

EXPLAINING NORTH KOREAN FOREIGN POLICY:  
FOCUSING ON HUMAN NEEDS AND PROSPECT THEORY

by

YONG SEOK CHOY

(Under the Direction of Han S. Park)

ABSTRACT

This study starts with the question of what conditions make North Korea choose between confrontation and collaboration toward the United States. In order to answer the research question, this study sets up four hypotheses based on prospect theory and human needs theory. The first hypothesis is that if Pyongyang regime perceives its survival to be threatened, it will frame its decision on a losses frame. Vice versa, if Pyongyang regime perceives its security situation to be improving, it will act on a gains frame. The second hypothesis is that under the condition that the need for survival is met, if Pyongyang regime perceives its identity to be threatened, it will act on a losses frame. Contrarily if Pyongyang regime perceives its identity to be improving, it will frame its decision on a gains frame. According to prospect theory, when North Korea acts on a gains frame, it will be risk averse and cooperative. When it is on a losses frame, it will take a risky option. According to the needs hierarchy theory, North Korea would be more risk acceptant when its security is threatened than its identity threatened.

In order to test these hypotheses, this study selects five cases related to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile diplomacy with the United States from 1992 to 2002: the withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1993 and 2003, the crisis in April 1995 caused by the North

rejecting South Korean-type nuclear reactor, the test-firing of a long-range missile in 1998, and the détente between Washington and Pyongyang in 2000.

Pyongyang regime's perception of needs situation is measured by content analysis of an official North Korean newspaper. In order to reveal changes in Pyongyang's need situation, this dissertation examines changes in the objective conditions of domestic politics, economy, society of North Korea and foreign relations with the United States. This study finds; 1) North Korea employs brinkmanship strategy when its security is threatened; 2) it takes a conflictual policy when its identity is threatened; 3) Pyongyang becomes cooperative when it perceives its security to be improving.

From the theoretical standpoint, the study might contribute to prospect theory in that it provides an alternative to identifying reference point by introducing the concept of human needs into prospect theory. This study provides an example that domestic politics can exercise influence on foreign policy even in a totalitarian society. This study also shows another example of the needs hierarchy theory: only when security problem is solved, identity need begins to matter. This study may be helpful for policy makers who want to see Pyongyang cooperate with the world. The prescription would be: 1) if we can make the North perceive its external security to be improving, Pyongyang will act in a cooperative way; 2) the North's domestic insecurity may lead to brinkmanship diplomacy. Therefore, humanitarian assistance for North Korea is recommended; 3) attention should be given to Pyongyang's identity need. Even when the North perceives its security to be stable, it would take a conflictual diplomacy if it perceives the identity need to be deteriorating.

**INDEX WORDS:** prospect, human needs, perception, reference point, frame of decision, brinkmanship, conflictual policy, coercive diplomacy, North Korea

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by

YONG SEOK CHOY

B.A., SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, SOUTH KOREA, 1993

M.P.A., UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, 2003

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YONG SEOK CHOY

Major Professor:	Han S. Park
Committee:	Gary Bertsch Jeffrey Berejikian Maurits van der Veen

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2010

## DEDICATION

For my wife,  
Heeeun Yun,  
and my sons,  
Junho and Jiho

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

“Few countries can rival, let alone surpass, North Korea in its propensity to trigger crises that have the potential to escalate to armed conflicts or even to start such conflicts outright” (Koh 2004, 1). Nevertheless, “it seems quite misleading to portray North Korea solely in a negative light” because it has also shown normal and cooperative behavior (Moon 2004, 328). In March 1993, faced with the demand from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for special inspection of two suspicious facilities in the Yongbyon nuclear complex, North Korea stunned the world by threatening to walk out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for the first time since the beginning of the international regime. Pyongyang’s decision to remove thousands of spent fuel rods from its graphite-moderate reactor in Yongbyon triggered a chain of events leading up to the Agreed Framework in Geneva in October 1994. Then North Korean foreign policy seemed to become collaborative with the United States. In 1998, “North Korea once again caught the world by surprise by test-firing a Taepodong I missile,” which flew over Japan, and continued to threaten to launch a Taepodong II missile, which was believed to be capable of reaching the west coast of the U.S. (Saccone 2003, 77). This missile brinkmanship diplomacy continued until William Perry, the former secretary of defense, offered “enhanced relations for the North’s halt to its missile and nuclear programs.” In a collaborative gesture in 2000, Jo Myong Rok, vice marshal of the (North) Korean People’s Army, officially visited Washington to directly discuss the future of

U.S. - North Korea relations with the highest-ranking U.S. officials, including President Bill Clinton. Since the emergence of the George W. Bush administration, the two countries' relations began to deteriorate. The Bush administration asserted that North Korea was pursuing a highly enriched uranium program secretly in October 2002. The Bush administration declared the end of the 1994 Agreed Framework by stopping the supply of heavy oil to North Korea. Pyongyang "reciprocated with the expulsion of IAEA inspectors from the Yongbyun nuclear complex in December 2002, withdrawing from the NPT completely in January 2003, restarting the 5MW reactor in February 2003, and finishing the reprocessing of spent fuel rods in October 2003" (Jun 2006, 56). Amid this intensifying crisis, the six-party talks in which the U.S., China, Russia, and the two Koreas participated began in August 2003. "The six-party talks became a serious negotiation forum only when North Korea announced the production of nuclear weapons in February 2005" (Jun 2006, 56). The multi-national talks produced a joint statement on September 19, 2005, only to be dropped as soon as the U.S. posed financial sanctions on the Banko Delta Asia, a Macao-based bank, for its money-laundering activities on behalf of North Korean companies a day after the joint statement was struck.<sup>1</sup> In defiance of the sanctions, North Korea reignited the crisis again with the July 5 missile launch and the October 9 nuclear test in 2006.

A cursory examination of the recent history<sup>2</sup> of North Korean nuclear and missile diplomacy toward U.S. shows fluctuating patterns, oscillating between confrontation and

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, it was a day before the joint statement was concluded that the U.S. decided to levy financial sanctions on the Banko Delta Asia. However, the news was known to North Korea after the joint statement was struck.

<sup>2</sup> Ordinary people who do not have background knowledge of the two Koreas are recommended to see *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* by Don Obrdorfer (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

collaboration.<sup>3</sup> Why, then, do these foreign policy patterns repeat? How can we explain North Korean foreign policy change between confrontation and engagement? That is, what are the conditions under which North Korea chooses to employ brinkmanship or engagement policy toward the United States? In spite of her denial of employing brinkmanship,<sup>4</sup> why does North Korea so heavily rely on nuclear and missile brinkmanship strategy or brinkmanship diplomacy? Is there any means that could encourage cooperative policies from North Korea? These are the issues I intend to address in this paper.

## **1.2 IR theories and North Korea**

This section evaluates how well theories of international relations explain North Korean foreign policy behavior.

### **1.2.1. Realism**

According to neorealists like Kenneth Waltz (1979), states are preoccupied with survival and independence and predisposed toward conflict and competition because of international anarchy, in which there is no overarching authority to prevent war. As Waltz (1979) says, any state that seeks to maintain its security must balance against any rival state.

From this perspective of balance of power, as C.S. Eliot Kang (2003, 66) says, North Korea

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the fluctuating patterns Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, said on February 20, 2009, “What is clear from the Six-Party process over the last years is that when North Korea decides to cooperate and make agreements that it believes are in furtherance of its own interests, it will do so. And when it doesn’t, it is always seeking advantage, and it uses provocative words and threatening actions to try to get attention in order to make a deal in some way”. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/20/clinton.asia/index.html#cn-STCVideo>. According to Chung-in Moon (2004, 329), “North Korea’s foreign policy has shown fluctuating patterns, oscillating between conflictual and cooperative, confrontational and accommodating, rational and irrational, and normal and abnormal behavior.

<sup>4</sup> “KCNA Ridicules Western Media’s Talk about DPRK’s Brinkmanship Tactics.” (North) Korea Central New Agency (KCNA), 22 February 2003. KCNA argues that some western media and some parrots in Japan and South Korea “are so naïve as to describe the DPRK’s independent foreign policy and its principled stand and activities for its implementation as ‘brinkmanship tactics’ [and ‘brinkmanship diplomacy’] only to betray their ignorance of the DPRK. This is baseless criticism of its just stand.”

“appears to be the very model of a neorealist state” because it “has increased its military readiness and accelerated its weapons of mass destruction programs in the post-Cold War era.”

Meanwhile, the balance of power theory suggests that weak states would engage in bandwagoning behavior more than in balancing behavior. However North Korea, one of the poorest countries, has been balancing against the United States, the most threatening state. Stephen Walt (1987), a neorealist, contends that states do not balance power but threat. The balance of threat theory would predict that when North Korea feels threatened by the American hostile behavior towards it, which has been often the case, North Korea would balance against the threat from the United States or act in a hostile way against it. Also, when North Korea does not feel threatened by American foreign policy toward it, Pyongyang will act in a conciliatory way. This prediction, however, does not appear to be correct when we look back at the history of the missile brinkmanship in 1998. North Korea launched a long-range missile in 1998 to increase tension with the U.S. when Washington softened its threat to the Pyongyang regime.

Realism has also some constraints in dealing with North Korea’s cooperative policy behavior. According to neorealists like Joseph Grieco (1990), cooperation between weak and strong states is not impossible because considerations of relative gains do not always impede cooperation and both the weak and strong states are less sensitive to calculations of relative gains than the middle states. To put it more bluntly, neorealists would predict that North Korea, the very weak state, will cooperate when it sees gains and will act in an uncooperative way when it sees losses. However, this suggestion does not appear to be appropriate when we compare Pyongyang’s opposite responses to Washington’s engagement policy in the late

1990s: North Korea took brinkmanship diplomacy against Washington in 1998 and it acted in a cooperative way in 2000.

In addition, we should take into consideration the fact that North Korea like other normal states also pursues a variety of goals as well as security. While the realists provide valid explanations in a situation in which North Korea pursues the goal of security, they do not have much to say with respect to other issues such as identity and national pride.

### **1.2.2. Liberalism**

Liberal institutionalism has been critical of neorealism. In fact, many scholars and experts on North Korea such as Selig S. Harrison, Don Oberdorfer, Leon V. Sigal, and David Kang have sought to explain Pyongyang's foreign policy behavior in terms of the liberal approaches in IR that cooperation can be facilitated even under anarchy. Neoliberalism, especially asymmetric conflict and negotiation theories, may be more useful in explaining North Korean diplomacy than neorealism in that neoliberals take into consideration other factors such as the contextual or issue-specific nature of power.

According to T.V. Paul (1994, 3), asymmetric conflicts mean that "two states with unequal power resources confront each other." In other words, asymmetric conflicts mean that "a weaker state accepts the risk of challenging a stronger one despite the unfavorable balance of power" (Jihwan Hwang 2003, 136). "The higher the stakes for a bargaining state actor, the more it is willing to commit its resources and the greater its resolve to attain a favorable negotiation outcome" (Samuel Kim 2002, 50).<sup>5</sup> This logic could account for North Korean foreign policy and behavior. That is, when Pyongyang places a high value on the

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<sup>5</sup> Snyder and Diesing (1977, 190) argue that "a militarily stronger party may be less resolved in the crisis than its opponent if it does not value its interests as highly as the opponent values his."

object in a dispute, it would take the drastic step of brinkmanship in order to demonstrate its resolve through assuming the risk of war inherent in brinkmanship despite its weakness against the United States.

As T.V. Paul (1994, 15-16) shows, however, the asymmetrical conflict approach needs some assumptions and requisite conditions. One of the conditions is that there is “serious conflicts of interests” between two states with unequal power. Therefore, this approach does have much to say about the situation without conflicts of interests. For example, North Korea initiated brinkmanship crisis against the U.S. even when there was no “serious conflicts of interests” between the two states. Therefore, the approach of asymmetrical conflict requires varying degrees of modification for a better fit in North Korea’s case. In addition, the neoliberalist arguments as well as neorealism have constraints in explaining North Korean foreign policy and behavior because the two theories both are predicated on the rational choice approach or expected utility theory. The problems with rational choice approach to North Korean diplomacy will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

### **1.2.3. Constructivism**

Although structural realists such as Waltz focus on international anarchy and ignore the issue of identity, national identity could be “an important factor in explaining otherwise inexplicable twists and turns in Pyongyang’s international demarche” (Sameul Kim 1998, 20). The problem with the identity approach is that North Korea has shown different behaviors with the same identification of friends and foes. That is, the relationship with the United States, the most salient enemy to Pyongyang, has changed even though North Korea has



maintained the same identification of the U.S. as an enemy state. The constructivist approach, generally speaking, is inherently descriptive and ex post facto explanation-oriented rather than parsimonious and predictive. The approach is not appropriate in dealing with the research question this dissertation is pursuing.

In conclusion, the DPRK like other states pursues a variety of policy goals such as security and identity and shows different behaviors according to the goals it seeks to acquire. The various foreign policy behaviors including confrontation and cooperation are difficult to be explained by only one specific IR theory. Therefore, as Samuel Kim (1998, 18) points out, we need “a more integrated and synthetic theory, one that would help us better describe, explain, and predict DPRK foreign policy behavior.”

### **1.3 Review of Previous Research**

This section reviews previous researches on North Korea’s foreign policy behavior in order to come up with an alternative framework. There is already an extensive literature devoted to North Korea’s foreign policy toward the United States. These studies could be divided into four categories according to research issues: perception, foreign policy goal, decision-making process, and political culture.

#### **1.3.1. Issue of Perception**

First, research has focused on the influence of North Korea’s perception of domestic and international circumstances on its foreign policy toward the United States. There appears to be a consensus that North Korea’s, especially top policymakers’, perception of a situation defines the direction of North Korea’s foreign policy and its diplomatic strategy (Tae Woon

Kim 2005, Kyo Duk Lee and Sang Won Lee 2003/2004). In particular, many researchers tend to focus on Pyongyang's perception of threats to its security (Youn Soo Kim 2003a, Harrison 2002). They argue that the perception of insecurity or "siege mentality" (Harrison 2002) is one of reasons that North Korea takes seemingly idiosyncratic foreign policies. Selig Harrison (2002), Yong-Hwan Choi (2005) and others hold that North Korea's perception of its diplomatic isolation from the collapse of the eastern socialist states in the early 1990s and serious internal economic problems had a great role in North Korea's decision to establish nuclear and missile program. Han Park (2002, 8-9) argues that "perception analysis helps in understanding the attitudes" of North Korea and that perception approach is "guided by the premise that state of mind determines behavioral patterns." Han Park (2002, 9) maintains as follows:

Too often, students of international and comparative studies have focused on institutions, power politics, and economic output as the units of analysis, as opposed to focusing on human variables such as perceptions, need satisfaction, and the process of learning and political socialization. As a result, policies and behavioral traits that are inconsistent with accepted norms in open societies and defy "rational" expectation are often characterized as being abnormal or irrational.

Thus he (2002, 9) argues that one should comprehend "the perceptions of reality of the North Koreans themselves" in order to adequately understand Pyongyang's policy orientations and behavioral characteristics. This perception approach is valuable in that it treats perception of external and internal settings as a major variable in analyzing North Korean foreign policy. However, relatively few studies have been devoted to the possibility

of perception change and its influence on Pyongyang's foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> For example, some scholars such as Young Soo Kim (2003) contend that North Korea's hostile perceptions of the United States are not likely to change as long as the North's existing system is maintained. This dissertation opposes the argument that there has been little change in North Korean hostilities toward (or perception of) the United States. Rather this study is based on the assumption that North Korea's policy toward the U.S. would adapt as external and internal environments change on the ground that "the North has generally responded positively to positive inducements, and negatively to negative ones" (Moon 2004, 329). In addition this dissertation studies North Korean perception of identity as well as of security, while many of the existing research on North Korean perception often focused on perception of security. This is because the perception of identity also could exercise influence on foreign policy as much as perception of security does.

### **1.3.2. Foreign Policy Goal**

Numerous studies (Choi 2005, Jang 1999, Jeong 1999, Youn Soo Kim 2003b, Lee and Oh 2005/2006, Namkoong 2003, Oh and Hassig 2000, Snyder 2000, Youn 2004) have attempted to define the goals and intentions or strategic objectives of North Korean foreign policy. Although there are some scholars who argue that North Korea is refusing to give up hopes of reunifying the Korean Peninsula on its own terms (Levin 1990, Spector and Smith 1991, Tong Whan Park 1992, Kye Dong Park 2002), gathering weight is the view that North Korea's foreign policy goals turned to be regime survival due to its serious economic situation and diplomatic isolation (Ahn 1987, Ahn 1997, Jeong 1999, Kang 2004, Yeon Soo

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel Kim (2002, 23) even contends that "policy change often takes place in the absence of a prior change in beliefs and perceptions, when political leaders pragmatically redefine their national interest with little or no reassessment of basic beliefs and goals."

Kim 2003, Oh and Hassig 2000, Youn 2004, Snyder 2000). In this line, Il-Whan Oh (2001, 127) maintains as follows:

With the fall of the Cold War, North Korea is becoming more diplomatically isolated in the New World Order, which is dominated by the U.S. Economically, the breakdown of the socialist market has augmented the difficulties, bring the nation to the brink of regime collapse. Given that, North Korea is insisting on a 'North Korean style socialism,' with the national priority of maintaining the regime. In this respect, North Korea is in pursuit of reducing the threat to national security, coming out of diplomatic isolation, and overcoming the economic crisis.

David Kang (2004) portrays North Korea as pursuing the twin goals of economic reform and military security. According to C. Kenneth Quinones (2004, 91), "central to the Democratic People's Republic Korea's foreign policy since 1948 has been a quest to promote its foremost goals of national unification and survival in the face of United States' opposition. However since the late 1980s North Korea's survival has taken precedent over national unification due to a consequence of changing circumstances. Chang Hee Kim (2005) also claims that "maintenance of the North Korean regime and practical socialism are the most fundamental strategies under Kim Jung Il's leadership," which "have been applied to all the spheres in North Korea's living space including politics, economy, international relations, etc." Yong-Hwan Choi (2005) maintains that in the Post-Cold War era, North Korean policy toward U.S. had dual purpose: "to deter the threat to her inherited regime and take outside help." Many studies argue that North Korea began to place priority on coexistence with the outside world including the United States rather than hegemonic unification over the Korean Peninsula. In other words, the DPRK began to consider the United States as an object that can be taken advantage of for economic development and other strategic objectives rather

than obstacles to the unification of the two Koreas (Jae Kyu Park 1997, Keun Sik Kim 2002). With respect to the goals of North Korean foreign policy, the importance of legitimacy for dominating the Korean Peninsula should be noted. Byung Chul Koh (2004, 3-4) maintains as follows:

At a fairly high level of abstraction one may conceptualize North Korea's strategic objectives as the quest for legitimacy, security, and development. Although their relative weights and substantive contents have undergone subtle or sometimes notable change, these goals nonetheless constitute the continuous dimensions of North Korean foreign policy. ... The emergency of legitimacy as a key foreign policy goal owes to the formation of two separate states on the Korean Peninsula. ... The Korean War of 1950-1953 was, in a sense, an attempt of the North to settle the legitimacy issue once and for all. In the post-Korean War period, the two Koreas waged an intense legitimacy competition to gain exclusive recognition in the diplomatic arena, insisting that states establishing diplomatic relations with them must not recognize their rival state. Such quest for exclusive legitimacy, however, soon gave way to the pursuit of relative legitimacy, in which both sought to expand their diplomatic partners regardless of whether the latter also recognized their rival. Both nonetheless continued to undercut the legitimacy of their rival on the world stage whenever opportunities either arose or appeared to be within reach.

As Han Park (2000/2001, 2002) argues, "this imperative of maintaining legitimacy vis-à-vis South Korea has worked as a restraint on Pyongyang's policy explorations." Many studies on the goals of North Korean foreign policies are helpful in understanding what North Korea is pursuing through various strategies and tactics. However, these studies have some weaknesses. One is that many of the studies treat the goals or strategic objectives of North Korean foreign policy as constant and unchangeable. These studies often fail to notice that the goals of North Korean foreign policy, like those of other countries, change under certain conditions or policy environments. For example, most scholars agree that the DPRK has been

putting the highest priority on pursuing the goal of regime survival since the end of the Cold War. They overlook the fact that often other goals such as regime identity have been pursued when the goal of survival is achieved. Another weakness of these studies based on goal-oriented approach is that they are less interested in explaining why and when North Korea chooses brinkmanship or engagement policy. For example, although a few scholars such as Denny Roy (1996/1997) hold that North Korea like other weak states would change its foreign policy to maintain its system or regime according to changes in external and internal settings, they give us few guidelines of what kinds of changes in external and internal settings would cause the North to be collaborative or confrontational. That is, studies on foreign policy goal are not appropriate for explaining why the DPRK chooses brinkmanship or engagement policy in order to guarantee its national security.

### **1.3.3. Decision-Making Process**

The conventional explanation of North Korean decision-making process has been the “monolithic model,” which assumes that North Korean foreign policy is implemented in a shipshape and top-down way due to its monolithic ideological system (Oh and Hassig 2000, Seo 2005). This “peculiar domestic structure that governs its foreign policymaking” can be characterized as “one-man dictatorship, concentration of decision-making power, and lack of a dynamic process of policymaking” (Moon 2004, 330). The monolithic model also insists that public opinion and organizational position of the bureaucracy minimally dictate policy outcomes. On the contrary, recently a few scholars such as Alexandre Mansourov (1997) and Selig Harrison (2002) present a “conflict model” of North Korean decision-making process. This model, like Graham Allison’s decision making Model II (Allison 1971), assumes that

there are policy conflicts among organizations or policymakers. Mansourové (1997) argues that the DPRK has “a highly compartmentalized institutional structure” and “its bureaucracy has a clear chain of command and a concentrated leadership structure,” but on the other hand “decisions do not come quickly and easily or in the most efficient form because of lack of consultations across the bureaucratic lines.” There are a lot of cases that would indicate conflicts between organizations in North Korea.<sup>7</sup> For instance *Nodong Sinmun*, a North Korean newspaper, carried a number of articles in 1995 that opposed seeking foreign aid even when North Korean delegations cried out for help from the United Nations and its related agencies.<sup>8</sup>

Another explanation of North Korean decision-making process is the “competition model,” which claims that differences among North Korean policymaking groups are nothing but “a loyalty competition for winning recognition from its top leadership” (Ahn 1996).<sup>9</sup> Chung-in Moon (2004, 362) claims as follows:

We often [mistakenly] believe that foreign policy outcomes in the North are the result of dynamic interactions among military hard-liners and technocratic soft-liners. It is often portrayed that foreign ministry officials who negotiate with the United States are pragmatic soft-liners, while military officers and party cadres are hard-line dogmatists. But a close look into policymaking structure and process in the North reveals that such a dichotomy is somewhat misleading. North Korea is a monolithic society where no such fragmentation is allowed. There is only a loyalty competition among authorities, and their differences are by and large tactical ones. They are united in protecting the Kim Jung Il regime, and their bureaucratic differences are contained within the structure of Kim’s monolithic leadership.

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<sup>7</sup> The assertion that there are conflicts between organizations in North Korea does not mean that they are not loyal to Kim Jong Il. Even the conflict model supposes that they pay absolute loyalty to the North Korean leader.

<sup>8</sup> This case should not and could not be interpreted as a tactic to get more foreign aids or concession, but as one that shows fundamental discord of interests between principal decision-making groups.

<sup>9</sup> In this line, Jang Yop Hwang (1999), high-ranking North Korean official who defected to the South, contended that Kim Jung Il, the North’s top leader, ordered to pretend that there were severe conflicts between foreign ministry which prefers a negotiated settlement and the military officers who are hardliners on foreign policy so as to get more concession from the United States regarding North Korean nuclear issues.

The citation of military opposition by North Korean negotiators is nothing but a tactical maneuver to yield better negotiation outcomes.

The competition model is similar to the monolithic model in that the two models acknowledge the notion that North Korea is a monolithic society and reject the notion of fragmentation between hard-liners and soft-liners.

This dissertation assumes that the “conflict model” is more appropriate when it comes to significant decision-making such as employing brinkmanship diplomacy. Because the model assumes that even Kim Jong Il, North Korean top leader, could not control all the details through the decision-making process including implementation, the conflict model provides us with a good insight into the foreign policy of North Korea and especially the brinkmanship diplomacy. For example, while officials from the United Front Department of (North) Korea Workers Party and even Kim Jong Il sought for reconciliation with South Korea, the military authorities waged a combat against the South Korean navy in June 1999 that resulted in dozens of deaths.<sup>10</sup> It should be added that this dissertation opposes the common assumption of the three models that domestic factors such as public opinion do not have any influence on the North Korea’s decision making. When the domestic situation such as economic hardship deteriorates up to a level where the regime’s survival is in danger, it will exercise a significant influence on policymakers’ exploration for policy options. These scholarly works on the decision-making process of the DPRK are helpful in understanding the dynamics of the North’s foreign policymaking; although these studies have some limits

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<sup>10</sup> The battle occurred six days before the vice minister-level inter-Korean dialogue. In 2002, another naval military conflict occurred. North Korea made an apology that the combat was not waged by the order of policy-makers, but by a mistake of low-level military officials.



because it is very difficult to get reliable information on what is happening inside the North's political circle.

#### **1.3.4. Political Culture**

Fourth and finally, many scholars pay attention to North Korea's culture with respect to the determinants of its foreign policy. Those who take this cultural approach such as Scott Snyder (2000) and Richard Saccone (2003) seek to explain North Korean diplomatic behavior as the result of North Korean political culture. Because one of most distinctive characteristics of North Korean culture is that *Juche* (self-determination) ideology is pervasive, some scholars try to find its implications for diplomatic behavior. For example, Saccone (2003) argues that North Korean cultural underpinnings, including *Juche* ideology, shape North Korean negotiating strategies. Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-Sik Lee (1972, 869) say, “(*Juche*) ideology inhibits any rapid adjustment to changing realities.” Since culture and ideologies are developed over long period of history, those who take a cultural approach such as Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (2000) also pay attention to its historical idiosyncrasy. They (Oh and Hassig 2000, 148) argue that “North Korea's foreign policy is crafted against the backdrop of Korean history, especially the memory of recurring invasions from neighboring powers and years of political subjugation.” According to Oh and Hassig (2000), given this history it is unreasonable to characterize North Korean attitudes toward the international community as “paranoid.” The cultural approaches appear to have some advantages in understanding North Korean idiosyncrasy of brinkmanship diplomacy because it examines “how North Koreans perceive themselves and the political environment surrounding the Korean peninsula and what they consider their own national interests” (Han

Park 2002). However, these cultural approaches are little helpful in explaining policy change from confrontation to cooperation and vice versa in part because culture in nature tends to be stable.

## CHAPTER 2

### ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Alternative Framework

In this chapter, an alternative framework will be advanced drawing on the achievements from the previous scholarly works on North Korean foreign policy. The framework is derived from two categories of theories that are prospect theory and human needs theory.

##### 2.1.1. Prospect Theory

Prospect theory is said to be “the leading alternative” to the expected utility framework as “a theory of choice under conditions of risk” (Levy 1996, 179). The core finding under prospect theory is that decision-makers evaluate each choice anew and against a neutral *reference point*. The theory, initiated by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), finds that decision makers do not maximize objective outcomes due to *framing effect* and *loss aversion*. That is, prospect theory holds that individuals are risk averse in the domain of gains and risk acceptant in the domain of losses. The essential characteristics of framing are often illustrated through the example which is as follows (Berejikian 1997, 790):

##### (Example I: Gains Frame)

Imagine a choice between two options that imply personal gains.

Option 1: a sure gain of \$80

Option 2: a risky venture with an 85% chance of winning \$100 and a 15% chance of winning nothing

(Example II: Losses Frame)

Now imagine a second set of options that imply personal losses.

Option 1: a sure loss of \$80

Option 2: a risky venture with an 85% chance of losing \$100 and a 15% chance of losing nothing

When confronted with the first choice set, most people prefer the sure gain over the risky venture even though the possible value of monetary gain is \$5 less than that of option 2. In the second set, individuals prefer the gamble to the sure thing even though its expected value of monetary loss is \$5 greater. Thus prospect theory can contribute to explaining why a state picks up a seemingly irrational choice.

The finding of prospect theory that decision makers do not maximize objective outcomes differently from the contention of rational choice theory has very significant implications on understanding seemingly irrational and abnormal foreign policies of North Korea. U.S. negotiators, even many scholars, have characterized North Korea as irrational and even mad.<sup>11</sup> In fact, if we followed the rational choice argument, Pyongyang's foreign policy, especially brinkmanship diplomacy, could be regarded as an irrational choice. Many scholars and experts, knowingly or unknowingly, use the rational choice approach to argue that Pyongyang's nuclear brinkmanship in 1993 was an irrational choice. This was the case because allowing IAEA's special inspection over the suspected nuclear facilities in North Korea could have contributed to Pyongyang's interests more than taking the risk of war by playing brinkmanship diplomacy. However if we adopt the logic of prospect theory, the

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<sup>11</sup> David Kang (Cha and David 2003, 64-67) argues that "scholars smuggled a number of ancillary or ad hoc assumptions into the theory" in order to explain the mysterious behavior of North Korea. Kang calls the ancillary assumption madman hypothesis. He falsifies the argument that the North is irrational by showing some evidences to the contrary. For instance, "of all Asia's communist states (including the USSR), only North Korea avoided famine in the course of its collectivization of agriculture."

brinkmanship diplomacy might be understood as normal. The reason this dissertation does not adopt rational choice argument is that the argument is often misleading us when it comes to North Korean foreign policy and behavior.

Meanwhile, the application of prospect theory to the study of international politics is not without challenges (Levy 1992b). As Jeffrey Berejikian (2004, 17) says, one of the problems with prospect theory is that it does not offer any theory about the reference point. Thus, “in dynamic and fluid decision contexts, scholars will find it difficult to reliably identify the actual reference points adopted by decision makers. ... Without an identifiable reference point against which decision makers can assess prospects as gains or losses, conducting research under prospect theory is impossible” (Berejikian 2004, 17). Thus, “if prospect theory is to contribute to a theory of state action” or to the understanding of North Korean brinkmanship diplomacy, “a method is needed for determining when the options facing the state are framed as a choice between gains or between losses” (Berejikian 1997, 791). This is easily done “in laboratory situations in which the experimenter sets the frame”; however “framing in international relations is much more problematic” (Levy 1992b, 294). The second problem with prospect theory is that, as Levy (1992b, 304) says, “Prospect theory does not necessarily predict that a state will choose risk-acceptant behavior in the domain of losses because its decision may be reversed when the probable outcome seems too catastrophic.” For instance, if decision-makers predict that war will lead to the collapse of their nation, they are not likely to go to war even in a losses frame. Thus, when the outcome of risky choice is “too catastrophic,” the standard hypotheses of prospect theory may not be applied. In other words, prospect theory may not be useful when the payoff of a risky gamble is much bigger than that of a sure gain.

### (Example III: Losses Frame)

Now imagine a third set of options that imply personal losses.

Option 1: a sure loss of \$80

Option 2: a risky venture with an 85% chance of losing \$10,000 and a 15% chance of losing nothing

In Example III the expected value of option 2 is -\$8,500 instead of -\$85 from example II, which symbolizes that option 2 is riskier compared to the gambles from Examples I and II. In the case of Example III, it would be difficult to expect that people would choose a gamble of which the payoff is -\$8,500 in order to avoid a sure loss of \$80. That is, prospect theory may work only when the expected utilities of options facing the decision maker have a moderate difference from each other. In other words, prospect theory would not be appropriate when the amount of expected loss is extraordinarily great. Moreover, prospect theory does not offer any guideline of what is “too catastrophic.”<sup>12</sup>

## **2.1.2. Human Needs Theory**

### **2.1.2.1. Human Needs and Hierarchy**

Coate and Rosati (1998, ix) argue, “Human needs are a powerful source of explanation to understanding human behavior and social interaction because all people and groups are driven to attain basic and universal human needs, and these needs will be pursued by all means available.” Furthermore, William Chittick (unpublished, 6) says, “Human needs

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<sup>12</sup> Another problem with prospect theory approaches to Pyongyang’s decision-making is that there is no guarantee of whether North Korean decision makers behave according to the predictions of prospect theory. Whether North Korean top leaders act like people on average could be proved only in an ex post facto manner or after the fact. That is, if Pyongyang’s decision makers choose a risk option on a losses frame and a sure option on a gains frame like ordinary people do, we can conclude that North Korean decision makers behave according to the predictions of prospect theory.

are distinct from cognition and affect or emotion, but needs work with both to produce goal-oriented behavior.”

Psychologists have identified three basic human needs (Chittick, unpublished, 6): survival, identity (or belongingness), and prosperity (or leisure). Survival need, broadly defined, is “the desire of all living beings to stay alive” (Han Park 1984, 61). Park (1984, 61) says, “Because most people value survival so highly, anything that facilitates survival is also valued highly.” The need for survival is often called security need. With respect to the term ‘security,’ its definition should be made clear. Although security may be defined in many ways, this article defines it as the need for being free from fear and anxiety.<sup>13</sup> Security need is often understood as need for safety, whether physical or psychological, and includes the need for survival. In this respect, this dissertation treats the three terms, ‘safety,’ ‘survival,’ and ‘security,’ as interchangeable despite the nuanced differences among them.

Belongingness is the desire to associate with others. According to Han Park (1984, 70), “social institutions are invented to provide a regularized, routinized mechanism for the satisfaction of a particular human need. Institutions such as the family, religious groups, mass media, and educational system are made for meeting the need for belongingness.” Ideology is also “a mechanism by which government attempts to institutionalize in the populace a belief system that is supportive of the regime and its goals and strategies” (Han Park 1984, 70). The need for belongingness can be called identity need. Identity can be defined as “a sense of self in relation to the outside world” (John Burton 1990). This dissertation treats as

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<sup>13</sup> The term ‘security’ has been regarded as an ‘ambiguous symbol’, as Arnold Wolfers has put it, which may not mean the same thing to different people, or which may not have any precise meaning at all. Nevertheless, a number of studies in terms of the subject try to understand the security of a state in terms of threat. For example, Barry Buzan defines security as the pursuit of freedom from the threat. Arnold Wolfers suggested that security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. The remarks of Wolfers and Buzan were quoted from Yong-Pyo Hong (1999).

interchangeable the three terms of the need for ideology, belongingness, and identity. As Han Park (1984, 62) defines, the leisure need can be said as “a desire for material consumption beyond what is required for survival.”

