join it in a multilateral front to address the North Korean nuclear issue.<sup>82</sup> China, the DPRK's last remaining major power ally and economic partner, convened the first round of these new negotiations in Beijing in April 2003 between North Korean and American representatives and mediated by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi.<sup>83</sup> These initial, trilateral discussions, constructed the framework for future multilateral negotiations that would also include the other Northeast Asian powers: South Korea, Japan, and Russia. The first round of the Six-Party Talks convened in August 2003 and achieved little outside of an agreement to continue further negotiations in February 2004. The second and third rounds, held throughout 2004, produced an agreement among the six states that reestablished their commitment to a denuclearized Korean peninsula, as well as the official recognition of the peaceful coexistence of all parties.<sup>84</sup>

After a year devoid of any discussion between the six states on the nuclear issue, largely a result of the extended nature of the 2004 US presidential election, after which President Bush secured a second term of office; talks were reconvened in July 2005. The fourth round of negotiations spawned the first major breakthrough produced by the Six-Party

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<sup>82</sup> Rupert Cornwell, "North Korea Begins Talks With America But Standoff Remains," *The Independent* 24 Apr 2003, 16

<sup>83</sup> Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question*, 329

<sup>84</sup> Joseph Kahn, "Diplomats See Modest Progress In North Korea Nuclear Talks," *The New York Times* 28 Feb 2004, 5

Talks. A joint statement released after the conclusion of talks established the basic tenets for the future denuclearization of North Korea.<sup>85</sup> The DPRK agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons programs, rejoin the NPT, place itself under the safeguards of the IAEA, and to take steps to normalize its relations with the US and Japan, while the United States renounced any intention to invade or attack the DPRK and also committed itself to the normalization of relations. The six-parties collectively sought to "...promote economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and investment, bilaterally and/or multilaterally," while the US, China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia committed themselves to provide energy assistance to the North and recognized the DPRK's right to possess nuclear technology for peaceful, energy purposes.

The optimism generated by this agreement tempered after the stagnation of fifth round of talks in November 2005 after the US Treasury Department froze North Korean accounts at the Banco Delta Asia in Macao on charges of money laundering and counterfeiting. The Macao issue consumed the negotiations, as they failed to produce an agreement to implement the provisions of the Fourth Round Joint Statement.<sup>86</sup> Dissatisfied with the lack of progress in negotiations and their frozen funds, North Korea test fired the Taepodong-2, a long-range missile believed to possess the capability of delivering a nuclear warhead to Alaska or Hawaii.<sup>87</sup> The US responded by sponsoring and passing UN Security Council Resolution 1695, which banned all UN member states from importing or exporting any missile technology to or from North Korea, however, due to Russian and Chinese

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<sup>85</sup> Sean McCormack, "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks," United States Department of State, 19 Sept 19 2005

<sup>86</sup> Funabashi, The Peninsula Question, 410-419

<sup>87</sup> David Sanger, "Few Good Choices in North Korean Standoff," *The New York Times* 6 Jul 2006, 1

opposition, the resolution failed to include the economic sanctions the US desired.<sup>88</sup> North Korean belligerence continued on 3 October 2006, as it announced its intentions to undertake a nuclear weapons test. Just six days later, despite the opposition of the US and the other four parties, the DPRK successfully tested a nuclear device, confirming the ultimate failure of the Agreed Framework in its goal to prevent North Korea from possessing a nuclear weapons capability.<sup>89</sup>

The test set off a crisis in East Asia, however, it helped solidify support for sanctions against North Korea, especially among the once resistant Chinese and Russians, who acquiesced to the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1718.<sup>90</sup> The resolution called on North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program, to halt any further nuclear or missile tests, and to immediately return to the Six-Party negotiations. Further, it granted UN member states the right to stop and inspect North Korean cargo ships for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and froze North Korean financial assets connected to the production of WMD.<sup>91</sup> A nuclear North Korea also created an impetus for the resumption of the stagnant fifth round of the Six-Party Talks, reconvened in December 2006. Despite the existence of a nuclear North Korea, all six parties reaffirmed the Fourth Round Joint Statement, while the US exhibited a desire to address long-standing North Korean grievances over assets frozen by the US in a Macao bank. February 2007 witnessed further progress with the issuance of the Fifth Round Joint Statement, in which, North Korea agreed to shutdown the Yongbyon reactor and to move toward complete, IAEA verified dismantlement of the facility.

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<sup>88</sup> “Security Council Condemns Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s Missile Launches Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1695,” United Nations Security Council, 15 Jul 2006

<sup>89</sup> Funabashi, The Peninsula Question, 464-65

<sup>90</sup> “Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1718,” United Nations Security Council, 14 Oct 2006

<sup>91</sup> “Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test...”

Additionally, the DPRK committed to full disclosure of all aspects of its nuclear program by 31 December 2007, in exchange for the resumption of heavy oil shipments.<sup>92</sup>

In a show of good faith, the US unfroze \$25 million in a North Korean bank account in Macao in June 2007 and exhibited a willingness to remove the DPRK from its official list of state sponsors of terrorism in the future.<sup>93</sup> By September, the DPRK had frozen plutonium production and embarked upon complete dismantlement of the Yongbyon reactor, monitored by IAEA officials. However, as of February 2008, North Korea has yet to follow through on its promise to disclose all aspects of its nuclear program, despite a personal plea from President Bush in late 2007.<sup>94</sup> For its part the US has issued assurances to the DPRK that will lead to its removal from the state sponsors of terror list within 45 days of full disclosure.<sup>95</sup> The full disclosure issue currently consumes the Six-Party Talks and at present its resolutions appears problematic.

## **Literature Review**

With this historical overview complete, it is pertinent to undertake a brief examination of the relevant scholarly discourse on the failure of Agreed Framework before embarking on the theoretical framework of this thesis. Broadly speaking, the literature seems to fall into three distinct categories. The first largely blames the US and its failure to robustly pursue implementation of the Agreed Framework's provisions for its eventual failure. The second blames North Korean actions, specifically its secretive, antagonistic nature and its covert HEU program for its collapse. The third cites the weakness of the

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<sup>92</sup> "North Korea – Denuclearization Action Plan," United States Department of State, 13 Feb 2007

<sup>93</sup> Tim Reid, "North Korea To Scrap Nuclear Plans," *The Times* 3 Sep 2007, p.28

<sup>94</sup> BBC News, "Timeline: N Korea Nuclear Stand-Off: 2002-present"

<sup>95</sup> Anna Fifield, "Atomic List Deadline Looms for North Korea," *Financial Times* 3 Dec 2007, p.10

framework and the actions of both the US and DPRK as the major impetus for its eventual collapse.

The first major category surrounds the failure of the United States to properly implement its provisions of the Agreed Framework, primarily the construction of the LWR and the funding of direct heavy oil shipments. Political scientists, Mel Gurtov and Sebastian Harnisch, both make this argument in articles published in 2002. Gurtov focused more on the considerable delays the Bush administration took toward addressing the situation in North Korea, with special emphasis on KEDO projects and South Korean attempts at rapprochement with the North, after Bush ascended to the presidency, both of which undermined the agreement. He asserted:

The new administration took a long time to put its Korea policy in place, evidently because of in-fighting about whether or not to take a hard line with the North...The long American delay in completing a policy review, moreover, showed how dependent the sunshine policy is on US diplomacy with the DPRK, a circumstance that directly undermines common security.<sup>96</sup>

Harnisch placed a similar focus on the flaws of the Bush administration's approach; however, he also recognized the impediment that the Republican-controlled Congress, elected in November of 1994, represented to the agreement's effectiveness. Harnisch argued, "...pressure from the Republicans in Congress built on the Clinton administration to withhold and even withdraw positive sanctions in the absence of a credible overall improvement of US-DPRK relations."<sup>97</sup> These pressures prevented the US from more robustly supporting KEDO and delayed the oil shipments, while also slowing the joint goals of economic and political normalization. He also assailed the delay, which Gurtov

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<sup>96</sup> Mel Gurtov, "Common Security in North Korea: Quest for a New Paradigm in Inter-Korean Relations," *Asian Survey* 42.3 (2002) 407-408

<sup>97</sup> Sebastian Harnisch, "U.S.-North Korean Relations Under the Bush Administration: From 'Slow Go' to 'No Go,'" *Asian Survey* 42.6 (2002) 860

addressed, as well as Bush's labeling of North Korea as a member of the "Axis of Evil" in his 2002 State of the Union speech, each of which he thought as undermined US-North Korean relations and the success of the Agreed Framework.

