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US Deployment of Nuclear Weapons in 1950s South Korea & North Korea's Nuclear Development: Toward Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula

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Abstract:

The United States suffered a serious financial deficit as a result of the Korean War in the 1950s. To solve this problem, it moved to reduce the sizes of US forces in Korea and the South Korean military which depended on U.S. financial aid. As President Rhee Syng-man opposed this plan, the U.S. introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea in January 1958. For this purpose, the UN Command removed NNSC personnel from South Korea in June 1956, and nullified part of the Armistice Agreement in June 1957.

As nuclear weapons were deployed in South Korea, North Korea began a massive program of underground construction in the 1960s and deployed its conventional forces in forward positions. North Korea asked the Soviet Union in 1963 and China in 1964 for help in developing nuclear weapons of its own, but was rebuffed. South Korea prepared to develop its own nuclear weapons in 1974 and North Korea began to develop its own program in the late 1970s.

North Korea seeks, through development of nuclear weapons, to secure international recognition as well as economic aid and national security. Thus for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, provision must be made for North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons without a sense of insecurity. In addition, it is unrealistic to urge North Korea to unilaterally dismantle its nuclear weapons without a breakthrough in U.S.-North Korea relations, preparing the withdrawal of US forces in South Korea, eliminating the U.S. nuclear umbrella for South Korea, and abolishing the U.S.-South Korea Alliance.

I. Introduction

Ever since the early 1990s, inter-Korean relations and the security environment surrounding the divided Korean peninsular have been deeply affected by the issue of North Korean nuclear weapons. Two decades later, the issue remains to be resolved with no portent of resolution in the near future. It is necessary to examine the historical background or the root causes of the issue to see how and when it came about before searching for solutions.

One of the biggest factors and immediate causes behind North Korea's nuclear weapons development has been the threat of nuclear attack by the U.S. In 1951 amidst the Korean War, the U.S. issued threats of a nuclear attack on North Korea. It began to deploy nuclear weapons in South Korea as early as 1958. However, these facts are hardly well known to the South Korean public.

Based on a U.S. State Department compilation of diplomatic documents (*Foreign Relations of the United States*) dating back to the latter half of the 1950s that were declassified in 1993 and

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1994, the author in 1995 presented a paper which mentioned the fact that U.S. Forces Korea (U.S.F.K.) started deploying nuclear weapons in South Korea in January 1958. In an interview with a reporter for a newspaper that boasted the largest circulation in South Korea at the time, he referred to this revelation as worthy of 'front page headlines' and showed copies of the U.S. official documents. But not one line of this front page news has ever been published. This was due to the discretion of executives at the newspaper who deemed the subject matter 'dangerous material', coming at a sensitive time with the North Korean nuclear issue still unresolved.

Word that nuclear weapons were deployed in South Korea began to spread vaguely in the mid-1970s. First, in a March 1974 testimony to Congress, Creighton Abrams, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, stated that the U.S. had deployed a 'modernized tactical nuclear weapon', the Lance Missile, in South Korea in preparedness for a limited nuclear war. Second, in his February 1975 testimony to Congress, James Schlesinger, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, while asserting that the U.S.F.K. was stationed not to prevent a North Korean attack of the south but to check regional powers, affirmed the deployment of nuclear weapons in the southern half of the Korean peninsula. And in two separate press conferences in April and June 1975, he brought up the matter again, saying that "The U.S. has deployed nuclear weapons along with its armed forces in Europe and South Korea." He went on to issue public threats to North Korea, saying that the U.S. would retaliate with nuclear weapons if the North attacked the South, and that it would maintain such weapons in South Korea.

On a side note, these congressional testimonies and press conferences were given in regard to South Korean plans for nuclear weapons development following the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. In July 1969, the U.S. promulgated its new foreign policy in Asia, known as the 'Nixon Doctrine', and accordingly notified the South Korean government of its plans to withdraw U.S. forces a year later. The U.S. 'walked the talk' in March 1971 as the 7th Division was withdrawn. While South Korea worked strenuously to persuade the U.S. to postpone or revoke the plan altogether, it concluded an accord on atomic technology cooperation with France in October 1974 with the goal of developing nuclear weapons in case of a full withdrawal of U.S. forces. And with the fall of Saigon in April 1975, the South Korean government announced that it could self-develop nuclear weapons should the U.S. withdraw its nuclear umbrella. The U.S. responded by threatening to abrogate the U.S.-R.O.K. security alliance, to withdraw the U.S.F.K. and nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea, and by pressuring the South to rescind plans to acquire nuclear reprocessing facilities from France. South Korea gave in and abandoned its designs to develop nuclear weapons.

Based on these congressional testimonies on nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea, U.S. nuclear experts and research institutes began publishing reports or theses around the mid-1970s. But due in part to U.S. administration policy of 'NCND' or 'neither confirm nor deny', they have not been able to clarify the specific details as to the quantity, when, where and what type of nuclear weapons were deployed to South Korea. It could only be assumed that nuclear weapons were first introduced in 1958, and that the number grew to at least several hundred nuclear warheads by the mid-1970s.