Many psychologists have found that there is a “hierarchy of human needs.” Hierarchy of needs means that “some needs are more urgent than others” (Han Park 1984, 60). It is needless to say that “the emergence of all other human needs is contingent upon the presence of conditions for survival” (Han Park 1984, 60). That is, survival need is likely to be most urgent. Han Park (1984, 60) says, “When survival need has been satisfied for a certain level, human focus moves to a higher level of need, identity, which will lead people to put more efforts to develop and maintain its identity.” The third urgency would be put on the need for prosperity. Han Park and Kyung-Ae Park (1990, 18) discuss one thing about this hierarchy that deserves our attention:

The incremental structure of human needs does not indicate a linear, unidirectional, or irreversible process of development. It does not imply an uninterrupted forward movement. The progress will be sustained only if lower level needs are well secured and maintained. Failure to do so will jeopardized the efforts to pursue the emergent new and will possibly result in a reversion to an earlier need. Thus, the process of attaining the goal of satisfying all the human needs is not necessarily unilinear

#### **2.1.2.2. Regime Needs and Hierarchy**

As this dissertation focuses on foreign policy decision of Pyongyang regime, the terms of ‘survival’ and ‘identity’ always mean the survival and identity of the Kim Jong Il regime. Before we proceed, it should be made clear what the Kim Jong Il regime or the Pyongyang regime means. In this dissertation, the Pyongyang regime means the core class (*Kibon Kyechung* or *Haeksim Kyechung*) in the North Korean political system, which



accounted for 3.91 million in 1971 or about 28 percent of the population in 1983-1984 classification.<sup>14</sup>

As the regime like other groups consists of people, it also has needs of survival, identity, and prosperity.<sup>15</sup> Since survival, as one of human needs, is the desire to stay alive, a regime's survival need is the regime's desire to survive. Because the three terms of safety, survival, and security are interchangeable, regime needs of safety, survival, and security are also treated as interchangeable. It should be noted that starvation of the persons who do not belong to the Pyongyang regime or the core class is irrelevant to survival or safety need of the Pyongyang regime as long as the regime members do not experience starvation.<sup>16</sup>

According to Northup (1989, 55), identity as one of human needs is defined as a sense of self in relation to the world. Although this definition appears to refer only to individual identity, identity can extend to groups such as ethnic communities. Thus group identity can be defined as a sense of us in relation to the others. Northup (1989, 55) argues, "when a conflict between or among parties involves a core sense of identity, the conflict tends to be intractable." The leisure need as one of regime needs can be defined as a desire for material consumption beyond what is required for regime survival. This need is related to the motivation of a regime for prosperity.

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<sup>14</sup> It is well-known that by 1971 everyone in North Korea was investigated and classified into three groups and fifty-one subgroups principally according to their loyalty to Kim Il Sung and family background. According to Jae Jin Seo (1995, 426-434), the three groups were the core class (*Kibon Kyechung or Haeksim Kyechung*), which accounted for 3.91 million, the wavering class (*Dongyo Kyechung*), which consisted of 3.15 million, and the hostile class (*Jeokdae Kyechung*), which accounted for 7.93 million in 1971. Members of the core class receive priority in almost every area of life such as promotions, housing, food, and medical care. According to Oh and Hassig (2000, 133), the core class consisted of about 28 percent of the population in the 1983-1984 classification, the wavering class accounted for 45 to 50 percent, and the hostile class consisted of 20 to 25 percent of the population.

<sup>15</sup> As Herbert C. Kelman (1997, 195) says, "Needs are attributes of individual human beings. But insofar as these needs become driving forces in international and inter-group conflict, they are needs of individuals articulated through important identity groups. The link of needs to groups - their collective aspect - is an important and almost ubiquitous feature of human needs."

<sup>16</sup> Of course, if the starvation deteriorates up to a level where the famine would lead to regime instability, the event would be relevant to the safety need of Pyongyang regime.

These regime needs, when threatened, could act as a reference point of decision-making. If a regime starts to perceive that recent changes begin to threaten its needs (say security need) that have been satisfied, the reference point of this regime may be the status quo ex ante in which the regime maintained security. As a result, the regime may be operating under a losses frame<sup>17</sup> and choose a risky option instead of passively accepting the loss of security from recent changes. Alternatively, if a regime starts to perceive that recent changes begin to increase the level of its needs (say security need) satisfaction, the reference point of this regime, at least for a while, may be the status quo ex ante in which the regime's security was at risk. As a result, the regime may be operating under a gains frame and accept passively the improved security situation from recent changes rather than attempting to capitalize on them proactively for further gain.<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that in this dissertation human and regime needs are treated as interchangeable, despite a few differences among them. One of differences between human and regime needs is that a regime may have a variety of needs at the same time because the regime consists of human beings whose individual needs may be different from one another. At a given point in time, however, a regime may have the then-dominant needs. As Han Park and Kyung-Ae Park (1990, 18) say, "Since the satisfaction of human needs is of such a pivotal importance to its legitimation, a regime has a great stake in improving its ability to address the needs of the populace." At any given point in time therefore, a regime's task (to put it more exactly, the regime leaders' task) "may be determined as a function of the then-dominant needs of its individual members" (Han Park 1984, 78). In other words, a regime's

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<sup>17</sup> We can say that a regime is on a losses frame only if its needs are unmet and all of its available strategies are losses.

<sup>18</sup> The concepts of passive acceptance and capitalizing on recent change originated from Jeffrey Berejikian (1997).

need characteristics are “defined as the aggregate of its individual members’ needs and a regime is to maximize its efforts in responding to the prevalent needs” of its members (Han Park 1984, 78)<sup>19</sup>

A regime may also have needs hierarchy in a sense that a regime is to maximize its efforts to meet the then-dominant needs of its members. As a result, the dominant needs of a regime, say security need, may exercise more influence on the foreign policy decision making than other needs such as prosperity.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in this dissertation, “regime needs” mean the prevalent needs of its members and the sentence that “a regime perceives its needs (say identity) to be threatened” means the majority of the regime members perceives their identity need to be threatened.

Another thing deserving our special attention is that when a regime perceives (in other words, the majority of its members perceives) its survival to be threatened, the regime may act in more extreme ways than when the other needs of identity and prosperity are threatened. Even a brinkmanship strategy including a risk of war would be an option for securing survival. Vice versa, when identity is threatened, the regime is likely to act in a less extreme way than security denied. According to the theory of needs hierarchy, we may assume that the regime might hesitate to take brinkmanship strategy to secure identity needs because it would not risk its survival need in order to avoid a loss of its identity need or any other less urgent need.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> According to Han Park (1984, 78), “a regime is to maximize its efforts in responding to the prevalent needs of the members of the society.” However, this dissertation contends that Pyongyang regime is responding to the dominant needs of “members of the regime,” that is, the core group of North Korea, more sensitively than those of people who belong to “the wavering and hostile class.”

<sup>20</sup> It is unfortunate that we cannot measure what the salient need of Pyongyang regime is in a direct way because North Korea is a highly closed system. This dissertation measures it in an indirect way by employing content-analysis approaches.

<sup>21</sup> Based on needs hierarchy, Han Park (2002) says that “like other system, North Korea seeks prosperity as much as possible but not at the expense of system survival.”

(Example IV: Losses Frame)

Option 1: a sure loss of identity

Option 2: a risky venture with an 85% chance of losing survival and a 15% chance of losing nothing

In the above example, a regime would not choose option 2 because it risks more urgent need, that is, survival. If this assumption is right, the needs hierarchy offers a guideline of how much of the expected loss is extraordinarily large or “too catastrophic.” That is, when a risky venture has a probability of losing a more urgent need, the expected loss is too great.

### 2.1.3. Incorporation of Human Needs and Prospect Theory

Based on the previous discussion, this study sets up an alternative framework for North Korean foreign policy behavior.

Table 2.1. Regime Needs and Frame of Decision

Regime Needs			Frame	Attitude	Foreign policy behavior
security	Identity	Prosperity			
threatened			losses	Risk-taking	Brinkmanship
satisfied			gains	Risk aversive	Cooperation
satisfied	threatened		losses	Risk-taking	Confliction
satisfied	satisfied		gains	Risk aversive	Cooperation
Satisfied	satisfied	threatened	losses	Risk-taking	Bargaining
Satisfied	satisfied	satisfied	gains	Risk aversive	Bargaining

A few assumptions are needed to apply this alternative framework to the Pyongyang regime. First of all, if a regime whose survival need has been satisfied perceives that its survival begins to be threatened, it will frame its decision in the domain of losses. As a result,

it will be risk-taking to secure its survival and choose a brinkmanship strategy. This argument is based on the assumption that survival becomes a reference point when the need for survival is threatened. Because securing survival is most urgent, anything that facilitates survival can be viewed as an appropriate policy means. Brinkmanship then can be one of policy options to the decision makers whose survival is at stake although brinkmanship might cause a war if unsuccessful.<sup>22</sup>

This can be described as follows:

(Example V: Losses Frame)

Option 1: a sure loss = threat to survival

Option 2: a risky venture with an 85% chance of causing a war and a 15% chance of losing nothing (that is, securing survival)

Conversely, if a regime whose survival has been threatened perceives that recent changes guarantees its survival, then it will act on a gains frame and be risk averse and take a cooperative policy. When security is threatened, the regime (or the majority of the regime members) is not likely to pay attention to higher needs or less urgent needs such as identity or prosperity. This means that decision-makers who recover security will act in a gains frame regardless of the situation of their identity need.

Secondly, this dissertation assumes that brinkmanship and confliction are risky options. The assumption deserves our attention because research based on prospect theory treat cooperation as a risky option. For instance, Michael Mastanduno argues that “the American agreement with Japan over structural impediments can be understood as a risky

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<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that war will not be a policy option as long as brinkmanship is available and provides an opportunity to survive. The purpose of brinkmanship is not to plunge into a war but to consolidate survival by using blackmail diplomacy.

choice” (Stein 1992, 223). However, it should be noted that most of the researches that regard cooperation as a risky option focus on the cases of international cooperation between allies, in which the decision makers identify certain losses or cost from the failure to cooperate. In other words, cooperation can be treated as a risky option when the relations between states involved are friendly enough to see certain losses from the refusal to cooperate. Therefore, in the case in which it is difficult to imagine that North Korean leaders would take seriously the cost from the failure to cooperate because North Korea is technically at war with the U.S. until now, it would be reasonable to assume that cooperation will occur in the domain of gains. Thus, this dissertation treats brinkmanship and confliction as a risky option.

Thirdly, if a regime whose survival need has been satisfied for a certain level starts to feel its identity threatened, it will frame its decision in the domain of losses. This assumption is based on the theory of needs hierarchy, which says that people tend to focus on identity needs when survival needs have been satisfied for a certain level. As a result, it will be risk-taking to regain the status quo ex ante and choose a conflictual foreign policy.

Vice versa, if a regime whose survival need has been satisfied but identity need not satisfied starts to feel its identity strengthened, then it will act on a gains frame. As a result, the regime will be risk averse and choose a cooperative policy. It should be emphasized that a regime whose identity need is negated adopts less extreme measures or conflictual policy than brinkmanship to regain identity. In this study conflictual policy means “coercive diplomacy” in the theory on coercive diplomacy introduced by Alexander L. George (1971), but does not include brinkmanship strategy. According to Alexander George (1971, 2), coercive diplomacy is a diplomatic strategy that relies on the threat of force rather than the

use of force to achieve the objective. George's definition of coercive policy includes brinkmanship and other conflictual policies and many international relations scholars follow suit. However, this study excludes brinkmanship from coercive diplomacy because brinkmanship uses both verbal and material threats while conflictual diplomacy only adopts verbal threat or blackmail. More detailed definitions and characteristics of brinkmanship and conflictual policy are shown in the next chapter.

Fourthly, if a regime whose needs for survival, identity, and prosperity have been satisfied starts to feel its prosperity threatened, it will frame its decision in the domain of losses. Vice versa, if a regime whose survival and identity needs have been satisfied but its prosperity need has not satisfied starts to feel prosperous, then it will act on a gains frame. This dissertation assumes that North Korea like other normal states would be ready to go into a bargain or to negotiate and compromise when North Korea focuses on prosperity need because the needs for security and identity are satisfied for a certain level. However, this dissertation does not deal with the impact of prosperity need on Pyongyang's decision making. This is because it does not appear that North Korea, one of the poorest states in the world, could afford to pay attention to the need for prosperity since the post Cold-War era.

Fifthly, this framework assumes that security policies of North Korea like those of other states are influenced by domestic settings as well as external circumstances. "There are numerous facets of domestic politics that could influence foreign policy decisions. One argument that has received a great deal of attention and wide support is the notion that state leaders often turn to foreign policy adventures, including war, as a means of dealing with internal political problems" (Morgan and Bickers 1992, 26). By contrast, as Daniel Pinkston (2003, 1) says, most analyses regarding North Korea tend to focus on the relationship

between international circumstances and its foreign policy, with little consideration given to North Korean domestic politics. This scholarly attitude might be justified on the ground that authoritarian or dictatorial states do not have to consider domestic factors such as elections.<sup>23</sup> “The DPRK is not a pluralistic polity; North Korean civil society is extraordinarily underdeveloped. Nevertheless, even the most authoritarian governments require a critical mass of supporters in order to remain in power” (Pinkston 2003, 1).<sup>24</sup> Especially in a situation in which the North Korean regime perceives that it is on the verge of collapse due to serious deterioration of domestic conditions such as massive starvation in the mid-1990s, it would be plausible that North Korean leaders could risk extreme danger to deal with the domestic problems.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, this study pays close attention to change both in domestic and in external settings in terms of survival needs. Meanwhile, this study presumes that North Korea’s identity need is more often than not influenced by external conditions. This assumption is at the root of the reality that the Pyongyang regime has been holding strong control over North Korean society and there have not been any significant civil forces enough to threaten the identity of North Korea.

Sixthly, it should be noted that this dissertation treat the theory of human needs hierarchy as an ideal type. That is, in reality higher level of human needs do not necessarily occur only after lower level of needs are met. The empty cells of table 2.1 indicate that the alternative framework as an ideal type treats concerns of lower level of human needs, when it is not met, as dominating concerns of other higher needs. In reality, North Korea might

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<sup>23</sup> Young Soo Kim (2003) insists that there is little correlation between North Korean external and internal policies for Pyongyang’s foreign policy is irrespective of the domestic situation or policy.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel A. Pinkston (2003, 1) argues that the North Korean domestic political economy is a determining factor for North Korean missile program as well as changes in the international strategic environment influence North Korea in determining the missile policy.

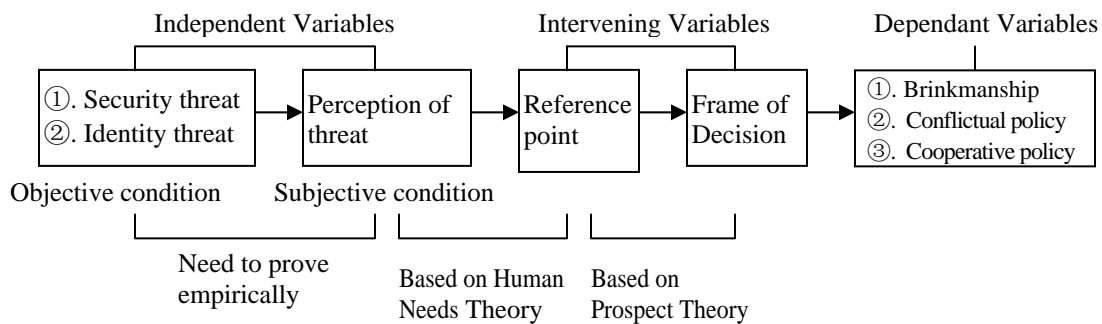
<sup>25</sup> According to Kyo Duk Lee and San Won Lee (2003/2004), domestic conditions of North Korea play a significant role in making a foreign policy decision.



pursue the needs for security, identity, and prosperity at the same time although there is difference of urgency among three needs.

Seventhly and finally, it should be noted that satisfaction or dissatisfaction of human needs are related to objective conditions while frame of decision is linked to psychological subjectivity. This means that there is a chance that improvement or deterioration of human needs situation does not necessarily determine the frame of decision.

The basic concepts mentioned above can be summarized as follow:



## 2.2 Methodology

### 2.2.1. Hypotheses

Based on the discussion above, this study sets up four hypotheses.

*HA1: If the Pyongyang regime perceives that its survival starts to be threatened, then it will frame its decision in the domain of losses regardless of the situation of its identity need. Thus, Pyongyang will be risk-taking and will take a brinkmanship strategy.*

Contrary to HA1, *if the Pyongyang regime whose survival has not been satisfied starts to perceive that its survival is guaranteed, then it will act on a gains frame regardless of the situation of its identity need (HA0).* Thus, Pyongyang will be risk averse and will take a cooperative policy.

*HB1: If the Pyongyang regime whose survival need has been satisfied perceives that its identity starts to be threatened, then it will frame its decision in the domain of losses. Thus, it will be risk-acceptant and take a conflictual foreign policy.*

On the contrary, *if the Pyongyang regime whose survival need has been guaranteed but identity need not satisfied perceives that its identity begins to be consolidated, then it will act on a gains frame (HB0).* Thus, it will be risk averse and take a cooperative foreign policy.

Hypothesis HB1 assumes that North Korea will take a conflictual policy in order to keep its identity intact. In this case, North Korea will not engage in a brinkmanship strategy because the strategy might jeopardize the North's survival if unsuccessful. According to the theory of hierarchy of human needs, it is almost unimaginable to seek to improve identity at the cost of the survival need.

It should be noted that the four hypotheses assume that North Korea has only two policy options of cooperation and confrontation. This assumption comes from observations of North Korean decision-making behavior.<sup>26</sup> North Korean decision makers tend to assess policy options in a black and white way or all or nothing way. North Koreans also tend to refuse coming up with compromised options mainly because they think of compromised policy options as a symbol of weakness or submission to outside pressure.<sup>27</sup>

Caution also should be given to the fact that frame of decision can be determined only when all choices for a certain domain imply either all losses or all gains to North Korea. That is, hypotheses HA1 and HB1 assume a situation in which all available policy options imply loss to North Korea and, vice versa, hypotheses HA0 and HB0 suppose a situation in which all feasible choices Pyongyang faces means all gains. Therefore, this dissertation will show in an empirical way that the choice-sets that Pyongyang is confronted with involve either all gains or all losses.

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<sup>26</sup> David Kang (1998) reveals the reasons why North Korea has only a few available policy options by assessing all the plausible policy options on the policy spectrum.

<sup>27</sup> Thus, North Korean interlocutors often use such phrases as “categorically reject.”

Table 2.2. Expected Needs Situation and Perception

EVENT	EXPECTED SITUATION OF HUMAN NEEDS	EXPECTED PERCEPTION	DECISION FRAME	RESULT
1st Nuke Crisis (1993)	Security Threatened	Security Threatened	Losses	Brinkmanship (Hypothesis A1)
South Korean Reactor(1995)	Identity Threatened	Identity Threatened	Losses	Conflictual (Hypothesis B1)
Missile Crisis (1998)	Security(Domestic) Threatened	Security(Domestic) Threatened	Losses	Brinkmanship (Hypothesis A1)
Detente with the U.S. (2000)	Security Secured	Security Secured	Gains	Engagement (Hypothesis A0)
2nd Nuke Crisis (2002)	Security Threatened	Security Threatened	Losses	Brinkmanship (Hypothesis A1)

### 2.2.2. Selection of Cases and Level of Analysis

This dissertation selects all the cases related to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile diplomacy with the United States from 1992 to 2002.<sup>28</sup> This dissertation considers the five cases. The first case is about North Korea's decision to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1993 when it was faced with Washington's demand to accept 'special inspection' over the suspected nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, North Korea.<sup>29</sup> The second case deals with the tension between the U.S. and North Korea in 1995. This case is about North Korea's threat to abandon the Agreed Framework of 1994 when faced with the Clinton administration's pressure to publicly acknowledge the key role of South Korea in providing North Korea with light water reactors. The third case is related to the test-fire of a long-range missile in 1998 in spite of Washington and other related states' objection. The fourth one is

<sup>28</sup> According to a few experts on North Korea, the Soviet decision to normalize foreign relations with Seoul in 1990 was one of main reasons North Korea decided to go nuclear. However, most of scholars and experts on North Korea would agree that the five cases in this dissertation are directly related to U.S.-North Korean relations.

<sup>29</sup> North Korea declared its withdrawal from the NPT again in 1994. However, the 1994 case is the continuation of the political confrontation between Washington and Pyongyang in 1993. Therefore, the two cases should be treated as one case.

about a series of cooperation episodes of Pyongyang with Washington, which culminated in dispatching a North Korean high-ranking official to the U.S. in 2000. The fifth and final case is related to Pyongyang's decision in early 2003 to walk out of the NPT when faced with the Bush administration's demand to solve such issues of concerns as its nuclear and missile program while stepping up political and military pressure.

As mentioned before, this study focuses on foreign policy decisions of the Pyongyang regime. Thus the term 'survival' always means the survival of the 'Kim Jong Il regime.' A state and a regime should be distinguished since the needs of state and those of a regime might be different, even though they are interrelated and interdependent. For example, the collapse of the Kim Jong Il regime does not necessarily mean the collapse of the DPRK as a sovereign state. The term "identity" also means Pyongyang regime's identity. Thus the regime's identity includes the *Juche* (self-reliance) ideology and the monolithic ideological system as well as socialism.

### **2.2.3. Variables**

#### **2.2.3.1. Dependent and Independent Variables**

Under the aforementioned hypotheses, the dependent variable of this study is North Korea's foreign policy toward the United States: brinkmanship, conflictual, and cooperative policies. The independent variables are situations of human needs and perception of them. That is, North Korea's foreign policy depends on whether human needs are threatened or improved and how the North perceives changes in the human need situation. With regard to the independent variables, the chapters from 4 to 8 will show that all choices for a certain

domain are either all losses or all gains.<sup>30</sup> For example, in 1993 North Korea had to choose one of two options that imply loss for the Pyongyang regime: one was to allow the IAEA's special inspection over the suspected nuclear facilities in North Korea, and the other was to employ brinkmanship. If the brinkmanship failed, North Korea would get more severe international sanctions and if it worked, Pyongyang would not receive special inspections (that is, North Korea would not loss anything).

#### **2.2.3.2. Intervening Variables**

This study assumes that the independent variables of human needs situation and its perception exercise influence on the dependent variable through the intervening variables of reference point and frame of decision. When the North perceives its need (say security) to be threatened, the reference point of the Pyongyang regime is to recover security up to the previous level. According to prospect theory, the reference point and policy options of either all losses or all gains determine the frame of decision, which finally directs the dependent variable or Pyongyang's foreign policy. In this dissertation, the intervening variables of reference point and frame of decision are not confirmed empirically because the intervening variables are deduced by human needs theory and prospect theory.

#### **2.2.4. Measurement**

##### **2.2.4.1. Measuring Human Needs Situation**

To reveal changes in the external and internal situations of human needs for the Pyongyang regime, this dissertation examines changes in the objective conditions of

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<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, chapter 6 shows that the policy option of missile brinkmanship was not all losses. Because the option included gain as well as loss, the chapter cannot confirm the hypothesis A1.

domestic politics, economy, society of North Korea, and foreign relations with the United States. The most influential external environment to North Korean security would be the American policy toward Pyongyang. This study focuses on Washington's policy toward Pyongyang in terms of hawkish and dovish or hostile and engagement policy. This is because when the U.S. takes a hawkish policy towards North Korea, it is expected to threaten Pyongyang's security need and vice versa.

This study also assumes that domestic settings may have influence on the foreign policy of the Pyongyang regime. So it is necessary to probe domestic changes in North Korea. This study focuses on the political stability of the Pyongyang regime regarding political elites' disturbance, power struggle, and political culture. Pyongyang's control over North Korean society will be examined with respect to internal migration, the number of defectors, political commotion, and outside information. This study also looks into such economic indexes as gross national product (GNP), growth rate, the food situation, and the number of death from hunger.

The situation of identity need will be examined by focusing on the *Juche* ideology and information control. This is because the ideology acts as a provider of identity for the Pyongyang regime and it can be maintained by cutting out information from the outside world. In fact, it is Pyongyang's perception of the needs situation for security and identity that ultimately determine its foreign policy rather than needs situation themselves. The utility of examining the objective human needs situation is to confirm whether North Korea's perception is based on reality.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Many scholars and experts on North Korea tend to believe that North Korea's foreign policies are often based on a wrong or distorted perception of reality.

## **2.2.4.2. Measuring Perception of Human Needs Situation**

### **2.2.4.2.1. Content Analysis and North Korean Newspaper**

Klaus Krippendorff (2004) writes, “the inability to observe phenomena of interest tends to be the motivation for using content analysis.” Samuel Kim (1980, 289) says that *Nodong Sinmun*, a North Korean official newspaper, has been considered “one of the most important available primary sources” because of “the secrecy of the Pyongyang regime and the paucity of data.” *Nodong Sinmun* has been believed to be helpful in understanding North Korean perception of a variety of issues. In this dissertation, content analysis<sup>32</sup> denotes a quantitative process in which the frequency of key words is counted.

*Nodong Sinmun* is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the (North) Korea Workers Party. Because *Nodong Sinmun* expresses North Korea’s official position or view on important issues and puts emphasis on propaganda rather than delivery of facts, great caution is required in analyzing the newspaper in order to ensure the validity of analysis. Therefore, what is required is an “explicit conceptual scheme for assembling, typologizing, and measuring the content of communication” as indicator of perceptions (Samuel Kim, 1980, 291). In other words, in order to justify inferences from contents (words in *Nodong Sinmun*) to what these contents mean (Pyongyang regime’s perception), “analytical constructs”<sup>33</sup> should be adopted.

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<sup>32</sup> According to the definition of Klaus Krippendorff (2004, 18), content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the texts of their use.”

<sup>33</sup> According to Klaus Krippendorff (2009, 3), an analytical construct is “a means to render inferences from texts to the contexts of their use conclusive.” For example, “in (Alexander) George’s article, the analytical construct consists of knowledge of how an elite’s use of preparatory propaganda responded to events not under its control.”



#### 2.2.4.2.2. Analytical Constructs

As mentioned above, if we could prove that Pyongyang perceives its security deteriorated and all available policy options imply losses, we can be sure that North Korea is on a losses frame based on prospect theory. The first thing we should do is to confirm Pyongyang's perception. This dissertation makes inferences to Pyongyang's perception on the fundamental assumption that North Korean decision-makers, when they feel their external security is threatened, would use the word of war more often than the previous period in which they felt secured. Contrarily, Pyongyang is supposed to feel less threatened when the frequency of the word "war" decreases. Higher or lower frequencies of particular words in a certain period than the previous period of time are inferred to changes in perception of the human needs situation.

There are a few reasons that this dissertation believes that Pyongyang's perception can be inferred by content analysis. First, one of the most important tasks of *Nodong Sinmun* is to maintain the political and ideological unity of the Korea Workers Party (Tongilbu 2001, 520). Accomplishing its purpose, the newspaper does not or should not deliberately mislead the readers, many of whom consist of the core class of North Korea, with respect to how the Korea Workers Party assesses or perceives the situation. It should be noted that almost all of the members must learn the official position and view of the Korea Workers Party. That is, if the North Korean leadership perceives that the ideological mindsets of people are wavering, the newspaper as a medium for propaganda will raise more ideology-related issues and use more related words than before to deal with the ideological crisis. Therefore, it would not be harmful to accept at face value the repeated words including phrases and statements in *Nodong Sinmun*.

Secondly, politically sensitive issues and themes such as negative news on the Pyongyang regime are expressed in a metaphoric way or are not released (Jongseok Lee 2005, 35-60). As a result, those issues and themes that are not politically sensitive appear on the newspaper without restriction. Thirdly and finally, a general observation about the North Korean newspaper practice is that only special and particular words are controlled or limited in the Newspaper. For example, based on a strategic viewpoint, the South Korean president's name is allowed or prohibited on the newspaper. Therefore, such proper nouns as war will be used in the newspaper without reservation. It should be added that a sudden increase of particular words for a short period of time, that is, for one or two months, should not be regarded as principal changes in perception. Only long-term changes in frequency of particular words might mean perception changes because perception is not easily changed.

#### **2.2.4.2.3. Unit of Analysis**

This study counts frequency of such words as war, self-help, and *Juche* ideology in *Nodong Sinmun*. All the articles in the North Korean newspaper are under the control of the (North) Korea Workers Party. As a result of this control, a skeptic might argue that we only get a sense of how the regime wants us to think it thinks rather than of how the regime really thinks by conducting content analysis of the communist newspaper of propaganda. However, even the communist regime does not and could not decide how many times the newspaper should use particular words. Thus, we might come to the conclusion that the Pyongyang regime perceives its human need to be threatened if the number of times specific words are used increases in *Nodong Sinmun* compared to the prior period. Contrarily, North Korea is expected to perceive its needs situation to be improving if the frequency of particular words

in the newspaper decreases against the previous time. This approach is a kind of Kremlinology technique for analyzing North Korean diplomacy and perception.

This dissertation picks up the word “war” to decipher Pyongyang regime’s perception of the security settings. The synonyms such as invasion, military threat, bellicose act, and military action are not counted. This is because there are too many synonyms and it is very difficult to decide what word should be treated as a synonym.<sup>34</sup> This study also chooses the word of *jaryeokgaengsaeng* (one’s salvation by one’s own effort or self-help) to infer Pyongyang’s perception of domestic security. All the mass media in North Korea including *Nodong Sinmun* do not carry out such negative words as political conflict and famine with respect to its domestic situation.<sup>35</sup> Such metaphoric words as “temporal obstacle,” “ordeal,” and “economic hardship” could be used, but these words are more often mentioned after the end of difficulty than while the adverse circumstances are proceeding.<sup>36</sup>

This dissertation believes that the word “self-help” (*jaryeokgaengsaeng*) might reflect Pyongyang regime’s perception of its domestic settings more accurately than any other words. “Self-help” can be used in any time, good or bad, because North Korean official ideology “*Juche Sasang*” emphasizes the importance of self-help or self-reliance in every aspect of life. Even when the state has nothing to do for its people facing a severe famine, Pyongyang might take advantage of the word “self-help” in order to encourage people and avoid responsibility of the famine. This study starts on the belief that the regime would use the word more often in an adversarial domestic situation than in a beneficial one.

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<sup>34</sup> In reality, the burden for research should be taken into consideration because this dissertation deals with over 24,000 pages from the North Korean newspaper.

<sup>35</sup> Even when at least hundreds of thousands of people were dying from hunger, North Korea boasted in vein that its children were provided with education service for free. *Nodong Sinmun*, 28 August 1996.

<sup>36</sup> For example, looking back on economic hardship in the late 1990s, the North Korean newspaper used the word “ordeal (*siryeon*)” more often in 2000 when economic crisis almost ended than in 1998 when famine was killing at least hundreds of thousands of North Korean citizens.

Finally, in order to infer Pyongyang's perception of identity need situation, this study counts the number of times the word of *Juche Sasang* (*Juche* ideology) is used. This study supposes that Pyongyang would mention *Juche* ideology more often when its identity is threatened than improved and that the number one threat of Pyongyang's identity comes from South Korea.

#### **2.2.4.2.4. Sampling, Coding Rules and Procedures<sup>37</sup>**

This dissertation uses an electronic database<sup>38</sup> provided by the National Information Service (Korean Central Intelligence Agency) in which all the articles from *Nodong Sinmun* are accumulated. At the first stage, all the articles from *Nodong Sinmun* from 1992 to 2002 should be categorized into three kinds of news: (1) news of international relations issues, (2) news of the relations between the North and the South, and (3) other news.<sup>39</sup> This study does not differentiate editorials from news articles and they will be both expressed as articles or news.

The news related to international relations issues are divided into two subcategories, which includes both news about foreign countries (1-1) and international relations (1-2). News of the relations between the North and South (category 2) includes both the news only related to the relations between the two Koreas and the news only mentioning South Korean issues. Therefore, the news related to the two Koreas and other states do not belong to category 2, the articles dealing with the relations between the two Korea. The news related to

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<sup>37</sup> As Margaret G. Hermann (2008) implies, elaborate coding rules and procedures would be helpful in enhancing the reliability of content analysis.

<sup>38</sup> The Database of the National Information Service (NIS) is only accessible for persons with special permission from the NIS. The database and search engine provided by the NIS has only a few basic functions.

<sup>39</sup> The NIS Database categorizes the articles in *Nodong Sinmun* automatically into five kinds: relations between the two Korea, international relations Issues, domestic political issues, economic issues, and others.

international relations (category 1-2) are categorized into two subcategories: the news that deals with the relations between Washington and Pyongyang (category 1-2-1) and the other news dealing with relations between North Korea and other states except the United States (category 1-2-2). For example, the article only related to the U.S. does not belong to the category 1-2-1,<sup>40</sup> but should be categorized into the news about foreign countries (category 1-1). However, articles that mostly mention the relationship between the U.S. and other countries and that deal with the U.S.-DPRK dyad secondarily are included into the category 1-2-1. Contrarily, articles are excluded from category 1-2-1 that might be implying the relationship between Pyongyang and Washington but do not mention it clearly. For example, the article “We (North Korea) will fight the Imperialists” is not included into the category 1-2-1 but belongs to category 1-2-2 because it just says the imperialists instead of the American imperialists.

Table 2.3. Categorization of Articles

(1) International Relations Issues	(1-1)News about foreign countries	
	(1-2) Int'l Relations	(1-2-1) Relations b/t U.S. & DPRK
		(1-2-2) Relations with others
(2) Relations between the two Korea.		
(3) Others		

At the next stage, this study counts the number of times the word ‘war’ is used in the articles which deal with U.S.-DPRK relations in *Nodong Sinmun* from 1992 to 2002. It should be noted that this dissertation deals with the dyad of the U.S. and North Korea. Therefore, only the word “war” from the articles that belong to category 1-2-1 should be

<sup>40</sup> For example, the article “the American economy suffering severe crisis” (8 January 1993) belongs to the news about foreign countries (that is, the category 1-1), because the article does not deal with relations between the two countries and only talks about the economic situation of the U.S.

counted. For instance, if we included the word of war from articles dealing with relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang into the frequency analysis, Pyongyang's threat perception of security would be overestimated. The word *jaryeokgaengsaeng* (one's salvation by one's own effort or self-help) is counted among all the articles in *Nodong Sinmun* from 1992 to 2002 because the word 'self-help' can be used in almost every kind of issues. Finally, regarding the word "Juche ideology," this dissertation counts the word of *Juche* ideology from the articles belonging in category 2, which deals with North-South Korea relations in *Nodong Sinmun* from 1992 to 2002. This is the case because this study supposes that a prosperous South Korea is the number one threat to Pyongyang's identity.

