

Nonproliferation and the North Korean Nuclear Weapons Program:

Impotence Meets Ambition

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Abbreviations

ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDRC	Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JIG	Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
KJNWFZ	Korea-Japan Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
NDC	National Defence Commission
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NLL	Northern Limit Line
NPT	Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty
PNT	People's Neighbourhood Teams
ROK	Republic of Korea
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation
SLOCs	Sea Lines of Communication
UN	United Nations
USA	United States
WFP	World Food Programme
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Abstract

North Korea is unlikely to willingly relinquish its nuclear program because of its importance to the political economy of the DPRK state and the perpetuation of the Kim Jong-il regime. It is clear that the nuclear program has great intrinsic value to Pyongyang, its role as a defensive deterrent and important element in Pyongyang's offensive asymmetric war strategy. The nuclear program functions as a bargaining chip in international diplomacy to extract economic inputs for its moribund economy, in domestic politics as vehicle for bureaucratic interests, and as a rallying symbol of the country's hyper-nationalist ideology. At the same time, regional states lack a credible strategy for coaxing North Korea into nuclear relinquishment due to their lack of leverage over the Kim regime, the absence of unity in addressing the nuclear issue and the incongruence of their wider strategic goals *vis-à-vis* North Korea. Given this state of affairs, regional countries will have no choice but to accept North Korea as a nuclear power and manage regional relations through deterrence. To increase the stability of this environment, regional states may consider unconditional normalisation of political and economic relations with North Korea.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: _____

Preface

Analysis of a country like North Korea that imposes such severe restrictions on the flow of information across its borders is complicated by impediments to the development of a chain of evidence. It is important at this juncture to acknowledge the limitations of the data sample used in this thesis and account for any potential bias that may lie herein. There is not the wealth of primary data available that one could expect to access if studying another country. Much of this information is available in South Korea, in Korean, which is an obstacle for a researcher based in Adelaide, Australia, with minimal understanding of *hangul*. Where possible and/or practical, this thesis has drawn on primary data, including government documents and official statistics obtained online and through direct observation on two trips to the region: a July 2008 research trip to South Korea, and a three-month stay in Dandong, China, during 2004, on the west bank of the Yalu River facing North Korea. Where access to primary data is limited, the thesis draws heavily on secondary sources written in English. Peer reviewed books and articles are the most prized secondary sources, followed by non-government organisation (NGO) reports and expert commentaries. Where appropriate, attempts have been made to corroborate primary data and secondary written sources with interview testimony from academics, journalists and think-tank policy analysts, gathered during the aforementioned trip to South Korea in 2008. Where interview testimony has been used, a description of the interviewee is provided in the footnotes to establish their credibility as a source of information.

The reliance on English language sources may bias data collection toward predominantly American and Australian perspectives on the nuclear issue. Every effort has been made to

access work by South Korean, Chinese and Japanese scholars, however it is acknowledged that a larger and more extensive literature on this subject exists in the native languages of those countries. In relation to the use of Korean words and names, the thesis uses the McCune-Reischauer system of transliteration (without breves).

It is for these reasons that the scope of the thesis is limited to providing a fresh interpretation of the existing academic literature in order to address its research hypothesis, rather than a more ambitious project requiring sustained access to large amounts of primary data. Despite these limitations, the thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of the North Korean nuclear issue and reaches conclusions that provide a substantive addition to the scholarly debate on this topic.

Many people have contributed to the production of this thesis. First, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my wife Helen for supporting me through my candidature, as well as my son Kobe and my parents Peter and Olga. The support of my family has been integral to the completion of this project. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Prof Andrew O'Neil and Dr Maryanne Kelton for their guidance and mentoring throughout my candidature. I greatly appreciate the contribution of Higher Degree Administration and Scholarships Office and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Flinders University for awarding me a scholarship to undertake PhD studies, and for providing financial grants to undertake field research in South Korea. My gratitude also goes out to Dr James Manicom, Dr Terry O'Callaghan, Dr Deanne Gannaway, Dr Martin Burke (DSTO), Dr Holli Evans, Dr Salah Kuteileh, Dr Vlado Vivoda, Dr Peter Burns, Dr Pamela Wallace, Assoc Prof Nick Bisley, Robert Godfrey (ANSTO), Julie Rayner, Cathy Moloney, Mary Lyons, Colum Graham, Rob Manwaring, Julie Tonkin, Sonja Yates, Trisha Farmilo for their assistance throughout my

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