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U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea

Making such an assumption or estimate was no easy matter in South Korea. For example, during a congressional interpellation of government ministers in May 1985, a representative asked if there was any truth to the rumor that more than 1,000 nuclear warheads were deployed in South Korea. The Minister of Defense Yoon Sung-Min replied by saying, "It is a part of U.S. nuclear policy and practice not to confirm, deny, or elaborate on the deployment of nuclear weapons. Therefore the government cannot answer this question in consideration of the relations with our ally." When the same question came up in Congress two years later in September 1987, Defense Minister Jung Ho-Yong responded by saying, "If we say that we do not possess nuclear weapons, it may embolden North Korea to attack the South, and if we say that we do, it can raise numerous questions in regard to the idea of a nuclear free zone. That said, we can neither confirm nor deny the existence or non-existence of nuclear weapons and even I have no knowledge of the matter." Things were no different in 1988. In a July congressional inquiry session on nuclear weapons, Defense Minister Oh Ja-Bok refused to confirm the deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea by repeatedly alluding to the 'strategic stance and principle' of the U.S.

In the meantime, the U.S. officially exchanged information on nuclear weapons with its nemesis, the Soviet Union. The U.S. now had detailed knowledge of the quantity and capability of Soviet nuclear weapons deployed in Siberia that targeted South Korea, and likewise the Soviet Union obtained specific information on U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea. In spite of this, South Korea was held back from confirming publicly not just the Soviet nuclear weapons that targeted them, but also the existence of U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in its territory. Whereas the member states of NATO received information on the type, quantity, capability, and location of U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in their respective territories, the South Korean government was never provided with such basic information on nuclear weapons deployed within its borders, let alone afforded the right to know or discuss the usage of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula.

Under these circumstances, it is no surprise that research beginning in the late 1980s on U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in the R.O.K. by South Korean scholars and journalists was limited in scope, relying primarily on the accounts of foreign nuclear weapons experts, and reports or monographs written by foreign think tanks. This paper, in contrast, seeks to shed light on the background and reasoning behind U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, and also on the timeline of deployment, from preparations to introduction of nuclear weapons in South Korea, based on the aforementioned U.S. State Department compilation of diplomatic documents dating back to the latter half of the 1950s that were declassified in the 1990s.

II. The Deployment of Nuclear Weapons by the U.S.F.K.

1. The Background and Reasoning Behind Deployment

The U.S. fiscal deficit worsened in the early

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1950s with U.S. entry into the Korean War. One of the easiest ways to cut government expenditure was to slash spending on national defense, which in turn would have meant the downsizing of U.S. forces stationed overseas. It is against this backdrop that the U.S.F.K. was drawn down considerably to approximately 50,000 troops by the mid-1950s, a number that hovered well above 300,000 at the time of the signing of the armistice in 1953. Besides slashing the defense budget, fiscal austerity necessitated a cutback in U.S. foreign assistance, of which South Korea ranked as one of the biggest recipients in the aftermath of the Korean War. South Korea, lacking the manpower and the economic strength to sustain and support the level of its military force at the time, relied almost entirely upon U.S. assistance.

In a September 1956 National Security Council (NSC) meeting, President Dwight Eisenhower bluntly pointed out that the annual infusion of US$800 million into South Korea along with the stationing of U.S. troops in Korea at the same time was a 'problem', and Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson stated that there was no way to reduce government expenditure without a draw down of both the U.S.F.K. and South Korean forces. Arthur Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had earlier argued that reduction in military spending for the defense of South Korea could only be achieved through modernization of the equipment used by the U.S.F.K. including nuclear weapons.

At this time, South Korea's Air Force was weaker than that of North Korea, but the Army, which made up the bulk of the armed forces, was stronger than the North Korean Army in terms of both offensive firepower and defensive capabilities. A NSC report written in July 1956 made the following assessment of South Korea's military force.

> The ROK Army is almost twice the size of the North Korean army. It has sufficient individual equipment, is well trained and is combat ready. It is superior to the North Korean Army in heavy weapons and artillery. The ROK Navy is clearly superior to that of North Korea which is attributed no combat capability. The ROK Air Force is inferior to that of North Korea. Despite weakness in the air, the ROK, given adequate logistic support, could repel an aggression by North Korean forces alone.

A comparison between the total armed forces, including foreign troops, stationed in South and North Korea at the time shows the following. Whereas the South Korean Army numbered approximately 720,000 men, U.S. forces stationed in Korea 50,000, and U.N. forces (excluding the U.S. and South Korean soldiers) approximately 8,000, North Korean armed forces were estimated at around 350,000 men and Chinese troops stationed in North Korea 290,000.

As can be seen, the U.S. was almost compelled to draw down its forces in South Korea to reduce its fiscal deficit considering that most of the U.S. assistance was spent on maintaining South Korea's troop levels, which exceeded North Korea in terms of military force. South Korean President Rhee Syng-Man, whose government had allocated more than 70% of its budget to national defense, strongly resisted U.S. plans, arguing that any reduction in South Korean armed forces would be unacceptable until the northward unification of the Korean peninsula by force was complete. His overarching objective was to achieve the unification of the two Koreas, a goal he believed could only be attained by force. Thus, he called for a reinforcement of troops let alone a reduction.