#### 2.2.4.2.3. Processing Data and Validity

The numbers of times the three words of war, self-help, and *Juche* ideology are used per every month are examined. The results are shown in the Appendix A. The changes in frequencies over time are presented as trend lines by using MS Excel. Because the time series of frequencies have sharp fluctuations, this study employs the 'simple moving average method' to observe a trend of changes in Pyongyang's threat perception. The moving average is calculated by using a 5-period average of  $t-4$  through  $t$ . The results are as follows:

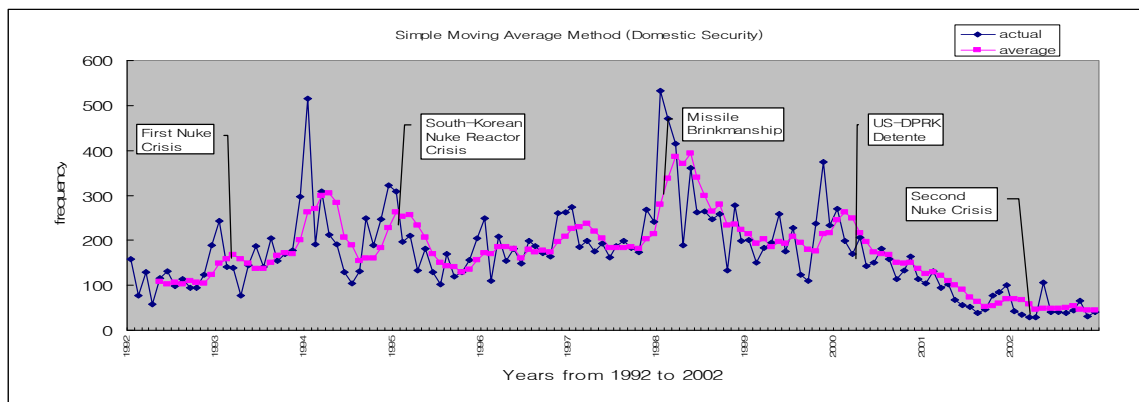


Figure 2.1. Domestic Security (1992-2002)

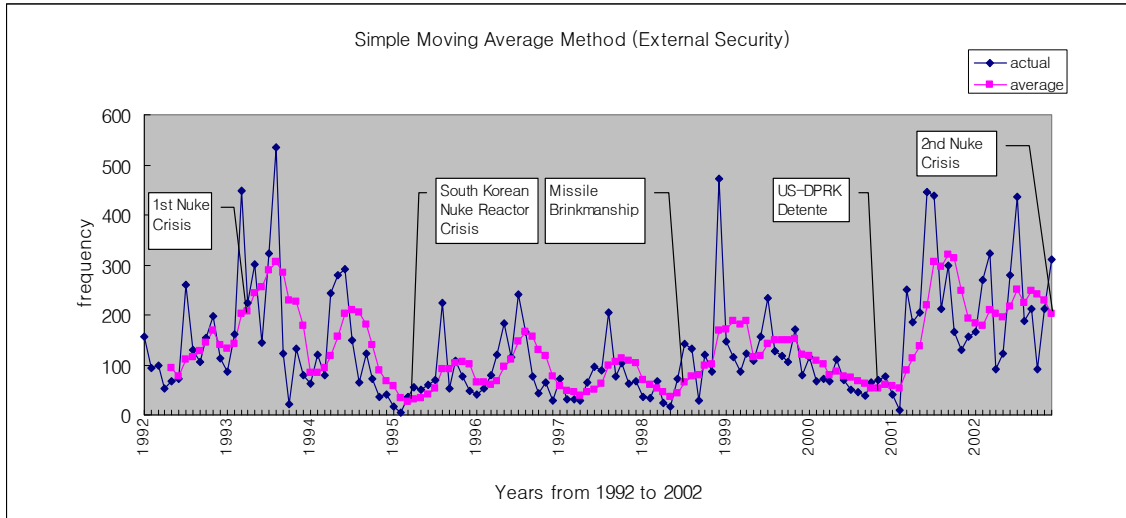


Figure 2.2. External Security (1992-2002)

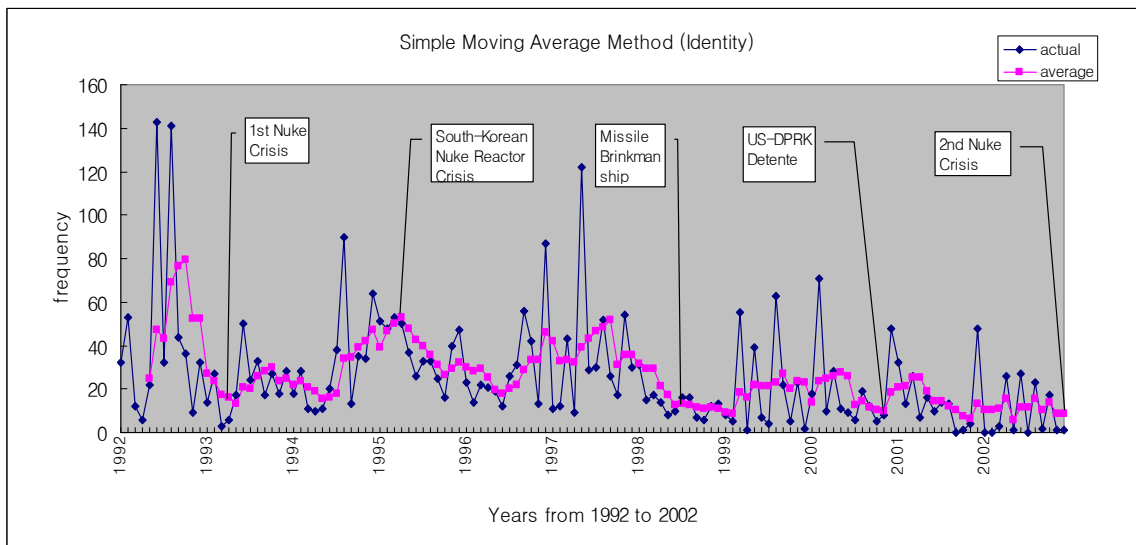


Figure 2.3. Identity (1992-2002)

In the above figures, the blue lines show sharp fluctuations while the red lines (moving average) represent smoother patterns. The ups and downs of the lines are supposed to reveal Pyongyang's perception of its needs situation. However, as Krippendorff (2004, 39) says, "Validation may be difficult or infeasible, if not impossible, in practice," because the absence of direct observational evidence leads to content analysis. In this study, one way to

secure validity might be to correlate the result of perception analysis with historical facts known to us. For example, on November 18, 2002, NHK, a Japanese television channel, broadcasted a special program regarding the summit between North Korea and Japan in 2002. According to the program, Junichiro Koizumi, Japanese prime minister, and other participants got the impression that Kim Jong Il, North Korea's top leader, was in a dire situation and seriously worried about the potential of war against the United States. The participants' observation coincides with the result of perception analysis in chapter 8.

### **2.3. Organization of the Dissertation**

The subsequent chapters will unfold as follows. Chapter 3 defines brinkmanship and shows its eight characteristics. Then it shows that Pyongyang's withdrawal from the NPT in 1993 and 2003 and test firing of a long-range missile in 1998 belong to the brinkmanship strategy. Chapter 3 also defines what conflictual policy is and shows that Pyongyang's rejection of South Korean-type nuclear reactor in 1995 is a conflictual policy toward the United States. Chapter 4 empirically verifies that North Korea chose to withdraw from the NPT in 1993 because North Korea acted on a losses frame. The reason Pyongyang behaved on a losses frame was that it perceived that its external security, which had had been satisfied, started to be threatened and that all available strategies implied a loss. Chapter 5 proves that Pyongyang rejected the South Korean-type nuclear reactors and threatened to walk out of the NPT because Pyongyang perceived Washington's insistence that the North accept South Korean-type reactor hurt its identity. Because the North perceived its identity impaired rather than security, it did not engage in a brinkmanship strategy but in a conflictual policy. Chapter 6 shows that the DPRK chose to test-fire a long-range missile because it perceived its



domestic security threatened due to the deteriorating economic circumstances. Chapter 7 shows that North Korea acted in a cooperative way with the U.S. during the year of 2000 because it perceived its security situation improve. Chapter 8 reveals that Pyongyang declared again the withdrawal from the NPT in 2003 because it perceived its security deteriorated. Finally, Chapter 9 summarizes the previous chapters' analyses and concludes that North Korea's foreign policy can be explained and predicted by observing changes in human needs situation and Pyongyang's perception of them on the basis of human needs theory and prospect theory.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **FOREIGN POLICIES AS DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

This chapter deals with the dependent variables of brinkmanship, conflictual and cooperative foreign policies of North Korea. In this chapter, the main focus is on the brinkmanship strategy and conflictual policy because there would be little doubt that the DPRK's high-ranking official's visit to the U.S. could be regarded as a cooperative policy.<sup>41</sup>

#### **3.1. Brinkmanship**

##### **3.1.1. Definition and Index of Brinkmanship**

###### **3.1.1.1. Definition of Brinkmanship**

The term of brinkmanship needs to be elaborated since some researchers and experts on North Korea have been using the term without any definition, which has the danger of including normal activities accompanied by bargaining or negotiation into brinkmanship. According to Evans and Newnham (1998), brinkmanship is a strategy adopted during a crisis to coerce one's adversary into making a conciliatory move. Dixit and Skeath (1999) define brinkmanship as "a threat that creates a risk but not certainty of a mutually bad outcome if the other player defies your specified wishes as to how he should act, and then gradually increases this risk until one player gives in or the bad outcome happens." According to Yehoshafat Harkabi (2008), brinkmanship is the art of intentionally forcing crises to the

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<sup>41</sup> As Kathleen R. McNamara (1998, 17) says, cooperation can be "defined in terms of a general trend" in outcomes, rather than "specific episodes of state behavior or interaction." In 2000, North Korean high-ranking official's visit to Washington was not a specific episode but an event resulted from continuous cooperation between the two states since late 1990s.

brink of hostilities in order to compel the other side to retreat. Thomas C. Schelling (1960) says, “If brinkmanship means anything, it means manipulating the shared risk of war. It means exploiting the danger that somebody may inadvertently go over the brink, dragging the other with him.” Not a few scholars treat the term ‘brinkmanship’ as interchangeable with “blackmail.” Michael Schwartz and Konstantin Sonin (2004) define brinkmanship as “an ability of the aggressor to undertake an observable action that will lead with positive probability to a war or some other mutually undesirable outcomes.”

Although many scholars do not explicitly include the risk of war into their definition of brinkmanship, it appears to be more appropriate to use the notion of risk of war explicitly. This is the case because the phrase “mutually bad consequences” might extend to include non-political events such as a strike of laborers in the definition of brinkmanship. Another thing that should be taken into consideration is that Schelling (1960) and others (Evans and Newnman 1998, Harkabi 2008, Schwarz and Sonin 2004) do not include the process of brinkmanship in their definition - that is, gradually increasing risk. In order to reveal how brinkmanship works in reality, it would be more appropriate to include the phrase “gradually increased risk” into the definition. Therefore, this study defines brinkmanship as follows: “a policy option that exposes both parties involved to a gradually increasing risk of war. Using this threat of war as leverage, one party attempts to pressure the other to take or not to take a particular action.”

### **3.1.1.2. Eight Characteristics of Brinkmanship**

It would be useful to mention some key elements of brinkmanship in order to clarify what brinkmanship is. If we put together characteristics of brinkmanship, they can be summarized as eight kinds. For example, Richard Ned Lebow (1983) indirectly presents a

characteristic of brinkmanship by using the concept of brinkmanship crisis: strategic move. According to him, brinkmanship crises are “confrontations in which states challenge important commitments of adversaries in the expectation that the adversaries will back down.” Thomas C. Schelling (1960) mentions ‘mutual harm’ as one of elements of brinkmanship. Robert Powell (1988) shows the importance of ‘uncertainty’ by studying the role of incomplete information in employing brinkmanship. Schwarz and Sonin (2004) emphasize the importance of probability and divisibility.<sup>42</sup> The most comprehensive explanation of brinkmanship characteristics comes from Dixit and Skeath (1999). Below is the summary of these characteristics.<sup>43</sup>

First of all, brinkmanship is one of strategic moves and a highly calculated action. Strategic moves mean actions taken at a pre-game stage in order to alter the other player’s expectations and therefore their actions in a way favorable to the player making these moves.

Secondly, brinkmanship should entail a mutual harm in order to make a threat credible. The most typical mutual harm is a (risk of) war. The threatened action inflicts a cost on both the player making the threat (the one pursuing the brinkmanship strategy, from now on a threatener) and the player whose action the threat is intended to influence.

Thirdly, brinkmanship contains a variety of uncertainty. The uncertainty arises mainly because one player cannot be sure of the other party’s objectives, preferences, intention, capabilities, etc. A threat in this context carries a twofold risk: one kind of risk is that the threatener’s opponent may defy it, requiring the threatener to carry out the costly threatened action.

Fourthly, brinkmanship entails a gradually increasing risk due to the uncertainty. That is, the danger that you may have miscalculated or the risk that the threatened action will take place by error even if the other player complies is a strong reason to refrain from using threats more severe than necessary.

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<sup>42</sup> Schwarz and Sonin (2004) say, “Indivisible threat such as nuclear capabilities gives a party far less bargaining power than a threat that is divisible, such as a large arsenal of conventional weapons ... The bargaining power of the potential aggressor increases dramatically if she is able to make probabilistic threats, e.g. by taking an observable action that leads to a war with positive probability.”

<sup>43</sup> The eight characteristics of brinkmanship have mostly come from Avinash Dixit and Susan Skeath (1999).

Fifthly, brinkmanship requires effectiveness and acceptability. That is, a threat should be, on the one hand, sufficiently big that the other player fears it and alter his action in the way that the threatener desires. On the other hand, the threat should not be so big as to be too risky for the threatener to ever carry out and therefore lacking credibility.

Sixthly, brinkmanship contains a probabilistic threat. That is, the threatener does something that creates a probability, but not certainty, that the mutually harmful outcome will occur if the opponent defies the threatener.

Seventh, a threatener tends to give up his freedom to act.<sup>44</sup> Brinkmanship means that you will do something if your wishes are not met that, if those circumstances actually arise, you will regret having to do.

Eighth and finally, brinkmanship has an implicit promise that the bad consequence will not occur if the other player complies with the threatener's wishes. However, threats generally do not specify this latter part because the second part of the strategy is automatically understood. And the threatener must begin reducing the risk immediately and quite quickly remove it from the picture if its opponent complies.

These eight characteristics of the brinkmanship strategy overlap and are interconnected with each other. This study does not argue that all brinkmanship strategies have the eight characteristics all the times. The characteristics can, however, work as indexes to help us identify a foreign policy with a brinkmanship strategy.

It should be noted that the two tactics of probabilistic threat and relinquishing freedom to act would work better when decision-makers cannot control all the details such as operation procedures. If everything were under the decision-makers' control, an accidental war would be implausible. Therefore, if we look at North Korea based on the monolithic model or competition model regarding decision-making processes in which North Korean top leader is supposed to handle all events and issues, the two tactics of probabilistic threat and relinquishing freedom to act would not work properly.

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<sup>44</sup> According to Dixit and Skeath, "giving up one's freedom to act" also means that decision makers cannot control all the details entailed by the process of decision making and implementation

### **3.1.2. Withdrawal from the NPT as Brinkmanship**

North Korea declared its withdrawal from the NPT in March 1993 and in January 2003. This section shows that walking out of the international nuclear regime can be treated as a brinkmanship strategy for it meets the eight characteristics of brinkmanship.

#### **3.1.2.1. Strategic Move**

As mentioned above, strategic move means actions taken in order to alter the other player's action in a way favorable to the threatener. There is little doubt that North Korea decided to withdraw from the NPT in 1993 in order to compel Washington to renounce the coercive diplomacy that forced Pyongyang to accept a special inspection. In an official statement announcing withdrawal from the NPT, Pyongyang clearly demanded that Washington stop the Team Spirit joint military exercise and stop attempting to enforce special inspection on its nuclear facilities. In 2003 when it walked out of the NPT again, it urged the U.S. to quit pursuing a hard-line and hostile policy toward Pyongyang (*Nodong Sinmun*, 10 January, 11 January, and 12 January 2003).

#### **3.1.2.2. Mutually Harmful Threat**

Walking out of the NPT entails a mutually harmful threat. On the one hand, this could be very harmful to the United States, which had tried to prevent the spread of nuclear arms. If the United States let North Korea get away with the withdrawal, other states including Iraq would follow suit. Therefore, Pyongyang's withdrawal would present a grave security threat to the U.S. and weaken the NPT's important bulwark against the spread of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the withdrawal from the NPT both in 1993 and in 2003 was also harmful to North Korea in that it was obvious that the international community would inflict various

sanctions on North Korea such as economic blockade and diplomatic isolation. A commentary of *Nodong Sinmun* (23 December 1993) said, “When we declared that we would withdraw from the NPT, we expected that a war was very likely.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, North Korea’s choice of withdrawal from the NPT entailed a mutually harm threat.

### 3.1.2.3. Gradually Increasing Risk and Uncertainty

North Korea did not know what would be the U.S.’s response to its withdrawal from the international regime: The U.S. might “mastermind some international pressure or sanctions,” or “might wage a preemptive war” (*Nodong Sinmun* 12 March 1993).<sup>46</sup> North Korea was not sure whether the U.S. would conform to Pyongyang’s stated wishes.<sup>47</sup> As a result of uncertainty about the American response, North Korea thoroughly followed the rule of ‘gradually increasing risk’ in both 1993 and in 2003. At first, North Korea increased tension with the United States by issuing violent statements. In mid-October 1992, *Nodong Sinmun* commentaries (15 October and 18 October 1992) called the resumption of Team Spirit “a criminal act” designed to disrupt the implementation of the North-South accord and to “put the brakes on North-South [Korean] relations and drive the North-South dialogue to a crisis.” Then, North Korea stopped the ongoing North-South dialogues. Pyongyang began to warn that the new situation would require them to take countermeasures of self-defense to safeguard their “sovereignty and supreme national interests.” This phrase “supreme

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<sup>45</sup> According to Jang Yep Hwang (1999), high-ranking official who defected from North Korea, the North’s leadership was ready to fight the U.S. in 1993, when tension between the two states escalated.

<sup>46</sup> According to Don Oberdorfer (2001, 281), South Korean foreign minister also worried about the possibility that the United States and other nations would react so strongly that a war would break out in Korea.

<sup>47</sup> According to Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004, 39), Washington did not know what North Korea really wanted, either. Hard-liners in the Clinton administration and the Congress thought that Pyongyang was bent on building nuclear weapons at any cost while doves did not think so. Meeting in New York, representatives from the United States, South Korea, and Japan agreed that they could not determine whether the North was using the NPT walkout as a high-risk bargaining tactic or as a means of protecting its nuclear weapons program.

interests” implied that it would withdraw from the NPT.<sup>48</sup> As a next step to increase tension, North Korea declared “a semi-state of war” to its people. Finally, North Korea issued a statement in which it declared its withdrawal from the NPT.

When the George W. Bush Administration began to take a coercive policy toward the DPRK, Pyongyang thoroughly followed the procedure of gradually increasing risk again. The North Korean Foreign Ministry (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 August 2002) warned, “the reality was pushing them to the phase where they should make *a final decision* to go [their] own way.” From December 2002, North Korea (*Nodong Sinmun* 12 December 2002) set to make a more threatening announcement in defiance of the U.S. suspension of heavy oil shipments: “the DPRK declared that the present situation compelled the DPRK Government to decide to lift the measure of nuclear freeze ... under the DPRK-U.S. Agreed Framework and immediately resume the operation and construction of nuclear facilities to generate electricity.” Confronted with the IAEA’s resolution that it would bring the North Korean nuclear matters to the UN Security Council, North Korea reciprocated with the expulsion of IAEA inspectors from the Yongbyon nuclear complex in December 2002 and withdrew from the NPT completely in January 2003.

#### **3.1.2.4. Effectiveness and Acceptance**

In order to make a brinkmanship strategy work, a threatener must create a threat with a risk level that is both large enough to be effective in compelling or deterring its rival and small enough to be acceptable to the threatener (Dixit and Skeath 1999). In this respect,

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<sup>48</sup> The Article X of the NPT regulates, “Each Party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the *supreme interests* of its country. It shall give notice of such withdrawal to all other Parties to the Treaty and to the United Nations Security Council three months in advance.”



North Korea tried to convince the United States that the sanctions that the UN Security Council might pose in response to the North's withdrawal from the NPT would be acceptable to Pyongyang. A commentary in *Nodong Sinmun* (30 March 1993) said that "no sanctions will work against us" because North Korea survived "the sanctions that the U.S. had imposed from the very day of the establishment of the DPRK." On the other hand, Pyongyang's threat to withdraw from the NPT in 1993 proved to be large enough to compel the United States to do something in Pyongyang's favor. However, the George W. Bush administration responded with neglect when the DPRK announced again in 2003 that it would withdraw from the NPT.<sup>49</sup>

### **3.1.2.5. Probabilistic Threat**

For brinkmanship to work, the threatener needs to do something that creates a probability, but not certainty, that the mutually harmful outcome will occur if the opponent defies the threatener (Dixit and Skeath 1999). Pyongyang did not declare that it would take a military step against the United States and its withdrawal from the NPT in 1993 and in 2003 were relatively small actions unlikely to start an all-out confrontation at once. However, by gradually increasing tension and finally conducting the nuclear test in 2006, North Korea succeeded in leading the U.S. to think that letting the crisis escalate any longer would end up in a disaster that nobody wanted to occur.

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<sup>49</sup> Faced with the American "neglect strategy," North Korea intensified its threats to the U.S. by nuclear test of 2006, which finally made the American government turn its policy to sincere dialogue with Pyongyang.

### 3.1.2.6. Relinquishing Freedom to Act

North Korea sought to take advantage of the division of the Korean peninsula and the 1953 Armistice in order to make its threat more credible. North Korea (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 April 2003) repeatedly said, “At any time a war might break out by accident since the two Koreas were facing each other heavily armed across the DMZ<sup>50</sup>. The situation on the Korean Peninsula remains so grave that a nuclear war can be triggered off by a trifling incident.” Although there have been frequent skirmishes or military confrontations along the DMZ, the combats that occurred in the time when tension was escalating often made South Korea, even the U.S. worried about an accidental war. In fact, the precarious peace on the Korean peninsula based on the Armistice treaty of 1953 could easily turn into a war even by a small-scale skirmish between the two countries. Even in 2006, when North and South Korea pursued détente between them, Seoul was worried that a war might break out by accident. Kyong-Suh Park, South Korean Human Rights Ambassador to the UN, said, “given the continuing state of military stand-off between 1.8 million troops along the 155-mile armistice line dividing South and North Korea, maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is of paramount importance in the ROK’s policy objectives. In recent years, South and North Korea have embarked on a process of reconciliation. *But the peace is still fragile and tentative, and the situation is unstable and delicate* (emphasis is mine).”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, whenever tension is mounting, North Korea can use and has used the cease-fire situation as a

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<sup>50</sup> DMZ is an abbreviation of the Demilitarized Zone, which divides the two Koreas. Differently from the literal meaning of DMZ, the DMZ is said to be one of the most heavily armed zones in the world.

<sup>51</sup> Kyong-Suh Park’s address on the seventh international forum on North Korean Human Rights and Refugees on May 11, 2006.

means for relinquishing freedom to act although it is not clear how much the North's strategy of "relinquishing freedom to act" has been effective.<sup>52</sup>

### **3.1.2.7. Implicit Promise**

In a statement on March 12, 1993, North Korea implied that if the United States stopped its military threat and the IAEA gave up the effort to impose special inspections, it would return to IAEA membership by saying that "there [was] no change in the government policy of [the DPRK] to use nuclear energy for peaceful purpose, and [North Koreans would] also continue in the future to make all possible effort to realize denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." And North Korea suspended its withdrawal from the NPT as soon as the United States accepted Pyongyang's demands such as suspension of Team Spirit. In December 2006 after its nuclear test, North Korea implicitly promised that it would not proliferate its nuclear capability by announcing "its nuclear weapons will remain *nuclear deterrent* for self-defense *under any circumstances*."

### **3.1.3. Test-Fire of Daepodong Missile as Brinkmanship**

We need to make it clear that launching a long-range Daepodong missile was used to militarily threaten or diplomatically pressure the United States. This was so because North Korea officially insisted that it launched an artificial satellite, not a missile and even some experts on North Korea maintained that the North launched an artificial satellite to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the DPRK.

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<sup>52</sup> Because many decision-makers and experts both in South Korea and in the U.S. have the tendency to believe that North Korea is a monolithic society in which Kim Jong Il, North Korean top leader, can control everything, they more often than not esteem that the possibility of an accidental war is low.

#### **3.1.3.1. Strategic Move**

North Korea (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998) declared that it had succeeded in launching “the first artificial satellite aboard a multi-stage rocket into orbit.” It is not still clear that North Korea succeeded in putting the alleged satellite into orbit, but one thing is clear: the multi-state rocket was used for coercing the United States as well as for launching a satellite. As U.S. State Department Spokesman James Rubin (Daily Press Briefing of the US Department of State 14 September 1998) said, “The military implications of the test were the same regardless of whether North Korea launched a missile or a satellite. North Korea demonstrated the capability for delivering weapon payloads against surface targets at increasing ranges.” According to Rubin, the United States regarded the test as a threat to U.S. allies.

#### **3.1.3.2. Mutually Harmful Threat**

Launching a long-range missile was harmful both to Pyongyang and to Washington. According to a (North) Korean Central News Agency (KCNA 16 June 1998) commentary, North Korea knew that if it launches missiles, the United States would refuse to lift economic sanctions on it and would not improve relations with North Korea: “[Some people in the United States] have raised the missile issue as a precondition for the easing of economic sanctions against the DPRK. ... They have also contended that [freezing] development and export of missiles is vital to the improvement of the bilateral relations.” Another negative effect the missile test might have was that Japan might use the test as a pretext to join in the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system proposed by the United States, which would in turn pose a great threat to North Korea’s security. Pyongyang argued that Japan was trying to take

part in the establishment of the TMD under the preposterous pretext of threat from the DPRK (*Nodong Sinmun* 16 March 1997). In early 1998, Pyongyang argued that if North Korea launches a long-range missile, “it would strengthen the position of U.S. hawks toward North Korea” and would “justify the continued hostile policy towards it by making impressions that it has done what it should not do”<sup>53</sup> (*Nodong Sinmun* 16 June 1997). On the other hand, regardless of whether North Korea launched a missile or a satellite, the test was, as James Rubin said, a threat to U.S. security. More importantly, a nuclear North Korea armed with Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) in the future will do a fatal harm to American security.

### **3.1.3.3. Gradually Increasing Risk and Uncertainty**

At first, as usual, North Korea increased tension with the United States by issuing provocative statements (*Nodong Sinmun* 16 June 1998): “Missile export is the option we could not but take. If the United States really wants to prevent our missile export, it should lift the economic embargo as early as possible and make a compensation for the losses to be caused by discontinued missile export.” In defiance of Washington’s rejection of the request, Pyongyang stopped the canning of spent fuel rods. Next, North Korea increased tension higher by launching a long-range missile. Confronted with American and Japanese warning not to break the Agreed Framework, Pyongyang increased tension much higher by announcing that “the United States must ponder over its military pressure upon and preemptive attack on the DPRK” (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998). The article further notes “the forces hostile towards the DPRK must be mindful that their attempt to lead the

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<sup>53</sup> In fact, Pyongyang’s missile test was a gift to partisans of controversial National Missile Defense Plan (NMD). A republican member of Congress gleefully told a White House official after the test that “They did it—we’ve got the NMD” (Oberdorfer 1999, 411).

DPRK to a change will bring them nothing but *destruction* (emphasis added)” (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998).

Meanwhile, North Korea increased uncertainty about its intention by denying that it had launched a long-range missile but by continuing to indicate that it was a kind of ICBM. A DPRK’s statement argued that North Korea had launched an artificial satellite “for peaceful use of outer space” (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998). However on the same day, Kim Il-Chul, one of North Korean top military leaders, issued a statement arguing “Our military will mercilessly terminate enemies *wherever they are on the earth* (emphasis added)”<sup>54</sup> (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998). We should pay attention to the fact that this phrase began to show up in North Korean mass media only after the alleged satellite launch. In addition, *Nodong Sinmun* (4 September 1998) quoted a Russian as saying that the North’s ability to launch a satellite into orbit brings the country close to ICBM capability. A DPRK Foreign Ministry’s statement on the same day argued that “whether this capacity [to launch a satellite] will be used for a military purpose or not, entirely depends on the attitudes of forces hostile toward [North Korea]” (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998).

#### **3.1.3.4. Effectiveness and Acceptance**

On the one hand, North Korea tried to make the United State believe that the expected losses from the launch of the Daepodong missile such as the abrogation of the Agreed Framework and economic sanctions were acceptable. At the New York talks between the two countries, North Korea made it clear that Pyongyang “would not submit tamely to any American pressure” by saying that “in case the U.S. takes a step backward again in the

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<sup>54</sup> North Korea began to repeat the same expression “wherever the enemies are on the earth” in an article printed in *Nodong Sinmun* on November 15, 1998. A statement of [North] Korean People’s Army also repeated the same expression on December 1, 1998.

implementation of the framework agreement, [Pyongyang] will take practical measures to show that [it] cannot unilaterally sacrifice [its] own nuclear power industry under the framework agreement” (*Nodong Sinmun* 10 September 1998). On the other, the North’s military threat of launching a long-range missile was large enough to compel the United States to agree to the North’s demands such as immediate resumption of delivery of heavy oil. It should be noted that North Korea had already used missile brinkmanship in May 1993, although it did not attract much attention from the world because of Pyongyang’s nuclear brinkmanship of the withdrawal from the NPT. In 1998, the world paid more attention to North Korea’s missile brinkmanship than its nuclear brinkmanship such as suspension of storage of spent fuel rods. This was mainly because North Korea, which had been suspected to have a nuclear weapons program, demonstrated its potential for delivering nuclear weapons.

### **3.1.3.5. Probabilistic Threat**

North Korea skillfully used its missile ability as a way of creating a probabilistic threat. Pyongyang declared that it depended on the U.S. and other states’ attitudes toward North Korea whether Pyongyang’s capability to launch a satellite would be used for a military purpose or not. At the New York talks in September 1998, North Korea emphasized that “in case such an incident occurs as failure to supply heavy oil again, irrevocable consequences may arise” (*Nodong Sinmun* 10 September 1998). North Korea never directly threatened the United States by mentioning a military confrontation. Pyongyang just implied that a military confrontation might occur in case the United States took a countermeasure.

North Korean media continued announcing its intention to fire a Daepodong Missile again implying that Pyongyang was ready to launch its more sophisticated missile.<sup>55</sup>

### **3.1.3.6. Relinquishing Freedom to Act**

As mentioned before, whenever tension is mounting, North Korea has used the cease-fire situation as a means for relinquishing freedom to act although the strategy of Pyongyang does not appear to have been very effective due to the view of North Korea as a monolithic society. North Korean Army issued a statement in which it said that “the U.S. and the South Korean authorities must remember that the Korean peninsula is in a state of temporary cease-fire and that the DPRK and the U.S. are technically at war” (*Nodong Sinmun* 19 August 1998).

### **3.1.3.7. Implicit Promise**

Pyongyang implied that it would not use its capability for military purposes if the United States and other countries renounce hostile policies toward it by saying that “whether its capacity to launch a satellite would be used for a military purpose or not entirely depended on the attitudes of forces hostile toward North Korea” (*Nodong Sinmun* 4 September 1998). Once the United States promised economic aid and sincere implementation of the Agreed Framework, North Korea reduced tension by agreeing to open the suspected underground nuclear facilities in Kumchangri, North Korea in May 1999 and by suspending the threatened

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<sup>55</sup> “No one can block DPRK’s exercise of sovereignty,” *Nodong Sinmun*, 3 October 1998. “Pressure from dishonest forces can never bar the DPRK from continuing what is good for its sovereignty and interests. We will exercise our sovereignty right to develop and launch an artificial satellite, when necessary, no matter what others may say.”



launch of a long-range ballistic missile (Daepodong II) in September 1999 as long as its dialogue with the United States was underway.

### **3.2. Conflictual Policy**

#### **3.2.1. Definition and Characteristics of Conflictual Policy**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, many scholars in IR treat brinkmanship as a kind of strategy for coercive diplomacy. However, this dissertation excludes brinkmanship from coercive diplomacy. According to Alexander L. George, coercive diplomacy is defined as diplomatic behavior that involves verbal and actual military threats, limited and indirected military provocations that purposes to offensively<sup>56</sup> or defensively persuade an opponent country to stop and/or undo an action it has already embarked upon (1991, 5).

Coercive diplomacy does indeed offer an alternative to reliance on military action. It seeks to persuade an opponent to cease his aggression rather than bludgeon him into stopping. In contrast to the blunt use of force to repel an adversary, coercive diplomacy emphasizes the use of threats to punish the adversary if he does not comply with what is demanded of him. If force is used in coercive diplomacy, it consists of an exemplary use of quite limited force to persuade the opponent to back down. By “exemplary” I mean the use of just enough force of an appropriate kind to demonstrate resolution to protect one’s interests and to establish the credibility of one’s determination to use more force if necessary.