Despite these arguments, other scholars have preferred to place more emphasis on the actions of North Korea and the authoritarian regime of Kim Jong-II, when studying the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework. Longtime scholar of US-Korean Affairs, Donald Kirk, appears to fall into this category in a piece he wrote in 2005 about the on-going Six-Party Talks. Kirk focused primarily on Kim's shrewdness and stubbornness as the main hindrance to a meaningful agreement, asserting:

No amount of diplomatic arm-twisting by any of the other five sitting at the six-sided table had a prayer of persuading North Korea to alter its posture. Pyongyang rigidly insisted on massive aid, written security guarantees, and diplomatic recognition by the United States, including an exchange of liaison offices in each other's capitals, prior to doing anything itself to redress its violating the Agreed Framework shutting down the plutonium-producing facility at Yongbyon and accepting International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection.<sup>98</sup>

Kyung-Ae Park, Associate Director of the Center of Korean Research shares this viewpoint. Her scholarship focuses on North Korean construction of advanced missiles and their state ideology of *juche*. While Park recognized the mistakes the US made throughout the implementation of the Agreed Framework, ultimately she argued that the *juche* ideology is a very large obstacle to the effectiveness of the framework or any future agreement asserting:

In light of this ideological conviction, it would be difficult for the US to compel North Korea to comply with its demands regarding missile and nuclear sites. Being promoted as the Mecca of the 'immortal idea' of Juche, it is unthinkable for North

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<sup>98</sup> Donald Kirk, "Kim's Nuclear Gambit: Calling the Shots in Korea," *New Leader* 88.4 (2005) 6-7



Korea to give in to any intervention and pressure from the ‘imperialist’ it has denounced since the country’s inception.<sup>99</sup>

Curtis H. Martin made a similar argument when applying positive sanctions theory to the construction and implementation of the Agreed Framework. Martin, writing just before the collapse of the agreement, argued that the antagonistic and secretive nature of North Korea made domestic support for implementation of the framework difficult to sustain in the US, South Korea, and Japan. He writes:

The skepticism born of 50 years of antagonism is difficult to dispel, and unless and until the North’s relations with the outside world are transformed and the DPRK becomes a normal country, fear of appeasement in the sender countries will remain high.<sup>100</sup>

The third major category of scholarly discourse regarding the collapse of the Agreed Framework focused on the actions of both the United States and North Korea and the flawed nature of the agreement from the beginning to explain its failure. Two of the most revered authorities on US-Korean relations, former US Ambassador to South Korea James T. Laney and Jonathon Pollack appear to fall in this dual culpability category. Laney, along with former KEDO policy advisor Jason Shaplen writing in 2007 asserted that while the Agreed Framework helped prevent the outbreak of war in 1994 and obstructed North Korea from constructing up to 30 nuclear weapons, it was a deeply flawed agreement that both states only grudgingly and slowly implemented.<sup>101</sup> Pollack took a similar stance in 2003, arguing that while the framework helped diffuse the 1994 crisis, it was devoid of key provisions that should have required North Korea to fully disclosed all aspects of its nuclear programs, not

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<sup>99</sup> Kyung-Ae Park, “North Korea’s Defensive Power and U.S.-North Korea Relations,” *Pacific Affairs* 73.4 (2000-2001) 545

<sup>100</sup> Curtis H. Martin, “Rewarding North Korea: Theoretical Perspectives on the 1994 Agreed Framework,” *Journal of Peace Research* 39.1 (2002) 65

<sup>101</sup> James T. Laney and Jason T. Shaplen, “How to Deal With North Korea,” *Foreign Affairs* 82.2 (2003)

just its plutonium processing and was poorly implemented by both parties. Pollack explained:

From its initial promulgation in October 1994 until its ultimate demise, the Agreed Framework was widely judged an incomplete and flawed policy document but one that did achieve measurable results...The missing pieces in the Agreed Framework (in particular, North Korea's undeclared nuclear facilities and the prior history of the DPRK's reprocessing activities) and the inability or unwillingness of both governments to fulfill their respective commitments under the agreement ultimately proved the source of its undoing.<sup>102</sup>

## **Conclusion**

While the following discussions of the historical relationship of the US and DPRK, in addition to the relevant scholarship on the failure of the Agreed Framework, provide only a brief narrative of the interaction between the United States and North Korea, it should highlight the major issues and factors that direct their actions. From the DPRK point of view, its relationship with the United States is one beset with unwanted interventionism, broken promises, outright hostility, and a blatant disrespect for its political institutions and way of life. The North Korean leadership and people, from what little can be ascertained from them directly, are still sensitive to the destruction that the Korean War, and by extension the Americans, brought upon their country and feel the need to strengthen to the extent to prevent another such event. Conversely, the United States finds the totalitarian nature of North Korean society and its lack of political freedom and openness morally repugnant. Presidents and policy-makers find it difficult to comprehend the erratic and unpredictable actions of the North Korean leadership, which consequently makes domestic support for diplomatic agreement with the DPRK difficult to cultivate and sustain. Most

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<sup>102</sup> Pollack, "The United States, North Korea," 16-17

importantly, a nuclear North Korea runs counter to the American desire for peace and stability in East Asia, and the removal of its current nuclear capability is a primary American goal in the region.

From this point, the following chapters will shift focus toward a more in-depth discussion of international political theory and its ability to explain the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework. While the next chapter analyzing neorealist theory will be devoid of further historical discussion, the subsequent chapter examining neoclassical realist theory will draw on many of the historical events laid out above to construct a proper explanation for the agreement failure.

### **Chapter 3: Neorealism as a Systemic Explanation for the Collapse of the Agreed Framework**

“Explaining international politics in nonpolitical terms does not require reducing international to national politics...”

-Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 1979<sup>1</sup>

In 1979, political scientist Kenneth Waltz published his seminal work on state interacting within the international political system, Theory of International Politics. The work, which applied principles of microeconomics to traditional realist tenants, transformed the framework in which the interactions of states were analyzed and researched and spawned several works that have sought to either refine or refute his claims. While, Waltz himself objected to the use of his theory in explaining specific foreign policy decisions by states, this does not prevent one from attempting to employ the basic precepts of neorealism toward analyzing the interaction of states within the international system, and in so doing, draw specific conclusions about the theories effectiveness in explaining these interactions. The relationship of the United States and North Korea is particularly interesting in this regard, as the signing of the Agreed Framework came in the wake of a specific transformation in the distribution of capabilities at the international level, as the US took its place at the helm of a unipolar system. Throughout the implementation phase of the agreement, the US maintained its hegemonic role, however, changes emerged in the distribution of capabilities as China took an increasingly important role in international affairs and the United States undertook an ambitious military campaign against terrorism and regime transformation in the Middle East.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1979) 38

The following chapter will utilize the broad, systemic principles of neorealism to craft an explanation for the ultimate collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework. This explanation will act as a counter to the neoclassical realist theory issued in Chapter 4. The first section of the chapter will issue a brief review of the basic principles of Waltzian neorealism. The next section will then explain the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework through various systemic factors from 1994-2003, which created an international environment in which the implementation of the agreement became increasingly difficult and eventually untenable. The final section will evaluate this neorealist explanation and provide a transition into the subsequent discussion of neoclassical realism that will take place in Chapter 4.

## **The Theory of Neorealism**

Nearly 30 years after its emergence, the tenants of neorealism still frame the study of international politics today. The first of these centers on the anarchic nature of the international system, which Waltz identified as the ordering principle of the international system. For Waltz, the anarchy of the system, starkly contrasted with the centralized, hierarchical nature of state institutions, played a paramount role in shaping the interactions and behaviors states engaged in. He argued:

Domestic systems are centralized and hierarchic. The parts of international-political systems stand in relations of coordination. Formally, each is the equal of all the others. None is entitled to command; none is required to obey. International systems are decentralized and anarchic.<sup>2</sup>

The primary goal of states within this anarchic system is to engage in activities meant to maintain and increase the probability of their survival as a unit within the system. However,

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<sup>2</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 88

the existence of the security “dilemma” undermined this survival impulse and exacerbated rivalries between states. Waltz, explained this “self-help” principle arguing, “Whether those units live, prosper, or die depends on their own efforts. Both systems are formed and maintained on a principle of self-help that applied to the units...I assume that states seek to ensure their survival.”<sup>3</sup> To ensure regime survival, states pursue security-maximizing gains that are relative to those of other states, minimizing the likelihood and effectiveness of international cooperation, while providing the primary impetus for armed conflict among them. It is also important to understand that because of this survival impulse, despite idiosyncratic factors at the state level, such as population size, regime type, culture, and military strength, states behave as “like units” who pursue the same security-maximizing goals, yet have different capabilities to achieve them. Waltz wrote:

States vary widely in size, wealth, power, and form. And yet variation in these and in other respects are variations among like units...States are alike in the tasks that they face, though not in their abilities to perform them. The differences are capabilities, not of function...International politics consists of like units duplicating one another’s activities.<sup>4</sup>

After establishing anarchy as the major ordering principle of the international system and the state as the most important actor within in it, Waltz turns toward a discussion of the distribution of capabilities among these states within the system, as the primary variable in explaining state behavior internationally. He explained:

The units of an anarchic system are functionally undifferentiated. The units of such an order are then distinguished primarily by their greater or lesser capabilities for performing similar tasks...The structure of a system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities across the system’s units. And changes in structure change expectations about how the units of the system will behave and about the outcomes their interactions will produce.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 91

<sup>4</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 97

<sup>5</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 97

The distribution of capabilities among the major powers in the world produces the type of system that will emerge. Waltz identified three major system types. The first, unipolarity, sees the system dominated by a lone hegemonic state whose power and control of the system falls short of direct hierarchical, imperialist control of other states. Bipolarity, the second major type, witnesses two “super-powers” commanding the system, while the final type, multipolarity sees more than two “great powers” vie for control within the system. Of these three systems, for Waltz, the most desirable for stability and peace internationally is a bipolar system, while the most likely to lead to war is a multipolar system where the capabilities of great powers are equal. Waltz cited the higher incidence of great power war historically in multipolar systems in comparison to bipolar ones.<sup>6</sup> He also asserted that bipolar systems provide far more efficient and effective management of the world system, in comparison to multipolarity and unipolarity. He argued, “The likelihood that great powers will try to manage the system is greatest when their number reduces to two. With many powers, the concerns of some of them are regional, not global. With only two, their worries about each other cause their concerns to encompass the globe.”<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, this distribution of capabilities and each states’ relative ability to maintain its position within it, results in the phenomenon known as the “balance of power” which influences and constrains state behavior within the system. For Waltz, states balance power instead of maximizing it, explaining, “The first concern of states is not to maximize power, but to maintain their position within the system.”<sup>8</sup> States can balance by strengthening internally and externally. Internal balancing sees a state strengthen its military

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<sup>6</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 162