To be sure, President Rhee was a thorn in the

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eyes of the U.S. throughout the 1950s. Above all, the U.S. was always wary of his potential threat to take unilateral military action to achieve northward unification of the Korean peninsula. When Rhee opposed talks on an armistice which the U.S. had begun preparing in 1951 in the midst of the Korean War, the U.S. plotted secretly on at least two occasions in 1952-53 to remove him. Even after the armistice was signed in July 1953, President Rhee simply ignored it as he pursued the goal of unification by force. To this the U.S. constantly emphasized that any South Korean violation of the armistice or unilateral military operation against either North Korean or Chinese forces would receive no support from the U.S. and the United Nations Command (UNC). Between January and February 1955, the U.S. put in place a plan to dispose of Rhee if he tried to give or order South Korean troops to advance north in defiance of U.S. warnings. Furthermore, Rhee tried to abrogate the armistice completely by instigating and fomenting public demonstrations, and urged the recovery of Gaesong, Ongjin peninsula, and the estuary of the Han River, territories which were a part of South Korea before the outbreak of war on June 25, 1950. To this, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lee Hyung-Keun stressed that the use of armed force for the recovery of those areas was simply impossible. Jung Il-Kwon, the Army Chief of Staff, fought with President Rhee over the command system of the South Korean Army, and made a secret promise to the U.S. that the South Korean Army would pledge its allegiance to the U.S. rather than their commander-in-chief, Pres. Rhee. He even harbored the notion that Rhee, who expressed his displeasure at the reluctance of the South Korean Army to drive North Korean troops out of Gaesong and Ongjin, had to be removed.

In the meantime, the U.S. believed that South Korea and Japan had to resolve their hostilities in order to reduce its assistance to South Korea and in turn reduce its fiscal deficit. This was because normalization of R.O.K.-Japan relations would allow Japan rather than the U.S. to provide assistance to South Korea, and possibly pave the way to an R.O.K.-U.S.-Japan tripartite treaty. Yet again, Rhee took an uncompromising stance, vehemently resisting such notions. In regard to this, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said in a June 1957 NSC meeting: "All the world now knows that the United States is up against serious budgetary problems. We can therefore go to Rhee and tell him that we simply do not have the money to maintain his forces in the style to which they have been accustomed. We must certainly take a stronger line with Rhee than we have in the past."

Through these twists and turns, the U.S. made the decision to deploy nuclear weapons in South Korea. To summarize, the U.S. had to reduce its forces in Korea in order to solve its fiscal deficit. It also needed to draw down the vast South Korean Army, which depended on U.S. assistance and support. When this met strong opposition from President Rhee, who pursued his agenda of northward unification by force, the U.S., in exchange for troop reductions, began introducing nuclear weapons in South Korea to serve as a safety for the U.S.F.K. and to coax President Rhee.

The following factors also figured into the U.S. decision to deploy nuclear weapons in South Korea. First, the U.S. could not totally disregard the possibility of a North Korean invasion of the South taking advantage of the likely chaos and confusion that might follow in the aftermath of Rhee's death. Rhee was over 80 years old. Accordingly, the logic was that the U.S.F.K. had to arm itself with nuclear weapons in case of such a contingency.

Second, the types of nuclear weapons the U.S. had planned to deploy in South Korea were 280mm atomic cannons and 762mm Honest John atomic rockets, both of which had been taken off the production line since they were bulky and cumbersome to handle, weighting 86 and 16 metric tons respectively. Plus, there was

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no NATO border fronting on the Soviet Union within the range of these weapons, rendering them basically obsolete in Europe. Thus, South Korea was the "only place in the world" where the U.S. could secretly deploy soon to be scrapped nuclear weapons and effectively target the Soviet Union.

Honest John rocket

Third, in October 1957, the Soviet Union succeeded in launching into orbit Sputnik, the first satellite in the history of mankind. Though the U.S. was quicker than the U.S.S.R. to develop nuclear weapons, the U.S.S.R. had turned the tables in developing Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), the delivery system that could carry nuclear weapons across oceans. The U.S. could not afford to delay nuclear weapons deployment to allay the psychological shock of Sputnik that U.S.F.K. and the Koreans were experiencing.

2. Preparations for Nuclear Weapons Deployment

There were two major obstacles to U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea. The first was a provision in the armistice that stipulated "Cease the introduction into Korea of reinforcing combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition..." and the other was the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) which, pursuant to this provision, performed monitoring activities to ensure non-introduction of such weapons and equipment. Since deploying nuclear weapons would violate the armistice, and even if it were to be introduced in breach of the armistice it was certain to face the surveillance and opposition of the NNSC, it would have been most difficult to introduce nuclear weapons unless these two hurdles were cleared. Two measures were taken to deal with the problem.

1) Expulsion of NNSC Inspection Teams

Around the time of the signing of the July 1953 armistice when the combined strength of UN and South Korean troops was superior to that of Chinese and North Koreans, the U.S. proposed the establishment of a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission seeking to maintain the upper hand and monitor any build up of North Korean military forces. And beginning in August 1953, the NNSC carried out monitoring activities to prevent the introduction of combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition etc. to ensure compliance with Article 2, Paragraph 13 of the armistice. Paragraphs 37 and 42 of Article 2 of the armistice provide that

> The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission shall be composed of four senior officers, two of whom shall be appointed by neutral nations nominated by the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command, namely, Sweden and Switzerland, and two of whom shall be appointed by neutral nations nominated jointly by the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers, namely, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The term 'neutral nations' as herein used is defined as those nations

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> whose combatant forces have not participated in the hostilities in Korea...

Swiss members of the NNSC depart for Korea, 1954

> The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission shall conduct, through its members and its Neutral Nations Inspection Teams, the supervision and inspection ... at the ports of entry enumerated in Paragraph 43 hereof... The inspection of combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition by the Neutral Nations Inspection Teams shall be such as to enable them to properly insure that reinforcing combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition are not being introduced into Korea...