Coercive diplomacy is treated to involve four basic variables: (i) the demand; (ii) how to create a sense of urgency; (iii) how to create a credible threat of punishment for noncompliance; and (iv) the possible use of incentives for compliance (Sung-han Kim 2006, 3). These variables are very similar to the eight characteristics of brinkmanship: (i) the

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<sup>56</sup> Alexander George (1991, George and Simons 1994, 7-10) made it clear that the definition of coercive diplomacy is restricted to defensive purposes. However, many scholars in IR tend to treat coercive diplomacy as including offensive purposes.

demand vs. strategic move; (ii) a sense of urgency vs. effectiveness; (iii) credible threat vs. effectiveness; (iv) incentives for compliance vs. implicit promise. As a result of the similarity, A. George's definition of coercive diplomacy can be treated as including brinkmanship strategy. Thus, there is a tendency to interpret every hawkish foreign policy as brinkmanship diplomacy, which makes people believe that North Korea is very irrational and provocative.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, this dissertation contends that we need an alternative to the definition of coercive diplomacy in order to understand North Korean diplomacy more clearly.

This study uses the concept of conflictual diplomacy instead of coercive diplomacy. Conflictual diplomacy is defined as a diplomatic strategy that relies on the verbal threat of force rather than the use of force to achieve an objective. Conflictual policy differs from brinkmanship in that policymakers who choose conflictual diplomacy are ready to compromise and withdraw from their initial threat before the goals of threat are fully attained. By contrast, brinkmanship continues to increase risk until its goal is attained.

Another characteristic difference of conflictual diplomacy from brinkmanship is that conflictual diplomacy does not use military provocation to persuade an opponent country to do something. While coercive diplomacy is a strategy that is used as a response to an adversary's hostile action in the past (George 1991, 5), conflictual diplomacy can use verbal threats preemptively in order to prevent an adversary's hostile action in the future. Conflictual diplomacy is also different from a cooperative policy or a conciliatory move in that the former tends to increase tension on purpose to achieve what the threatener wants

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<sup>57</sup> Samuel S. Kim (1996, 68) insists that Pyongyang's warning that it would resume operations at the Yongbyon nuclear complex in 1995 was a brinkmanship diplomacy. However, this dissertation contends that the warning should be treated as a conflictual policy rather than a brinkmanship strategy.

rather than decrease it.<sup>58</sup> Based on the discussion above, conflictual diplomacy could be said to include five key elements: (i) demand or strategic move; (ii) how to create a sense of urgency; (iii) how to create a credible verbal threat of punishment for noncompliance; (iv) the possible use of incentives for compliance or implicit promise; and (v) readiness to compromise.

### **3.2.2. Rejecting South Korean Nuclear Reactors as Conflictual Policy**

As early as February 1995, North Korea began to confront the United States over the type of light water reactors (LWRs) that would replace the DPRK's graphite-moderated reactors. North Korea strongly rejected accepting South Korean nuclear reactors with a threat to abandon the Agreed Framework.<sup>59</sup> This section shows that the threat to break the Agreed Framework can be treated as a conflictual diplomacy.<sup>60</sup>

#### **3.2.2.1. Strategic Move**

Washington, following Seoul's demand, asked Pyongyang to accept South Korean-type reactors. In defiance of the American demand, Kang Sok Ju, a North Korean negotiator, said in a news conference that he had never heard that there existed South Korean-type LWRs (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 September 1994). Pyongyang continuously insisted as follows:

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<sup>58</sup> The fact that two parties are in a negotiation does not necessarily mean that the two parties are taking a cooperative policy or strategy. If one or two of them relies on a strategy that increases tension on purpose, we should interpret that he is or they are taking a conflictual or coercive strategy. It should be also noted that even a party that takes a brinkmanship strategy often goes into a negotiation with the other party.

<sup>59</sup> "The U.S. Side Must Take Full Responsibility," *Nodong Sinmun*, 27 April 1995. The commentary contended that "the U.S. tried to force the DPRK side to accept the non-existent South Korean model, which was to infringe on North Korea's sovereignty." Therefore, the commentary argued that "although the Agreed Framework is dear to us, we have no idea to abide by the DPRK-U.S. Agreed Framework with our sovereignty being violated."

<sup>60</sup> As mentioned before, many experts such as Samuel S. Kim (1996, 68) on North Korea argue that the threat to break the Agreed Framework was one of brinkmanship strategy. Unfortunately, their arguments are not based on a concrete definition of brinkmanship.

“Our position toward the discussions on the LWRs is clear and reasonable. *We will never accept South Korean-model reactors* for political reasons and in view of technical safety [emphasis is added]” (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 February 1995). Therefore, there is little doubt that North Korea communicated a demand so obviously that the U.S. could understand what the North wanted.

### **3.2.2.2. Sense of Urgency**

When North Korea threatened to break the Agreed Framework of 1994 and withdraw from the NPT, the U.S. was trying to permanently extend the NPT.<sup>61</sup> In the Agreed Framework, the U.S. had pledged to make the best efforts to conclude a contract to supply the new reactors by April 21, 1995 - six months after the signing of the accord. However, on April 12, 1995, U.S.-DPRK talks in Berlin for supply contract for the provision of two new LWRs reached an impasse due to the strong refusal of North Korea to accept South Korean-type models. If North Korea had withdrawn from the nonproliferation regime, the U.S. would have been in a disadvantaged position in pursuing the extension. Thus, Pyongyang’s threat succeeded in creating a sense of urgency for the U.S.

### **3.2.2.3. Verbal Threat**

As usual, North Korea increased tension with the United States by issuing violent statements. A statement of the DPRK warned “if the U.S. side tried to provide the nonexistent South Korean model to the DPRK, the United States must know that ... it will have to bear responsibility for the consequences arising from it” (*Nodong Sinmun* 21 March

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<sup>61</sup> On May 11, 1995, the NPT was agreed to extend permanently at the NPT Review and Extension Conference held in the UN headquarters in New York. <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dda/WMD/treaty>>

1995). Over time, North Korea increased the level of threat to the United States by stating “If the United States persists in its unreasonable position, *the Agreed Framework will go busted*” (*Nodong Sinmun* 30 March 1995). Pyongyang continued to warn that it might resume operations of its frozen nuclear facilities if the United States continued to insist on South Korean-type nuclear reactors (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 May 1995). However, North Korea never took any military provocations or physical actions to persuade the U.S from insisting on South Korean-type LWRs.

#### **3.2.2.4. Incentive for Compliance**

Pyongyang said, “If the U.S. side takes an honest attitude, abandoning the unjust stand with its own resolution to resolve the issue, it will hasten the solution” (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 September 1994). As soon as the United States agreed to the North’s claim that the supply contract should not mention South Korea as a main provider of LWRs, North Korea resolved the crisis by accepting South Korean-type reactors.

#### **3.2.2.5. Readiness to Compromise**

From May 19 to June 12, 1995, the U.S. and DPRK met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to resolve the nuclear reactor type issue (Oberdorfer 2001, 367). North Korea began to change its position on South Korean-type reactors by contending that “we [North Korea] have consistently maintained from the first that we attach importance to what country’s technology and design the product is based on, and that we do not particularly care about where it is manufactured” (*Nodong Sinmun* 5 June 1995). In the end, a joint press statement by the DPRK and the U.S. was issued in Kuala Lumpur on June 13, 1995. The statement

stipulated that “the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), under U.S. leadership, will finance and supply the LWR project”<sup>62</sup> without explicitly mentioning South Korea as a main provider. However, Pyongyang allowed the KEDO Executive Board to announce that the “reference plants for the project would be South Korea’s *Ulchin* 3 and 4 reactors, currently under construction by the Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO), South Korea’s state-controlled electric company” (New York Times 14 June 1995). That means North Korea compromised with the U.S. by actually accepting LWRs from Seoul and avoiding open acknowledgement that South Korea was the source of the reactors. In sum, North Korea’s threat to abandon the Agreed Framework belongs to a typical conflictual diplomacy.

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<sup>62</sup> The full-text of the joint press statement can be found in <http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/KualaLumpur.pdf>

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE FIRST NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS**

This chapter deals with the question of what made North Korea decide to withdraw from the NPT in March 1993 in terms of changes in human needs situation and its perception.

#### **4.1 Changes in Human Needs Situation**

##### **4.1.1. Changes in External Security Situation**

North Korea's external security has been strongly affected by American foreign policy toward it at least since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. This section focuses on the changes in the American North Korea policy and on how the policy changes affected the security need of the Pyongyang regime during the early 1990s.

##### **4.1.1.1. The American North Korea Policy from Late 1991 to Mid 1992**

From late 1991, Washington began to provide some incentives for Pyongyang to persuade it to sign the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement.<sup>63</sup> Those incentives were mainly related to security guarantees that North Korea had longed for from the United States. The first incentive was a nuclear withdrawal from South Korea. On September 27, 1991, President George H. W. Bush announced "the removal of all ground-based and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons from U.S. forces worldwide. Although the American policy of nuclear withdrawal "was focused principally on demobilizing all tactical

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<sup>63</sup> The DPRK acceded to the NPT on December 12, 1985. Under the provision of the NPT, North Korea had 18 months to negotiate and sign a safeguards agreement of the IAEA. However, the DPRK refused to sign it until January 30, 1992.

nuclear weapons in the former Soviet republics, it affected U.S. nuclear deployments in South Korea, meeting a major North Korean concern” (Manning 1998, 148). A statement of the DPRK Foreign Ministry said, “Regarding [the] U.S. measure [of nuclear withdrawal] as a way to lead us into signing the nuclear safeguards accords, we welcomed [President Bush’s] proposal” (*Nodong Sinmun* 26 November 1991). It should be noted that the DPRK Foreign Ministry has rarely used positive words toward the United States such as “welcome.” Pyongyang’s positive response to the U.S. policy of nuclear withdrawal from South Korea appears to be natural when we remember the fact that *Nodong Sinmun* carried over 250 signed commentaries in 1991 that demanded directly or indirectly that the U.S. withdraw its nuclear weapons from South Korea.<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, the Bush administration “decided in principle to permit North Koreans to inspect the American military bases in South Korea, where nuclear weapons had been stored,” if Pyongyang accepted the inspections by the IAEA (Oberdorfer 2001, 259). The decision for permitting mutual inspection was to relieve Pyongyang’s security concern.<sup>65</sup>

Thirdly and most importantly, the U.S. soothed North Korea by suspending the annual Team Spirit joint military exercise, which was held every year since 1976 by the U.S. and ROK armed forces. As Don Oberdorfer (2001, 273) writes, “While Americans tended to scoff at Pyongyang’s fears that the annual field exercise was a threat to its national security, the landing of large numbers of additional American troops in South Korea by sea and air, the profusion of flights near the DMZ by American nuclear-capable warplanes, and the

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<sup>64</sup> The signed commentaries in *Nodong Sinmun* tend to repeat the phrases used in Kim Il Sung’s New Year’s Address. It is known that the New Year’s Address shows a general policy orientation of the year in North Korea. Kim Il Sung emphasized in the New Year’s Speech of 1991 that the U.S. should withdraw its troops and nuclear weapons from South Korea (*Nodong Sinmun* 1 January 1991).

<sup>65</sup> In an interview on September 26, 1991, Kim Il Sung demanded for inspections of nuclear bases located in South Korea in return for allowing inspections by the IAEA. North Korea’s foreign ministry statement of November 12, 1991 reiterated the demand for mutual inspection.



movement of heavily armed ROK and U.S. ground troops made a powerful impression on the North as Team Spirit's planners had hoped from the start.”<sup>66</sup> In this line, we can understand why the Korean People's Army's (KPA) supreme commander released an order to the KPA and North Korean armed forces<sup>67</sup> to assume a combat mobilization posture in February 1991 when the U.S. and South Korea conducted Team Spirit joint military exercises. In that order, North Korea argued that the Team Spirit was a nuclear war exercise, a thoroughly aggressive exercise, a preliminary war practice, and a test to launch a surprise attack at North Korea (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 January 1991). The Pyongyang regime alleged that “there [was] no guarantee that the Team Spirit 91 joint military exercise itself [would] not turn into an actual war” (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 January 1991). What we should pay attention to is that the combat mobilization order revealed that North Korea had requested the United States and South Korea to suspend the Team Spirit military exercise for two or three years if the two countries could not completely suspend it. “The DPRK's military and general mobilization efforts in response to Team Spirit consume roughly enough energy to power Pyongyang for six months. They were also a drag on the economy, since workers were pulled from factories for military service” (Reiss 1995, 300). Therefore, the United States' promise to cancel Team Spirit was effective enough for North Korea to feel its security situation improved. A signed commentary in *Nodong Sinmun* (13 January 1992) asserted that the discontinuation of the Team Spirit joint military exercise in 1992 was “fruition of [North Korea's] peace-loving policy and consistent efforts” and “fruition of struggle for 16 years.”

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<sup>66</sup> Leon Sigal (1998, 30) also argues that “to Westerners, the Team Spirit was a just routine readiness measure, but to North Korea, it posed a nuclear threat because U.S. nuclear-capable forces had taken part in the past.”

<sup>67</sup> North Korean armed forces constitute of KPA, the Korean Security Forces, Worker-Peasant Militia, and the Red Youth Guards.

Another American foreign policy toward North Korea that helped it feel less threatened was improving the relationship between the two countries by accepting high-level talks with Pyongyang. The Pyongyang regime had wished to improve relations with the United States since the late 1980s. In 1991, Pyongyang requested the U.S. to “upgrade the then counsel-level meetings between the two countries to ambassadorial level” (Rhee 1992, 61). In January 1992, a high-level meeting between Washington and Pyongyang was held. The meeting functioned as an important factor in the North’s decision to sign a nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA. According to the North Korea’s Foreign Ministry’s statement on signing a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, Pyongyang decided to sign the accord in part because “the United States responded to high-level talks” (*Nodong Sinmun* 30 January 1992). In addition, we can see through *Nodong Sinmun*’s reporting attitude how seriously North Korea took the meeting with the United States.<sup>68</sup> In sum, the Bush administration’s dovish policies toward Pyongyang during the early 1990s contributed to relaxing North Korea’s concerns over its external security.

#### **4.1.1.2. Changes in the American North Korea Policy from the Late 1992**

As early as September 1992, the foreign policy of the U.S. began to turn to coercive policy (Manning 1998, 150-1). The IAEA inspectors found that the DPRK could have weapons-grade plutonium, which it had not declared to the IAEA. Furthermore, as early as summer 1992 the Bush administration began to suspect that the DPRK had two undeclared nuclear waste and other storage sites. As a result of IAEA’s findings and American suspicion

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<sup>68</sup> On January 20, *Nodong Sinmun* carried the news that North Korean delegation left for the U.S. On January 22, it reported that the delegation arrived at its destination. On January 24, the newspaper reported the meeting was over. This is a rare occurrence in that *Nodong Sinmun* usually does not report in real time what is going on with the United States in the present.

over North Korean integrity, the United States began to oppose engaging in negotiation or dialogue with North Korea (Sigal 1998). In addition, Washington sought to inflict “special inspection” and “challenge inspection”<sup>69</sup> of the two suspected North Korea nuclear facilities and began to put emphasis on military pressure to obtain the compliance of Pyongyang. These policy changes, in turn, exacerbated North Korea’s concern over the external security.

#### **4.1.1.2.1. Mutual Inspection to Unilateral Inspection**

In January 1992, North and South Korea agreed<sup>70</sup> to conduct inspection of the objects selected by the other. For some reason however, South Korea refused to allow North Korea to inspect U.S. military bases in the South to confirm that U.S. tactical nuclear weapons had actually been removed as declared by South Korea in December 1991.<sup>71</sup> The talks for mutual inspections between the two Koreas came to a halt in the second half of 1992. Behind the scenes, at least in Pyongyang’s view, the Bush administration was pressing South Korea to refuse the mutual inspection. North Korean leader Kim Il Sung angrily argued that it was “unfair to impose unilateral inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities without allowing North Korea to inspect nuclear bases in South Korea” (*Nodong Sinmun* 11 November 1991).

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<sup>69</sup> Challenge inspection means that South Korea inspects the North’s suspected nuclear facilities but the North does not have the right to inspect the South’s facilities.

<sup>70</sup> North and South Korea struck the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which was entered into force February 19, 1992.

<sup>71</sup> In mid October 1991, President Bush promised to allow North Korea to inspect Kunsan Airbase in South Korea. However, when North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong Nam demanded inspections of U.S. facilities in a UN General Assembly speech, the U.S. rejected the demand. Michael Mazarr (1995, 88) says, “In retrospect, it is difficult to understand why Washington and Seoul did not ... open [U.S. bases in South Korea] to outside inspection, as many U.S. military officers had long agreed that this would pose no threat to security.”

#### **4.1.1.2.2. Regular Inspection to Special Inspection**

Once the North-South mutual inspection failed, the United States began to use the IAEA to gain access to North Korea's nuclear facilities. According to the North Korean Foreign Ministry, the IAEA was banned from using the intelligence offered by a certain country for either non-regular inspections or special inspections (*Nodong Sinmun* 7 February 1993). This was because the IAEA's Board of Governors voted down the right for the IAEA to use outside intelligence in December 1991 (*Nodong Sinmun* 7 February 1993). North Korea insisted that U.S. officials had provided intelligence briefings for IAEA Director Hans Blix and his top aides and continued to provide intelligence after the voting (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 February 1993).<sup>72</sup>

#### **4.1.1.2.3. Talks between Washington and Pyongyang Suspended**

The American diplomacy campaign during 1991 to persuade Pyongyang to sign the IAEA safeguards agreement "involved behind-the-scenes assurances that formal U.S.-North Korea diplomatic ties would be strengthened once inspections occurred" (Mazarr 1995, 69). Even after the inspection by the IAEA started in May 1992, however, the United States did not show any sign of improving diplomatic relations. "The slowing of progress with the IAEA and South Korea blocked the last avenue for ... talks with the United States. (Wit et al. 2004, 14). During the summer of 1992, as hope for progress dimmed, the DPRK's vice foreign ministers Kang Sok Ju and Kim Yong Sun repeatedly wrote to Under Secretary Arnold Kanter asking for another bilateral high-level meeting. To Pyongyang's dismay, Kant

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<sup>72</sup> In response to the U.S. cooperation with the IAEA, Pyongyang severely accused the U.S. of having tried "by hook or by crook to get the military objects and bases of the DPRK opened to the public by manipulating the South Korean authorities, but in vain" and now "trying to attain its sinister purpose through the IAEA" (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 February 1993).

flatly rejected talks because of the lack of progress on North-South inspections and cooperation with the IAEA (Wit et al. 2004, 14).

#### **4.1.1.2.4. Military Pressure Stepped Up**

The fourth change in the American foreign policy toward North Korea came from the “skeptical voices within the Bush administration arguing that the United States and South Korea were moving too far and too fast” (Reiss 1995, 238). In August 1992, the United States and the ROK had conducted a joint military exercise named “Ulchi Focus Lens.” North Korea claimed that “the Focus Lens military exercise was another Team Spirit war exercise under different banner”<sup>73</sup> (*Nodong Sinmun* 16 July 1992, 8 September 1992). In early October 1992, as a part of a campaign of pressure, the U.S. and ROK defense ministers announced that they were resuming preparations for the Team Spirit military exercise in March 1993 and would suspend its planned second reductions of the American forces stationed in South Korea until the dangers and uncertainties of the North Korean nuclear program were thoroughly addressed (Reiss 1995, 238). Finally, the U.S. and ROK went into the Team Spirit joint military exercise in mid-March, 1993. In sum, the U.S. policy changes from engagement to coercive diplomacy severely threatened the security of the DPRK.

#### **4.1.2. Domestic Security Situation in North Korea**

This section turns its attention to the domestic settings in North Korea in terms of its political stability, economic situation, and control over the society.

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<sup>73</sup> Actually the Ulchi Focus Lens involved more personnel than the Team Spirit.

#### **4.1.2.1. Political Stability**

In order to understand the stability of Pyongyang regime, we need to look into North Korean political culture. “The tightly controlled system that Kim Il Sung founded has lasted longer than any other twentieth-century dictatorship because he carried over traditions of centralized authority inherited from the Confucian-influenced Korean dynasties of the past” (Harrison 2002, 21). Kim Il Sung “successfully combined the democratic centralism learned from his Soviet sponsors with Confucian values and other Korean cultural legacies to produce a system that does not fit neatly into conventional political science categories” (Harrison 2002, 24). In addition, “a half-century of propaganda and social control” has shaped the overwhelmingly submissive and compliant “attitudes, values, and behavior of the masses and the elite” (Oh and Hassig 2000, 145). Kim Il Sung succeeded in manipulating the North Korean people to unquestionably obey him and in making the society remarkably stable (Oh and Hassig 2000, 145). Kim Il Sung was deified as the “Great Leader.” Even after his death, Kim Il sung is still the eternal leader for North Koreans. He maintained almost perfect control over the Korean Workers’ Party and the KWP, in turn, exercised complete control over the military complex.

Domestic stability can also be proven by the fact that Kim Il Sung’s son succeeded his father as chairman of the key National Defense Commission, the highest DPRK organ for military guidance, despite his lack of military experience. The armed forces of North Korea were dominated by a clique of Kim Il Sung’s old cronies from the Manchuria guerrilla days, who paid absolute loyalty to their leader (Suh 1998, 24-29). Therefore as long as the Great Leader Kim Il Sung was alive, political instability such as elites’ disturbance in the Korean Workers’ Party or power conflict was out of the question.

#### 4.1.2.2. Deteriorating Economy

It is clear that North Korea's economic circumstances were deteriorating in the early 1990s. For example, the GNI of North Korea shrank by 3.7% in 1990, 5.2% in 1991, and 7.6% in 1992 (for detail, see the figure 6.1 in chapter 6). In early December 1993, the Workers' Party Central Committee made a surprising admission that the major targets of its seven-year economic plan had not been attained and North Korea was in a grave situation (Oh and Hassig 2000, 53). Instead of adopting a new seven-year plan with the usual emphasis on heavy industry, Kim Il Sung set a three-year period of adjustment, with top priority given to agriculture, light industry, and foreign trade. Kim Il Sung even conceded in his New Year Message that "we came up against considerable difficulty and obstacles in the economic construction owing to the unexpected international events and the acute situation created in the country" (*Nodong Sinmun* 1 January 1994). However, it does not appear that the economic situation of North Korea deteriorated up to the level in which the Pyongyang regime felt its domestic security threatened. The number of North Korean defectors remained meager during the early 1990s and there were few people who starved to death. The so-called Public Distribution System (PDS) through which food rations were distributed still worked as a powerful tool of social control,<sup>74</sup> although the rate of rations began to fall as the decline in food production continued. Therefore, there would be few experts on North Korea to deny that the Pyongyang regime's political stability was strongly maintained in spite of the deteriorating economic situation during the early 1990s.

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<sup>74</sup> According to Oh and Hassig (2000), between 60 and 70 percent of North Koreans depended on the PDS.

#### 4.1.2.3. Control over Society

The Pyongyang regime has been developing formidable tools to control the society, ranging from security organizations to ideological control. The two principle domestic security organizations are the Ministry of People's Security (MPS) and the State Security Department (SSD). "Permission must be obtained from the MPS to change one's residence or job or to travel within the country ... The MPS controlled the ration system, which - until the famine years of the mid-1990s - was the primary source of food for the population ... The SSD investigates political dissident suspects and manages political prisons ... Electronic communication channels are monitored by the SSD" (Oh and Hassig 2000, 136). At least until the mid-1990s famine, "North Korea can be characterized by a complete absence of standard political freedom and civil liberties. ... any sign of political deviance, from listening to foreign radio broadcasts ... to inadvertently sitting on a newspaper containing the photograph of Kim Il Sung, can be subject to punishment."<sup>75</sup> ... Until the famine (during the mid-1990s) forced their breakdown, the North Korean government maintained almost perfect control" on the population (Haggard and Noland 2007, 6). As Han Park (2002, 177-8) says, the ordinary people in North Korea submit themselves voluntarily to the elite leadership because of "a consistent and carefully engineered process of lifelong political socialization."

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<sup>75</sup> This kind of political and social control has an important role in maintaining political stability in North Korea, which consists of serious human rights abuses. North Korea's human rights situation has not improved until now. Regarding Pyongyang's control over its society and violations of human rights, see "2008 Human Rights Report: Democratic People's Republic of Korea" written by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of U.S. Department of State on February 25, 2009. As Han Park (2002, 177) says, however, "one should not make a blind and uneducated assumption that North Koreans have been oppressed by the iron hand of the "Great Leaders" as might be expected in a typical police state of totalitarianism."



#### 4.1.3. Identity Need Situation in North Korea

In North Korea, *Juche* ideology has served a useful function of providing the North Korean regime and society with an identity and cohesiveness. “The presence of South Korea against which Pyongyang has had to defend itself and with which it has competed for legitimacy ... has strengthened (*Juche*) ideology” (Han Park 2002, 165-6). The identities of the Pyongyang regime and South Korea have developed through several decades-long struggles against each other, which can be called “legitimacy war” or “legitimacy competition.” Pyongyang’s foreign policy was “centered on enhancing Pyongyang’s legitimacy at the expense of Seoul” (Manning 1998, 140). And vice versa, Seoul’s foreign policy also focused on promoting its legitimacy by denouncing North Korea. The North and South have gone to every length to claim greater legitimacy both internally and externally (Han Park 2002, 117-130). Chun Doo Whan and Roh Tae Woo, the South Korean presidents who had occupied power through a military coup and a rigged election, made it easier for the North to claim to have greater legitimacy. In addition, while South Korea showed off its economic success, as early as 1980s North Korea began to promote political propagandas to make the people believe that the capitalist economy was only for the capitalists making the ordinary persons miserable (*Nodong Sinmun* 12 December 1989). During the early 1990s therefore, Seoul’s economic prosperity seems to have posed, if any, only a little threat to Pyongyang’s identity.

Among many factors that might hurt the identity need for North Korea, in other words, might break the regime’s cohesiveness, outside information is most threatening to Pyongyang. “For this reason, Pyongyang authorities cannot subject the people to unhealthy information originating from the capitalist West and South Korea” (Han Park 2002, 167).

The Pyongyang regime succeeded in keeping the people perfectly cut off from outside information until the mid-1990s famine struck the country. In sum, it appears that Pyongyang's identity need was minimally threatened by outside information and legitimacy competition.

## 4.2 Pyongyang's Perception of Human Needs Situation

### 4.2.1. Pyongyang's Perception of Security and Identity

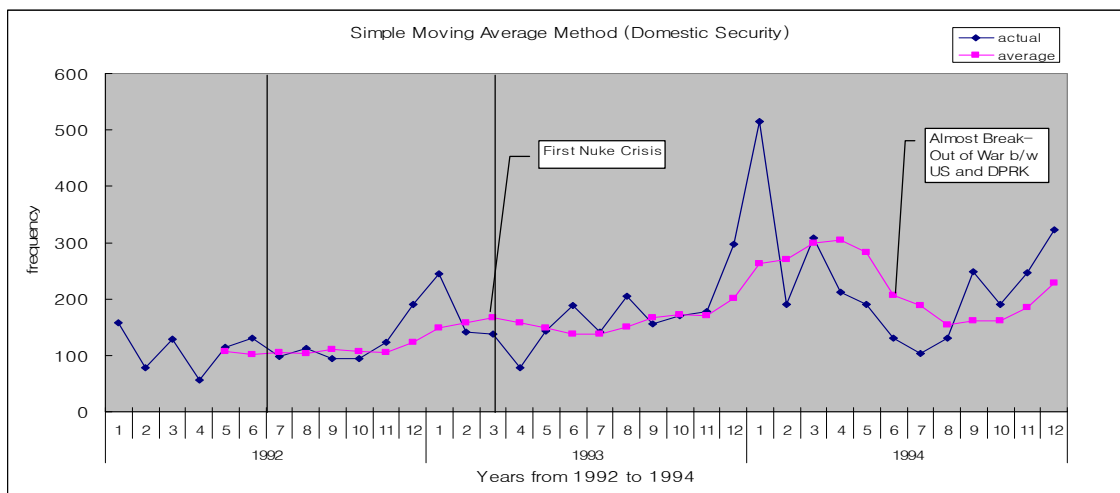


Figure 4.1. Domestic Security (1992-1994)

In this section our focus should be put on the period of time from the second half of 1992, when the American coercive policy toward Pyongyang was stepped up to March 1993, when North Korea declared its withdrawal from the NPT. Figure 4.1 shows the number of times the word “self-help (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*)” is used. The word frequency of self-help is examined to decipher Pyongyang's perception of its domestic security need. The red line (moving average) remained low in 1992 and increased slightly in 1993, compared to the

previous year.<sup>76</sup> The red line indicates that Pyongyang perceived its domestic settings to be stable at least until the first half of 1993.<sup>77</sup> The slight rise of the red line lasted only for 4 months, from December 1992 to February 1993, before Pyongyang declared the withdrawal from the NPT in March 1993. This declaration can be interpreted as having been influenced more by other factors than the short-term domestic insecurity.

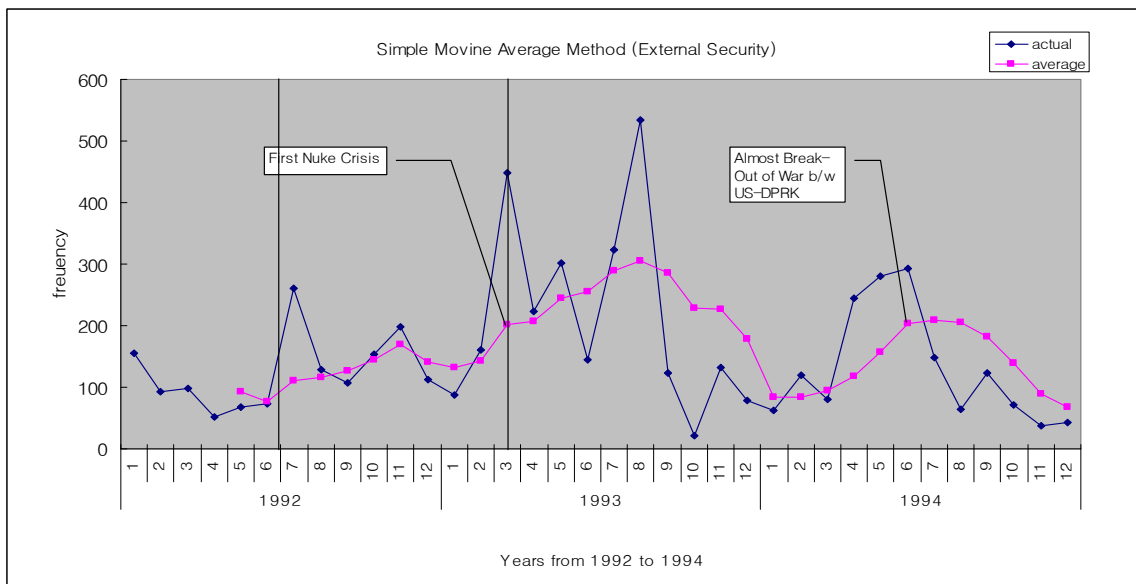


Figure 4.2. External Security (1992-1994)

As mentioned before, in this section we should pay attention to the period of time from September 1992 to March 1993. Figure 4.2 shows the number of times the word “war” is used. The word frequency of war is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of external

<sup>76</sup> The red line surged from the end of 1993. The sudden rise of frequency appears to reflect the reality that North Korea failed on the seven-year economic plan in the end of 1993 and deteriorating economic situation.

<sup>77</sup> The blue line shows a sharp increase during December 1993 to January 1994. However, the increase of the blue line appears to have been affected by unforeseen events. Around November 1993, the seven-year economic plan turned out to be a failure. The unexpected economic result appears to have led the Korea Workers Party to emphasize the spirit of self-help (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*) because the KWP did not have other resources to improve the economic situation. During the two months, North Korea held national rally named “self-help” (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng Daehoi*), which contributed to the increase of the number of times the word ‘self-help’ was used. Therefore the increase should be treated as an outcast.

security. The red line in figure 4.2 shows a steady increase with an exception of the period from December 1992 to January 1993.

The blue line shows a sharp increase in July 1992. This appears to reflect the tension between Washington and Pyongyang caused by American suspicion that the DPRK might have two undeclared nuclear waste and other storage site. The sudden fall of the blue line from December 1992 to January 1993 appears to reflect the dialogues between the countries. The wish for North Korea to solve the nuclear crisis through dialogue with the United States turned out as a failure. The Team Spirit joint military exercise in March 1993 signifies the failure, which resulted in the sharp surge of the blue line in March 1993. From figure 4.2, we can say that Pyongyang perceived its external security severely deteriorating.<sup>78</sup>

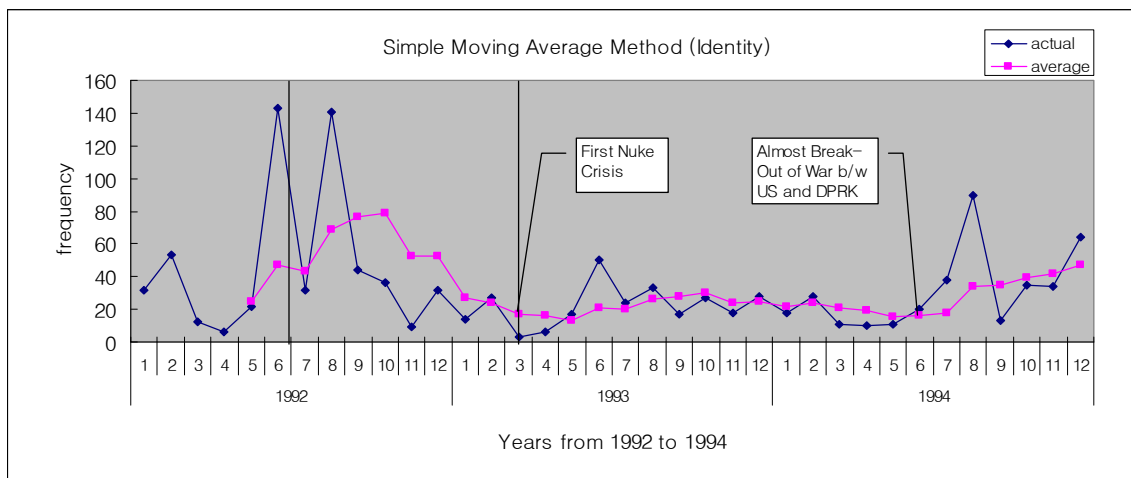


Figure 4.3. Identity (1992-1994)

Figure 4.3 shows the number of times the word “*Juche* ideology (*Juche Sasang*)” is used. The word frequency of *Juche* ideology is examined to discern Pyongyang’s perception

<sup>78</sup> The red line from August 1993 to February 1994 shows a trend of steady decline. The trend appears to have been influenced by the fact that the U.S. sought to solve the nuclear crisis through dialogue with the North, which resulted in the cancellation of the Team Spirit joint military exercise 1994.

of its identity need situation. The red line in figure 4.3 begins to diminish from October 1992 and remains low until July 1994. This indicates that North Korea's perception of its identity situation begins to improve.<sup>79</sup>

In conclusion, the content-analyses from figures 4.1 to 4.3 indicate that the Pyongyang regime perceived its external security to be threatened and did not feel its domestic security and identity at stake when it decided to walk out of the NPT in March 1993.