<sup>7</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 198

<sup>8</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 126

and economic capabilities domestically, while external balancing concerns a state's attempt to build defensive military alliances. The identification of power as a means and not an end, also exhibits why states will refrain from bandwagoning internationally, as Waltz stated, "If states wished to maximize power, they would join the stronger side, and we would see not balances forming but a world hegemony forged. This does not happen because balancing, not bandwagoning, is the behavior induced by the system."<sup>9</sup>

Outside of these basic neorealist principles of anarchy, the distribution of capabilities, and balancing, Waltz also wrote in-depth on the effect that nuclear weapons play in international politics. His views on this subject are relevant as the nuclear issue plays a crucial role in the diplomatic relationship between the United States and North Korea. In his works, Waltz has exhibited that the gradual proliferation of nuclear weaponry to states such as the DPRK should be more "welcomed than feared."<sup>10</sup> He based this conclusion on the principles of neorealism and the experience of the Cold War, arguing that nuclear weapons make international conflict, among those that possess them, an undesirable and untenable option. He wrote, "The likelihood of war decreases as deterrent and defensive capabilities increase. Nuclear weapons make wars hard to start. These statements hold for small as for big nuclear powers."<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Waltz was highly critical of any factor that sought to undercut the deterrent quality of nuclear weapons, such as the United States National Missile Defense program.<sup>12</sup> In the end, he finds that the biggest danger toward peace and stability in the international system emanates from the larger states that possessed a nuclear capability,

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<sup>9</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 126

<sup>10</sup> Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 45

<sup>11</sup> Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 45

<sup>12</sup> Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 146



such as the US, Russia, and China and not those small states like North Korea and Iran, who he believes are or will be moderated in its action through the possession of nuclear weapons.

While Waltz's work has spawned critical rebuttals from realist, liberal, and post-positivist international political scholars, the merits of his work and theoretical acumen are widely accepted.<sup>13</sup> While taking these critiques into account, the following sections will seek to explain the importance of system level variables, which shaped American foreign policy toward North Korea from 1993-2003, particularly in the negotiation, implementation, and ultimate dissolution of the Agreed Framework. I understand the shortcomings of Waltz's principles in explaining specific foreign policy behaviors. However, one can utilize the broad ideas of international anarchy, the distribution of capabilities in the system, and balancing to uncover important insight into the agreements collapse.

### **The International System and the Collapse of the Agreed Framework**

The following section will argue that system level factors pushed the United States and North Korea into specific policy decisions that led to the eventual collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework. Initially, in the period of the decline and later collapse of the Soviet Union (1988-1993), North Korea, facing the loss of its super power ally and a substantial shift in the distribution of capabilities in the favor of the US, a recognized threat to its survival, pursued a nuclear weapons deterrent against American intervention. Conversely, the American perception that a nuclear capability in the hands of North Korea represented a clear threat to its role as system and regional hegemon in East Asia pushed it to consider a number of options, which finally saw the negotiation and implementation of the Agreed

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<sup>13</sup> Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Abroad," *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 197

Framework as the most cost-effective option to remove the threat of a nuclear DPRK and decrease the security dilemma between the two states. Throughout the implementation phase of the framework (1995-2000), the hegemonic position of the US increased, while the material capabilities of the DPRK decreased, which worked to erode the ability of the Agreed Framework to decrease the security dilemma between the two states and to potentially persuade North Korea that they had to cheat on the agreement. Finally, in the period of the collapse of the framework (2001-2003), the United States remained the hegemon of the unipolar system; however, challenges to this status began to emerge from a rising China and a revived Russia. The US also became engaged in a global military campaign against al-Qaeda, resulting in a diversion of its material capabilities away from the Korean peninsula.

As a result of the American diversion of its material capabilities in the Middle East and Central Asia, the rise of China as an effective balancing partner for North Korea, and the increase in the security dilemma (stemming from the lack of American implementation of the agreement and the American belief that North Korea was cheating), both states acquiesced to the Agreed Framework's total collapse. Specifically, for North Korea, the framework sought to ensure its sovereign decision-making in the face of American interference and, ultimately, survival of the Kim Jong-II led communist regime. However, by 2002, due to these international factors the framework no longer provided the best avenue from which North Korea could pursue these goals. For the United States, the agreement sought to impede the emergence of a nuclear North Korea that would challenge the existing global and regional East Asian order and American security. In the face of radical Islamic terrorism, the consuming military campaign to combat it, the increasing influence of China, and intelligence that North Korea was cheating on the agreement, the US felt the framework

inadequately addressed these goals. The following neorealist progression of events is outlined in greater specificity below.

### **The End of the Cold War and the Emergence of Unipolarity**

The total collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a major systemic change in the international system. The bipolarity that had dominated world affairs for four decades gave way to a new period of unipolarity, with the United States filling the role as the new system hegemon. Its swift and impressive victory in the 1991 Persian Gulf War embodied this new American hegemony and publicly exhibited the technological superiority of US manufactured weaponry.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the decline and the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Navy, left the US Navy, led by 13 aircraft carriers, as the only navy with the capacity to protect global shipping lanes.<sup>15</sup>

In 1994, the year that witnessed the signing and negotiation of the Agreed Framework, American military spending, while down from Cold War levels, was estimated at \$288 billion.<sup>16</sup> This figure represented roughly 37% of the world's collective expenditure on armed forces for that year. The American dominated North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) spent an estimated \$459 billion, making up 58% of total world military spending.<sup>17</sup> Russia (\$55.2 billion) and China (\$53.6 billion) represented the closest competition to the US; however, their combined expenditure was less than half of that spent by the United

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17.4, (1993) 5

<sup>15</sup> Peter Grier, "US Military Not Rattled By Russia's Instability," *Christian Science Monitor* 26 Mar 1993, 3

<sup>16</sup> "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers: 1999-2000," United States Department of State, 6 Feb 2003, 99

<sup>17</sup> "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," 57

States.<sup>18</sup> Economically, the US also held a dominant position in comparison to its global competitors, with a Gross National Product (GNP) in 1994 estimated at \$7.07 trillion dollars, around 26% of total world GNP.<sup>19</sup> Japan (\$3.8 trillion) and China (\$2.4 trillion) ranked as the second and third largest economies, yet combined failed to match the strength of the American economy.<sup>20</sup>

The post-Cold War period was not as generous to North Korea. The collapse of the USSR meant the loss of a key political and economic power globally, as its long-time enemy the US ascended into the position of system hegemon. Without the USSR and other communist trading partners, the North Korean GNP suffered a precipitous 29% drop, falling from \$30 billion in 1989 to \$21.3 in 1994.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the DPRK was spending \$5.5 billion, 26% of its total GNP, on its military.<sup>22</sup> Even more pressing for the North, was South Korean military spending, estimated at \$9.58 (3.2% of GNP) billion dollars, and economic growth that had resulted in an incredible 40% increase in its GNP since 1989, estimated at \$295 billion in 1994.<sup>23</sup>

These statistics exhibit the preponderance of capabilities that the United States, acting as the unipolar hegemon of the international system, maintained over the rest of the world and specifically toward North Korea at the time of the signing of the Agreed Framework. The US committed itself to the agreement, at a time when it held a clear military and economic advantage over the North and its last remaining ally, China, who did not participate

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<sup>18</sup> “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” 67, 91. It should be noted that efforts to quantify Chinese military expenditure are difficult, as China’s publicly available defense budget does not include expenses for strategic forces, foreign acquisitions, military related research and development, and China’s paramilitary forces, all of which are not subject to transparency.

<sup>19</sup> “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” 99

<sup>20</sup> “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” 67, 79

<sup>21</sup> “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” 80

<sup>22</sup> “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” 80

<sup>23</sup> “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” 80

in the negotiating process. To make matter worse, North Korea lacked a legitimate balancing partner to counter this growing American power. They also represent the weak position, in terms of material capabilities, that North Korea held comparable to the United States, Japan, and even South Korea. It is not difficult to take from this that North Korea found nuclear weapons an appealing policy option, in the absence of the USSR, from which to deter American interference in their affairs. As Waltz, himself, argued, “North Korea, Iraq, Iran, and others believe that America can be held at bay only by deterrence. Weapons of mass destruction are the only means by they can hope to deter the United States...Other countries may now use nuclear weapons to offset ours.”<sup>24</sup>

However, as was demonstrated in previous chapters, it was also in the United States national interest, not too mention a stated policy goal, to prevent the existence of such a capability, as a reliable North Korean nuclear deterrent had the potential to alter the balance of power on the Korean peninsula and in East Asia, if the capability sparked a regional nuclear arms race. The Clinton administration weighed the costs of diplomatic negotiations, stringent economic sanctions, and direct military intervention to block the nascent nuclear program. In the end, they found that the least expensive option toward maintaining American hegemony on the peninsula and in East Asia was the negotiation of the Agreed Framework that included the financial backing and construction of two light-water reactors for the DPRK.