Pursuant to these provisions, Swedish and Swiss inspectors were stationed in the North Korean regions of Shinuju, Chongjin, Hungnam, Manpo, Shinanju, while Polish and Czechoslovak inspectors resided at Inchon, Taegu, Pusan, Kangrung, and Kunsan, South Korea, as they carried out their functions. However, the operations of the NNSC were limited by the contending Korean governments, and violations of the armistice were difficult to prove.

From 1954, the U.S. moved to neutralize the NNSC and abrogate related armistice provisions, alleging that North Korea was undertaking a build up of its military beyond the surveillance of the NNSC and that Polish and Czechoslovak inspectors stationed in the South were conducting espionage activities. As a first phase for the eventual dissolution of the NNSC, the U.S. sought the withdrawal of Swedish and Swiss inspectors from North Korea to the Demilitarized Zone. If that were to happen, the U.S. then could evict Polish and Czechoslovak inspectors out of South Korea. This is why the U.S., along with Great Britain and France, started exerting pressure on the governments of Sweden and Switzerland in December 1954, and persuaded the 16 nations which dispatched troops to South Korea to support their proposal. The U.S. Department of State especially had been putting "all possible pressure" on the Swiss and the Swedes to get out of the NNSC, but the two nations did not readily bow to U.S. demands.

South Korea, for its part, also called for the dissolution of the NNSC in early 1955, notifying the Polish and Czechoslovak inspectors to leave by August 1955. The Rhee administration organized anti-NNSC demonstrations for months. President Rhee even urged the U.S. to expel the Soviet Union from the United Nations and then reorganize that body.

Sustained U.S. pressure bore partial success as Sweden and Switzerland agreed with North Korea upon the reduction, instead of complete withdrawal, of the number of inspection teams from 5 to 3 in both South and North Korea. In October 1955, the United Nations Command (UNC) attempted to reach a mutual agreement with North Korea on the abrogation of

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Paragraph 13 of the armistice and the abolition of the NNSC, even suggesting that the UNC unilaterally announce that the provision and NNSC are regarded as abrogated and abolished in the case of a North Korean refusal. To this, the Swedes and Swiss proposed to the North that the 3 remaining teams also withdraw to the demilitarized zone, but in refusing this proposal in January 1956 North Korea offered a counterproposal that outlined an additional reduction of inspection teams from 3 to 1 in both North and South Korea. Under constant U.S. pressure, Sweden and Switzerland began preparations to withdraw completely a month later.

Through this process the U.S.F.K. and UNC announced that, due to North Korean and Chinese uncooperative behaviour and obstruction of Czech and Polish members, the effective supervision by NNSC has been frustrated and that it will suspend the activities of the NNSC within a week. In addition, the U.S.F.K. and UNC expelled the 16 members of the NNSC stationed in Inchon, Pusan, and Kunsan to Panmunjom. The instruments to monitor the build up of South Korea's military had been removed.

2) Partial Repeal of Armistice Provisions

Article 2, Paragraph 13(d) of the Korean War armistice agreement provides as follows;

> Cease the introduction into Korea of reinforcing combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition; provided however, that combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition which are destroyed, damaged, worn out, or used up during the period of the armistice may be replaced on the basis piece-for-piece of the same effectiveness and the same type. Such combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition shall be introduced into Korea only through the ports of entry enumerated in paragraph 43 hereof. ... The NNSC, through its Neutral Nations Inspection Teams, shall conduct supervision and inspection of the replacement of combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition authorized above, at the ports of entry enumerated in paragraph 43 hereof.

As stated, neither North nor South Korea was allowed to introduce new weapons according to the armistice agreement. However, the U.S. and South Korea thought that the balance of military power was shifting in favor of North Korea, which was believed to be introducing new materiel and equipment in violation of the armistice. In his report to President Eisenhower during a NSC meeting in April 1995, U.S.F.K. and UNC Commander John Hull emphasized the importance of amending paragraph 13(d) of the armistice agreement in order to supply new weapons to the U.S.F.K. and South Korean troops. This argument was opposed by the State Department, which asserted that if the U.S. unilaterally terminated the provision at a time when no clear evidence existed on the introduction of new weapons by North Korea, then the U.S. could draw criticism that they were the first to violate the terms of the armistice.

The Pentagon claimed that North Korea had introduced by early 1956 some 450 fighter planes into North Korea, of which over 250 were jet aircraft, and that it was a matter of urgency to replace obsolete weapons and equipment used by the U.S.F.K. and South Korean forces. They proposed two ways to introduce new weapons, including nuclear and other materiel into South Korea. One was the temporary

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suspension of the armistice agreement, and the other was the reinterpretation of paragraph 13(d) of the agreement. The UNC also iterated the need to replace obsolete weapons in South Korea through a more 'flexible' interpretation of the relevant clause.

Following the counsel of legal advisors, the State Department judged that even with the most 'liberal' interpretation of paragraph 13(d) of the armistice, any inference that nuclear weapons could be introduced into South Korea was legally impossible. It was further argued that nuclear deployment in South Korea, unless preceded by the introduction of nuclear weapons in the North, would be a clear violation of the armistice agreement, and could incur serious problems since it lacked legal justification. In other words, this meant that nuclear deployment in South Korea could be justified if there was irrefutable evidence of similar North Korean infractions of the armistice, but such evidence was not at hand. In addition, the reaction throughout the world and in the U.N. was an important factor that needed to be considered, and it was believed that the introduction of nuclear weapons would adversely effect U.S. world-wide objectives, and position. Once nuclear weapons were introduced into South Korea, news would spread to communist and neutral nations, as well as to Sweden, Switzerland, and several other U.S. allies serving in Korea. The State Department, based on their intelligence, expected to face considerable backlash from their adversaries and allies alike.