#### **4.2.2. Policy Options**

The section above shows that external security need for Pyongyang was unmet. This section shows that all of the available strategies to regain its security in 1993 implied losses for the Pyongyang regime. Under the situation in which the U.S. demanded that North Korea open up its nuclear facilities to international inspections with stepping up military pressure and refusing, at least in Pyongyang's view, a negotiated solution, the Pyongyang regime had to pick up one of two alternative courses of action: passively accept the U.S.'s demands for special inspections or rely on brinkmanship.<sup>80</sup>

##### **4.2.2.1. Passive Acceptance of U.S. Demand for Special Inspection**

As Joel Wit et al. (2004, 35-6) say, North Korea "might have been able to find a way to submit to the IAEA's demands for special inspections." However, it had "the immediate risk of disclosing further North Korean safeguards violations" (Wit et al. 2004, 36). "If the

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<sup>79</sup> The blue line in figure 4.3 shows sharp increase in June and August 1992. It was mainly because *Nodong Sinmun* issued very long editorials praising *Juche* ideology during the two months. However, I do not know what made *Nodong Sinmun* issue such long editorials.

<sup>80</sup> Wit et al. (2004, 35) also argue, "The passage of the IAEA resolution on February 26, (1993), essentially an ultimatum, left Kim Jong Il with few options, all risky." According to Kang (1998, 175), "Only by fully specifying the range of North Korea's options we fully understand the options they choose. He convincingly shows that the range of choices available to North Korea was very limited.

special inspections reinforced the IAEA's past claim that Pyongyang had lied and produced more plutonium than it had admitted, the IAEA would start a hunt-down for the alleged diverted plutonium by demanding to open North Korea's military facilities" (Oberdorfer 2001, 308). North Korea said, "Today they [the IAEA and the U.S.] will demand the opening of one military facility and tomorrow they will demand another military facility be opened" (*Nodong Sinmun* 12 March 1993). It might have represented a serious setback for North Korea. "The danger of political emasculation--turning North Korea into another Iraq--was too great" (Wit et al. 2004, 36). According to Robert Manning (1998, 151), "Choi Hak Gun, North Korea's nuclear energy minister, argued in a letter to IAEA Director Hans Blix that a special inspection request could be misused by hostile countries including South Korea and the United States trying to make their military sites open to disarm North Korea and thereby strangle their socialist system." Therefore, the policy option of allowing the special inspection demanded by the U.S. and the IAEA implied a loss for Pyongyang.

#### **4.2.2.2. Risky Venture: Brinkmanship**

On the one hand, by employing the brinkmanship strategy of withdrawal from the NPT, North Korea could avoid the special inspection. In other words, the strategy might give Pyongyang a chance to regain the status quo ex ante, if successful. On the other hand, the nuclear brinkmanship had a risk of causing international sanctions and even a war. In an interview with domestic and international press, answering a question of what would happen in the future, Kang Suk Joo, North Korean vice minister of foreign affairs, replied that "the U.S. might seek to intimidate North Korea by masterminding some international pressure or sanctions" (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 March 1993). A commentary of *Nodong Sinmun* (23

December 1993) said, “When we declared that we would withdraw from the NPT, we expected that a war [initiated by the United States] was very likely.”<sup>81</sup> This means that the strategy of brinkmanship also implied a loss for Pyongyang regime.

#### **4.2.3. Pyongyang’s Frame of Decision**

This dissertation assumes that frame of decision is determined both by satisfaction or dissatisfaction of human needs and policy options of either all losses or all gains. Thus it is not my task to empirically prove what Pyongyang’s reference point was and on which frame it was. However, there are a few hints we can get regarding the reference point and frame of decision through an official statement North Korea made.

In March 1993, North Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement announcing withdrawal from the NPT. The statement revealed that Pyongyang assessed that the status quo of 1993 became worse than that of early 1992: “As we have been subject to the IAEA’s inspections, ... a situation in which peace and security on the Korean peninsula is not guaranteed but is destroyed is prevailing” (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 March 1993). According to the statement, North Korea decided to withdraw from the NPT mainly due to four reasons. The first one was that “the United States and South Korean authorities resumed the [suspended] Team Spirit joint military exercise - a nuclear war exercise against [North Korea],” which was “threatening the country’s national sovereignty and security.” Thus, North Korea argued that the withdrawal from the NPT was “a self-defensive measure *to defend its national sovereignty* and dignity (emphasis added).” Secondly, North Korea contended that it withdrew from the NPT because the United States did not carry out “its obligations to withdraw nuclear weapons from South Korea.” “This proves that the promises

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<sup>81</sup> According to Jang Yeop Hwang (1999), North Koreans were virtually willing to take a war against the U.S.

of the so-called withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons and declaration of nonexistence of nuclear weapons by the United States and the South Korean authorities were a trick designed to deceive [North Koreans].” The third reason was that “the IAEA, which [was] under the directive of the United States, passed a resolution to enforce special inspection of [North Korea’s] military facilities to turn so-called [North Korean] nuclear issue into an international one and inflict collective sanctions and pressure on [Pyongyang].” The fourth and final one was that mutual inspection was not realized. “Inspection of U.S. nuclear weapons and nuclear bases in South Korea is not being conducted. Thus [North Korean] people’s worry over the U.S. nuclear threat is not being resolutely dissolved.” “Some strata of the IAEA’s secretariat are ignoring [Pyongyang’s] demand for inspection of U.S. nuclear weapons and nuclear bases in South Korea but are persistently working to carry out inspection of [North Korea’s] military facilities, which the United States is enforcing.” Throughout the statement, we can see that North Korea strongly wanted to regain the status quo of the early 1992, which means suspension of the Team Spirit military exercise, mutual inspection, and regular inspections instead of unilateral and special inspection over its nuclear facilities.

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

North Korea’s domestic security and identity situations remained stable during the early 1990s, and the Pyongyang regime perceived in that way. However, the external security environment changed in an intolerable way. Early 1992 had seen the removal of nuclear weapons from South Korea, temporarily suspended Team Spirit joint military exercise, U.S. promise against use and threat of forces, and high-level talks between the United States and



North Korea. In addition, the IAEA had only demanded for ad hoc and regular inspections of North Korea's nuclear complex. The United States suddenly changed its policy from engagement to coercion mainly due to unexpected findings on North Korea's past nuclear activities. The U.S. began to press South Korea to demand "challenge inspections" of North Korea's military facilities and the IAEA to impose "special inspections" of the two suspected facilities at Yongbyon nuclear complex in North Korea while refusing high-level talks with North Korea. These negative changes in external security deteriorated Pyongyang's perception of the external security, which this chapter proved through the content analysis of *Nodong Sinmun*. Therefore, some arguments that North Korea took a brinkmanship strategy in 1993 to deal with the domestic problems cannot be sustained.<sup>82</sup> As a result of the American coercive policy, North Korea perceived its external security severely threatened and all available policy options implied loss. Under this situation, Pyongyang acted on a losses frame and finally declared its intention to walk out of the international nuclear regime in spite of a variety of risks such as sanctions and war. This confirms hypothesis A1 (HA1) that when Pyongyang feels its security threatened it takes a brinkmanship strategy.

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<sup>82</sup> Wit et al. (2004, 38) claim that "Kim Jong Il may have used the nuclear crisis to shore up his position, bolster his credentials with the military, and provide justification for the deteriorating economy."

## CHAPTER 5

### REJECTING THE SOUTH KOREAN NUCLEAR REACTORS

This chapter deals with the question of what made North Korea reject the South Korean-type nuclear reactors and compromise with the United States by allowing the Korean Energy Development Organization to announce that the South would provide the light water nuclear reactors for the North.

#### 5.1 Changes in Human Needs Situation

##### 5.1.1. External Security Situation Stable

The Clinton administration provided some incentives for North Korea to defuse the nuclear crisis in October 1994, when the two countries worked out the Agreed Framework (so-called Geneva Agreement). First of all, the U.S. sought to allay Pyongyang's security concerns by officially promising that it would not threaten or use nuclear weapons. Although North Korea thought that the U.S. had repeatedly broken its promise<sup>83</sup> against threat or use of force for various reasons, the promise was still very valuable to North Korea. In a news conference, Kang Sok Ju, head of the DPRK delegation to the DPRK-U.S. talks, said that the Agreed Framework was a "historic document" because it could "contribute to peace and security on the Korean peninsula" (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 October 1994). And he emphasized that "sincerely implementing the items in the agreement" would contribute to "the peace and security of Asia." Another incentive was the U.S. agreement that it would postpone "special

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<sup>83</sup> "It Defends on U.S. Stand," *Nodong Sinmun*, 6 May 1995. The commentary said, "From the very beginning, we have thought that the United States is not trustworthy. In recent years, we have more keenly realized this because the United States says one thing then does another; it easily breaks what it had once promised."

inspection” of the two North Korean nuclear sites, which might reveal how much the North had produced its plutonium, until 70 to 80 percent of the components of the light water reactors (LWR) project was completed. *Nodong Sinmun* (23 October 1994) argued “The joint step of South Korea and the United States in claiming that there is no provision of light water reactors without *special inspection* burst like soap bubbles (emphasis added).” In addition to the two incentives, the United States began to give economic incentives to North Korea for the first time since the early 1990s, when North Korean nuclear activities raised international concerns. The Agreed Framework stated that the United States would provide LWRs and 500,000 tons of heavy oil annually and lift economic sanctions against North Korea.

As early as the conclusion of the Agreed Framework, the United States took an engagement policy toward North Korea by implementing the agreement in earnest. First of all, in late February 1995 the United States and South Korea agreed not to hold the Team Spirit exercise slated for March 1995. Secondly, the United States made an effort to provide LWRs for North Korea according to the Agreed Framework. On December 16, 1994, delegations from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea met in San Francisco to establish a multilateral consortium, tentatively named the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO). Thirdly, the United States also began to fulfill its obligations by shipping 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil to North Korea, which was a compensation for the shutdown of the North Korean nuclear program according to the Agreed Framework. In addition, on January 20, 1995, the U.S. State Department announced a first-step measure to ease “several economic sanctions against North Korea, as anticipated in the Agreed Framework” (Oberdorfer 2001, 364). Due to the American cooperative policy, Pyongyang’s external

security improved significantly compared to the period before the Geneva Agreement was struck.

### **5.1.2. Domestic Security Situation**

#### **5.1.2.1. Political Stability**

“Since the death of their supreme leader, Kim Il Sung, in July 1994, the North Korean people have suffered considerable setbacks in all aspects of their social and political life” (Suh 2000, 3). “Kim Il Sung succeeded in appointing his son commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but Kim Jong Il was not elected general secretary of the party or president of the republic. Thus, Kim Il Sung’s sudden death created an abnormal and uneasy political state where a military commander, not the head of the state, had to rule the country” (Suh 2000, 6). However, this did not directly lead to political instability in North Korea.<sup>84</sup> Dae-Sook Suh (1998, 29) argues, “North Korean political leadership consists of a mixture of old leaders of the Kim Il Sung generation and new, young leaders of the Kim Jong Il generation. All leaders, the old and new alike, are in full support of Kim Jong Il.” “At the time of the Kim Il Sung’s death, there was no evidence that Kim Jong Il’s leadership was challenged by any competitor” (Han Park 2002, 164).

#### **5.1.2.2. Deepening Economic Crisis and Strong Social Control**

In 1995, one of the challenges facing the Pyongyang regime was the flagging economy. North Korea’s economic performance continued to decline during the mid-1990s.

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<sup>84</sup> According to Han Park (2002, 162), “when the top posts of general secretary of the Korean Workers’ Party and the presidency of the state were left unfilled following Kim Il Sung’s death, most observers inferred that Kim Jong Il was unable to consolidate his power position. Nevertheless, the younger Kim waited until the third anniversary of his father’s death before assuming those positions.”

As mentioned before, North Korea's GNI shrank by 1.8 in 1994 and 3.7% in 1995. In addition, the deficiency of food was so severe that the Public Distribution System worked improperly.

Table 5.1. Food Situation in North Korea

(unit: 10,000 ton)											
Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	'01	'02
Demand	650	658	667	672	673	670	639	650	606	613	626
Supply	443	427	388	413	345	369	349	389	422	359	395

Source: *Tongilkyoyookwon* (2004, 151)

The economic situation was “serious enough for the proud and putatively self-reliant North Korea, though informally, to make an unprecedented request to Japan and South Korean ‘puppets’ for food aid in 1995” (Samuel Kim 1996, 61). As mentioned in the previous chapter however, the economic difficulties during the first half of 1990s were not expected to bring about political instability due to the formidable tools to control the society, ranging from security organizations to ideological control. For example, the North Korean government continued to maintain strict control of the border areas to avoid the spread of the “capitalist wind” among its people. Kim Jong Il’s control of top government, party, and military leaders was successful and actually has been so until today. As mentioned in the previous chapter, coercive control over the society encompasses not only the pervasive surveillance over the populations and security apparatuses, but also the regulation of the potentially subversive activities such as the ritual of religion. The Ministry of People’s Security (MPS) and the State Security Department (SSD), the two domestic security organizations, were effective in “preventing the formation of unauthorized organizations and gatherings” (Oh and Hassig 2000, 145). According to North Korean refugees, the MPS maintained a tight control over the society in regard to keeping the populations from moving

around the country at least until the flooding in mid 1995 (*Joeunbeotdeul* 2002). Any voices of dissent were not reported. In sum, in spite of the economic hardship, the Pyongyang regime appears to have enjoyed domestic stability.

### **5.1.3. Changes in Identity Need Situation**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Juche* (self-sufficiency or independence) ideology acts as a provider of identity for the Pyongyang regime. The ideological pride began to be slowly affected by the worsening economy.<sup>85</sup> However, the most disadvantageous changes in identity need came from Washington's demand to acknowledge clearly that it would receive the "South Korean-type" reactors since Seoul would play a central role in the financing and construction in the DPRK of two LWRs. This can be confirmed by comparing the American policy toward Pyongyang in 1994 with that in the early 1995.

#### **5.1.3.1. The American Policy from Mid to late 1994**

From the mid-1994, the U.S. sought to satisfy North Korea's identity needs by, knowingly or unknowingly, acknowledging North Korean leadership. Meeting North Korea's identity needs functioned as an important element for North Korea to sign the Agreed Framework. To understand the importance of meeting Pyongyang's identity need, we need to turn our attention to the legitimacy war between the two Koreas.

As mentioned before, Pyongyang's foreign policy was "centered on enhancing Pyongyang's legitimacy at the expense of Seoul" (Manning 1998, 141). Thus, the United

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<sup>85</sup> On June 17, 1995, the very day that inter-Korean talks on rice aid got underway in Beijing, Pyongyang's "Ray of Juche" radio program featured an interview with Professor Li Ki-ban of Kimilsung University, who said: "If a country's economy cannot stand on its own, it cannot help but hold out its begging hands to eat, to dress, and to live. This inevitably results in subordination. ... Nothing is more servile and humiliating than begging. Recited from Samuel Kim (1996, 72).

States President Clinton's condolences regarding the death of the great leader Kim Il Sung and letter of assurance regarding the Agreed Framework to Kim Jong Il worked as tangible evidences that the U.S. had recognized the legitimacy of North Korea. Although the letter of assurance from President Clinton to Kim Jong Il and the Agreed Framework was not legally binding, Pyongyang heralded the letter and the Agreed Framework as "a great diplomatic achievement" (*Nodong Sinmun* 1 December 1994). In fact, the North Korean official newspaper appears to have treated the Clinton's letter as more important than the Agreed Framework itself by placing the letter at the front page where usually news and photographs of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il have been placed. In addition, at the new conference after signing the Agreed Framework Kang Sok Ju stressed as follows:

We address the dear Comrade Kim Jong Il in high esteem as the supreme leader of the DPRK and as the great leader of our party and people. The dear Comrade Kim Jong Il, the supreme leader of the DPRK, is the single successor of the great leader [Kim Il Sung], and is recognized by and highly respected by the world. In consideration of this and recognizing the reality, I think U.S. President Clinton used *the title of esteem* - Your Excellency Kim Jong Il, the DPRK's supreme leader - in his letter of assurance to the dear comrade (emphasis added)<sup>86</sup> (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 October 1994)

Holding direct negotiations with the U.S. without the participation of the South also satisfied North Korea's identity need. *Nodong Sinmun* (22 October 1994), boasted, "We held the talks independently with the U.S. on an independent footing, not relying on someone

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<sup>86</sup> "News Conference of the head of the DPRK delegation to the DPRK-U.S. talks, October 21, 1994." *Nodong Sinmun*, 24 October 1994. There are many lost in translation. Kan Sok Ju describes President Clinton's sending [in Korean, *drida*] a letter of assurance as if Clinton as a vessel sent a letter to his King. Presumably, through this kind of distorted description, the vice foreign minister sought to increase the legitimacy of DPRK's top leader and reinforce the identity of the Pyongyang regime. In a new conference on June 14, 1995, Kim Kye Kwan (*Nodong Sinmun* 15 June 1995), North Korean vice foreign minister, also depicted President Clinton as a man of low status when he said that U.S. president sent [pay tribute to, in Korean, *olida*] to the great leader General Kim Jong Il.

else's sympathy or advice."<sup>87</sup> The North Korean newspaper (22 October 1994) also derided the South: "[South Korean president] Kim Young Sam traitor clique are in a serious uneasiness, fear and despair, conscious of their desperate straits after the DPRK-U.S. talks in Geneva culminated in the adoption of Agreed Framework." North Korea's identity need was satisfied in part because South Korea was completely excluded in the Geneva agreement.

Another commentary in *Nodong Sinmun* (23 October 1994) argued "the Kim Young Sam puppet clique are openly expressing regret and complaint against their American master, finding themselves *isolated* [emphasis added]" because "*the United States ignored the request of South Korea* that it should be more prudent in the North-U.S. talks." This happening was precisely what the North had sought through dialogues with the U.S. for four decades: driving a wedge between the United States and South Korea.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, this commentary (23 October 1994) interpreted the U.S.-DPRK talks in a way that portrayed that "the United States ... gave a *big diplomatic victory* to North Korea [emphasis added]." In this respect, both the Agreed Statement of August 1994, in which the United States indicated that it would move toward full normalization of political and economic relations, and the Agreed Framework of October 1994, in which the U.S. promised that it would upgrade relations with North Korea to the Ambassadorial level, worked as elements to lessen the Pyongyang regime's concerns for legitimacy and identity.

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<sup>87</sup> According to Don Oberdorfer (2001), the most important objection on the part of Seoul to the Agreed Framework was that the United States would establish any relationship with North Korea.

<sup>88</sup> Even in 2008 one of the South's greatest fears is a sign of weakening alliance with the United States. Thus, in an interview with the CNN, Hillary Clinton, secretary of state, had to say in order to soothe the South's anxiety that "if North Korea's calculating that somehow, they're going to drive a wedge between the United States and the Republic of Korea, they're badly miscalculating that.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/20/clinton.asia/index.html#cnnSTCVideo>



### 5.1.3.2. Changes in the American Policy from the Early 1995

As early as February 1995, foreign relations between the United States and North Korea changed for the worse over the type of LWRs that would replace the DPRK's graphite-moderated reactors. Pyongyang was determined to avoid acknowledgement that South Korea might be the source of the reactors, insisting as follows: "Our position toward the discussions on the LWRs is clear and reasonable. We will never accept South Korean-model reactors" (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 February 1995). According to North Korea, "South Korean-type LWR advertised by the [South Korean] authorities is based on a U.S. design and it is an assembly of parts from different countries" (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 February 1995). "South Korea can not work out a reactor design. What they can do is to modify Western reactors a little. Therefore, LWRs made in South Korea cannot be called South Korean-type. Therefore, South Korean-type reactor does not exist, and the South Korean model is not still known to the world" (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 February 1995). Seoul, on the other hand, insisted that Washington make North Korea clearly acknowledge that it would receive the "South Korean-type" reactors since Seoul would play a central role in the financing and construction in the DPRK of two LWRs and the South Korean administration could not get ratification from the National Assembly without Pyongyang's clear acknowledgement (Oberdorfer 2001, 366).

The reason North Korea adamantly refused to accept South Korean-type reactors and to hold talks with Seoul was mainly because, North Korea argued, "South Korea had irrevocably insulted North Korea by affronting their deceased leader Kim Il Sung," instead of "extending condolences to North Koreans" (*Nodong Sinmun* 30 July 1994). For North Koreans, insulting its top leadership meant totally denying their regime's identity. According

to a statement of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland<sup>89</sup> (*Nodong Sinmun* 30 July 1994),

The death of the great leader President Kim Il Sung ... was the biggest national misfortune and loss for both the North and the South. The Koreans in the North, South and overseas, ... deeply mourned the death of respected President Kim Il Sung. The South Korean authorities, however, took a stance quite different from that of the people in the North and the South. The South Korean ruler Kim Young Sam perpetrated military provocations against the North, committing without hesitation the never-to-be condoned treachery of abusing the [North's] misfortune. [South Korean President Kim Young Sam's] ... acts of driving the sword into the bleeding hearts of the fellow countrymen in deep grief was a rude act of a man bereft of reason. [He committed] ... the crime of suppressing South Korean people for expressing condolences at the point of bayonet on top of their indelible crime in failing to show etiquette

Therefore, North Korea insisted that the South must formally apologize to the North if Seoul really wanted to improve relations with Pyongyang (*Nodong Sinmun* 3 February 1995). Without a formal apology, for North Koreans, it was beyond imagination to resume talks with Seoul or to accept "South Korean-type nuclear reactors." As a result, the U.S.'s pressure to resume North-South dialogue was "a very arrogant act which hurts [North Korea's] *self-respect* and *dignity* [emphasis added]" (*Nodong Sinmun* 9 February 1995). In short, the first half of 1995 saw Pyongyang's identity threatened by American pressure.

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<sup>89</sup> The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland is an institution under direct control of (North) Korea Workers Party.

## 5.2 Pyongyang's Perception of Human Needs Situation

### 5.2.1. Pyongyang's Perception of Security and Identity

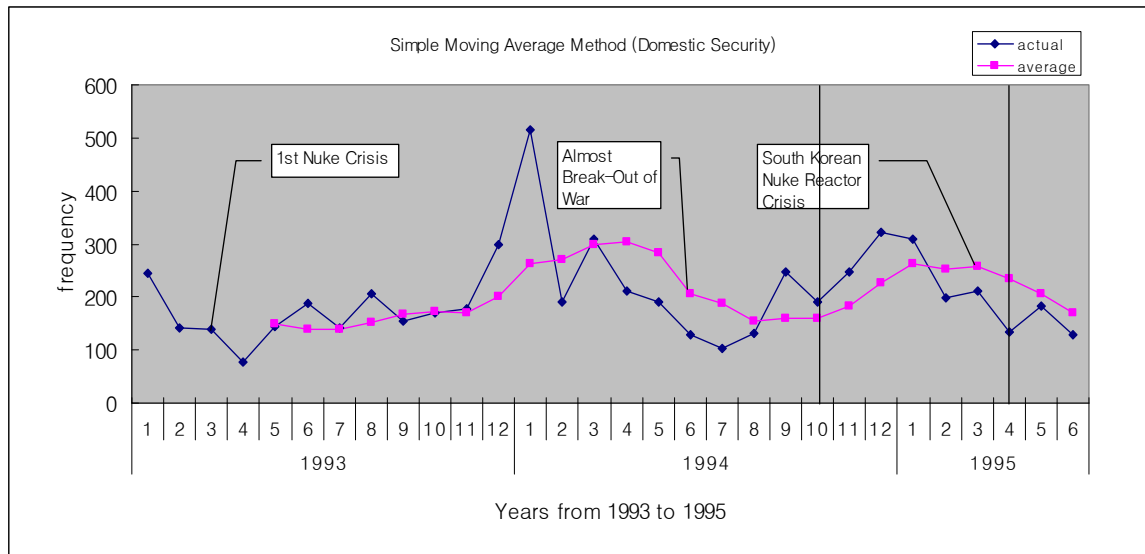


Figure 5.1. Domestic Security (1993-1995)

In this section our focus should be put on the period of time from October 1994, when Washington and Pyongyang adopted the Agreed Framework and the U.S. began to ask the DPRK to accept South Korean-type nuclear reactors, to April 1995, when North Korea began to threaten the United States by mentioning the withdrawal from the NPT. It should be noted that from May 1995 Pyongyang and Washington began to compromise regarding the role of South Korea in providing nuclear reactors for the North.

Figure 5.1 shows the number of times the word “self-help (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*)” was used. The word frequency of self-help is examined to understand Pyongyang’s perception of its domestic security need. The red line (moving average) in figure 5.1 is on a steady increase from October 1994 to January 1995 and then began to decrease. The blue line also shows a similar pattern. This means that North Korea began to perceive its domestic security to be

steadily improving from January 1995. The threat perception from October 1994 to April 1995 is relatively high compared to the year 1993. As mentioned in the previous chapter, however, it should be noted that the relatively high threat perception is reflecting mainly the deteriorating economic situation represented by the failed seven-year economic plan in 1993 and the newly set three-year period of transition (from 1994 to 1996). Close attention should be paid to the fact that the North did not seek to extract economic assistance when it refused to acknowledge the key role of South Korea in providing the light water reactors for Pyongyang. If the North had taken the conflictual policy mainly due to its deteriorating economy, it would have sought economic assistance from Washington. In short, the relatively high threat perception exercised, if any, little influence on the decision to reject the South Korean-type reactors.

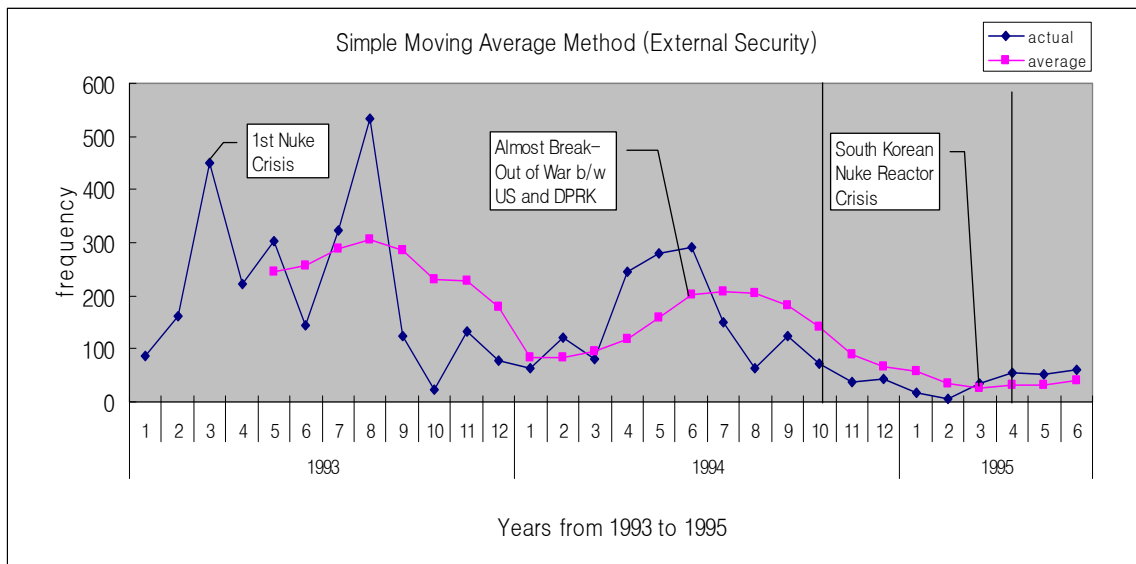


Figure 5.2. External Security (1993-1995)

Figure 5.2 shows the number of times the word “war” is used. The word frequency of war is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its external security need. The red line in

figure 5.2 is on a steady decrease from August 1994 to June 1995. This means that North Korea perceived that the environment of external security, especially foreign relations with the United States, was stable and advantageous to it.

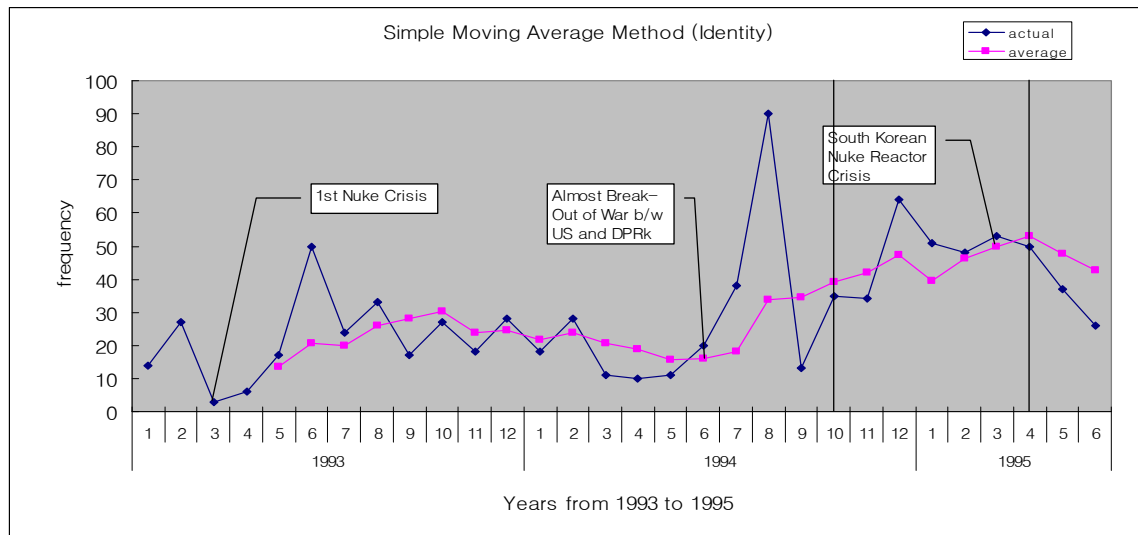


Figure 5.3. Identity (1993-1995)

Figure 5.3 shows the number of times the word “*Juche* ideology (*Juche Sasang*)” is used. The word frequency of *Juche* ideology is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its identity need. The red line in figure 5.3 increased steadily from June 1994 to April 1995. From May 1995 when Washington and Pyongyang reached at a tentative compromise regarding the role of South Korea in providing nuclear reactors, both the red and blue lines began to decrease.

On the other hand, this blue line has a peak in August 1994. However, the sudden peak of the blue line should be treated as an outlier because the peak appears to have been affected by an unexpected event of the North Korean president Kim Il Sung’s sudden death in July 1994. In August 1994, North Korea held nationwide campaigns to commemorate the deceased president who has been credited with inventing *Juche* ideology (*Juche Sasang*),

which resulted in the increased number of times the word '*Juche* ideology' was used. Therefore, figure 5.3 can be interpreted that Pyongyang perceived its identity to be threatened from October 1994 to April 1995.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the increase of threat perception with respect to identity starkly contrasted with the decrease of threat perception regarding security. This appears to confirm the theory of hierarchy of human (regime) needs: when security need has been satisfied for a certain level, human (regime) focus moves to identity need, a higher level of need. In short, in early 1995 Pyongyang perceived its identity need situation deteriorating but the situation of both the domestic and external security stable or improve.

### **5.2.2. Policy Options**

The section above shows that identity need for Pyongyang was unmet. This section shows that all of the available strategies to regain its identity in the first half of 1995 implied losses for the Pyongyang regime. Under the situation in which the U.S. demanded that North Korea acknowledge the central role of South Korea as a prerequisite for concluding the contract of supply for light water reactors, the Pyongyang regime had to pick up one of two alternative courses of action: passively accepting the U.S.'s demands regarding South Korean type- nuclear reactor or relying on a conflictual policy. Pyongyang could not choose a brinkmanship strategy such as unfreezing the reactors in the Yongbyong nuclear site because it did not want to meet its identity need at the expense of its national security. It should be noted that during the conflict with the U.S. over the source of LWRs, what North Korea wanted was to keep its "national dignity" intact.

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<sup>90</sup> The red line begins to increase from June 1994, which resulted from the sudden peak of the blue line in August 1994. Without the sudden peak, the red line would increase from October 1994 when Washington asked Pyongyang to accept South Korean-type nuclear reactors.

#### **5.2.2.1. Passive Acceptance of U.S. Demand**

Acknowledging the South Korean-type reactor would do harm to Pyongyang's legitimacy or identity need. North Korean newspaper *Nodong Sinmun* (6 May 1995) interpreted acknowledging South Korea's central role regarding the LWRs as sacrificing national dignity. In addition, North Korea feared that the U.S. would "drag in" the South in nuclear negotiations with the United States, which would undermine Pyongyang's identity. The North argued that the U.S. was "insisting on dragging in perpetrator [South Korea] who has been entirely excluded from discussions since the very beginning of the adoption of the Agreed Framework," which was to "infringe upon the national dignity and sovereignty" of North Korea (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 May 1995). Therefore, the policy option of accepting the American demand implied a loss for Pyongyang.

#### **5.2.2.2. Risky Venture: Conflictual Policy**

On the one hand, by adopting the conflictual strategy of a verbal threat to abandon the Agreed Framework, North Korea could avoid acknowledging South Korea's central role. In other words, the strategy might give Pyongyang a chance to regain the status quo ex ante, if successful. On the other hand, the verbal threat had a risk of escalating tension between Washington and Pyongyang if the United States misinterpreted Pyongyang's bluffing as a real intention to walk out of the Geneva Agreement. This means that the conflictual strategy also implied a loss for Pyongyang regime.