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<sup>24</sup> Sagan and Waltz, The Spread of Nuclear Weapons, 150

### **The International System at the turn of the century**

By 1999, five years into the implementation phase of the Agreed Framework, the United States had maintained its relative advantage in military and economic capacity within the unipolar international system. While American domestic military spending had fallen slightly to \$281 billion, it still represented 33% of all world expenditures, even as NATO spending increased to \$475 billion. The US GNP also rose steeply to \$9.26 trillion, a 31% increase from 1994.<sup>25</sup> Despite the lingering effects of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, South Korean military expenditure increased to \$11.6 billion, with a rise in its GNP to \$402 billion.<sup>26</sup> Japan, also affected by the crisis, still maintained the world's second largest economy with a GNP of \$4.4 trillion, with \$43.2 billion spent on their ground and naval self-defense forces.<sup>27</sup>

The story was much different for North Korea. Faced with flood and famine, the DPRK saw a drop in military spending (down to \$4.26 billion) and negligible growth in GNP.<sup>28</sup> The implementation of the Agreed Framework was also behind schedule and American promised heavy-oil shipments, a critical source of energy, faced chronic delays due to the lack of funds from the US Congress.<sup>29</sup> Somewhat more encouraging for the North, however, was the rise of China. Chinese military expenditures, up to \$88.9 billion, and GNP (\$3.93 trillion) nearly doubled from 1994 to 1999, making North Korea's only key ally

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<sup>25</sup> "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," 99

<sup>26</sup> "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," 80

<sup>27</sup> "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," 79

<sup>28</sup> Reuters, "Tidal Wave Took Homes of 28,000 N. Koreans, Compounding Famine," *The Toronto Star*, 2 Sep 1997, A16, "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," 80

<sup>29</sup> Tim Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power*, (Ann Arbor, Pluto Press, 2005), 83-84, Thomas W. Lippman, "N. Korea-U.S. Nuclear Pact Threatened; Funding Holds Up Promised Oil," *The Washington Post*, 6 Jul 1998, A1

comparatively stronger than it had been when the agreement was negotiated.<sup>30</sup> However, their economic growth and expanding military fell far short of threatening American unipolarity.

At a time crucial to the implementation of the Agreed Framework, these statistics suggests that the US had maintained its place as the system hegemon; however, the data also exhibit the beginning of China's rise as a major world power. It was still within the United States best interest to implement its provisions of the framework, most importantly, the heavy-oil shipments and its financial commitments to the KEDO light-water reactor construction project to check a potential North Korean nuclear capability. However, as will be delved into further in Chapter 4, American implementation was slow and difficult to achieve domestically. This slow implementation directly worked to undermine the agreements success and later exacerbate the security dilemma, something that a purely neorealist explanation fails to adequately account for.

Furthermore, the lack of Chinese involvement in the original negotiations began to become troublesome as China more forcefully asserted its interests in regional and global affairs. China's refusal to assist the KEDO construction project, financially or logistically, and the aid (economic and humanitarian) that they independently contributed to the Kim regime, outside of American coordinated efforts, exhibited the important role China was beginning to play in the US's relationship with North Korea.<sup>31</sup> From this, one might reason that as China grew more important in the balance of power of East Asian affairs, particularly

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<sup>30</sup> "World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers," 67

It should be noted that this figure reported by the US Department of State, is far more than other sources such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), who estimated Chinese expenditure at \$21.6 billion

<sup>31</sup> James R. Lilley, "New Rules in Korea," *Newsweek*, 9 Nov 9 1998, 29

on the Korean peninsula, it undermined the Agreed Framework, which was devoid of Chinese involvement at any stage of its negotiation or implementation. The important role China played in the future Six-Party Talks provided evidence of the growth in Chinese influence.

In regards to North Korea, their position toward the United States, South Korea, and Japan was becoming even weaker. Despite the growing strength of China, the slow implementation of the framework and the further erosion of a credible deterrent against American aggression pushed Kim and the DPRK to covertly develop nuclear weapons through its secret uranium enrichment program. Nevertheless, North Korea kept the Yongbyon reactor sealed and refrained from plutonium production and in 2000 appeared ready to embark upon the normalization of its diplomatic relations with the United States, while it also participated in a historic summit with the South.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Agreed Framework's Collapse**

By early 2003, the time of the Agreed Framework's collapse, many world events worked to dramatically alter the distribution of capabilities and appeared to erode American unipolarity. The United States, still recovering from the September 2001 terror attacks was involved in a nation-building and insurgency combat effort in Afghanistan. The US was also in the final planning stages of an additional invasion and nation-building effort in Iraq. The broad military campaign directed at al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and abroad inflated military spending by the United States to levels, seeing military expenditures rise to an estimated

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Dorgan, "'Dawn of hope' for Koreans: North, South embark on road to reunification after 50 years of bitter enmity," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 15 Jun 2000, A1



\$440 billion by the end of 2003.<sup>33</sup> Based purely on material factors, neorealism would argue that the credibility of American intervention in North Korea decreased as it utilized its material capabilities (both military and economic) in the broad campaign against al-Qaeda and radical Islamic terrorism.

Perhaps, as important was the more aggressive bent that American unipolarity took in the wake of the September 2001 attacks. In the “National Security Strategy of the United States,” released in 2002, the US espoused its right to engaged in preventative and unilateral military conflict to thwart the influence of terrorism globally. The document explained, “While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country.”<sup>34</sup> The document also specifically signaled the threat that North Korea represented to the US, specifically as a proliferator of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destructions to terrorist organizations and other “rogue” states. The National Security Strategy asserted:

In the past decade North Korea has become the world’s principal purveyor of ballistic missiles, and has tested increasingly capable missiles while developing its own WMD arsenal. Other rogue regimes seek nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons as well. These states’ pursuit of, and global trade in, such weapons has become a looming threat to all nations. We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends.<sup>35</sup>

The National Security Strategy, along with the inclusion of North Korea in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review and as a defined member of the “Axis of Evil,” it is clear that the US defined

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<sup>33</sup> The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2007, “USA,” 1 Apr 2008

<sup>34</sup> George W. Bush, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” The White House, 17 Sep 2002, 6

<sup>35</sup> Bush, “The National Security Strategy,” 14

North Korea as a threat to its security in the period in which the Agreed Framework collapsed.

Additionally, American unipolarity faced the challenge of the continued rise of China and the reemergence of Russia, embolden by a reformed economy and the new wealth derived from petroleum and natural gas production, in global affairs. China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by an estimated 12% in the first quarter of 2003, after growing an impressive 8% in 2002.<sup>36</sup> They also became the world's second largest consumer and the third largest importer of oil in the same period.<sup>37</sup> Concurrently, Russia's grew at a rate of 4.1% in 2002 and at an estimated rate of 25% since 1998, representing a massive turnaround from the negative growth the country experienced in that same year.<sup>38</sup> In military spending, a report to the US Congress in 2007 claimed that based on purchasing power parity Chinese military expenditures in 2003 were as high as \$141 billion and possibly as low as \$30.6 billion.<sup>39</sup> The same Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) study put Russian expenditures at \$55.4 billion.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, China pursued a more active role in global and regional diplomacy to represent this growth in material capabilities.

The continued erosion of North Korean capabilities, comparable to the US and South Korea continued in 2003. While, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reported that military spending increased to \$5.4 billion in 2002, about 33.9% of its GDP, North

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<sup>36</sup> Corinne Lim, "Overheating China Nears Boiling Point," *The Australian Financial Review*, 19 Sep 2003, 27/31

<sup>37</sup> "Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2007: Annual Report to Congress," United States Department of Defense, 2007, 8

<sup>38</sup> Bloomberg News, "Russia Restates its GDP for the Preceding Six Years," *Financial Post*, 6 May 6 2003, 2

<sup>39</sup> "Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2007," 26

<sup>40</sup> Truthandpolitics.org, 1 Apr 2004, "US Military Spending---International Comparisons: Chart 4: Top 15 nations, as ranked by military spending in 2002 using PPP exchange rates (data from SIPRI)," <<http://www.truthandpolitics.org/military-US-world.php#wmeat>>

Korean expenditure were only 40% of that spent by their southern rivals.<sup>41</sup> Neorealist would argue that this poor position, in terms of the distribution of capabilities, toward the US and South Korea, in addition to American preoccupation with Afghanistan and Iraq, the rise of China and reemergence of Russia, and the considerable delays in the KEDO project and the cancellation of oil shipments served as the final impetus to end its commitments to the Agreed Framework and restart plutonium production at Yongbyon to cultivate an effective nuclear deterrent. The United States, for its part, determined that the framework no longer possessed the ability to prevent the emergence of a nuclear North Korea, who it believed was undertaking a secret effort for weapons through a highly enriched uranium program, thus widening the security dilemma.

### **Conclusion: What's Missing?**

In the above section I have crafted a narrative that neorealists might apply to explain the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework. This narrative was born out of the basic neorealist principles of international anarchy, relative gains, and the security dilemma. This explanation includes three specific factors at the system level that contributed to an international system that was less conducive to the successful implementation of the framework. The first of these factors was the North Korean desire for a nuclear deterrent against American intervention in the face of its comparable disadvantage to the United States and its allies. The second was the rise of China as an economic and military power at the global and regional level, beginning in the late 1990s and into the twenty-first century. The third was the United States' participation in a global military campaign against al-Qaeda and

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<sup>41</sup> "NK's Military Spending Less Than 40 Percent of South Korea's: CIA," *The Korea Times*, 14 Sep 2003

its build-up in the lead-up to its invasion of Iraq that reduced the credibility of its ability to militarily thwart a nuclear North Korea. Each of these factors worked throughout the implementation phase of the agreement to exacerbate the security dilemma and undermine the benefits each state hoped to reap from it. Specifically, the framework no longer provided North Korea the best instrument from which to maintain its survival in the anarchic, American dominated system, while, for the US the agreement became an ineffective means of preventing a nuclear North Korea.

While these system level factors, paint a compelling picture, there is something missing, most notably: what impeded the full implementation of the 1994 Agreed Framework? Chapter 4 will more closely examine this question and issue a new theory, one based in a neoclassical realist tradition. This theory will argue that key intervening domestic variables in the United States worked to undermine American efforts to implement the 1994 Agreed Framework leading to its failure and eventually a nuclear weapons possessing North Korea.

## **Chapter 4: Neoclassical Realism and the Collapse of the Agreed Framework**

“Statesmen, not nations, confront the international system...”