Although the Pentagon acknowledged that evidence to back up raw intelligence reports on the physical existence of nuclear weapons or its delivery systems in North Korea did not exist, it contended that new weapons and equipment had been introduced after the ceasefire and that it might not be long before delivery systems for nuclear weapons entered the communist nation. It used this argument to persuade the State Department to view the issue of deploying nuclear weapons to South Korea not within a legal context but rather as a political and military matter. The final say on such discussions was made in a December 1956 NSC meeting when President Eisenhower chose the Pentagon's plan over that of the State Department. The Pentagon would, on a top priority basis, pull together all available evidence of communist violations of the armistice in a form which could be used in discussing the matter with the Swiss and Swedes, the fifteen nations and the United Nations. Once the publishable evidence confirming North Korean violations was at hand, the Secretaries of State and Defense, in conjunction with the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, would decide on a time frame to deploy nuclear weapons in South Korea.

The State Department may have eventually accepted the arguments put forth by the Pentagon, but Secretary of State Dulles expressed his concerns to the very end. In an April 1957 NSC meeting, he said that the introduction of nuclear weapons would cause serious repercussions around the world, and that the political disadvantages would be greater than the military advantages. Dulles continued, stating that he thought it very unlikely that the Soviets would entrust atomic weapons to the communist Chinese or to the North Korean armed forces, and pointed out that there was no evidence of introduction of weapons with atomic capabilities into North Korea. He worried that U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons and violation of the armistice agreement would become a focal point for a Soviet propaganda campaign whose effect on U.S. friends and allies would be considerable.

Nevertheless, at a June 1956 meeting of the Military Armistice Commission at Panmunjom, the U.S.F.K. and UNC issued a statement detailing 'alleged' North Korean violations of paragraph 13(d) of the armistice agreement and indicating that the UNC would no longer

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consider itself bound by that paragraph until such time as the relative military balance has been restored and North Korea has demonstrated its willingness to comply with the terms of the armistice. On the heels of the expulsion of the NNSC inspection teams in June 1956, the U.S. had abrogated the very clause that prevented it from deploying nuclear weapons in South Korea.

3. Timing of the Initial Deployment of Nuclear Weapons

The U.S. Department of Defense began weighing the option of deploying atomic weapons in South Korea around January 1956 at the latest. In a joint meeting of State and Defense Department officials on January 6, 1956, Maxwell Taylor, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, said that new tanks and new types of artillery would be introduced into Korea if it were not for paragraph 13(d) of the armistice agreement, and in particular, mentioned the possibility of introducing Honest John missiles that could be mounted with atomic cannons and nuclear weapons. Also, the Commander-in-Chief of the UNC (CINCUNC) Lyman Lemnitzer sent a telegram dated January 30, 1956 to the Department of the Army in which he suggested that it was highly desirable for the U.S.F.K. to possess weapons with atomic delivery capability in order to alleviate the imbalance of strength between the opposing forces in Korea.

In a top secret memorandum in September 1956 to Secretary of Defense Wilson, Admiral Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, took the position that the modernization of U.S.F.K. equipment to include atomic capability should be effected without delay, and recommended that CINCUNC be authorized to begin the introduction of weapons of atomic capability immediately and that such equipment not be reported to the NNSC. At a time when reducing the burdensome military assistance to South Korea was the top U.S. agenda, Admiral Radford believed this was only possible through the modernization of military equipment, including atomic weapons.

The State Department offered dissenting views on the grounds that the deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea would violate paragraph 13(d) of the armistice that prohibited the introduction of combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition etc. However, this was overridden by President Eisenhower in December 1956 as he approved Department of Defense recommendations, thus paving the way to pursue nuclear armament of the U.S.F.K. Later at a press conference on May 14, 1957, Secretary of State Dulles indicated that the U.S. was considering the introduction of "more modern, more effective" weapons into the R.O.K., and Secretary of Defense Wilson amplified those remarks by indicating that these might include weapons possessing "dual capability", that is, conventional and atomic.

President Rhee sent a letter in June 1957 to President Eisenhower expressing gratitude for the U.S. decision. This was followed by another letter in August inquiring about when, how many, and what type of modern weapons were coming to Korea, and also whether the U.S. modernization program would apply exclusively to the U.S.F.K. or to the Korean forces as well. To this, the State Department sent a telegram to Walter Dowling, the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, instructing him to inform President Rhee of the following: "The 7th and 24th Divisions (comprised of 5 battalions armed with weapons with atomic capabilities) will be reorganized into Pentomic Divisions and the 100th Field Artillery Battalion (Honest John) and the 663rd Field Artillery Battalion (280mm gun) will be introduced into Korea."