### 5.2.3. Pyongyang's Frame of Decision

This dissertation assumes that Pyongyang's frame of decision was determined both by dissatisfaction of its identity need and policy options comprised of all losses. Thus it is not my task to empirically prove what Pyongyang's reference point was and on which frame it was. However, we can get a few pictures regarding the reference point and frame of decision by looking into a few columns in *Nodong Sinmun*. When the United States began to press Pyongyang to acknowledge South Korea's role in providing light water reactors, many columns in *Nodong Sinmun* repeated this contention: "The Agreed Framework is good for us; however, what is more important is sovereignty." "We will not adhere to the DPRK-U.S. Agreed Framework while seeing our sovereignty infringed upon. *Our people value national dignity and sovereignty (Jajookwon)*<sup>91</sup> as much as life." These sentences show that Pyongyang perceived its identity need was at stake regarding the South Korean-type reactors. As mentioned above, the process of striking the Agreed Framework met North Korea's identity needs since Pyongyang could have direct talks with Washington without the participation of Seoul. Thus, isolating South Korea in the nuclear negotiations with the U.S. acted as one of the policy goals of North Korea. A statement of the DPRK Foreign Ministry (*Nodong Sinmun* 15 Jun 1995) insisted as follows:

Another important point of [the Joint Press Statement of June 13, 1995,] is the reconfirmation that the United States is our only principal contact in the process of carrying out the LWR project. As in the past, we do not care how the United States operates KEDO. ... We will simply regard the United States, which represents KEDO, as our principal point of contact in connection with the LWR issue. The DPRK-U.S. Joint Press Statement also stipulates that in order for the U.S. to carry out its role as our principal contact, U.S.

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<sup>91</sup> Although both "*Jajookwon*" and "*Jookwon*" in North Korean are interpreted as sovereignty in English, the two words have different meanings. North Korea tends to use the word "*Jajookwon*" when it comes to North Korean identity or dignity. When the state's sovereignty matters, North Korea tends to use the word "*Jookwon*."



citizens will lead the KEDO delegations and working teams. In the event any third party of KEDO [that is, South Korea] tries to poke its nose into the matter, not knowing where to sit or stand, the issue will grow complicated.

In conclusion, the commentary and Pyongyang's official statement show that North Korea's reference point in the early and mid-1995 was to regain the status quo of October 1994. This status quo was when the U.S. met North Korea's identity needs by allowing direct talks between the two countries. Furthermore, these talks excluded Seoul and did not ask Pyongyang to accept South Korean-type nuclear reactors.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The existing and conventional studies on the North's foreign policy goal tend to pay more attention to security and less attention to the identity issue. This chapter shows how influential the identity need is on foreign policy decision-making in North Korea. In October 1994, the United States and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework, in which the United States provided several economic and security incentives. The agreement contributed to relieving Pyongyang's concerns over external security, which is confirmed by the content-analysis. In early 1995, the North maintained domestic stability in spite of the economic difficulties, which is proven by the low frequency of the word "self-help."

However, the United States began to ask North Korea to accept "South Korean-type" nuclear reactors. In Pyongyang's perspective, the U.S.'s demand was tantamount to a threat to its identity. Faced with the U.S. pressure, North Korea had two feasible options. One option was to accept the U.S. demand by acknowledging the "South Korean-type" reactors. The other was to defy the U.S. demand by threatening to abandon the Agreed Framework. The two options all implied a loss for Pyongyang regime. Accepting the South Korean-type

reactor meant not only acknowledging that South Korea was more advanced economically and technologically, but also letting Seoul get away with the affront of the deceased Kim Il Sung. Thus, under the situation in which the two Koreas were in a war of legitimacy, accepting the South Korean-type reactors was to impair its identity need. By contrast, verbal threats to abandon the Geneva agreement could escalate tension between Washington and Pyongyang, although the strategy could give North Korea a chance to avoid acknowledging South Korea's role. As a result, the Pyongyang regime, which fell onto a losses frame, chose the risky option of a conflictual diplomacy.

It should be emphasized that the North did not take a brinkmanship strategy, but a conflictual policy and it was because Pyongyang's identity rather than its security was threatened. In conclusion, the aforementioned debates confirm hypothesis B1 (HB1): when Pyongyang's security need had been satisfied and it perceived its identity threatened, it took a conflictual policy.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE MISSILE CRISIS

This chapter deals with the question of what made North Korea take a brinkmanship strategy with the long-range missile in 1998.

#### 6.1 Changes in Human Needs Situation

##### 6.1.1. External Security Situation Stable

Differently from Pyongyang's assertion (Joint New Year Editorial, *Nodong Sinmun* 1 January 1997) that the imperialist U.S. continued with vicious activities to stifle Korean socialism, Washington maintained the engagement policy<sup>92</sup> toward Pyongyang from October 1994 to mid-1998. The Clinton administration made sincere efforts to implement the Geneva agreement of 1994. Firstly, the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), under the leadership of the U.S., carried out successfully its mission with regard to providing North Korea with light water reactors (LWRs). On August 18, 1997, the KEDO announced the official groundbreaking of the LWR project (Oh 2000, 193).

Secondly, the United States tried to lessen North Korea's security concern by canceling the Team Spirit joint military exercise for the fifth consecutive year since 1993 (McCann 1997, 201). In this period of time, the United States emphasized diplomatic solutions over military solutions. For example, in September 1996, a North Korean spy submarine ran aground off the South Korean coast. In response to the infiltration, U.S.

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<sup>92</sup> Oh and Hassig (2006, 25) say, "Engagement can be broadly defined as non-hostile interaction between two countries."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher expressed concern about the attempted infiltration and urged both North and South Korea to exercise restraint rather than militarily threatening Pyongyang to apologize for the infiltration.<sup>93</sup>

Thirdly, the United States in 1996 shifted its policy toward Pyongyang “from decades of deterrence and containment to positive inducements to cooperation, signaling a commitment to improve (diplomatic) ties” (Satterwhite 1997, 17). In this vein, the United States provided humanitarian aid to North Korea several times. Although the aid was not directly related to the implementation of the Agreed Framework, it helped the United States maintain relatively stable diplomatic relations with North Korea. On February 2, 1996, the U.S. Department of State announced it would contribute \$2 million to help alleviate famine in North Korea. “This decision came one week after the South Korean and Japanese government officials had advised Washington of their plans not to provide further assistance, claiming North Korean citizens are not in dire straits” (McCann 1997, 200). In response to the U.S. aid, the [North] Korean Central News Agency (KCNA, 2 February 1996) claimed that the United States’ “humanitarian steps ...will remove distrust between the DPRK and the United States and create an atmosphere favorable for a smooth implementation of the Agreed Framework.” The American engagement policy toward North Korea culminated in resumption of high-level talks on March 7, 1997.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “S. Koreans Find, Kill 7 Infiltrators,” *Sun-Times*, 20 September 1996. State Secretary Christopher said, “We wish that all parties would avoid taking any further provocative actions.” Another example related to diplomatic approach is that when North Korea sent several hundred troops into prohibited areas of the Demilitarized Zone, which divides the two Koreas, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said that “we see this as primarily a political rather than a military move,” instead of threatening military response to North Korea. According to the newspaper, there was no push by the United States for a UN Security Council meeting. See Thomas W. Lippman and Bradley Graham, “U.S. Criticizes North Korea’s Entry of DMZ,” *The Washington Post*, 9 April 1996.

<sup>94</sup> The U.S. and DPRK had not held high-level talks since June 1995. In the 1997 high-level consultations, the two sides discussed a variety of issues including implementation of the Agreed Framework, North Korea’s ballistic missile program, and the proposed four-party peace talks.

Fourthly and finally, in order to keep the KEDO project going, President Clinton issued a presidential determination. Congress required this presidential determination and it certified that North Korea was complying with the provisions of the Agreed Framework and was cooperating fully in the canning and safe storage of all spent fuel from its graphite-moderated nuclear reactors.<sup>95</sup> “North Korea-U.S. relations have thus progressed over the years from outright hostility to friendly cooperation, and from containment of each other to engagement” (Kyung-Ae Park 1997, 625). In short, 1997 witnessed a significant warming of relations between the U.S. and North Korea, with the two inching toward closer ties.<sup>96</sup> Washington’s policy toward Pyongyang remained unchanged in 1998. Although North Korea defined the year of 1998 as “one that the imperialist combined forces made a frantic attempt to isolate and stifle her” (KCNA 1 January 1999), this appears to have been due to North Korea’s feature that attributes policy failure to external enemies.

### **6.1.2. Domestic Security Situation**

#### **6.1.2.1. Collapsing Economy**

During 1995 to 1998, North Korean economy was on the brink of collapse due to repeated natural disasters as well as the inefficiency of the socialist command economy. With respect to North Korean economic situation, the most frequently cited economic statistic is

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<sup>95</sup> Presidential Determination No. 97-20, the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, March 19, 1997.

<sup>96</sup> David Satterwhite (1998, 20) offers a partial list of the year’s multi-faced contacts: continued joint searches for the remains of U.S. soldiers from the Korean War era, discussions concerning North Korean missile proliferation issues, discussions for opening liaison offices in the respective capitals, formal ground-breaking ceremonies in August 1997 by KEDO, negotiations over provision of U.S. humanitarian assistance, first-time visits by DPRK agricultural specialists to learn from research in the U.S., visits to Pyongyang of U.S. governmental officials and members of Congress, discussion over DPRK admission to the Asian Development Bank, and the Four-Way Talks.

the shrinking GNP, which is estimated to have declined by 55% from an already low \$23.1 billion in 1990.<sup>97</sup>

Table 6.1. North Korea's GNI

GNI = Gross National Income

Year	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00
Nominal GNI (\$billions)	23.1	22.9	21.1	20.5	21.2	22.3	21.4	17.7	12.6	15.8	16.8
GNI per capita (\$)	1,064	1,038	943	904	923	957	910	741	573	714	757
Growth Rate (%)	-3.7	-5.2	-7.6	-4.3	-1.8	-3.7	-3.7	-6.8	-1.1	6.2	1.3

Source: *Tongilkyoyookwon* (2004, 139)

North Korean factories are estimated to be operating at less than 30% of capacity.<sup>98</sup>

The most significant indicator of North Korea's poverty is hunger and starvation that have swept through North Korea since 1995. Estimates of the number of premature deaths range from as low as 220,000 deaths (by the North Korean government) to as many as 3.5 million at the upper end (Haggard and Norland 2007, 11).<sup>99</sup>

Before proceeding, we should remember that the great famine caused severe concern for the Pyongyang regime because the famine killed not only the people who belong to the "wavering" and "hostile" class but also the members of "core class." Against these backdrops, following the death of its Great Leader, North Korea was forced to focus its attention and

<sup>97</sup> However, it would be a mistake to place too much faith in the statistical accuracy mentioned in the table. The North Korean government does not publish reliable economic statistics since the late 1980s. On the reliability and usability of the DPRK statistics, see Suk Lee (2006).

<sup>98</sup> The estimate of 30% operating level for factories is widely cited by North Korean defectors. However, this assessment is based on circumstantial evidence. According to *Tongilkyoyookwon* (2004), the so-called second economy including military factories may be operating at much higher rates.

<sup>99</sup> According to Suk Lee (2005), North Korean famine from 1994 to 2000 cost 580,000 to 1,120,000. According to an official of the international relief organization World Vision, an informal survey found that about 15 percent of people in North Korea's town and villages may be dying of starvation and famine-related diseases. See Barbara Crossett, "North Korea Famine May Be Killing 15 % in Towns, Survey Says," *New York Times*, September 15, 1997. According to former North Korean high ranking official Jang Yop Hwang (1999, 362-3), 500,000 in 1995 and one million in 1996 died of starvation and famine-related diseases.

energies on sheer survival and little else and in so doing to ask the assistance of the outside world. A variety of other nations and charitable organizations contributed food or funds to purchase food. “Despite an estimated \$200 million worth of food annually from China and almost \$1 billion in food aid during 1995-98 provided by other foreign governments and international aid organizations, the emergency continued” (Oh and Hassig 1999, 287). This was compounded by a serious drought in the summer of 1997 and followed by tidal waves along the western coast that devastated up to 70 percent of the summer corn harvest (Satterwhite 1998, 16). The 1999 budget shrank to 50 percent below the 1994 budget (*Tongilkyoyookwon* 2004, 144).

During the prolonged economic straits, many desperate expressions began to appear in the articles in *Nodong Sinmun* revealing the regime’s perception of economic crisis: “*indescribable* economic difficulties and trials (10 December 1997)”; “serious natural disasters and economic difficulties” (1 January 1998). The Joint New Year Editorial (*Nodong Sinmun* 1 January 1998) expressed the economic hardship as follows: “rigorous struggle”; “arduous march”; “struggle that will decide whether the people remain an independent people or be reduced to slaves”; “*inching through storm and rough sea*”, “no matter what situation may come and no matter which way the wind may blow”, “*indeed hard time* for our people”, “manifold hardship.” The editorial of *Nodong Sinmun* on 16 February 1998 devoted to Kim Jung Il used such heartbreaking expressions as “*nobody can match anyone ready to die*”, “if the sky fall, we shall catch larks”, “there is a way out of every situation, however bad”, “to blow flowers even on a rock”, “to create thing out of nothing”, “the party of strong ideology does not tarnish, the country of steadfast faith does not collapse, the people of strong will does not fall down.” Korean Central News Agency (1 January 1999) described

the predicament of the year 1998 as a “rigorous situation in which other countries would have *collapsed more than ten times*.” These expressions are an honest confession of the Pyongyang regime placed in an extreme situation.<sup>100</sup> Looking back up the years of “arduous march” in 1998, Kim Jong Il said, “I had an indescribable pang of sorrow when I saw with my own eyes the stopped factories and people suffering extreme economic difficulties” (Shim and Oh 2005, 402).

#### **6.1.2.2. Weakening Social Control**

“The new year of 1996 began with an official announcement that the Public Distribution System would cease provision of food rations until May and those stealing food and animals would be immediately executed” (Suk Lee 2005, 10). “The breakdown of the official food procurement and distribution system resulting from the famine left the government with no alternative but to acquiesce both in private markets and in widespread illegal private cultivation” (Harrison 2002, 40). North Korea had kept tight rein on private travels of the populace in order to maintain social control efficiently (Tongilbu 2001, 423). After the great famine in 1995, “a growing number of food refugees traveled domestically without official permission and even fled into China, raising great security concerns” for the North Korean government (Suk Lee 2005, 11).

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<sup>100</sup> According to Jung-Kyun Mok (1999, 6-7), the editorials express the anxiety and fear of changing circumstances, the desperation that there is no outlet, earnest prayer that longs for a miracle such as flowers blooming on a rock, and ominous presentment that the Workers’ Party would tarnish, that the state would collapse, and that finally the people would disintegrate.



### 6.1.2.3. Political Stability

The remarks of North Korean top leader Kim Jong Il (Jong Il Kim 2000b, 295) reveal the deepening fear of economic collapse: “Although we are badly off, the real problem is that we would be worse off. And our enemies are loud-mouthing about our collapse.” Due to North Korea’s economic crisis, many experts on North Korea believed that the North would collapse (Harrison 2002, 3-7). According to a poll of 50 experts on North Korean affairs done by a South Korean newspaper, almost half of the experts predicted North Korea might collapse within 10 years (*Joongang Ilbo* 22 September 1996). Alarmed by surprising information on the North Korean economic situation, the South Korean government began to make a contingency plan to cope with a possible implosion of North Korea. However, these predictions were totally wrong. As mentioned everywhere, the economic hardship did not directly lead to political instability in North Korea because of the North’s political culture. As Han Park (2002, 164) says, “to challenge Kim Jong Il amounts to discrediting and challenging Kim Il Sung himself, which is unthinkable in the context of North Korean political culture.”<sup>101</sup>

### 6.1.3. Changes in Identity Need Situation

The North’s identity had been maintained by total control of outside information. Seeking economic assistance from the international community and increased internal migration of people seeking food made Pyongyang’s control over information a little weakened, raising Pyongyang’s concerns over its identity need as well as domestic security.

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<sup>101</sup> According to Han Park (2002, 165), “a system fails when it experiences an unmanageable degree of legitimacy crisis. ... Regime legitimacy for North Korea is anchored, to a large extent, on the ideology of *Juche*, as opposed to economic prosperity or political freedom.” That is one of reasons the North did not collapse facing the dire economic situation during the mid 1990s.

As a result of the concerns, “at the height of the food shortage in spring 1997 the regime refused to give in to pressures to open up the society to foreign food suppliers, thus avoiding the danger of exposing the people to unhealthy external stimuli” (Han Park 2002, 166). Kim Jong Il (Jong Il Kim 2000a) appealed in a speech that “people should sharpen their vigilance against infiltration, by all manner, of anti-socialist ideas and bourgeois modes of life, reject them categorically, and staunchly defend the socialist ideology and ‘our socialist system’ from the abuses, slander, and subversive moves of the enemies of socialism.” To Pyongyang’s delight, ironically, South Korea asked the International Monetary Fund for assistance in November 1997 due to the financial straits, which helped justify North Korea deriding the South.<sup>102</sup> In short, at least in terms of legitimacy competition with the South which was experiencing severe economic crisis, Pyongyang’s identity need was minimally threatened in spite of its own economic straits and influx of outside information.

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<sup>102</sup> “Traitor Kim Young Sam cannot evade the responsibility for the catastrophic economic crisis” *Nodong Sinmun*. November 28, 1997.

## 6.2 Pyongyang's Perception of Human Needs Situation

### 6.2.1. Perception of Security and Identity

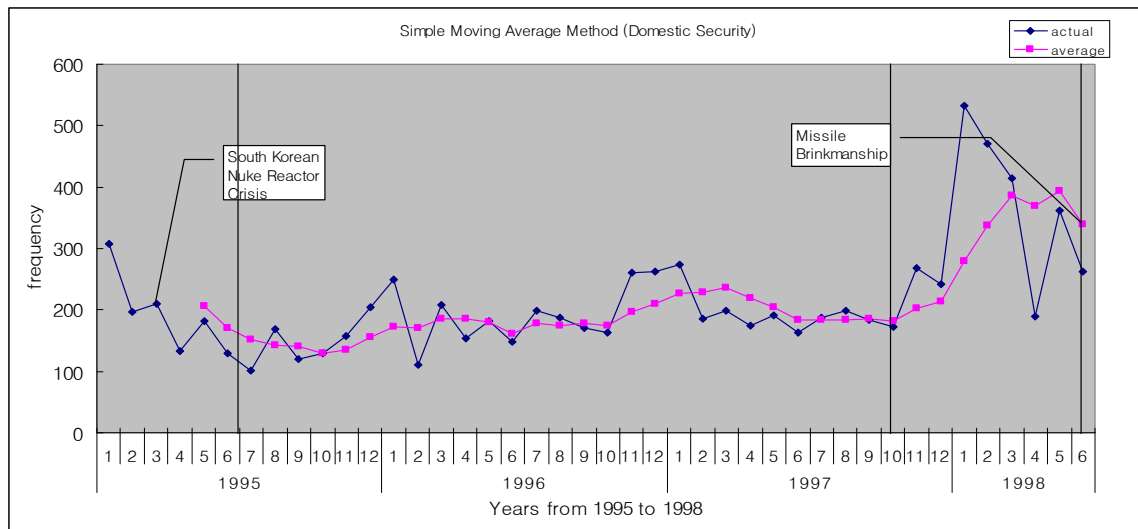


Figure 6.1. Domestic Security (1995-1998)

In this section our focus should be put on the period of time from the second half of 1995, when the great famine started in North Korea, to June 1998, when North Korea began to rely on brinkmanship strategy by mentioning missile issues. Figure 6.1 shows the number of times the word “self-help (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*)” is used. The word frequency of self-help is examined to portray Pyongyang’s perception of domestic security. The red line (moving average) in figure 6.1 soars sharply from October 1997 to June 1998 when North Korea began to prepare for a long-range missile test. The blue line shows a peak in January 1998. This was mainly because North Korea held nationwide campaigns for self-help (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*)<sup>103</sup> from January 1998 to March 1998 in order to overcome the dire

<sup>103</sup> In 1998, self-help (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*) meant that people should find their own ways to survive because the Korea Workers Party or government did not have any means to get people out of the famine. *Nodong Sinmun* and other North Korean mass media emphasized the phrase that “we should live up to the spirit that there will be no problem even if the government did not to support anything for me (*Yuieseo Daejwodo Jotko An Daejwodo Jottanun Jeongsin*).” This phrase is an indirect confession of Pyongyang regime that it was helpless in dealing with the great famine in the second half of 1990s.

economic situation instead of seeking foreign assistance. Therefore, figure 6.1 can be interpreted as depicting that the Pyongyang regime perceived its domestic security or survival to be threatened from October 1997 to June 1998.

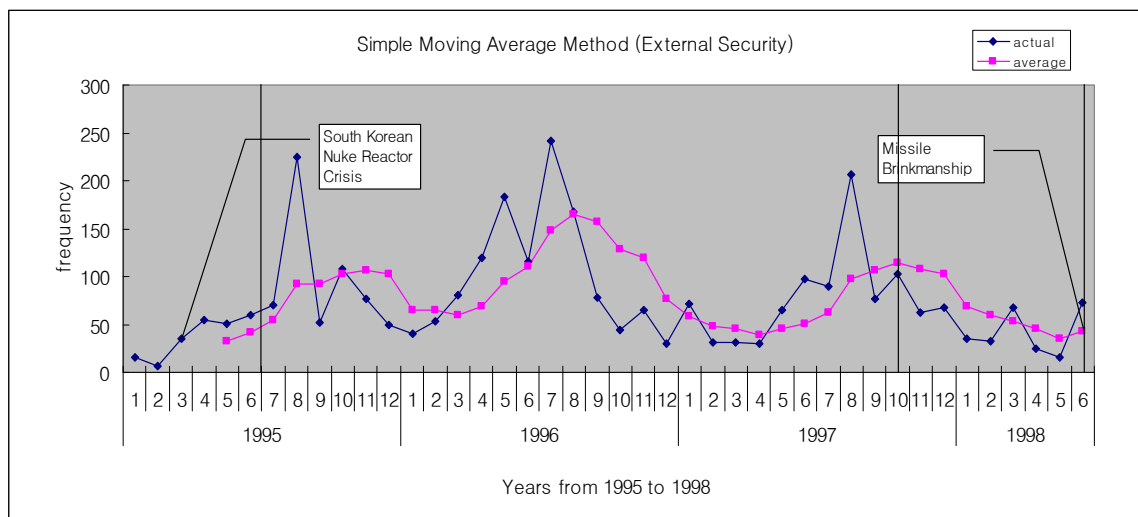


Figure 6.2. External Security (1995-1998)

Figure 6.2 shows the number of times the word “war” was used. The word frequency of war is related to Pyongyang’s perception of its external security need. The red line (moving average) in figure 6.2 is on a steady decrease from October 1997 to June 1998. This means that North Korea perceived that the environment of external security, especially foreign relations with the United States, was improving from October 1997 to June 1998.

It should be noted that both the red and blue line show a surge in 1996. This is mainly because of North Korea’s repeated demand for peace treaty and the tension between Japan and DPRK. In January 1996, North Korea proposed to contract a peace treaty between Washington and Pyongyang, but the U.S. turned down the proposal. In order to justify its proposal for peace treaty, North Korea asserted that the U.S. did not give up “the vicious plan to attack North Korea militarily.” *Nodong Sinmun* repeated the demand for peace treaty from

February to October 1996.<sup>104</sup> The surge of number of times the word ‘war’ was used in 1996 does not indicate that Pyongyang’s worsened perception of its security settings.

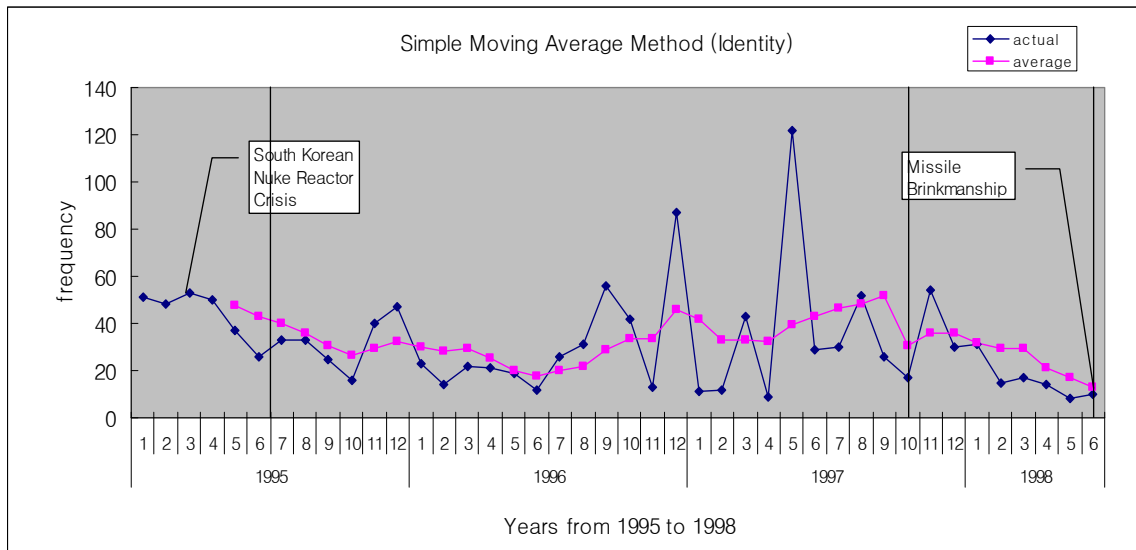


Figure 6.3. Identity (1995 to 1998)

Figure 6.3 shows the number of times the word “*Juche* ideology (*Juche Sasang*)” was used. The word frequency of *Juche* ideology is examined to interpret Pyongyang’s perception of its identity need situation. The red line (moving average) in the figure 6.3 begins to diminish from November 1997. This indicates that North Korea’s perception of its identity situation began to improve.

It should be noted that the red line’s steady decrease from November 1997 to June 1998 in spite of prolonged economic straits coincides with the time in which the South made a request for the IMF bailout. In addition, the steady decline of the red line is in a stark

<sup>104</sup> 302 articles in 1996 that belong to category 1-2-1, which dealt with the relations between the U.S. and DPRK included 75 articles related to North Korea’s demand for peace treaty and the tension between Japan and DPRK. These 302 articles in *Nodong Sinmun* mentioned the word “war” 1189 times. Meanwhile, the 75 articles related to peace treaty and tension between Tokyo and Pyongyang mentioned “war” 338 times in 1996. That is, the word “war” only related to North Korea’s perception of its security was mentioned 851 times in 1996. Therefore, the frequency of the word “war” in 1996 is lower than 1571, annual average from 1992 to 2002. In other words, the word frequency in 1996 is the second lowest among 11 years from 1992 to 2002.

contrast with the soaring frequency of word ‘self-help.’ This appears to support the theory of human (regime) needs hierarchy: the emergency of all other human (regime) needs is contingent upon the presence of conditions of survival. That is, the Pyongyang regime paid more attention to the security need than its identity because its survival was at stake. In sum, North Korea appears to have perceived its domestic security to be more threatened than external security and identity from October 1997 to June 1998.

### **6.2.2. Policy Options**

The section above shows that the domestic security need for Pyongyang was unmet. This section shows that all of the available strategies to recover domestic security did not imply all losses for the Pyongyang regime. Faced with the collapsing economy and a formidable death toll, North Korea had to choose one of two alternatives: passively accepting the deteriorating economic situation or relying on brinkmanship.

It should be mentioned that the strategy of brinkmanship did not imply all loss for the Pyongyang regime because the strategy could provide some gains for the North. Another thing to be mentioned is that other policy options such as getting economic assistance from outside or reformative economic measures were not available. In 1998, the international food assistance to North Korea was meager and the United States, the only country that could provide massive economic assistance for North Korea, did not provide even heavy fuel oil that the U.S. promised under the Agreed Framework of 1994.<sup>105</sup> As Han Park (2002, 149) says, economic reform was not a feasible option<sup>106</sup> because it meant the regime collapse.

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<sup>105</sup> This does not mean that North Korea did not make diplomatic efforts to extract economic assistance from outside world. Any country in the world did not respond to the North’s appeal for economic help.

<sup>106</sup> *Nodong Sinmun* (19 June 1996) quoted Kim Jong Il as saying, “Don’t expect any change from me.”

Like any other system, North Korea seeks prosperity as much as possible but not at the expense of system survival. ... With respect to the goal of system survival, what is unique about North Korea is the nature of the system itself. The goal is not just keeping the leadership in power or maintaining the political entity without being swallowed up by another system. It means the perpetuation of the system characteristics that tend to be unique and peculiar. Once these characteristics are compromised, the system faces the danger of being absorbed into the South. The system cannot stay alive by being similar to the South; it would only be poorer, inferior, and less popular among the people. ... One must realize that North Korea believe for good reason that system change means system collapse. Therefore, their resistance to change is in fact their resistance to collapse. Viewed from this perspective, it is not hard to understand why North Korean leadership has refused to compromise its stance on the question of reforms and opening to the outside.

#### **6.2.2.1. Passive Acceptance of Economic Deterioration**

From 1995 to 1998, North Korean economy was on the brink of collapse due to repeated natural disasters as well as the inefficiency of the socialist command economy. If Pyongyang had passively accepted the falling-down economic situation, North Korea would have to suffer continued “economic confusion” and increasing threat to the domestic security in the long run, even though the external security might have remained stable. Therefore, the policy option of accepting the economic deterioration implied a loss for Pyongyang.

#### **6.2.2.2. Risky Venture: Brinkmanship**

In contrast to passive acceptance of the dire domestic reality, the brinkmanship strategy including the launch of a long-range missile, if successful, might give Pyongyang a chance to extract economic assistance from the U.S. North Korea had attributed the economic hardship to “imperialists’ vicious activities to stifle socialism” as well as natural disasters. North Korea clearly knew that the blast-off of a missile would cause international

tension (*Nodong Sinmun* 16 June 1998). By taking a brinkmanship strategy such as stopping the canning of spent fuel rods and test-firing of a long-range missile, North Korea could have made the U.S. carry out the Agreed Framework, which included economic incentives for North Korea, as scheduled.

If North Korea's missile brinkmanship had failed, however, the United States might have walked out of the Agreed Framework, which would make Pyongyang lose more than the policy option of passively accepting the deteriorating economic conditions: no heavy fuel oil, no LWRs, no more economic sanctions, etc. In the worst case, North Korea thought that the United States might "wage a preemptive attack on the DPRK" (KCNA 4 September 1998).

### **6.2.3. Pyongyang's Frame of Decision: Unclear**

The strategy of missile brinkmanship did not imply all loss.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, it is impossible to know on which frame North Korea was.

## **6.3 Conclusion**

While external security for the Pyongyang regime was stable because of the American engagement policy, North Korea's domestic setting in 1998 was in a serious condition under which the Pyongyang regime perceived its survival threatened. Thus, we might deduce that North Korea took a brinkmanship strategy because of its dire economic situation. Of course, there is a chance that the DPRK test-fired the long-range missile for

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<sup>107</sup> If North Korea had perceived that the economic assistance such as heavy fuel oil it wanted to get from the United States was not an additional gain because it was the American duty under the Agreed Framework of 1994, the brinkmanship strategy could be interpreted as all loss.



different reasons. However, we can be sure that the North's contention<sup>108</sup> that they defeated the American imperialists' hostile attempt to stifle it by launching a long-range missile does not make sense because the number of times the word 'war' was used remained low.

It is regrettable that this chapter cannot confirm that North Korea took missile brinkmanship because it was on a losses frame. Differently from other brinkmanship strategies that North Korea has taken, the missile brinkmanship in 1998 might imply some gains for the Pyongyang regime. In conclusion, this chapter does not confirm hypothesis A1 (HA1) that when the Pyongyang regime perceives its security, whether domestic or external, threatened it takes a brinkmanship strategy.

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<sup>108</sup> North Korea has contended that it suffered "catastrophic ordeals" in the late of 1990s due to the stifling maneuver employed by the imperialist coalition including the United State (*Nodong Sinmun* 28 June 2002). The North has also maintained that it "launched a satellite in the middle of the days when the American imperialists was stepping up the hostile moves against it" (*Nodong Sinmun* 3 July 2003). North Korea argued that the world saw that the alleged satellite "hit the imperialists on a vulnerable spot" (*Nodong Sinmun* 21 June 2002).

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

This chapter is related to the question of why North Korea chose to cooperate with the United States by dispatching a high-ranking official to Washington in late 2000.

#### **7.1 Changes in Human Needs Situation**

##### **7.1.1. Domestic Security Situation**

###### **7.1.1.1. Political Stability**

One of the major long-term problems at the time of the death of Kim Il Sung in July 1994 was “the domestic problem related to the political succession that was not completed” (Suh 2000, 6). “Kim Il Sung’s sudden death created an abnormal and uneasy political state where a military commander, not the head of the state, had to rule the country” (Suh 2000, 6). “It was unusual that the position of general secretary of the ruling party and the office of the president of the republic were left vacant for nearly three years” after the death of Kim Il Sung (Suh 2000, 8). In addition, Kim Jong Il assumed the post of general secretary of the Korea Workers Party in 1997 not by election but proclamations of support from provincial party conferences and from the armed forces. However, there is little doubt that Kim Jong Il was in complete control of the Workers Party and the Pyongyang regime has never been challenged by domestic dissent. In September 1998, as Kim Jong Il introduced a new constitution and revamped the North Korean governmental structure, this abnormal and uneasy political state came to an end.

Since the introduction of the new constitution, other state organizations and institutions began to normalize (Chun 2001, 38), though the normalization was far from perfect. Elections for deputies to provincial, city and county people's assembly were held on March 7, 1999. According to the Central Election Management Committee, 99.9% of the registered voters participated in the elections and 100% of them voted for the candidates except those who are abroad or on ocean (KCNA 8 March 1999). 29,442 were elected deputies to local people's assemblies. KCNA (8 March 1999) reported that the elections marked a significant occasion in "perfecting the revolutionary system of the state structure and enhancing the function and role of the people's government bodies." Hyun-Jun Chun (2001, 38) says as follows:

Since both a new Supreme People's Assembly in 1998<sup>109</sup> and local people's assemblies in 1998 were organized, the nation's administrative bodies were in order nationwide. The second session of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK opened in April 1999 and SPA adopted a law of the DPRK on the plan of the national economy and dealt with the summing up of the fulfillment of the state budget for 1998 and the state budget for 1999. The state budget review was the first since the death of former president Kim Il Sung. The year 2000 also saw the national institutions working properly. The third session of the 10<sup>th</sup> Supreme People's Assembly opened in April 2000 to review the state budget and approved the laws adopted by the presidium of the DPRK SPA during its recession.