-Fareed Zakaria, From Wealth to Power, 1998<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapter, I explored various system level factors that framed the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework, including the North Korea’s quest for a nuclear deterrent, the rise of China, and the United States preoccupation with the War on Terrorism. However, the systems-level of analysis, based in neorealist principles fails to adequately account for the collapse of the framework in 2003, especially the failure in its implementation. To make up for these shortfalls, I propose a theory based in neoclassical realism. This theory argues that the material capabilities of a state and its relative place within the world system serve as the independent variable in determining the strategy it takes in addressing a threat internationally. Further, neoclassical realism accounts for intervening state-level variables, such as domestic political institutions, and how they affect the successful implementation of a particular foreign policy strategy. Finally, it defines a successful strategy as one which minimizes the threat in question and as a result increases the security of the state in relative terms.

First, let me review of neoclassical realist theory. Following this brief theoretical analysis, a more complete assessment of the theory I presented above, along with factual evidence in the form of stated US government policy and Congressional votes and hearing on

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<sup>1</sup> Fareed Zakaria, From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) 35

the KEDO funding issue. The chapter will close with an examination of the potential shortcomings of this neoclassical realist theory.

## **Neoclassical Realism**

The neoclassical realist school of international politics first emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to address the shortfalls that many scholars perceived to exist in structural realism. The proponents of neoclassical realism, while accepting the importance of system level attributes like international anarchy, relative gains, and the balance of power, sought to place more attention on the critical role that individual and state level variables played in the formulation of foreign policy, which had played a central role in the classical realist thought proposed by such luminaries as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Hans Morgenthau. International political scholar Gideon Rose, in a substantial article outlining the major ideas and works of neoclassical realism as a theory of foreign policy, explained:

To understand the way states interpret and respond to their external environment, they [neoclassical realists] say, one must analyze how systemic pressures are translated through unit-level intervening variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and domestic state structure. In neoclassical realist world leaders can be constrained by both international and domestic politics. International anarchy, moreover, is neither Hobbesian nor benign but rather murky and difficult to read. States existing within it have a hard time seeing clearly whether security is plentiful or scarce and must group their way forward in twilight, interpreting partial and problematic evidence according to the subjective rules of thumb.<sup>2</sup>

Importantly, Rose addressed the similarity of neoclassical realism to constructivism, but also drew specific principles that differentiated it from the constructivist school of thought; primarily its adherence to relative power and the distribution capabilities

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<sup>2</sup> Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51.1 (1998) 152

internationally as the chief independent variable in analysis. The major difference he maintained was that neoclassical realists rejected structural realist arguments directly connecting systemic constraints to state foreign policy choices, while concurrently denying the reality of the international system as socially constructed, an idea propagated by constructivists. Describing the middle ground that neoclassical realists occupied between structural realism and constructivism, Rose argued:

Neoclassical realists assume that there is indeed something like an objective reality of relative power, which will, for example, have dramatic effects on the outcomes of state interactions. They do not assume, however, that states necessarily apprehend that reality accurately on a day-to-day basis. Hans Morgenthau famously argued that with his theory one could peer over the statesman's shoulder; neoclassical realists believe the same but feel that in doing so one sees through a glass, darkly. The world states end up inhabiting, therefore, is indeed partly of their own making.<sup>3</sup>

For Rose, neoclassical realist utilized two intervening variables most prominently: decision-maker's perception at the individual level and "...the strength of a country's state apparatus and its relation to the surrounding society" at the domestic level.<sup>4</sup> In regard to individual perceptions, Rose claimed that neoclassical realist argued:

The international distribution of power can drive countries' behavior only by influencing the decisions of flesh and blood officials, they point out, and would-be analysts of foreign policy thus have no alternative but to explore in detail how each country's policymakers actually understand their situation. What this means in practice is that the translation of capabilities into national behavior is often rough and capricious over the short and medium term.<sup>5</sup>

Even more important for the progression of realist theory in explaining specific foreign policy choices for Rose, is neoclassical realist theory that incorporated domestic level variables. Rose contended that this inclusion of previously ignored factors at the state level represented a powerful and important development for realist theory, explaining:

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<sup>3</sup> Rose, "Neoclassical Realism..." 152-153

<sup>4</sup> Rose, "Neoclassical Realism..." 161

<sup>5</sup> Rose, "Neoclassical Realism..." 158

Gross assessments of the international distribution of power are inadequate, they contend, because national leaders may not have easy access to a country's total material power resources. Once raised, the notion that international power analysis must take into account the ability of governments to extract and direct the resources of their societies seems almost obvious, and in fact it simply involves incorporating into international relations theory variables that are routine in other subfields of political science.<sup>6</sup>

The works of international political scholars Randall Schweller, Fareed Zakaria, Thomas Christensen, and William Wohlforth exemplify the major themes present in neoclassical realism and in Rose's piece. Schweller served as the standard bearer of the school in his writings about the function of the balance-of-power and the role of international institutions in the anarchic world system. He explained the importance of state level factors, writing, "...states often react differently to similar systemic pressures and opportunities, and their responses may be less motivated by systemic-level factors than domestic ones."<sup>7</sup> More explicitly, Schweller and co-author David Priess explained that neoclassical realism provided for more specific predictions in foreign policy analysis in comparison to system level analysis. Schweller and Priess asserted:

These subsystemic levels of analysis are...conditioned by the structure of the system, which constrains and enables state behavior and interstate relationships but, as Waltz has suggested, does not determine outcomes. By incorporating state-level attributes and interactions, the model generates more precise explanations and can offer more determinate predictions than are possible from a purely structural form of realism.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, Zakaria's work on the concept of *state power* and its relationship with the rise of powerful states, Christensen's study on the ability of states to undertake domestic mobilization in support of foreign policy, and Wohlforth's arguments on the importance of

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<sup>6</sup> Rose, "Neoclassical Realism..." 161

<sup>7</sup> Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29.2 (2004) 164

<sup>8</sup> Randall L. Schweller and David Priess, "A Tale of Two Realisms: Expanding the Institutions Debate," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41.1 (1997) 14



individual perceptions in bilateral relationships, all underlie the role that state level variables play in state decision-making. On the lack of the theoretical explanatory strength of structural realism, Zakaria explained, "...a good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influence, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factors."<sup>9</sup> In Zakaria's major work From Wealth to Power where he sought to explain the rise of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, he argued that a nation, based in a state-centered realist approach, would expand its influence internationally when its central decision-making bodies perceived an increase in its *state power*.<sup>10</sup> However, important "statist" structural change within the nation was required for this to effectively occur.<sup>11</sup> For neoclassical realism, From Wealth to Power provides an important work that identifies the key role that a state's ability to harness and organize its power, a variable beneath the system level, plays in the formulation and application of foreign policy. For the United States and its rise, Zakaria found that the US Congress represented a major encumbrance to the creation and implementation of cohesive foreign policy throughout much of the nineteenth century, however, "statist" transformation in the executive allowed for the US to more effectively exercise its power abroad.

In his own neoclassical realist work, Thomas Christensen criticized structural realism's over reliance on material capabilities in determining policy choices, asserting, "The overemphasis on national economic and military power has handicapped realism's ability to address a number of interesting policy outcomes that may be related to domestic mobilization

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<sup>9</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security* 17.1 (1992) 198

<sup>10</sup> Zakaria, From Wealth to Power, 38

<sup>11</sup> Zakaria, From Wealth to Power, 40-41

or maintenance of national political power.”<sup>12</sup> In Useful Adversaries, Christensen examined the diplomatic relationship between the United States and China in the early Cold War period, seeking to highlight the importance of his concept of *national political power* in foreign policy decision-making. For Christensen, *national political power* was the, “...the ability of state leaders to mobilize their nation’s human and material resources behind security policy initiatives.”<sup>13</sup> Relevant to the idea presented in this thesis and similar to those put forth by Zakaria, Christensen’s Useful Adversaries emphasized the important role that domestic level variables like public opinion and legislative support played in the construction of effective foreign policy by the United States toward the communist threat in China. Ultimately, he asserted that the public and Congress could “...sometimes prevent the implementation of optimal grand strategies.”<sup>14</sup>

As Rose asserted, neoclassical realists have also sought to underline the importance that state and individual level perception played in foreign policy decisions. When questioning structural realism’s account of the balance of power, political scientist William Wohlforth, in his book The Elusive Balance, posited, “...perceptions of power are more dynamic than measurements of material relationships. Rapid shifts in behavior may be related to perceived shifts in the distribution of power which are not captured by typical measures of capabilities.”<sup>15</sup> By examining the relationship between the United States and Soviet Union throughout the Cold War, Wohlforth puts forth an almost constructivist idea that explained, “Rapid change in perceptions, the ambiguity of feedback, and the rarity and

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 12

<sup>13</sup> Christensen, Useful Adversaries, 11

<sup>14</sup> Christensen, Useful Adversaries, 259

<sup>15</sup> William Curti Wohlforth, The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 294

inadequacy of tests all translate in the prevalence of differences in perceptions of power among the major actors in world politics.”<sup>16</sup> According to Rose, Wohlforth, “...contends, the recurrent cycles of superpower tension from the 1940s to the 1980s were quite similar, and all were rooted in the ambiguities of relative power and policymakers' perceptions of it.”<sup>17</sup>

The neoclassical theory that I will outline further in the next section to explain the failure of the United States to craft a foreign policy to prevent North Korea from obtaining a nuclear weapon will specifically draw on these scholars. Specifically, from the works of Zakaria and Christensen, I will utilize arguments on the constraining factors present in domestic political institutions that affect the ability of states to exercise their material capabilities toward the implantation of a specific foreign policy strategy.