But controversy remained over releasing information to the South Korean public about such introductions. President Eisenhower said that it was not necessary to inform anybody about the deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea. The reply from Admiral Radford

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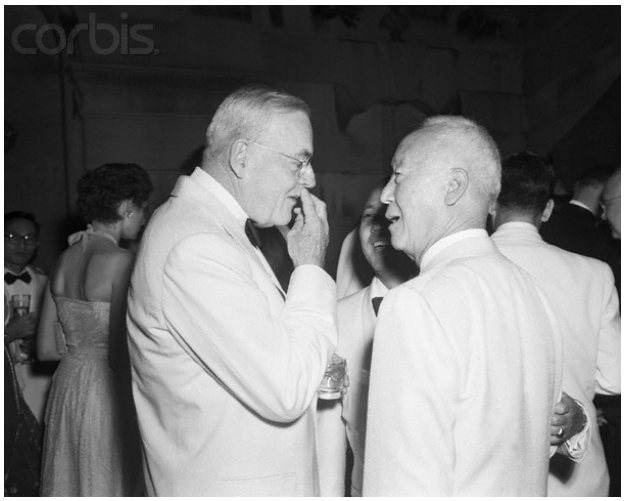
was that in any case the U.S. had to tell the South Koreans which nuclear weapons they were introducing. Otherwise, the U.S. would not be able to convince them of the feasibility of reducing their own forces. Since the South Korean government apparently had not given consent to troop reductions prior to December 1957, the U.S. was almost compelled to make the introduction of nuclear weapons known to South Koreans in order to persuade President Rhee.



John Foster Dulles and Rhee Syng-man in Washington, 1954

Until December 28, 1957, Rhee complained bitterly that the shipment of modern weapons to Korea had been frequently postponed. He did not see how he could agree to force reductions before such weapons arrived, and wondered whether they ever would arrive.

The State Department requested on January 8, 1958, via telegram, information on the exact timing of the introduction of the atomic cannons and missiles. The gist was that although the State and Defense Departments mutually agreed to move the atomic cannon and missile battalions without publicity, it was important for the State Department to be fully aware of the timing of the deployments in anticipation of the Koreans who would give this action considerable play in official statements and in the press upon arrival of the weapons. The Department of Defense responded in a letter on January 16, 1958, indicating that the 100th (Honest John) and the 663rd (280mm gun) field artillery battalions were being deployed to Korea that month.

As can be seen through to the 1994 publication of U.S. diplomatic correspondence during the 1950s, the U.S.F.K. started deploying nuclear weapons in January 1958 at the latest. But according to a secret report written by the U.S. Pacific Command, nuclear weapons were first deployed to South Korea in 1957 and withdrawn in 1991. The Washington Post also reported in October 2006 that "In 1957, the United States placed nuclear-tipped Matador missiles in South Korea, to be followed in later years ... by nuclear artillery..." It should be noted that the expression "January 1958 at the latest" has been used by the author since it is not clear whether the initial introduction of nuclear weapons occurred in late 1957 or early 1958. On a side note, the U.S.F.K. did confirm the arrival of the 280mm atomic cannons and Honest John nuclear missiles in South Korea on January 28, 1958, and proceeded to disclose and test-fire them on February 3 and May 1, 1958, respectively.

III. North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development

1. North Korean Response to Nuclear Deployment in South Korea

When the U.S.F.K. and UNC unilaterally announced the suspension of paragraph 13(d) of the armistice agreement at a June 1957 meeting of the Military Armistice Commission, North Korea denounced the statement as an attempt to wreck the armistice agreement and turn South Korea into an American base of atomic warfare. And at the U.N. General Assembly in November 1957, the representatives of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia condemned, on behalf of North Korea, which was not a member state of the

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U.N. at the time, the decision of the United Nations Command to introduce nuclear-capable weapons into Korea. Walter Judd, the U.S. representative, responded that the action taken was merely "remedial action" designed to offset North Korean violations of the armistice agreement.

North Korea, in addition, arranged for the following countermeasures against the commencement of the deployment of nuclear weapons. First, it started work on a massive 'fortification of the entire land' in the 1960s to protect defense installations from bombing attacks. Kim Il-Sung, in declaring that it was necessary to dig underground tunnels in 1963, announced that by fortifying the entire country, they could defeat those with atomic weapons even though they did not possess them. He ordered that all key military and basic industrial facilities including factories on the frontlines and in the rear be built underground. In regard to this, Thomas Schwartz, the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S.F.K. testified before the U.S. Senate that more than 10,000 underground defense facilities are presumed to exist nationwide in North Korea. Especially, it has been estimated that several hundred 'hardened artillery sites' (HARTS) are concentrated in the mountainous range across the western to central DMZ. Furthermore, during the author's visit to North Korea in October 1998, a North Korean guide confirmed that the subways in the capital of Pyongyang have been built 100 meters below the surface to serve as an emergency air-raid shelter.

Second, this was followed by the forward deployment of its conventional forces in a 'hugging the enemy' strategy so that the use of nuclear weapons would endanger friend as well as foe, civilian as well as soldier. The reasoning was that if forward deployed North Korean forces near the DMZ came under attack from nuclear weapons, U.S. and R.O.K. forces deployed in the forward areas would perish, as well as civilians in nearby regions who would be collectively exposed to radiation. This specter would discourage and deter their adversary from reckless use of nuclear weapons. Kim Il-Sung went so far as to say that the U.S. would not be able to use nuclear weapons in a situation where North and South Korean troops were jumbled together in combat. General Schwartz reported to the U.S. Senate in March 2001 that seventy percent of North Korea's active force is positioned within 150 kilometers of the DMZ.

The next logical step was asking the Soviet Union for help in developing nuclear weapons of its own. This occurred in 1963. Moscow refused, but to placate its ally the Soviets agreed to help the North develop a peaceful nuclear energy program, starting with the installation of a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon in 1965. Three hundred North Korean nuclear scientists were trained in the Soviet Union during the next two decades, and it was the Yongbyon reactor, enlarged by North Korea without Soviet help, that eventually became the focus of U.S. suspicions of a nuclear weapons effort in the 1980s.