#### **7.1.1.2. Upturning Economy**

Another problem many scholars on North Korea pointed was the debilitated state of the North Korean economy. It had suffered negative economic growth for the previous nine years in a row since 1990. North Korea gave top priority to economic recovery. "It is the

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<sup>109</sup> The Supreme People's Assembly was not held from 1995 to 1997.

unswerving will and resolution of our General [Kim Jong Il] to concentrate all national efforts on the economy so as to put our country on the path toward an economic power” (*Nodong Sinmun* 15 August 1999). Pyongyang regime’s efforts for the economic recovery were also evident in Kim Jong Il’s activities. After assuming chairmanship of the Korea Workers Party in September 1997, “Kim Jong Il embarked upon active economic policy, resuming on-the-spot guidance for the economy from January 1998” (Hyeng-Jung Park 2003, 116).<sup>110</sup> Fortunately, North Korean economy stopped the downward spiral and showed positive growth of Gross National Product: 6.2 percent in 1999 and 1.3 percent in 2000. The North Korean government, which used to refuse to make economic statistics public, reported that the revenue of 1998 was 0.4 percent larger than that of 1997. Suk Lee (2005, 14) says as follows:

The food situation reportedly improved slightly in 1998 and 1999. In January 1999, the (North Korean) government announced that 1998 grain production was significantly increased from the lowest levels in 1995-97 and that the economy had begun to revive.<sup>111</sup> Both UN aid organizations and the ROK (South Korea) government also observed that Public Distribution System recovered in many areas and food rations continued to increase.

Thanks to North Korea’s economic reforms and the food aid provided by China, South Korea and international aid organizations, the year of 1999 and 2000 did not witness any such large number of famine deaths experienced 1996 and 1997. The Joint New Year Editorial in 2000 evaluated that Pyongyang succeeded in “turning the arduous march to

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<sup>110</sup> According to Ministry of Unification, South Korea, Kim Jong Il was reported to have made 25 on-the-spot inspection tours of economic units out of 75 public activities in 2000. This is a stark contrast with Kim Jong Il’s former stance on economic work in that Kim absolved himself of responsibility for the country’s economic problem. For example, the communist leader made 11 on-the-spot inspection tours of economic units in 1998.

<sup>111</sup> Suk Lee cited the sentence from the Ministry of Unification, South Korea.

forced march to walking march” although the North’s “economy was still in a bad shape” (*Nodong Sinmun* 1 January 2000).

#### **7.1.1.3. Tightened Social Control**

Revived, though partially, the food rationing system also helped the social control system work more effectively, which in turn helped the regime’s long-term security. Selig Harrison (2002, 65) says as follows:

When he was defense secretary, William J. Perry said on September 26, 1993, that North Korea would collapse “some time in the next few years.” Six years later, after his first visit to Pyongyang, Perry concluded that the regime is very much in control, and it would be imprudent on our part to assume that this regime is going to collapse.

As the economic situation improved, social control over the people by the principal domestic security organizations including the Ministry of People’s Security began to improve. In short, North Korea maintained domestic security during the late 1990s mainly due to its economic recovery.

#### **7.1.2. Changes in the External Security Situation**

The year 1999 saw political and military tensions between the U.S. and North Korea mainly because of the alleged Pyongyang’s covert nuclear program and Intercontinental Ballistic Missile development. North Korea was alarmed by the revelation of “Operation Plan 5027” in December 1998. A North Korean spokesman for the General Staff of the Korean People’s Army criticized the plan as “an attempt to launch a second Korean War” (*Nodong Sinmun* 12 December 1998). The fact that the General Staff of the North Korean

army itself had rarely issued a statement denouncing the U.S. indicated that Pyongyang perceived the American plan severely threatening its security. In addition, throughout 1999, the U.S. provoked North Korea by mentioning that Pyongyang was trying to establish a nuclear and ICBM program. According to a South Korean newspaper (Korea Times 3 February 1999), "CIA Director George Tenet told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Pyongyang was developing a longer-range missile, the Taepodong II, that could carry heavy payloads to Hawaii and Alaska and lighter-weight weapons to parts of the rest of the United States." Furthermore, Tenet stated that "U.S. intelligence was closely following a massive North Korean construction project at *Kumchang-ni*, an underground complex large enough to house facilities for making plutonium and other weapons-grade material for nuclear weapons." The North interpreted these remarks as the United States seeking "a pretext to ignite a war against the DPRK" (*Nodong Sinmun* 6 February 1999). In June 1999 the navies of North and South Korea exchanged gunfire, killing and wounding ten North Korean Navy servicemen. The United States vowed to reinforce the combined South Korea-U.S. military posture on the Korean Peninsula and sent the North a strong warning (Korea Times 16 June 1999).

In spite of the escalated tension between Washington and Pyongyang, the Clinton administration continued seeking to engage the North, which slowly took effect in alleviating Pyongyang's suspicions of American intentions. On May 27, 1999 William Perry, appointed by President Clinton as North Korean Policy Coordinator, visited North Korea as part of a comprehensive review of the Clinton administration's policy toward North Korea. Perry offered to "phase out American economic sanctions" and begin "steps toward diplomatic recognition of North Korea" (New York Times 2 June 1999). He also said that the U.S.

would be “prepared to resolve the legitimate defense concerns of the DPRK” by concluding a peace treaty ending the Korean War. The DPRK in return was expected to “resolve the defense concerns of others in the region” by “ending its long-range missile programs and reconfirming the stand-down of its nuclear weapons program” (New York Times 2 June 1999). On June 25, 1999, the State Department in its daily press briefing announced that the site at *Kumchangri*, which had been suspected as a underground nuclear facility, did not contain a plutonium production reactor or a reprocessing plant and the site was also not well-designed for a reprocessing plant. On September 17, 1999, President Clinton ordered a broad easing of economic sanctions against North Korea and it was the first step in a long-term plan to induce the North to abandon its missile and nuclear program.<sup>112</sup> In short, due to the Clinton administration’s engagement policy, North Korea’s external security began to improve from the mid-1999.

### **7.1.3. Changes in Identity Need**

During the late 1990s, the identity need for Pyongyang was more satisfied than ever mainly because of two events. First, William Perry, the highest-level official from the United States ever to visit North Korea, carried a letter from President Clinton. The letter from the American president, as it did in July 1994, contributed to satisfying the North’s identity need. In addition, the visit of the high-ranking official to the DPRK itself contributed to increasing, at least in Pyongyang’s view, the legitimacy of the regime. The second event that helped to enhance the North’s legitimacy occurred in the mid-2000. As Han Park (2002, 124-31)

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<sup>112</sup> According to a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK (KCNA 24 September 1999), “as a result of the Berlin talks with the DPRK on September 17 [1999] the United States made public the lift of a series of sanctions imposed upon the DPRK by it under the trade with the enemy act for scores of years after defining the DPRK as an ‘enemy state’, and so on. That is a step taken by the U.S. in a bid to fulfill its commitments to remove trade and investment barriers under the DPRK-U.S agreed framework adopted in 1994.”

insists, the summit meeting between South Korean president Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il that took place in Pyongyang on June 13-15, 2000, contributed to enhancing, at least in the eyes of North Korea people, “the Pyongyang’s position in the legitimacy competition with the South.” Getting economic assistance from the international community could have impaired the North’s identity or *Juche* ideology, but the Pyongyang regime successfully manipulated the economic assistance as “an American tribute to North Korea” (Ki-Hwan Choi 2003, 46). In short, during the last two years of the 1990s, Pyongyang’s identity need appears to have been more or less satisfied.

## 7.2 Pyongyang’s Perception of Human Needs Situation

### 7.2.1. Perception of Security and Identity

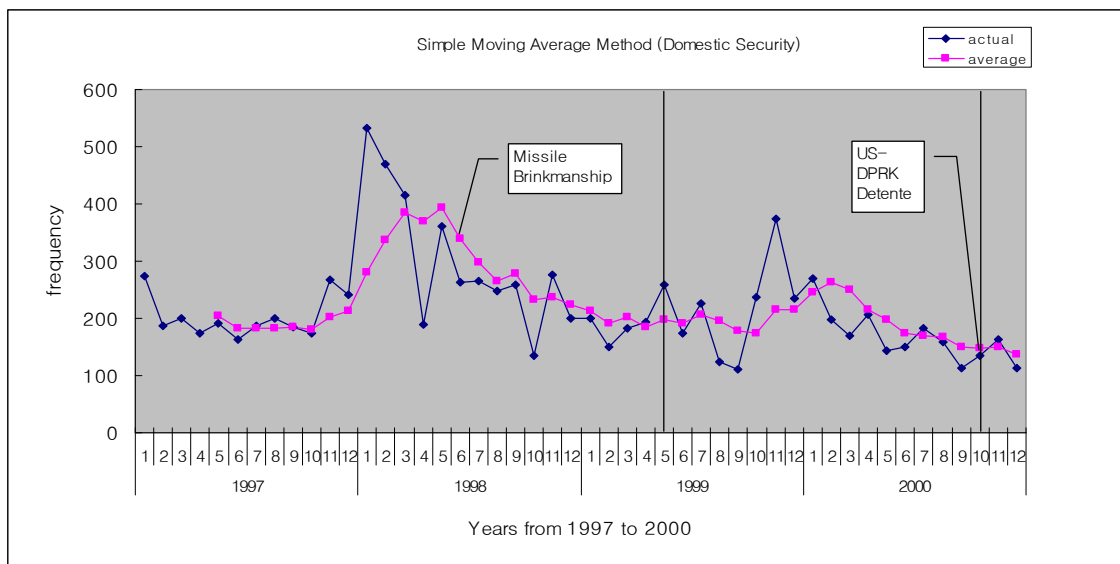


Figure 7.1. Domestic Security (1997-2000)

In this section our focus should be put on the period of time from May 1999, when the U.S.’s North Korean Policy Coordinator William Perry visited Pyongyang, to October



2000, when North Korean high-ranking official Jo Myong Rok visited Washington. Figure 7.1 shows the number of times the word “self-help” (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*) was used. The word frequency of self-help is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its domestic security need. The red line (moving average) in figure 7.1 is on a steady decrease from February 2000 and the blue line also shows a similar trend.<sup>113</sup> Figure 7.1, therefore, indicates that North Korea perceived its domestic security to be improving.

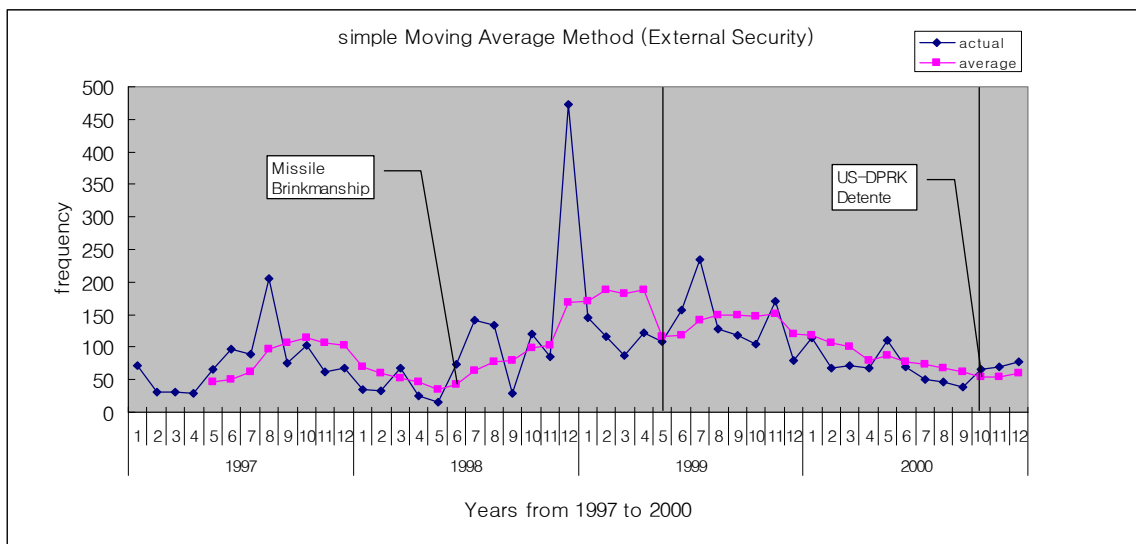


Figure 7.2. External Security (1997-2000)

Figure 7.2 shows the number of times the word “war” was used. The word frequency of war is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its external security need. The red line (moving average) in figure 7.2 is on a steady decrease from November 1999 to the end of 2000. The blue line also shows a similar pattern.

Although the time of period that we should focus on is from May 1999 to October 2000, two peaks in the blue line should be explained: one in December 1998 and the other one in July 1999. The high frequency of the word ‘war’ in December 1998 coincides with the

<sup>113</sup> The blue line in figure 7.1 shows a peak in November 1999. This is mainly because North Korea held a national rally “for the second Chollima March toward a strong and prosperous state (*Kangsung Daekook*).” Due to the rally, Nodong Sinmun used the word “*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*” more frequently than the previous months.

tension between Washington and Pyongyang. This tension was caused by Pyongyang's insistence that North Korea had the right to launch missiles at any time and continuous preparation for a multi-stage Daepondong II missile. The peak in the blue line in July 1999 appears to be influenced by the naval combat between the two Koreas in June 1999. Therefore the surge in the blue line in July 1999 should be treated as an outlier. In sum, from figure 7.2 it can be interpreted that the Pyongyang regime perceived its external security to be improving from November 1999.

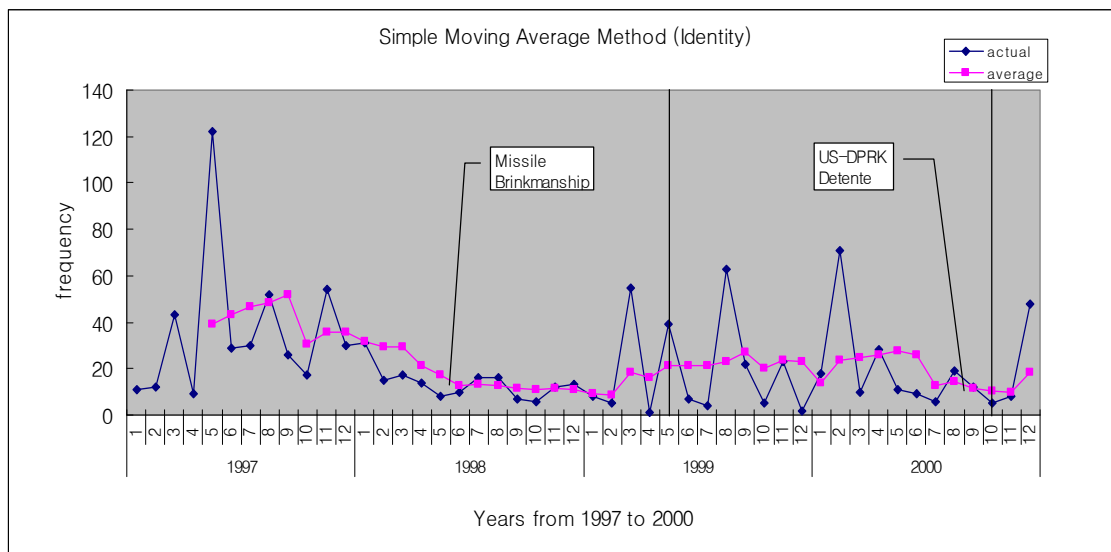


Figure 7.3. Identity (1997-2000)

Figure 7.3 shows the number of times the word “*Juche* ideology (*Juche Sasang*)” was used. The word frequency of *Juche* ideology is examined to deduce Pyongyang's perception of its identity need situation. The red line in figure 7.3 remained low during the years 1999 and 2000. This indicates that North Korea perceived its identity intact.

It should be noted that during the historical events of the North-South Korean summit in June 2000 and reconciliation between Washington and Pyongyang in October 2000, the

frequency of the word '*Juche* ideology' are lowest out of the year of 2000. This indicates that the two events contributed to satisfying the North's identity need.

In conclusion, the content-analysis from figures 7.1 to 7.3 indicate that the Pyongyang regime perceived its need situation of security and identity to be improving or intact from May 1999 to October 2000.

### **7.2.2. Policy Options**

The section above shows that security and identity needs for Pyongyang were satisfied. This section shows that all of the available strategies to deal with William Perry's proposal implied gains for the Pyongyang regime. Under the situation in which the U.S. invited a top-level North Korean official to Washington and asked Pyongyang to freeze its missile programs to improve bilateral relations between the two states, Pyongyang had to choose one of two alternatives: passively accepting the U.S.'s demands or employing a conflictual policy in order to get more benefits from the United States such as withdrawal of US forces stationed in South Korea.

#### **7.2.2.1. Passive Acceptance of US Demands**

If North Korea passively accepted William Perry's demands to renounce its nuclear and missile programs, North Korea would have gotten what Perry promised to it. The benefits Perry promised to give North Korea were released to the public through the "Perry Report," in which Perry recommended that the United States and its allies move to "reduce

pressures on the DPRK... in a step-by-step and reciprocal fashion.”<sup>114</sup> However, Perry’s proposal was not to fully satisfy Pyongyang’s policy goals. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 September 1999) said as follows:

The United States made public the lift of a series of sanctions imposed upon the DPRK ... That is a step taken by the U.S. in a bid to fulfill its commitments to remove trade and investment barriers under the DPRK-U.S. agreed framework adopted in 1994. ... The U.S. should not confine itself to the announcement of the lift of a series of sanctions concerning trade and investment, but put them into practice as soon as possible, completely discard hostile desire against the DPRK and lift the remaining sanctions (*Nodong Sinmun* 24 September 1999).

*The People’s Korea* (22 September 1999) reported as follows: “Despite the easing of sanctions, not a few restrictions still remain in trade and financial transactions between the two countries. The latest step does not include exports of military and sensitive dual-use items and most types of U.S. assistance under the U.S.’s ‘counterterrorism’ and ‘nonproliferation’ control on the DPRK. Other strict sanctions, based on the U.S.’s designation of the DPRK as a ‘terrorist state,’ still remain in place.” North Korea might have achieved those goals mentioned above by adopting a conflictual strategy.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, the expedition of North Korean high-ranking official to Washington would not cause any cost for Pyongyang regime. Perry’s demands for renouncing the nuclear and missile program did not cause any burden to North Korea. It was because North Korea had already promised to freeze its nuclear program under the Agreed

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<sup>114</sup> Perry Report continued that “If the DPRK moved to eliminate its nuclear and long-range missile threats, the United States would normalize relations with the DPRK, relax sanctions that have long constrained trade with the DPRK and take other positive steps that would provide opportunities for the DPRK.”

<sup>115</sup> In the second half of 2007 in which Pyongyang’s security was severely threatened by the George W. Bush administration, North Korea succeed in making the United States get it out of the lists of terror sponsoring states by employing nuclear brinkmanship strategy.

Framework of 1994 and had announced that it would suspend the test-firing of its long-range missile in September 1999. In short, the passive acceptance of the American demands did not imply losses at all.

#### **7.2.2.2. Risky Venture: Conflictual Policy**

In contrast to passive acceptance, North Korea could have adopted a conflictual policy to get more benefits from the United States. Those benefits may include stopping the US-South Korea joint military exercise such as Foul Eagle, withdrawal of US forces in South Korea, getting out of the list of terror sponsoring states, complete lifting of economic sanctions, and a peace treaty between the US and North Korea. This means that the conflictual strategy also implied gains for Pyongyang regime. However, if the conflictual strategy failed, North Korea would not have gotten anything further. It should be mentioned that the brinkmanship strategy was an infeasible option for the Pyongyang regime because any country would pursue more economic benefits or more security at the expense of survival itself.<sup>116</sup>

### **7.3 Conclusion**

At least since the early 2000, North Korea's environment for security and identity appears to have been stable. The content-analysis of *Nodong Sinmun* shows that Pyongyang perceived its need for security and identity to be improving. As a result of improved perception, Kim Jong Il dispatched Vice Marshall Jo Myong Rok, his second in command, to Washington for talks with high ranking U.S. officials and a meeting with President Bill

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<sup>116</sup> According to New York Times (19 January 2003), William Perry had warned to North Korea that the United States might "resort to all means of pressure, including those that risked war," if North Korea takes a wrong path.

Clinton, in spite of the fact that the United States continuously denied Pyongyang's claims such as delisting it from the list of terrorist states. We should remember that Pyongyang had repeatedly insisted, "We [North Korea] can not visit the United States [wearing] the cap of a terrorist." But, in late 2000, even though North Korea did not fully get what it had wanted, it cooperated with the United States because North Korea acted on a gains frame. That is, Pyongyang's needs for security and identity were satisfied and all of the available strategies implied all gains. In sum, this chapter confirms hypothesis A0 (HA0) that when North Korea perceives its security need satisfied regardless of its identity need situation, it takes a cooperative policy.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE SECOND NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

This chapter deals with the question of what made North Korea decide to withdraw from the NPT again in January 2003.

#### 8.1 Changes in Human Needs Situation

##### 8.1.1. Domestic Security Situation

###### 8.1.1.1. Political Stability

As Yinhay Ahn (2002, 47) says, “North Korea has been relatively stable in managing its political system” since 1999. North Korea held regular political events. The Supreme People’s Assembly has been held annually since 1998. This has political meaning in that North Korea failed to hold, for example, the SPA meetings for three years in a row when it was in dire economic straits. In addition, “the shift to military rule in the late 1990s” by *Songun* (Military-first) policy “allowed Kim Jong Il to further consolidate his power and suppress any seeds of dissent within the ruling class, let alone the general population” (Mansourov 2005, 91). According to a South Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* (14 August 2000), Kim Jong Il said that his power is based on two sources: One is “the monolithic unity of North Korean people” and the other one comes from “military power.” There is little doubt Kim Jong Il is firmly in control and North Korea does enjoy political stability. The party, the government, and the military are loyal to Kim Jong Il and his policy lines.

### 8.1.1.2. Modest Economic Growth

In the economy, North Korea experienced uninterrupted modest economic growth for four year in a row from 1999 to 2002 (*Tongilkyoyookwon* 2004, 139). The economic performance improved and the famine situation in the late 1990s were abated by multi billion dollar foreign aid. Thus, North Korea declared the end of ‘arduous march’ and the ‘forced march’ in October 2000 (KCNA 10 October 2000). Economic success, though moderate, led North Korea to adopt “the July 1 economic management improvement measures” in 2002, through which “the state-managed rationing system was abolished, foreign exchange rates were adjusted to realistic levels, and currency exchange was freed to strengthen the consumption capacity of the people. This means that North Korea was preparing to adopt a market system.”<sup>117</sup>

North Korea seems to have recovered self-confidence over domestic issues. In this vein, the 2002 Joint New Year Editorial declared that 2001 was a historic year when “breakthrough was made in the building of a socialist powerful nation in the 21st century” (*Nodong Sinmun* 1 January 2002). The (North) Korean Central News Agency (25 March 2003) reported that “Kim Jong Il has *successfully overcome the difficult situation* (emphasis added) of the country with a strong will to defend socialism and accomplish the revolutionary cause of *Juche* with arms and turn Korea into a powerful socialist country.” North Korea does not hesitate to call it “a miracle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” that they tided over the economic difficulties (Shim and Oh 2005, 221). Recalling that the DPRK suffered dire economic straits

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<sup>117</sup> Selig Harrison (2002) calls North Korea’s economic changes “reform by stealth” since they did not draw special attention from outside world. However, there are some experts who argue that the economic reform of July 2002 does not mean that North Korea is going to adopt a market system. According to them, the economic improvement measures are “a sheer adaptation of Pyongyang regime to the changed economic conditions” caused by the famine during the mid-1990s. In fact, Kim Jong Il repeatedly showed resentment over the word “reform” on the second North-South summit in 2007.



in the late 1990s, North Korean professor Ki-Pung Chung in an interview with *Hankyoreh*, a South Korean newspaper, (1 October 2005) said that they kept the economic situation secret due to the fear that the imperialist power states would make little of them. The fact that a North Korean professor is allowed to reveal that North Korea was in a serious economic crisis is a reflection of Pyongyang's confidence over its domestic problems.

#### **8.1.1.3. Social Control**

After the North-South summit of 2000, the increased exchange in people and merchandise between the two Koreas and economic assistance from outside including South Korea could have the danger of spreading information on the outside world. This might be one of the reasons North Korean defectors increased. However, the Pyongyang regime kept a sharp vigilance against this trend and appears to have managed to cope with the influence from outside by increasing ideological control and oppressive rule through the domestic security organizations. The Pyongyang regime appears to have been stable enough to “initiate and accelerate vital economic reforms while skillfully preserving social peace and stability” (Mansourov 2005, 94). As Mansourov (2005, 95) says, it is obvious that from the Pyongyang regime's perspective “the economy seems to be improving, Kim Jong Il's grip on power appears to be rock-solid, and the regime future looks unchallenged.”

#### **8.1.2. Changes in External Security Situation**

The newly inaugurated George W. Bush administration began to review its policies toward North Korea, which resulted in a “containment and neglect” policy. President Bush publicly revealed “his preference for toppling the North Korean regime” (Long 2006, 12).

The Bush administration's policy toward North Korea has been in stark contrast to those of the former Clinton administration. The Bush administration implied that "the U.S. would seek to revise the 1994 Agreed Framework to ensure transparency of North Korea's past nuclear activities and would demand to re-deploy North Korean forces back from the Demilitarized Zone at the U.S.-DPRK talks" (Kookshin Kim 2005, 22). In November 2001 President George Bush said that "the U.S. would not tolerate North Korea unless the communist country stops developing suspected weapons of mass destruction" and threatened to "make the North pay the price if it continues to refuse to cooperate with international efforts to inspect weapons of mass destruction in the North" (Korea Times 27 November 2001). North Korea said that "U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld asserted that even the use of force against the DPRK would not be ruled out and that the U.S. was perfectly capable of taking military action against Iraq and North Korea at the same time" (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 December 2002).

"By 2002, the Bush administration asserted that North Korea represented a threat to the United States and the region and that regime change caused by internal collapse or foreign military intervention would be the preferred course of events" (Long 2006, 2).<sup>118</sup> Regarding President Bush's State of Union address, North Korea denounced that "Bush's singling out the DPRK as a member of the axis of evil discloses the U.S. intention to regard the DPRK as the principal enemy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the main target of its anti-terrorism strategy and crusade operation. This is little short of declaring a war against the DPRK"

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<sup>118</sup> According to *Nodong Sinmun* (27 February 2002), the assertion of the regime change led North Korea "not to pin a hope on a negotiated resolution." "The DPRK cannot but take a very serious view on [President Bush's] remarks intended to force the DPRK to change its political system. To force the [North] Korean people to abandon man-centered socialism of Korean style, their life and soul and their future, is little short of urging them to follow the Western and American way of life and opt for slavery and death. ... the Bush clan who tries to force the DPRK to change its political system is not qualified to sit at the negotiation table with it."

(*Nodong Sinmun* 11 February and 28 March 2002). In March 2002, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a summary of the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), a classified Pentagon contingency plan. The NPR singled out North Korea including other six nations as possible targets of an American nuclear strike. After the visit of Assistant Secretary of State, James Kelly, to Pyongyang as a special envoy from October 3 to 5, 2002, the U.S. asserted that North Korea had admitted<sup>119</sup> to possessing a highly enriched uranium program (HEU) and justified its nuclear card as a self-defensive measure against an American nuclear attack. The United States called the DPRK nuclear program a serious violation of the Agreed Framework, the NPT, the IAEA safeguards agreement, and the 1992 Joint North-South declaration on the Korean Peninsula, and the U.S. maintained it would not hold any further discussions with the North to normalize relations until Pyongyang took steps to dismantle its nuclear program.

Finally, “the Bush administration declared the end of the already moribund Agreed Framework regime claiming that North Korean officials confessed<sup>120</sup> that North Korea was pursuing a highly enriched uranium weapons program secretly in October 2002” (Jun 2006, 56). On November 14, the KEDO under American influence decided to halt fuel oil shipments to North Korea that they had been providing under the 1994 agreement. In defiance to the KEDO’s decision, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT in January 2003. In sum, the George W. Bush administration’s coercive policies toward

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<sup>119</sup> The DPRK contended that it made clear to the special envoy of the U.S. President that the DPRK was “entitled to possess not only nuclear weapons but any type of weapon more powerful than that so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the U.S.” (*Nodong Sinmun* 25 October 2002).

<sup>120</sup> Sungchul Yang, former South Korean ambassador to the U.S. and Dongwon Im, former South Korean general director of the National Information Service, claim that the U.S. fabricated information on North Korean nuclear program in order to break up the Agreed Framework of 1994 (*Ohmaynews* (a South Korean internet news agency) 12 March 2007). Christopher Hill, former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, revealed that the U.S. did not have any concrete information of HEU. Regarding the allegation of a secret uranium program and its implications, see Selig Harrison (2005).

Pyongyang during the early 2000s contributed to deteriorating North Korea's concerns over its external security.

### **8.1.3. Changes in Identity Need**

There would be few scholars that maintain Pyongyang's information and ideological control softened in the early 2000s. However, the identity need for the Pyongyang regime was severely threatened by the new Bush administration. President George W. Bush did not hesitate to denounce the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il as "a pygmy" and "an evildoer." The situation was further aggravated by the Bush administration's distaste for the North Korean leader as shown in explicit expressions such as "axis of evil."<sup>121</sup> His remark for North Korea's top leader was in stark contrast with former president Clinton's expression "Your Excellency." As regards remarks made by U.S. Secretary of State Powell, the spokesman of the DPRK foreign ministry said as follows:

At a U.S. senate confirmation hearing held on January 18 [2001] he dared make such reckless remark going against the elementary common sense as slandering our supreme leadership as 'dictator of North Korea.' It cannot but be something surprising that he did not bother to make such a statement debasing the dignity of the DPRK (KCNA 25 January 2001).

In short, there is little doubt that North Korea had suffered serious losses regarding its identity need since the inauguration of George W. Bush administration.

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<sup>121</sup> President Bush named North Korea an "axis of evil" along with Iran and Iraq that armed itself with WMD and threatened world peace in his January 2002 State of Union speech. Secretary of state-designate Condoleezza Rice in her Senate confirmation hearing in January 2005 stated North Korea an "outpost of tyranny." Hearing these, North Korea threatened to stop attending the six-party talks. South Korean government also expressed concerns that these might hurt the progress of the multilateral talks and inter-Korean relations.

## 8.2 Pyongyang's Perception of Human Needs Situation

### 8.2.1. Pyongyang's Perception of Security and Identity

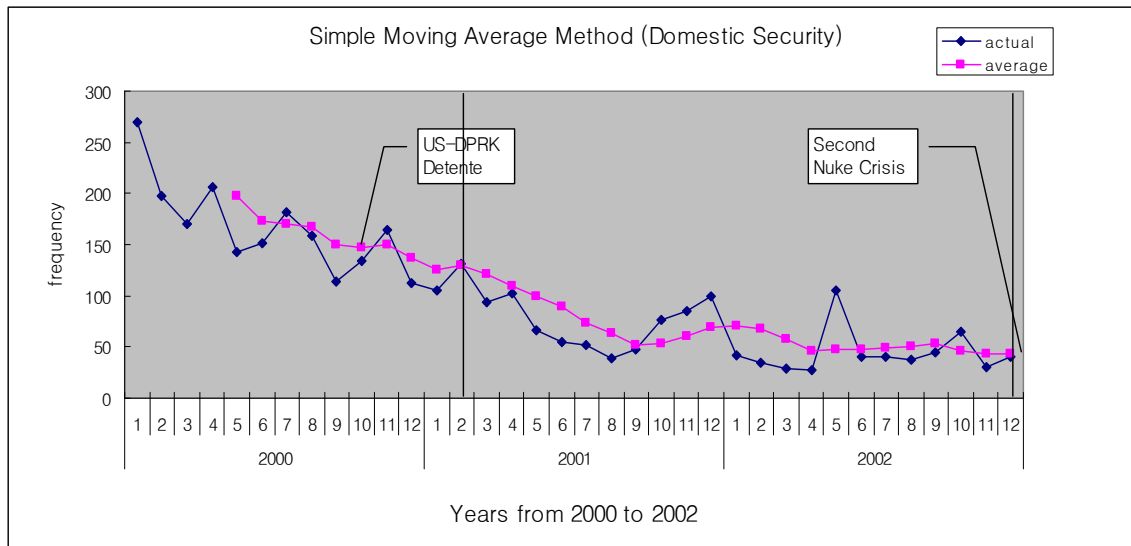


Figure 8.1. Domestic Security (2000-2002)

In this section our focus should be put on the period of time from February 2001, when the George W. Bush administration was inaugurated, to January 2003,<sup>122</sup> when North Korea withdrew the NPT. Figure 8.1 shows the number of times the word “self-help” (*Jaryeokgaengsaeng*) was used. The word frequency of self-help is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its domestic security need. The red line (moving average) in figure 8.1 is on a steady decline since May 2000 and remained low until the end of 2002. The blue line shows a similar trend. Figure 8.1 indicates that Pyongyang perceived its domestic security to be improving.

<sup>122</sup> Regretfully, the data for January 2003 were not collected.



Figure 8.2. External Security (2000-2002)

Figure 8.2 shows the number of times the word “war” was used. The word frequency of war is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its external security need. The blue line in figure 8.2 shows a very irregular pattern between 2001 and 2002. The red line (moving average) shows a sharp surge from February 2001, when the Bush administration went into power, to July 2001, since then the red line remained relatively high. This indicates that North Korea perceived its external security to be severely threatened by the new American government.

The blue line in figure 8.2 shows that the frequency of the war “war” decreased from October to December 2001 and remained low in April and May 2002. The reason the word frequencies decreased during these two periods was because the U.S. has provided a humanitarian aid for North Korea.<sup>123</sup> October 2002 also shows that the frequency of the

<sup>123</sup> KCNA (9 June 2002) said, “The U.S. government announced its decision on June 7 to provide 100,000 tons of food for DPRK in response to World Food Program’s appeal. From this year, the U.S. has provided 100,000 tones of food as it had promised in the late 2001. Moreover, the U.S. has been currently providing additional 50,000 tons of food. This food provision is a part of humanitarian efforts to relieve our food situation, which has faced a series of natural disaster.”

word “war” declined. This is mainly because Washington and Pyongyang went into dialogues in the month.