### **Neoclassical Realism and the Effectiveness of the Agreed Framework in Preventing a Nuclear North Korea**

With this brief theoretical overview complete, it is appropriate to apply a specific neoclassical theory that attempts to address the shortfalls that emerged in American foreign policy strategies meant to thwart a nuclear North Korea. It is hoped that this theory can address the bilateral diplomatic strategy carried out from 1993-2002, which ultimately failed to prevent a nuclear North Korea. The theory based in the major precepts of neoclassical realism generally states that the dependent variables examined in this study are the foreign policy decisions of North Korea toward the pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability and those of the United States toward the prevention of this capability. Initially, the material capabilities of a state and its relative place within the world system serve as the independent

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<sup>16</sup> Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, 301

<sup>17</sup> Rose, Rose, “Neoclassical Realism...” 159

variable in determining the strategy it takes in addressing a threat internationally.

Subsequently, the intervening state level variable of domestic political institutions functions to affect the successful implementation of a particular strategy. Meanwhile, system level factors continue to frame and constrain policy choices. The definition of a successful strategy is one which minimizes the threat in question and as a result increases the security of the state in relative terms.

For the failure of the 1994 Agreed Framework, this theory explicitly explains that in 1994, the United States served as the unipolar system hegemon, while North Korea was devoid of a legitimate balancing partner. The DPRK feared the emerging security dilemma and the relative disparity in capabilities between the two states and pursued a nuclear deterrent to prevent potential American or South Korean interference in its domestic affairs or even more radically, a drive for unification. To prevent the emergence of a North Korean nuclear deterrent, a capability that threatened the American preponderance of power in the world, specifically in East Asia and could set off a nuclear arms race in the region, the US negotiated and signed the Agreed Framework. North Korea acquiesced to the agreement as its successful implementation would decrease the security dilemma between the two states and was a cheaper option, in comparison to nuclear weapons, to ensure the survival of Kim Jong-Il's communist regime.

However, the political institutions of the United States served as an intervening variable that hindered the successful implementation of this policy strategy. The midterm congressional elections of 1994 and presidential elections of 2000 represented dramatic partisan change that worked to inhibit a cohesive policy toward North Korea, specifically in the implementation of the Agreed Framework. These changes disrupted American financial

commitments for the construction project and heavy-oil shipments managed by KEDO and disturbed progress in other bilateral areas such as the normalization of diplomatic relations. Consequently, the failure to implement the framework adequately exacerbated North Korean fears of a new security dilemma with the US, pushing them to disregard the framework in early 2003. While there is a lack of significant evidence, failed American implementation might have also persuaded them to cheat on the agreement by pursuing a covert HEU program in the late 1990s and the early 2000s.

Thus, in the case of the Agreed Framework, American political institutions impeded the successful implementation of an agreement, which sought to increase the security of the United States and its interests in East Asia. Accordingly, the collapse of the framework and the mistrust it bred on both sides undermined future policies of the United States to thwart a North Korean nuclear capability, specifically exhibited in the failure of the Six-Party Talks to prevent North Korea's successful test of a nuclear device in October 2006. To test the validity of this theory, one must critically analyze how American domestic political institutions worked to impede both the construction and implementation of the 1994 Agreed Framework in the years in question.

### **The Agreed Framework at the Systems Level**

As the hegemon of a new, unipolar world system, the United States acknowledged that it possessed a distinct military and economic advantage in comparison to the weaker DPRK, who had lost a major economic, military, and ideological ally with the collapse of the USSR in 1991. To retain this clear material advantage, it was imperative that the US prevent North Korea from developing a nuclear capability that would increase the relative

capabilities of North Korea to threaten American interests and allies in East Asia. While, as exhibited in the historical narrative, the Clinton administration briefly considered armed force as an option to remove the threat of a nuclear North Korea, the United States viewed this alternative as too costly and never seriously considered preemptive air strikes on the reactor at Yongbyon.<sup>18</sup> Instead, they pursued diplomacy and negotiated the Agreed Framework that sought to offer financial incentives (oil shipments, the normalization of economic relations, and the constructions of the LWR), in addition to diplomatic concessions (the normalization of relations and the establishment of official diplomatic ties) in order to persuade North Korea that there was greater material benefit in giving up its nuclear program.

### **The Republican Revolution: Congressional Resistance to the Agreed Framework**

While the Agreed Framework did not constitute an official treaty between the two states, which would have left its implementation contingent upon the approval of the US Senate, many of its provisions, including the heavy oil shipments and American financial commitments to KEDO and were dependent on Congressional approval. Thus, the 1994 midterm elections, in which President Clinton's Democratic Party lost a majority in the House of Representative and the Senate, immediately impacted the future implementation of the Agreed Framework. This election saw the Republicans gain their first majority in the House of Representatives since 1954, as President Clinton and the Democratic Party went from having an 82 seat majority in the House and 12 seat majority in the Senate, to a 26 seat

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<sup>18</sup> Terence Roehrig, From Deterrence to Engagement: the U.S. Defense Commitment to South Korea, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006) 207

minority in the House and 8 seat minority in the Senate.<sup>19</sup> One Washington Post editorial presciently remarked three days after the election results that:

In Haiti, North Korea and the Middle East, three areas where Mr. Clinton has claimed foreign policy achievement, the delivery on administration commitments of aid and possibly of peace-keepers will fall to the new Congress. A Republican Congress will almost certainly cool further the Democratic administration's already-cooling interest in U.N. peace-keeping.<sup>20</sup>

The electoral swing also gave the GOP control of key leadership position on committees important to the framework's implementation. Conservative Kansas Senator Bob Dole, the new Senate Majority Leader and North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, the new Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations committee were both recognized critics of the framework, specifically Clinton's refusal to classify it as a treaty. In March 1995, just two months after taking power of Congress, Dole and Helms held hearings to investigate the negotiation and implementation of the framework, which brought even more negative scrutiny upon it as appeasement, blackmail, and a betrayal of South Korea.<sup>21</sup>

While oil shipments were usually approved, they comprised a significant total of the initial \$30 million dollars a year that were allotted toward the implementation of American provisions of the agreement, hampering American funding toward the construction of the LWR mandated in the agreement.<sup>22</sup> In the first year of KEDO operation in 1995, the US spent \$5.5 million on the shipment of heavy oil. By 1997, this figure ballooned to \$21

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<sup>19</sup> David S. Broder, "A Historic Republican Triumph: GOP Captures Congress; Sharp Turn to Right Reflects Doubts About Clinton, Democrats," *The Washington Post* 9 Nov 1994, A1

<sup>20</sup> "The Foreign Policy Lines Tighten," *The Washington Post* 11 Nov 1994, A30

<sup>21</sup> Ben Barber, "Dole Takes State to Task for North Korea Accord," *The Washington Times* 15 Mar 1995, A15

<sup>22</sup> Thomas W. Lippman, "N. Korea-U.S. Nuclear Pact Threatened; Funding Holds Up Promised Oil," *The Washington Post* 6 Jul 1998, A1

million.<sup>23</sup> Scholar Joel Wit and former American diplomats Daniel Poneman and Gallucci, explained:

...congressional skepticism toward the Framework translated into a chronic battle by the administration to secure the few tens of millions of dollars needed to support the heavy fuel oil shipments owed by KEDO to North Korea. (Critics of the Agreed Framework might fairly be said to have adopted the posture of a picador, not matador – wounding but never going in for the kill).<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, a hostile Congress, a consuming re-election campaign in 1996, impeachment proceedings throughout 1998-99, and a bombing campaign in the Balkans seem to have prevented a defensive Clinton from addressing issues of North Korean normalization until very late in his presidency when he considered attending a North Korean hosted summit. However, the trip never came to fruition. Korean scholar Terence Roehrig sums up the problems the Clinton administrative faced domestically, explaining:

Once the Agreed Framework was in place, the administration failed to implement several key aspects of the accord, at times slowed by a Congress that found the agreement appalling...As a result, U.S. credibility regarding its ability to deliver the benefits was damaged, making North Korean cooperation difficult and acquiescence to any future agreement more problematic.<sup>25</sup>

In 1998, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held hearings on the progress of the implementation of the Agreed Framework, specifically on the delays and financial problems that were plaguing KEDO. The hearings recognized that KEDO had fallen nearly \$47 million dollars in debt and was facing considerable delays in the shipment of heavy oil to North Korea and in the construction of the LWR; a project falling significantly behind the intended completion date of 2003.<sup>26</sup> Testifying in front of the subcommittee, Assistant

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<sup>23</sup> Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, "2001 Annual Report," 31 Dec 2001, 12-13

<sup>24</sup> Wit, Poneman, Gallucci, Going Critical, 373

<sup>25</sup> Roehrig, From Deterrence to Engagement, 215

<sup>26</sup> Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Senate, "Holds Hearings on KEDO and the Korean Agreed Nuclear Framework – Funding, Problems and Prospects," United States Senate, 14 Jul 1998



Secretary Gallucci outlined the success of the Agreed Framework in freezing the North Korean plutonium based nuclear program, while outlining fears that Congressional disapproval was hampering the framework. He explained, "...an increase in the amount of U.S. funding for KEDO is essential now and for the longer term, even if the Administration is successful in its efforts to draw greater support from other countries. Sustaining KEDO sustains the Agreed Framework, and it is clearly in the national security interest of the United States to do so."<sup>27</sup> Deputy Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Rust Deming similarly argued the case for the implementation and funding of KEDO, especially the construction of the LWR. Deming concluded by arguing:

Let me close by stressing that KEDO and the Agreed Framework remain central to our efforts to promote peace and stability in Northeast Asia and to support regional and global nuclear nonproliferation. KEDO's mission is of utmost importance to the national security of this nation as well. We must not allow KEDO to fail.<sup>28</sup>