Fourth, shortly after China detonated its first atomic blast in 1964, Kim Il-Sung headed a delegation to Beijing asking for assistance to develop nuclear weapons. In a letter to Mao Zedong, he declared that China and North Korea, as brother countries who shared fighting and dying on the battlefield, should share the atomic secret. But Mao turned down the North Korean request on the grounds that a small country like North Korea did not need nuclear weapons.

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Kim Il-Sung and Mao in October 1964

2. The Background on North Korea's Nuclear Development

As we have seen, North Korea has long had an interest in nuclear development as a response to the introduction and deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea. Kim Il-Sung is reported to have made another request for Chinese aid in 1974, when it became known that South Korea attempted to develop nuclear weapons with the aid of the French, but this was also turned down. And so North Korea appears to have launched an earnest effort to indigenously develop nuclear weapons in the late 1970s. Several factors played a role in this decision.

First, the Korean peninsula is surrounded by the four major world powers; the United States, Japan, China, and Russia. North Korea is cut off on land by China and Russia to the north and South Korea to the south. To the west across the Yellow Sea lies China, and to the east, it is surrounded by Japan and the U.S. By the late 1960s South Korea and the four major powers encircling North Korea had all either developed their own nuclear weapons or deployed U.S. nuclear weapons on their territory.

It is believed that the nuclear weapons that were in South Korea since 1958 were withdrawn by the end of 1991. On July 31, 1991, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. agreed on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which outlined the reduction of their respective nuclear arsenal by one third of current levels. Plans to withdraw nuclear weapons from South Korea pursuant to this agreement were approved by President George H. Bush on November 5, 1991. Despite the withdrawal of over 2,000 nuclear weapons, according to a secret PACOM report at the time the door was left open to restore or redeploy naval nuclear weapons 'at an appropriate time' and storage facilities for nuclear weapons were preserved. The U.S. has pledged consistently that it would place South Korea under its nuclear umbrella to the present day. Here, a 'nuclear umbrella' refers to a guarantee by a nuclear weapons state to defend a non-nuclear allied state with nuclear weapons. Since the U.S. would retaliate with nuclear weapons if South Korea came under nuclear attack from an enemy, this could be viewed by an adversary as no different than South Korea possessing defensive nuclear weapons.

In contrast, North Korea has never fallen under the nuclear umbrella of the Soviet Union or China. At a time when all nations encircling North Korea either possessed various types of nuclear weapons in large quantities or enjoyed the U.S. nuclear umbrella, North Korea alone did not have its own nuclear weapons and was not afforded such an umbrella by its allies.

From an economic perspective, nuclear weapons development would allow North Korea to maximize security at minimum cost, strikingly similar to U.S. motives to introduce and deploy nuclear weapons in South Korea. From the 1970s onwards, South Korea's economic strength surpassed that of North Korea, and as the gap widened with time, North Korea found itself unable to compete in a conventional arms race. Especially, the 1990s brought serious economic hardship to North Korea as its GNP is estimated to be a mere 1/600 and 1/30 of the economies of the U.S. and South Korea respectively. With a moribund

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economy, North Korea can no longer possibly afford an arms race, such as in fighter aircraft and naval vessels. But paradoxically, the development of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) seems to have been spurred by such economic difficulties. That is, the possession of WMD, even in small quantities, would relieve security concerns and allow the diversion of finances away from maintaining and strengthening conventional weapons to economic development.

North Korea announced in June 2003 that "The DPRK's intention to build up a nuclear deterrent force is not aimed to threaten and blackmail others but reduce conventional weapons under a long-term plan and channel manpower resources and funds into economic construction and the betterment of people's living." It added, "The DPRK will build up a powerful physical deterrent force capable of neutralizing any sophisticated and nuclear weapons with less spending unless the U.S. gives up its hostile policy toward the DPRK." North Korea had made clear the economic feasibility of nuclear weapons development. This meant that despite repeated U.S. threats of a nuclear pre-emptive attack, North Korea could not afford a conventional military build up due to serious economic strains and so would cut military expenses after arming itself 'cheaply' with nuclear weapons.

Third, from the late 1980s, North Korea found itself struggling to maintain its system in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the east European communist bloc at the turn of the decade. As assistance from its allies, the U.S.S.R. and China, was discontinued or dwindled, North Korea appears to have used the development of nuclear weapons and missiles as a bargaining chip to lure the U.S. to the negotiating table. This is because the U.S., the sole remaining superpower, established the prevention of the spread of WMD, including nuclear weapons and missiles, as one of its core foreign policy objectives in the post-Cold War era, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

IV. Denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula

1. South Korean Perceptions on Nuclear Weapons

The U.S. first developed nuclear weapons in 1945. This feat would be duplicated by the Soviet Union in 1949, Great Britain in 1952, France in 1960, and China in 1964. To this day, August 1945, the date of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, marked the first and only time in the history of mankind that this weapon was actually used.

It is important to recognize that the victims of the atomic bombs were not only Japanese According to one study, the number of people exposed to radiation was 690,000 (420,000 in Hiroshima and 270,000 in Nagasaki), of which approximately 70,000 were Koreans (50,000 in Hiroshima and 20,000 in Nagasaki). The number of deaths due to the bombs and radioactive contamination is estimated at 230,000 people, of which approximately 40,000 are presumed to be Korean.