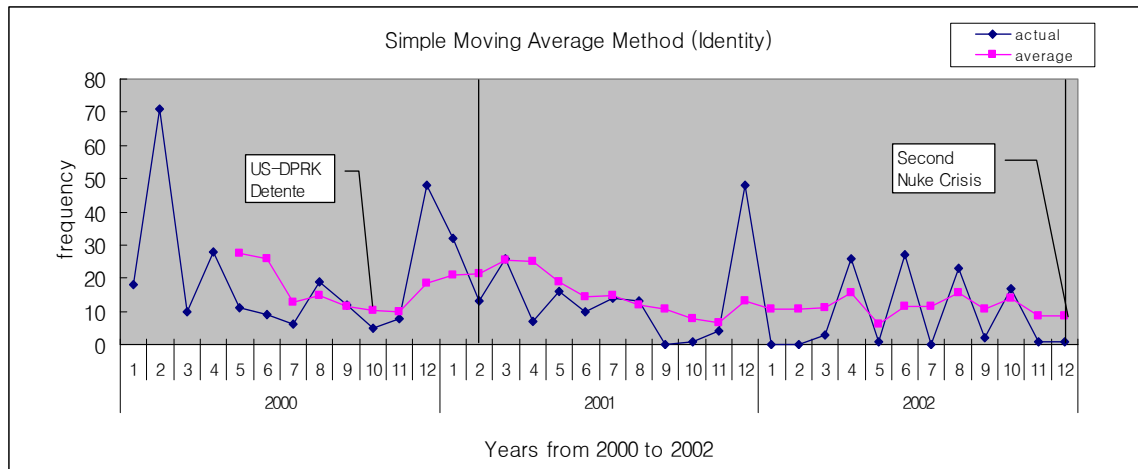


Figure 8.3. Identity (2000-2002)

Figure 8.3 shows the number of times the word “*Juche* ideology” (*Juche Sasang*) was used. The word frequency of *Juche* ideology is examined to see Pyongyang’s perception of its identity need. Although the blue line in figure 8.3 shows an irregular pattern, especially in 2002, the red line (moving average) remains low even in the years 2001 and 2002 when the Bush administration denounced the North as one of “axes of evil” and an “outpost of tyranny.” This appears to coincide with the theory of human need hierarchy. That is, the North could not afford to focus on its identity need, the higher level need, mainly due to the severely threatened external security. Another possible explanation would be that the frequency of the word “*Juche* ideology” underestimates the influence of US-DPRK relations on Pyongyang’s identity need because this dissertation counted the word “*Juche* ideology” from the articles that dealt with the North-South Korea relations.

### 8.2.2. Policy Options

The section above shows that the external security need for Pyongyang was unmet. This section shows that all of the available strategies to regain its security in 2002 implied losses for the Pyongyang regime. Under the situation in which James Kelly, U.S. assistant secretary of state, demanded that North Korea first meet U.S. demands such as nuclear and missile programs, conventional armed forces, and human rights issues while stepping up political, economic, and military pressure,<sup>124</sup> Pyongyang had to pick up one of two alternative courses of action: passively accepting the U.S.'s demands regarding the "issue of concerns" or relying on brinkmanship.

#### 8.2.2.1. Passive Acceptance of the American Demand

Washington called on Pyongyang to solve its concerns about the North's suspected nuclear development programs, missile exports, the posture of conventional forces, and human rights violations.<sup>125</sup> However, North Korea did not believe that the U.S. promises such as increased U.S.-DPRK relations in exchange for the "issue of concerns" were sincere. First of all, Kelly's assertion about North Korea's active engagement in highly enriched uranium (HEU) program of which high-ranking officials of the U.S. and South Korea

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<sup>124</sup> Although the U.S. did not take any particular measures so as not to mount military tension against North Korea, Pyongyang began to be extremely nervous after the Congress in Washington adopted a resolution that allowed its president to use armed forces against Iraq. North Korea argued that "[the resolution] means that the president U.S. chief executive is allowed to start any war of aggression against Iraq and other countries anytime" (KCNA 22 October 2002).

<sup>125</sup> According to a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry or the DPRK, the Secretary of State, Collin Powell, asked North Korea to stop the nuclear proliferation, eliminate long-range missiles threatening other countries, weaken the posture of the threatening conventional armed forces, and fully comply with the safeguards accord under the NPT (*Nodong Sinmun* 13 June 2003). According to North Korea, the special envoy, James Kelly, "asserted that the DPRK has been actively engaged in the enriched uranium program in pursuit of possessing nuclear weapons in violation of the DPRK-U.S. agreed framework." The North continued to contend that he even intimidated the DPRK side by saying that "there would be no dialogue with the U.S. unless the DPRK halts it, and the DPRK-Japan, and North-South relations would be jeopardized" (*Nodong Sinmun* 25 December 2002).



contended that Washington fabricated the information, at least in Pyongyang's standpoint, only reflected the changed U.S. position toward North Korean nuclear activities. This is because as early as 1999 North Korea was suspected of engaging in a HEU program, but the Clinton administration turned a blind eye to the program and did not take issue with North Korea about it.<sup>126</sup>

Secondly, North Korea came to the conclusion that the Bush administration ruled out the possibility of seeking a negotiated settlement of the conventional armed forces and missile issues. *Nodong Sinmun* (10 January 2003) quoted the United States as saying that there might be talk but "negotiations are impossible." As a result, North Korea considered the U.S.'s concerns on conventional armed forces and missile issues as "a tactics to disarm the DPRK" (KCNA 12 October 2002). North Korea claimed, "It was a very abnormal logic to assert that negotiations should be held after the DPRK puts down its arms. How can the DPRK counter any attack with empty hands? The demand for putting down its arms before negotiations was little short of demanding the DPRK yield to pressure, which meant death" (KCNA 25 October 2002).

Thirdly, human rights issue raised by the U.S. was a synonym to tactics for regime change. That is, North Korea regarded the issue as "forcing it to change its political system and to opt for slavery and death" (KCNA 27 February and 4 March 2002). Fourthly and finally, North Korea believed that "the peace obtained through compromises was no more

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<sup>126</sup> According to *Kyonghyang Sinmun* (a South Korean newspaper, 22 October 2002), the Clinton administration reportedly learned of North Korea-Pakistan cooperation in HEU program and a Department of Energy report of 1999 cited evidence of the program. In March 2000, President Clinton notified Congress that he was waiving certification that 'North Korea is not seeking to develop or acquire the capability to enrich uranium'. [http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/nkorea\\_nucweps.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/nkorea_nucweps.htm)

than a short-lived success” (Ki-Whan Choi 2003, 107).<sup>127</sup> In short, the policy option of passively accepting the American demands implied a loss for Pyongyang.

### **8.2.2. 2. Risky Venture: Brinkmanship**

If successful, the nuclear brinkmanship of the withdrawal from the NPT might give Pyongyang a chance to avoid the American “issue of concerns.” The lesson North Korea drew from the relations with Washington since the early 1990s was that the brinkmanship strategy was effective in driving the U.S. to the negotiation table. In 2003 North Korea made it clear that it employed the nuclear brinkmanship strategy in order to “drive the U.S. to the negotiation table” (*Nodong Sinmun* 10 January 2003). The phrase “Driving the U.S. to the negotiation table” meant that North Korea forced the United States to recede from its demand of “issue of concerns.”

On the other hand, the brinkmanship had the potential of intensifying international sanctions. The United States might beef up anti-Pyongyang measures such as economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and even a war. For example, North Korea mentioned that the IAEA had already “issued an ultimatum that the agency would bring the matter to the UN Security Council to apply sanctions against the DPRK” (*Nodong Sinmun* 10 January 2003). Pyongyang implied that it took into consideration the consequences that failed brinkmanship

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<sup>127</sup> The expression “short-live peace” was used after the DPRK’s withdrawal from the NPT in 2003. However, Pyongyang’s negative conception of compromise has a long history. North Korea often interprets compromise as submission to outside pressure, not as negotiated solution of problem. Pyongyang’s negative impression of compromise on national security was intensified as the U.S invaded Iraq, which had “allowed international inspection over its overall military facilities and even the Palace of President that represents the sovereignty (Ki-Hwan Choi 2003, 46).”

would cause by repeatedly showing its will to overcome another “arduous march.”<sup>128</sup> This means that the strategy of brinkmanship also implied a loss for the Pyongyang regime.

### 8.2.3. Pyongyang’s Frame of Decision

This dissertation assumes that Pyongyang’s frame of decision was determined by dissatisfaction of its security need and policy options comprised of all losses. Thus, it is not my task to empirically assess what Pyongyang’s reference point was and on which frame it was. However, we can get a few pictures regarding the reference point and frame of decision by looking into North Korean news media.

Pyongyang said, “[the Bush administration’s] reckless political, economic and military pressure is *most seriously threatening the DPRK’s right to existence*” (*Nodong Sinmun* 25 October 2002). This phrase appears to imply that North Korea wanted to secure its survival. Regarding the frame of decision, the North said, “The DPRK *appreciates the progress so far made in the bilateral ties through negotiations with U.S. politicians of reason* but has no idea of pinning any hope on those forces displeased with this process” (*Nodong Sinmun* 7 February 2001). North Korea contended, “since the inauguration of Bush administration, the DPRK-U.S. relations that were on a track of détente have plummeted into the worst situation because the new administration broke the Clinton administration’s promises to North Korea” (KCNA 14 February 2002).

Another example is a statement by a spokesman for the North Korean foreign ministry (*Nodong Sinmun* 31 January and 14 February 2002): “*There has been no precedent* (emphasis added) in the modern history of DPRK-U.S. relations that in his policy speech the

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<sup>128</sup> For example, Kim Jong Il (2005, 330) announced that North Korea should brace itself for “another arduous march” and more severe trial than the “forced march” in the foreseeable future.

U.S. President made undisguised threatening remarks on aggression and threat against the DPRK. ... This is, in fact, little short of declaring a war against the DPRK.” On July 24, 2002, North Korea said, “The DPRK-U.S. relations that had been improved at the time of the former administration reversed to confrontation. Since the emergence of the Bush administration the U.S. has rendered the situation on the peninsula extremely tense by pursuing a hard-line and hostile policy toward the DPRK more undisguisedly.”<sup>129</sup> It appears to be natural that Pyongyang was convinced that the Bush administration “backpedal[ed] the positive development of the situation in the Korean Peninsula” (*Nodong Sinmun* 25 October 2002).

### 8.3 Conclusion

North Korea’s domestic settings in the early 2000s were in a stable condition under which the Pyongyang regime perceived the domestic security maintained, which was confirmed by content-analysis regarding domestic security (Figure 8.1). On the contrary, its external security environment had changed in an intolerable way since the inception of the Bush administration. The North’s perception of the deteriorated external security can be found in figure 8.2. Even though its identity need had been threatened by the Bush administration, Pyongyang could not have focused on the identity need because of its severely threatened external security. Faced with the American demand to solve the issue of concerns, North Korea had two available options. One was to accept the demand from the U.S., and the other one was to rely on nuclear brinkmanship to make the U.S. retract the

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<sup>129</sup> Pyongyang’s negative description about the George W. Bush administration is in a stark contrast with the positive comment on the visit of Madeleine Albright to Pyongyang (*Nodong Sinmun* 27 October 2000): “At the first official trip to Pyongyang of a high-ranking U.S. official, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright set foot on Pyongyang on the early morning of October 23 [2000]. This suffices to indicate that long-standing hostilities between the DPRK and the U.S. started to be melted into a friendly relation.”

demand. The two options implied all losses for the Pyongyang regime. Thus, North Korea took a risky option of brinkmanship. In conclusion, the case of the second nuclear crisis confirms hypothesis A1 (HA1) that North Korea took a brinkmanship strategy when it perceived its security threatened.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

This study has presented five case studies on the influence of perception of human needs situation on Pyongyang's foreign policy with an alternative theoretical framework. This chapter summarizes the preceding chapters and the key findings, provides a discussion of the implications of the findings both from theoretical and practical perspectives, notes the limitations of this project, and proffers suggestions for future study.

#### **9.1 Summary of Arguments**

This dissertation started with the question of what conditions make North Korea choose between confrontation and cooperation towards the United States. In order to answer the research question, this study set up four hypotheses based on prospect theory and human needs theory. The hypotheses also assumed that even though North Korea is a totalitarian state, its domestic conditions as well as external settings exercise influence on Pyongyang's foreign policy. The hypotheses are predicated on the assumption that Pyongyang may perceive some losses or gains as the need situations for security and identity change. The hypotheses are also based on the hierarchy theory of human and regime needs. That is, North Korea is supposed to focus on its security need when the security is threatened. As a result of the needs hierarchy, the Pyongyang regime's attention on its identity need comes only after its security need has been satisfied up to a certain level. This study paid a close attention to the differences between brinkmanship and conflictual policy because even cooperative

negotiations with the U.S. were often misunderstood as brinkmanship. This study examined both objective situations for Pyongyang's needs and subjective perception of them in spite of the fact that it is the decision-maker's perception that ultimately determines the foreign policy. The cross check was conducted because we need evidence to verify whether or not the North's foreign policies, which have often been believed to be based on a wrong or distorted perception of reality, are based on an objective reality. The examination of the objective situation also aimed at securing validity of the perception analysis.

The results of this study can be summarized as Table 9.1.

Table 9.1. Results

Events	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		DEPENDENT VARIABLES	RESULT
	Needs Situation	Perception		
1 <sup>st</sup> Nuke Crisis	External Security Threatened	External Security Threatened	Brinkmanship	Hypothesis A1 confirmed
South Reactor	Security Guaranteed Identity Threatened	Security Guaranteed Identity Threatened	Conflictual	Hypothesis B1 Confirmed
Missile Crisis	Domestic Security Threatened	Domestic Security Threatened	Brinkmanship	Hypothesis A1 Not Confirmed
Detente with US	Both Security and Identity Satisfied	Both Security and Identity Satisfied	Cooperation	Hypothesis A0 Confirmed
2 <sup>nd</sup> Nuke Crisis	External Security and Identity Threatened	Ex Security Threatened Identity Not Threatened	Brinkmanship	Hypothesis A1 Confirmed

Chapter 4 has showed that North Korea experienced that the environment related to its external security changed in an intolerable way since the late 1992 mainly due to the changes in Washington's North Korea policy and that Pyongyang perceived its external security threatened. Meanwhile, the environment with regard to its domestic security and identity were stable and Pyongyang perceived its domestic security and identity to be minimally threatened. Faced with the American demand to accept 'special inspection' over the suspected nuclear facilities, North Korea had to choose one of two available strategies.

Both accepting the special inspection and nuclear brinkmanship implied loss. As a result, Pyongyang framed its decision on a losses frame and finally declared its intention to walk out of the international nuclear regime in spite of a variety of risks such as sanctions and war. Therefore, the case of the first nuclear crisis confirms hypothesis AI: Pyongyang took a brinkmanship strategy when it perceived its survival need threatened. In addition, this chapter confirms that the North's decision of withdrawal from the NPT was based on the perception of the deteriorated security environment. Based on the conclusion of Chapter 4, we can deny the argument that the North decided to withdraw from the international nuclear regime in order to shore up Kim Jong Il's position or his credentials with the military.

Chapter 5 has showed that North Korea perceived that its external security environment had improved mainly due to the conclusion of the Agreed Framework. During early 1995, the North maintained domestic stability and perceived the domestic security to be minimally threatened in spite of the economic difficulties and sudden death of Kim Il Sung, which was proved by the content-analysis regarding domestic security. However, when the Clinton administration began to press Pyongyang to acknowledge the key role of South Korea in the introduction of light water nuclear reactors, Pyongyang perceived its identity impaired, which was demonstrated by the increased frequency of the word "*Juche* ideology." Faced with the demand from the United States, North Korea had to choose one of two feasible options. Both acknowledging the South's central role and threatening to abandon the Agreed Framework implied a loss for Pyongyang. These conditions made North Korea act on a losses frame. Thus, Pyongyang took the conflictual strategy. Therefore, chapter 5 concludes that the case of South Korean-type reactors confirms hypothesis B1: when Pyongyang perceived its identity threatened, it took a conflictual policy. In addition, the conclusion of



chapter 5 coincides with the theory of needs hierarchy: when security need had been satisfied for a certain level, the regime's focus moved to its identity need, a higher level of need. Furthermore, this chapter confirms that Pyongyang took a conflictual policy rather than brinkmanship when the need for identity mattered after the security need was met up to a certain level.

Chapter 6 has showed with the case of the 1998 missile crisis that domestic insecurity can exercise strong influence on the foreign policy of North Korea, which has been widely believed as a system immune to the domestic environment. This chapter also examined both objective needs situations of the North and Pyongyang's perception of them. According to the perception analysis, we are now sure that North Korea did not feel its external security threatened by the United States during the mid-1990s, differently from the North's propaganda that the U.S. imperialists tried to stifle North Korea's socialist system. The chapter concludes that North Korea took missile brinkmanship because its domestic security was severely threatened mainly due to the prolonged economic straits. The case of the missile crisis in 1998, however, cannot confirm hypothesis AI that when the North perceived its security threat, it took a brinkmanship strategy. It is mainly because the missile brinkmanship strategy involved both gains and losses, which in turn left Pyongyang's frame of decision unidentified.

Chapter 7 confirms hypothesis A0 that when North Korea began to perceive the security to be improving, it took a cooperative policy. Since late 1998, the need situation for domestic security turned to be stable. This was due to North Korea's economic recovery and international economic assistance. Because of this, Pyongyang appears to have been relieved according to the perception analysis regarding its domestic security. North Korea

experienced tension with the United States because of the alleged underground nuclear facilities and long-range missile program in 1999. However, the North-South Korean summit and other incentives provided by the Perry Process satisfied the needs for both external security and identity. In spite of the fact that North Korea could have extracted more benefits from the United States by taking advantage of a conflictual policy, Pyongyang took a cooperative policy toward Washington that culminated in the Joint Communiqué between the two countries in the late 2000.

Chapter 8 confirms hypothesis A1 with the case of the second nuclear crisis that Pyongyang took a brinkmanship policy when it perceived its security threatened. The North's domestic settings in the early 2000s were stable. Although Pyongyang's needs for identity and external security both were threatened by the Bush administration that took a hard-line policy toward it, the North could not afford to focus on the identity need because of the severely threatened external security. Faced with the American demand to solve the 'issue of concerns,' North Korea could choose one of two available options. Although both accepting the American demand and employing brinkmanship implied loss for Pyongyang regime, it chose the risky option of brinkmanship because it was on a losses frame.

## **9.2 Theoretical and Policy Implications**

### **9.2.1. Theoretical Implications**

The conventional perspectives of international relations usually take into account only interests, but not human needs, which are one of the most powerful sources of explanation of human behavior and social interaction. First, this study shows a possibility that the foreign policy behavior of North Korea can be more appropriately explained by taking into account

Pyongyang's unmet needs for security and identity. Second, another significance of this study or theoretical implication for IR theory is related to the limitations of prospect theory. One of the problems with prospect theory, when it is applied to international relations, is that it offers few guides about reference point. The study might contribute to prospect theory in that it provides an alternative to identifying the reference point by introducing the concept of human needs into prospect theory. That is, if a state perceives its security need to be threatened, the reference point of the state would be to recover its security. When the state feels its identity is in danger while the security is maintained, it would seek to satisfy the identity need. However, the attempt of this study to combine prospect theory and human needs theory is incomplete because this study did not try to confirm Pyongyang's reference points and frame of decision in an empirical way due to the lack of information on North Korea.

Thirdly, this study provides an example that domestic politics can exercise influence on foreign policy even in a totalitarian society. Other researches employing prospect theory tend to focus on the relations between external security and foreign policy. Fourthly, the study shows another example of the need hierarchy theory. When Pyongyang's needs for security and identity were threatened, the North focused on its security need first. The cases of South Korean-type nuclear reactors in 1995 and the second nuclear crisis in 2002 showed that only when the security problem had been solved did the identity need begin to matter.

Fifthly, this study may contribute to the advancement of the conventional conflict resolution theories based on human needs reasoning. As John Burton (1990, 40) says, "The victims whose basic needs are unmet will fight indefinitely for their achievement and will not give up until that goal is attained." However, this argument has constraints in explaining

cooperative behaviors of a state whose basic needs are still unmet. If the state is on a gains frame, it will be cooperative even though its need is not fully satisfied, as we have seen in the case of the US-DPRK détente in 2000. This study might be an attempt to fill this gap in conflict resolution research. That is, even though a state's human needs are not fully met, as long as it acts on a gains frame it may engage in constructive negotiations.

Sixthly and finally, the content analysis of the North Korean official newspaper *Nodong Sinmun* has a scholarly meaning in that it measured North Korea's perception in a quantitative manner.

### **9.2.2. Policy Implications**

This study may be helpful in the formulation of foreign policy toward North Korea. In fact, policymakers have often misinterpreted the North's internal logic and purpose, and this has often resulted in inappropriate policies toward North Korea and in an intensification of crises with the North. For example, the George W. Bush administration's coercive diplomacy that was based on the wrong assumption that the North was bent on nuclear armaments and extracting economic assistance from the world by employing brinkmanship strategies only led Pyongyang to take nuclear brinkmanship, which resulted in the nuclear test of 2006 that Pyongyang had long refrained from conducting. As Jun (2006, 60) says, "The July 5 missile test and October 9 nuclear test (in 2006) might have been prevented if active and intensive diplomacy had been exercised" in a way that could lead North Korea to perceive its security improving.

This study may help policy makers adequately understand Pyongyang's policy orientations and behavioral characteristics by a relatively simple logic based on prospect

theory and human needs theory, thus helping them to produce appropriate foreign policy toward the regime. The prescription would be: (1) if we can make the North perceive its external security to be improving, then Pyongyang will act in a cooperative way toward the world. If North Korea feels its external security threatened, the first thing we should do, if we really want to see Pyongyang cooperate with the world, is to take steps to reduce the insecurity; (2) the North's domestic insecurity may lead to brinkmanship diplomacy. Therefore, economic assistance or humanitarian aid for North Korea is needed, which in turn would result in a cooperative policy; (3) attention should be given to the identity need of the Pyongyang regime. For example, it is not wise to name North Korea part of the axis-of-evil. Even when the North perceives the security environment stable, it would take conflictual diplomacy if it perceives the identity need unmet. The conflictual policy always has the risk of ending up with increased tension, which in turn may worsen the North's security perception that would result in brinkmanship diplomacy.

Regarding policy implications, it should be emphasized that the alternative framework in this dissertation is an ideal type. As mentioned above, in reality, North Korea might pursue three kinds of needs at the same time rather than in a step by step manner. Therefore, even under the situation in which North Korea perceives its security threatened, economic cooperation with North Korea is strongly recommended. This is because economic cooperation could mitigate Pyongyang's perception of security threat, which would make, in turn, North Korea act in a cooperative way.

The results of this study support the rationality or normality debates on the Pyongyang regime. Some conservative experts on North Korea describe it as an abnormal or irrational state. Their assertions are often confirmed by seemingly irrational diplomacy of

brinkmanship. North Korean foreign policy might be described as irrational on the basis of expected-utility theories or cost-benefit analyses. As shown above, however, North Korea is risk-taking only when its needs for security and/or identity are unmet. Therefore, Pyongyang's tendency to resort to brinkmanship strategies does not necessarily mean that the regime is irrational or abnormal. It should be advised that the North takes a brinkmanship strategy because it stands on a brink regarding domestic and external security. In short, foreign policies toward Pyongyang should be based on the assumption that the North will act as normal as many other normal countries when it does not perceive its security and identity threatened. In this vein, this study might also be helpful to policymakers who want to dismantle North Korean nuclear facilities and induce nuclear cooperation. The North's nuclear armaments and missile brinkmanship, paradoxically, bespeaks Pyongyang's fear of security although many believe that a U.S. invasion of North Korea is nearly impossible. Therefore, what the U.S. should recommend is not a stick for the North but a carrot that can reduce Pyongyang's perception of external insecurity. A stick could only deteriorate Pyongyang's perception of insecurity, which will lead the North to take a more risky adventure toward the U.S.

### **9.3 Caveats**

In spite of its theoretical and practical importance, this study has some potential problems in the theoretical and methodological aspects. As mentioned above, this study did not seek to identify Pyongyang's reference point and frame of decision in an empirical way. They can be more directly viewed through analyses of the decision-making process of North Korea. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to make a straightforward assessment of the

decision frame through interviews with North Korean policymakers or through internal official records regarding the decision-making process. The lack of information on Pyongyang's decision-making will make it difficult to conclusively identify whether North Korea has framed its decision on a losses or a gains frame. In this line, the case in which North Korea cooperated with the U.S. could be reviewed in terms of loss aversion. In other words, North Korea might have framed its decision to cooperate in the domain of gains rather than losses.

However, this study had a certain level of confidence that North Korea's perception of security and identity was measured in a proper way. That is, by contrasting the objective conditions for human needs with subjective perception of them, this study could tell whether the North tells a different story from what it really believes. For example, chapter 6 demonstrated that Pyongyang did not perceive its security threatened by the United States in 1998 when the North spread intensive propagandas that the U.S. sought to stifle it.

Despite all the justification for identifying North Korea's perception by content-analyzing the North Korean newspaper, the validity of this study may be affected by a few human errors and information distortions on the part of the Pyongyang regime. For example, this study has searched for the words 'war, self-help, and *Juche* ideology' by searching the database made by the (South Korean) National Information Service. Because of a few defects of the database that were caused by input errors, the word counting of the threatened words has some errors. A more serious problem is related to the North's information distortion. The frequency of the word 'self-help' in 1996 and 1997 were lower than that of 1993 and 1994, which I suspect that the North tried to hide its economic straits as much as possible. Although this study chose the highly disguised word of "self-help" (*jaryokgangsang*) in order

to overcome the problem of information distortion, the problem appears to have not been solved completely.

Finally, the study has limitations with generalization, which is often experienced in other case studies. As many experts on North Korea say, North Korea is peculiar in that it has developed its own national identity and legitimacy because of its history of struggle against the imperialist invaders, in reality or perception, which has made it difficult for the regime to choose many policy options that other countries can do. That is, other countries would not easily choose brinkmanship against a superpower, the U.S., even if they act on a losses frame. For example, faced with the American pressure, Iraq allowed international inspection over its military facilities and even the president's palace. But, in the eyes of the North, Iraq's cooperation with the U.S. were only seen as buying temporal peace at the cost of national dignity and sovereignty, which is beyond imagination for Pyongyang because of its political culture and *Juche* ideology.



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## APPENDIX A

### DATA

#### 1. Number of times the word 'war' is used (external security)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1992	156	93	98	52	67	73	260	129	107	154	198	113
1993	87	161	449	223	302	145	323	534	123	22	132	79
1994	63	120	80	244	280	292	149	64	123	72	37	46
1995	16	6	35	55	51	60	70	225	52	108	76	49
1996	40	53	80	120	183	116	241	167	78	44	65	30
1997	72	31	31	30	65	97	90	206	76	103	62	68
1998	35	33	67	25	16	73	142	133	30	121	86	472
1999	146	116	87	122	109	157	234	127	118	105	170	79
2000	115	68	72	68	110	69	50	46	38	66	70	78
2001	40	10	251	186	204	446	439	212	298	166	130	157
2002	166	269	323	92	123	279	437	188	211	91	213	311

#### 2. Number of times the word 'self-help' is used (domestic security)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1992	158	78	129	57	115	131	98	113	95	95	123	190
1993	244	141	138	78	144	188	141	205	155	170	178	298
1994	515	191	309	212	191	130	104	131	248	190	247	323
1995	308	197	210	133	182	130	102	169	120	130	157	204
1996	249	110	209	154	182	149	199	187	171	164	261	263
1997	273	186	199	175	192	163	188	199	184	173	268	242
1998	533	470	415	190	361	263	265	247	258	134	277	199
1999	200	150	183	194	258	175	227	123	110	238	375	234
2000	270	198	170	206	143	151	182	158	114	134	164	113
2001	105	131	94	103	67	55	52	39	47	77	85	100
2002	42	35	29	28	106	41	40	38	45	65	30	40

3. Number of times the word '*Juche* Ideology' is used (identity)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1992	32	53	12	6	22	143	32	141	44	36	9	32
1993	14	27	3	6	17	50	24	33	17	27	18	28
1994	18	28	11	10	11	20	38	90	13	35	34	64
1995	51	48	53	50	37	26	33	33	25	16	40	47
1996	23	14	22	21	19	12	26	31	56	42	13	87
1997	11	12	43	9	122	29	30	52	26	17	54	30
1998	31	15	17	14	8	10	16	16	7	6	12	13
1999	8	5	55	1	39	7	4	63	22	5	23	2
2000	18	71	10	28	11	9	6	19	12	5	8	48
2001	32	13	26	7	16	10	14	13	0	1	4	48
2002	0	0	3	26	1	27	0	23	2	17	1	1

## APPENDIX B

### On Transcription of Korean Proper Nouns into English

This dissertation has not strictly adhered to the McCane-Reischauer method of transcribing Korean into English because, as Oh and Hassig (2000, xv) say, the resulting spellings often lead to mispronunciations. For example, *Juche* is more common-sense rather than *chuch'e* base on McCane-Reischauer method.

Basically I have adhered to the spellings from the English service of the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA, North Korean News Agency). However, when I quoted proper nouns from other materials such as South Korean newspapers and books written by non-North Koreans, I did not make any alterations of the spellings to the transcription rules kept by the KCNA. Therefore, there might be some confusion for people who do not speak Korean.

For clarification, the North Korean top leader Kim Jong Il might be transcribed into Kim Jung Il and Kim Jung-II. Kim Il Sung, the deceased North Korean president, might be expressed as Kimilsung when his name is used for that of University or other purpose. For instance, Kim Il Sung University is marked as Kimilsung University. Kang Suk Ju, the North Korean negotiator, might be transcribed into Kang Sok Ju or Kang Sok Joo. Cho Myong Rok, North Korea's high-ranking military official, might be written as Jo Myong Rok. *Nodong Sinmun*, a North Korean official newspaper, sometimes is written as *Rodong Sinmun* or *Rodongsinmun*. Daepondong missile, North Korean long-range missile, could be transcribed into Taepodong. Gumchangri, suspected North Korean nuclear facility, might be transcribed into Kumchangri or Kumchang-ni.

Regarding the order of surname and first name, most Korean names, both from South and North, are written based on the order in which a given name is followed by family name. However, it should be noted that a few Koreans' names are expressed in the opposite way. For example, even though Kim Il Sung's surname is Kim and his given name is Il Sung, this dissertation writes his name in the Korean style where the family name is before the given name because lots of books and media have expressed his name in that way. The list where family name is followed by first name is as follows:

Kim Il Sung: the former North Korean top leader

Kim Jong Il: the current North Korean top leader

Choi Hak Gun, Cho Myong Rok, Kim Il-Chul, Kim Yong Nam, Kim Yong Sun,

Kang Suk Ju, and Kim Kye Kwan: North Korean high-ranking officials

Kim Young Sam: the former South Korean president

Kim Dae-jung: the deceased South Korean president

## APPENDIX C

### On Translation of Peculiar Korean Expressions into English

In order to increase objectivity in translation of peculiar North Korean expressions, this dissertation made extensive use of English-language translations and transcriptions provided by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), a U.S. government-funded organization. Until September 1996, important statements or articles from North Korean newspaper and broadcast were included in the FBIS's *Daily Report: East Asia*, available in hard copy or microfilm at most university libraries. Since the discontinuation of the Daily Report, I took advantage of the English translation internet service ([www.korea-np.co.jp](http://www.korea-np.co.jp)) provided by *Chosunsinbosa*, which is under the influence of North Korea and closely related to Korean Central News Agency.

## APPENDIX D

### On North Korean Newspaper “*Nodong Sinmun*”<sup>130</sup>

*Nodong Sinmun* (often written as *Rodong Sinmun*) is a North Korean newspaper published by the Nodong News Agency under the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the (North) Korea Workers Party (KWP) and the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the KWP. *Nodong Sinmun* was first published in Pyongyang by the name of Jeongro (the Right Path) as an official newspaper of the North Bureau of the KWP. It was renamed in 1946 to its current name. *Nodong Sinmun* is published seven days a week without break. At first, it contained four pages. From November 1946, it expanded the pages into six. As an official newspaper of the KWP, *Nodong Sinmun* expresses the official position and political line of the KWP, announces public policy, and educates the general public. It would not be an exaggeration to say that *Nodong Sinmun* represents North Korean press.

The Nodong News Agency is controlled directly by the Editing Committee, which is composed of executive members such as a chief editor, deputy editors, and a managing editor. The committee is said to determine the directions of editorials. Articles of the newspaper can be categorized into two kinds: editorials and news articles.<sup>131</sup> Editorials consist of four kinds. The first one is *Saseul*. This editorial is regarded as the most important article. The purpose of this kind of editorial is to inform people of the KWP’s position or view on newly raised issues and to exercise propaganda to agitate people. The second is *Nonseul*. This editorial is to discuss either socio-political issues or techno-scientific matters. The third kind is

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<sup>130</sup> The introduction to *Nodong Sinmun* mostly comes from the Ministry of Unification (2001) in South Korea.

<sup>131</sup> *Nodong Sinmun* also has other reporting forms such as “short comment” and “white paper,” which are put in the paper occasionally.



*Jeongnon*. This kind of editorial is to delve into the essences of issues that have significant social or political meanings. In practice, it is difficult to find significant differences among them. Differently from the Western newspaper, these three kinds of editorials are published in an irregular manner. The last one is signed commentaries (*Kaein Pilmyong Nonpyong*). The big difference between the former three kinds of editorials and signed commentaries is that *Nodong Sinmun* treats the signed commentary as if the op-eds in the Western newspapers. The expressions of signed commentaries are harsher than those of other editorials. Signed commentaries are often used for denouncing Pyongyang's foes such as the U.S. and South Korea. But news reporters working for *Nodong Sinmun* more often than not write signed commentaries. Regarding international relations, four to six persons write signed commentaries according to their own specialties.

Circulation of the newspaper is estimated at 2 million to 2.5 million. Although it is the most widely read newspaper in North Korea, the circulation is limited to the members of Korea Workers Party. The main readers of *Nodong Sinmun* are mostly composed of the core class of North Korea. Almost all of the members of the KWP are required to learn (*Hakseup* in Korean) the official position and view of the Korea Workers Party by perusing the newspaper. *Nodong Sinmun* is delivered to organizations such as workplaces, schools, state-run companies, and cooperative farms.

Although the newspaper is a basic tool for propaganda, it has been one of the most important primary sources to do research on the DPRK. It is because the KWP or the North Korean authorities often express their own views of pending issues and present policy directions.