Also in 1998, as was reviewed in Chapter 2, Clinton commissioned a full-scale review of the Agreed Framework by former Secretary of Defense William Perry. In the report, published in October 1999, Perry stressed the need for the President and Congress to work together toward the implementation of the framework and any future agreement involving missile technology. He argued that steps needed to be taken:

...to create a sustainable, bipartisan, long-term outlook toward the problem of North Korea. The President should explore with the majority and minority leaders of both houses of Congress ways for the Hill, on a bipartisan basis, to consult on this and future Administrations' policy toward the DPRK. Just as no policy toward the DPRK can succeed unless it is a combined strategy of the United States and its allies, the

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<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Gallucci, "Testimony, July 14, 1998, Robert L. Gallucci, Dean, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Senate Foreign Relations, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Nuclear Framework in Korea," United States Senate, 14 Jul 1998

<sup>28</sup> Rust Deming, "Testimony, July 14, 1998, Rust Deming, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, Senate Foreign Relations, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Nuclear Framework in Korea," United States Senate, 14 Jul 1998

policy review team believes no strategy can be sustained over time without the input and support of Congress.<sup>29</sup>

All of these factors suggest that the Agreed Framework lacked an ideal domestic environment under President Clinton from which to gain the support necessary in Congress to maintain effective implementation of its provisions. Despite these setbacks, however, oil shipments continued and Clinton left office with the framework still intact. Nevertheless, these setbacks aggravated the security dilemma between the two states. In response to American suggestions that it was cheating on the framework in 1999, North Korea responded by issuing an in-depth criticism of the failure of American implementation of the framework on its state-controlled radio station. The report, embodying the deepening distrust, claimed:

...the ground has not been properly leveled for the two light-water reactors the United States is obliged to hand over to the DPRK on a turn-key basis after completing them in a responsible way by the year 2003. This is true today, when nearly half of the set time has elapsed. The main construction has not even started, and the time it will be completed is vague. The United States did not properly fulfill its obligation to provide the heavy oil, and shipments have continuously been delayed. It is preposterous for the United States to talk about someone's violation, notwithstanding these facts.

Article II of the DPRK-US Agreed Framework concerns normalizing economic and political relations on the two sides. Within three months from the signing of the agreement, the sides were to reduce trade and investment barriers, including restrictions on telecommunications services and financial transactions. The United States did not implement this article either. It talked about easing restrictions once or twice, but this was empty talk. The economic sanctions against us have essentially not been eased at all. The United States continued to groundlessly include us on the list of sponsors of terrorism and in effect tightened economic sanctions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> William J. Perry, "Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations," United States Department of State, 12 Oct 1999, 12

<sup>30</sup> "North Korean "Anti-Nuke Peace Committee" Berates US Obstruction of Geneva Accord," BBC Worldwide Monitoring: Asia-Pacific, DPRK Central Broadcasting Station, Pyongyang, North Korea, 9 Jan 1999

## From Clinton to Bush

Another critical example of American domestic political institutions affecting the implementation of the Agreed Framework occurred with the election of Texas Governor George W. Bush in 2000 and the dramatic change in policy that occurred in its wake at a critical point of implementation. As was outlined in Chapter 2, President Bush, in addition to several key administration officials, was openly skeptical of the framework and in March 2001 issued a harder-line strategy to compel North Korea to fully verify all aspects of its nuclear program in exchange for future negotiations.<sup>31</sup> This position was a reversal of comments that Secretary of State Colin Powell had made just three days earlier, where he commented that Bush's North Korean policy would, "...pick up where President Clinton and his administration left off."<sup>32</sup> The injection of the complete verification issue, in addition to the emergence of the War on Terrorism as a key political and security issue, helped antagonize US-DPRK relations further and sidelined bilateral talks indefinitely. Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci wrote:

The prospect for successful bilateral diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang worsened that autumn, as skepticism about the North Korean regime deepened following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Specifically, Bush balked at the funding of KEDO. As early as May 2001 the Bush administration cast doubt on the viability of the LWR construction projects carried out by KEDO.<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of North Korea in the "Axis of Evil," in addition to their placement in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review and National Security Strategy (the "Bush Doctrine")

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<sup>31</sup> Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement*, 218

<sup>32</sup> David E. Sanger, "Bush Tells Seoul Talks With North Won't Resume Now," *The New York Times* 8 Mar 2001, 1

<sup>33</sup> Wit, Poneman, Gallucci, *Going Critical*, 378

<sup>34</sup> "May 2001-North-South Korea," *Keesing's Record of World Events* 47 (May 2001) 44161

pressed the Agreed Framework to the precipice. In April 2002, President Bush refused to officially certify North Korean compliance to the framework; however, he begrudgingly continued American funding of the KEDO project.<sup>35</sup> When evidence emerged that North Korea was potentially cheating on the agreement, Bush's rhetoric toward the North increased. After the supposed admission in October 2002, the President asserted:

North Korea has acknowledged that it is actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program based on enriched uranium. This program undermines regional and international security and the international nonproliferation regime. North Korea is also in direct violation of the North's commitments under the Agreed Framework, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), its International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Agreement, and the Joint North-South Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's clear violation of its international commitments will not be ignored.<sup>36</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 2, just two weeks after the North Korean admission of a heavy-uranium program, the Bush administration indefinitely suspended all heavy oil shipments to the North and began to actively refer to the agreement as “dead.” Confirmation of the agreements collapse came in February 2003 after North Korea reactivated their nuclear facilities, which remained active until the 2007 freeze, while KEDO indefinitely suspended operations and construction on the LWR in November 2003.<sup>37</sup> Important to the theoretical explanation outlined in this thesis, the Bush presidency and the actions taken by his nascent administration from 2001-2003 appear to have undermined implementation efforts of the framework and as a consequence further increased the security dilemma between the US and DPRK. Throughout this period, North Korea continued to complain that KEDO was well behind schedule in its LWR construction project and that American heavy-oil shipments

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<sup>35</sup> Tim Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power*, (Ann Arbor, Pluto Press, 2005) 263

<sup>36</sup> George W. Bush, “Statement By the President,” *The White House*, 15 Nov 2002

<sup>37</sup> “N-project Halt to Have Little Effect,” *The Daily Yomiuri* 7 Nov 2003, 3

were continually late.<sup>38</sup> An official government radio report, in the wake of the October 2002 talks as the framework approached the precipice of its collapse, summarized North Korean grievances with the slow pace of American implementation and the insertion of new preconditions for progress in bilateral relations. The report stated:

The United States...is still hanging around at the starting line today - eight years after the agreement was adopted. The United States has dragged its feet regarding LWR construction, which is supposed to be finished by 2003, and only now merely started the ground tamping for the concrete for the LWRs. The fact that the United States, being in the position that it is in, came out with the nuclear issue, which it should raise at the end point, is absurd.

On 7 August, when the LWRs ground tamping for concrete started, the US administration concocted an excuse that it could not provide LWRs unless our Republic accepted the IAEA's nuclear inspection, insisting our Republic accept inspection.

This is an arrogant, unilateral act that tramples on the basic spirit of the DPRK-US Agreed Framework. It is also a grave threat that provokes our independence and dignity.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, when looking at this case there is a compelling evidence that American domestic political institutions played a damaging role in the implementation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. For Clinton, a hostile Congress undermined the implementation of American provisions of the agreement. There also appears to be evidence that the Clinton administration was hesitant to expend political capital on the implementation of the unpopular agreement in the face of a dearth of issues, including President Clinton's reelection campaign in 1996, his impeachment in 1998-99, and American military intervention in the Balkans, where he faced heavy congressional opposition. Additionally, the dramatic change in policy as Bush took office derailed the previous negotiation procedure

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<sup>38</sup> "N.K. Puts Energy Delay On Top of Agenda for U.S. Talks," *The Korean Herald* 19 Jun 2001

<sup>39</sup> "North Korean Radio Urges US to Implement Nuclear Accord," BBC Worldwide Monitoring: Asia-Pacific, Pyongyang Broadcasting Station, Pyongyang, North Korea, 21 Oct 2001

with the demand that North Korea comply to complete verification and further damaged the implementation process. I am not making a normative statement about the foreign policy of President Bush, however, I am making the point that the lack of stability in the relationship between the US and DPRK, due to the dramatic change in administration strategies helped impede implementation of the Agreed Framework. Interestingly, after the framework's collapse, and even more so after the nuclear test, the Bush administration would utilize a more conciliatory negotiating strategy, similar to that pursued by his predecessor.

### **Conclusion: Potential Criticisms**

While I believe that this neoclassical realist theory presents a compelling explanation for why the Agreed Framework failed to prevent a North Korean nuclear capability, there are potential criticisms that emerge. The most obvious one centers on the actions taken by North Korea throughout the implementation phase, which might have worked to shape the negative perceptions toward the agreement in the US Congress. These include issues surrounding North Korean scud missile technology proliferation to Iran and Pakistan, North Korea's numerous tests of the long-range Taepodong missile, a handful of naval clashes that took place with the South Korean navy that took place in 1996, 1998, and 2002, and the belief that the DPRK was covertly developing nuclear weapons. Each of these demonstrated that North Korea acted as a "rogue state" that could not be trusted to enact their provisions of the framework, especially on the missile and cheating issues. While these all constituted important events and trends in the United States diplomatic relationship with North Korea, this neoclassical realist theory explicitly argues that first and foremost that the United States recognized the threat that a nuclear North Korea had for its place as the unipolar system

hegemon and secondly that American political institutions impeded the efforts to thwart it. I am not trying to make a normative statement about how the Republican Party shaped their views toward the framework, but that their opposition within the American system of governance made it difficult to implement its provisions, without regard for how these views were formed or whether they were correct.