Despite the fact that Koreans were among the victims of the atomic bombings, the Korean people have been insensitive to the plight of the victims. In part this may be because the atomic bombs helped liberate Korea from Japanese rule. This is well illustrated in the reaction to an accident in the late 1970s in which a Soviet satellite fitted with a nuclear fuel propelled device malfunctioned, left its orbit, and crashed to earth. At a time when the entire world was caught up with the fear of nuclear fallout, a large circulation South Korean newspaper printed a cartoon that prayed for the nuclear material to fall on Pyongyang. This may have been a mere reflection of Cold War dictate such that North Korea could be seen only as a foe. But had nuclear material fallen on Pyongyang, hundreds and thousands of innocent Koreans, North and South, could have been exposed to

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deadly radiation.

University student anti-war and anti-nuclear demonstrations of the mid-1980s were also heavily criticized by the South Korean press. For instance, one newspaper scolded the students saying that, "We have been able to live in a world in which South Korea exists only because of the U.S. nuclear superiority and umbrella." Another newspaper editorial dated March 20, 1986 read "The reason why Korea needs permanent stationing of U.S. troops, cannot decline the risky burden of nuclear support from the U.S.... and holds the annual Team Spirit joint military training exercise is as clear as daylight. It is to survive." The press went further, denouncing the anti-war, anti-nuclear slogans of student movements as "chants on behalf of the communist North", or as "coinciding wholly with recent North Korean strategic propaganda and political demagoguery against South Korea," in effect portraying it as a pro-North Korean act.

As U.S. Secretary of Defense Arthur Schlesinger stated in the 1970s, the nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea were meant not to prevent an invasion of the South by North Korea, but rather to check other major powers. This helps us to understand why the U.S., despite getting wind of North Korean attempts to develop nuclear weapons in the early 1980s and being fully convinced of such activities by the end of the decade, withdrew its nuclear weapons from the R.O.K. once the Soviet threat disappeared in 1991. For 34 years nuclear weapons were deployed all over South Korea, but the Korean people were either unaware of this fact, or knew it well but cherished the illusion that their safety and lives were not endangered, but rather assured by its existence.

It was not until October 2006, when North Korea announced that it had conducted a nuclear test, that the Korean people broke out of its numbness to the fears of nuclear weapons. All of a sudden, South Korea was seized with the deadly fear of imminent nuclear war, and in addition the issue of retaliation was hotly debated throughout society. Taking root was the asymmetrical or unbalanced perception that U.S. nuclear weapons were essential in maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula and the security of South Korea, but that those of North Korea threatened to disrupt it altogether.

2. A Change of Paradigm to Achieve North Korean Nuclear Disarmament

All nuclear weapons, including those of the U.S.F.K. and North Korea, should be dismantled to attain peace on the Korean peninsula and for the safety of its inhabitants. But the goal of 'denuclearization of the Korean peninsula' has been interpreted by the South in a narrow sense to apply only to the nuclear weapons north of the 38th parallel, whereas North Korea has asserted that U.S. nuclear weapons and umbrella also must be subject to denuclearization.

At this point in time, if we are to induce North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons, we need to try to see things from the other's perspective, that is, put ourselves in the other's shoes. When North Korea neither possessed nuclear weapons nor enjoyed the safety net of the Soviet or Chinese nuclear umbrella during the 1980s, South Korea argued that U.S. nuclear weapons ensured its existence or were needed in order to survive. The few who did oppose nuclear weapons were criticized for their thoughtlessness and pro-North Korean inclinations. Witnessing the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Soviet republics on the one hand, and recognizing the U.S. pursuit of the collapse of the North Korean regime by stationing its armed forces and extending the nuclear umbrella to South Korea on the other, it is hardly surprising that North Korea sought nuclear capability to assure its survival.

By playing the nuclear card, North Korea is believed to have two goals in mind; economic assistance and a security guarantee. First, in

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terms of economic assistance, North Korea has asking that the U.S. and other parties to the Six-Party talks provide energy resources in the form of the construction of a Light Water Reactor (LWR), which cannot be easily diverted to develop nuclear weapons, and fuel supplies until its completion. These are the North's terms in exchange for dismantling the graphite-moderated reactor, its atomic energy generating facility that produces plutonium that can be used for nuclear weapons. Second, the security guarantee could take the form of a non-aggression pact, a peace treaty, and/or the normalization of U.S.-D.P.R.K. relations. North Korean demands are essentially that the two nations co-exist peacefully by bringing an end, in a legal context, to the Korean War, which was halted fifty-five years ago in 1953 after both sides agreed to a truce promising not to attack each other.

It is unlikely that North Korea will dismantle its nuclear weapons and facilities unless both demands are fulfilled. The U.S., however, maintains that the issue of LWRs will be set aside until North Korea has kept its pledge on complete denuclearization. It has long-range plans, moreover, for maintaining U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula.

The strength of South Korea's economy and foreign relations vastly exceeds that of North Korea, yet the South seeks to strengthening the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance and to maintain the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Under these circumstances, one should question whether it would be reasonable to expect a weak North Korea to forgo its nuclear aspirations. A change of paradigm, that is, putting oneself in the other's shoes, is of utmost need at this juncture. The conditions and environment in which North Korea can dismantle its nuclear weapons and facilities without worries in regard to regime survival need to be met and fostered. Demands for North Korea's denuclearization in the absence of preparations to withdraw U.S. forces from Korea, to remove the nuclear umbrella, and to end the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance can only be termed unrealistic and absurd.

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