Others would argue that this study has not addressed several other state and individual level factors that may have played a role in the failure of the Agreed Framework. These include: the vast differences in political culture between the US and North Korea that might have shaped the perceptions of each actor throughout implementation, the historical experience of the two states that might have made implementation difficult, and the role that the personalities of Clinton, Bush, and Kim Jong-Il played. In the face of this criticism, I would argue that making this theory too reductionist would damage its parsimony and the ability to test it against other international agreements. Additionally, basic realist principles about international anarchy, material capabilities, and the distribution of capabilities at the international level are still relevant as was explained in Chapter 3. An overly reductionist theory is in danger of ignoring these principles and how they frame and work to constrain foreign policy decision-making.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

“I am pleased with the agreements reached today at the Six Party Talks in Beijing. These talks represent the best opportunity to use diplomacy to address North Korea's nuclear programs. They reflect the common commitment of the participants to a Korean Peninsula that is free of nuclear weapons.”

-President George W. Bush, February 13, 2007, upon the major breakthrough at the Six-Party Talks<sup>1</sup>

In the preceding chapters I have provided an in-depth historical review of the United States' diplomatic relationship with North Korea and cultivated both neorealist and neoclassical realist theories to explain the ultimate collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework and North Korea's eventual attainment of nuclear weapons. Looking at, first, neorealist theory, I identified key systemic factors that framed and constrained American foreign policy throughout the implementation phase of the Agreed Framework. These system level factors included the emergence of the United States as system hegemon, the eventual rise of China beginning in the late 1990s, and American involvement in a global campaign against Islamic terrorism after 2001. However, systems theory is not a sufficient explanation for why the US failed to implement an agreement that was in the best interest of its security. To address this, I utilized a theoretical explanation based in neoclassical realism to include the analysis of specific domestic level variables to supplement the system level as the independent variable. This theory argued that the United States' place as the unipolar system hegemon and North Korea's lack of a legitimate balancing partner compelled the DPRK to pursue a nuclear deterrent to prevent American interference and to address the growing security dilemma

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Bush, “Statement by the President,” [The White House](#), 13 Feb 2007



between the two states. To prevent the emergence of a North Korean nuclear deterrent, a capability that threatened the American preponderance of power in the world, specifically in East Asia, the US negotiated and signed the Agreed Framework. North Korea acquiesced to the agreement as its successful implementation would decrease the security dilemma between the two states and provide for the survival of the Kim regime.

Furthermore, the political institutions of the United States served as an intervening domestic level variable to prevent the successful implementation of this agreement. Primarily the impediment of American political institutions manifested itself in congressional and Presidential elections where dramatic partisan change occurred and worked to prevent a cohesive policy toward North Korea, specifically in the implementation of the Agreed Framework's specific provisions, starting with the 1994 midterm elections and later the 2000 presidential election. These changes disrupted American financial commitments for the construction project and heavy-oil shipments managed by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and disturbed progress in other bilateral areas. Consequently, the failure to implement the framework exacerbated North Korean fears of a security dilemma with the US, pushing them to disregard the framework in early 2003. In the case of the Agreed Framework, American political institutions impeded the successful implementation of an agreement with the expressed goal to increase the security of the United States and its interests in East Asia, leading to its collapse and failure to prevent the emergence of a nuclear North Korea.

To exhibit the strength and validity of this theory, I undertook an in-depth examination of the effect of the 1994 midterm elections and the 2000 presidential election on the implementation of the framework and found that each fundamentally altered American

policy toward the framework. They additionally exhibited that both congressional and presidential elections, where large partisan shifts occur, can affect the cohesion and stability of American foreign policy. This is not to say that North Korea is blameless, as their own inconsistent and belligerent actions made it difficult to sustain public and congressional support of the framework in the long-term. This study is ripe for application to present and future American policy, most significantly to the on-going Six-Party Talks.

### **Lessons for the Success of the Six-Party Talks**

There are many lessons taken from both the neorealist and neoclassical realist theory asserted in Chapters 3 and 4 for the construction of successful foreign policy on the Korean peninsula, especially the Six-Party Talks. First, it is still in the United States' interest to prevent North Korea from developing a reliable nuclear capability and, if possible, to remove the capability permanently. All six parties have expressed such an outcome as the explicit goal of the talks and are actively taking steps to achieve a nuclear free North Korea. The Six-Party Talks have importantly included China, who initially organized and continue to host the talks. The participation of China implicitly recognizes the important place China holds both in global and in regional, East Asian affairs and that any effective, lasting agreement must have their approval and active support.

So far, President Bush has avoided a sweeping bilateral agreement with North Korea that would require Congressional approval for some aspect. It is likely, however, that any substantial agreement, in which North Korea voluntarily surrenders its nuclear capability, would include provisions subject to the review of the US Congress. While this agreement seems far in the future based on the slow pace of progress today, this study demonstrates that

the construction of such an agreement must keep the American political system in mind. This potential agreement must also be able to survive a partisan-power exchange in Congress or the White House, while maintaining popular support in public opinion. In future works on this subject, attention should focus on American efforts toward Iran and other states pursuing nuclear weapons globally. Also focus does not have to exclude itself to the American political system. In fact, the expansion of this theory could be utilized to examine democratic and non-democratic regimes where enough information exists to analyze domestic institutions and the role they play in foreign policy.

### **Implications for Neoclassical Realist Theory and Lessons of International Political Theory**

The utilization of neoclassical realist theory in examining the collapse of the Agreed Framework throughout this thesis has provided an opportunity from which to judge the relative merits of this theory in explaining foreign policy and other aspects of international politics. As discussed in Chapter 4, neoclassical realist theory primarily seeks to address the important role that domestic level factors, acting as intervening variables, play in foreign policy choices, while attempting to maintain the significance of the system as the independent variable in these policy choices. However, the means in which the theory links the system and state level of analysis is confusing and unclear. Are individual perceptions and expectations of the system the primary linkage between the system and state or are the state and system two separate factors and as a consequence must be analyzed apart? This is unclear and harms the explanatory power of the theory.

Fareed Zakaria addressed the linkage of system and state level analysis in neoclassical realism. In a 1992 article, he defended the theoretical strength of realism that

incorporated both system and state level variables when formulating theories of foreign policy, explaining, “A good foreign policy should not ignore domestic politics or national culture or individual decision-makers. But it must separate the effects of the various levels of international politics.”<sup>2</sup> He goes further, arguing, “In order to achieve balance between the parsimony of a spare theory and greater descriptive accuracy, a first-cut theory can be layered successively with additional causes from different levels of analysis focusing on domestic regime types, bureaucracies and statesmen.”<sup>3</sup> In short, Zakaria proposed that neoclassical realism must separate the study of the two levels, in an effort to sufficiently understand which level was most important in shaping foreign policy choices, rendering neoclassical realism more a paradigm than a grand theory of foreign policy. Gideon Rose similarly tackled the theoretical issue surrounding neoclassical realism. Rose conceded that “hardline” positivists would deny the ability of the theory to present clear, parsimonious predictions of state behavior, while relying too heavily on history and specific area expertise. However, he argued:

...neoclassical realism does not claim that power-related factors will drive all aspects of a state's foreign policy, only that they will affect its broad contours. Critics might charge that all these qualifications make the theory harder (though not impossible) to falsify and thus discredit. Adherents would have to concede the point and acknowledge this as a serious weakness; they might counter, however, that neoclassical realism has compensating advantages, particularly in the opportunities it offers for building satisfying comprehensive explanations of foreign policy without abandoning the theory's core assumptions. Its very looseness, in other words, makes it a useful framework for carrying out the kind of midrange theorizing that so often is the best social science can hope to achieve.<sup>4</sup>

I am inclined to argue that despite the shortfalls of neoclassical realism, an analysis of the collapse of the 1994 Agreed Framework is ripe for the theory's *looseness*, reliance on

<sup>2</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay,” *International Security* 17.1 (1992) 197

<sup>3</sup> Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 197

<sup>4</sup> Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51.1 (1998) 167-168

historical analysis, and the examination of specific state level idiosyncrasies (such as domestic level factors), as exhibited by Chapters 2 and 4.

More generally for international politics, in the tradition of Robert Putnam's two-level game and other nested theories of international politics and foreign policy, the following chapters has underscored the important role that domestic level institutions play in how a state conducts itself within the international system. The ability of a state to properly mobilize its intuitional apparatus, in addition to the perception that important actors, such as the US Congress and President, maintain toward it, at least in the case of the Agreed Framework, appears to have a significant role in the success of a particular foreign policy strategies. One might make a gross misreading of the neoclassical realist theory and posit that the construction of effective American foreign policy would see the exclusion of the legislature. I thoroughly reject this line of reasoning and instead argue that in this specific case, the domestic American institutions played an impediment to cohesive policy making, however, this is not the case in all American foreign policy decisions.

Finally, this study demonstrates the important role that systemic factors continue to play in international politics. The international systemic reality of the relationship between the US and DPRK, primarily American unipolarity, framed the policy choices made in 1994 and continue to in the more recent Six-Party Talks. Despite the emergence of international organizations, transnational institutions and corporations, and a globalized economy, international anarchy is still the major ordering principle in the international system. As American unipolarity begins to wane in the next several decades and developing nations like China, India, Russia, Brazil, and South Korea play increasingly important roles in the distribution of capabilities globally, this anarchy and the balance of power within it will

magnify in importance. It will be up to domestic-policy makers and elected officials in the United States and elsewhere, who face idiosyncratic factors unique to their state to peacefully manage this new multi-polar reality. As a consequence, it will become even more important to understand these state level factors and the influences they play in foreign policy decision-making.

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