

If the US Wants Peace in Korea, It Should Keep Its Word

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On January 29, 2002, former President George W. Bush designated North Korea as one of three nations in the "axis of evil". Bush made it clear that these countries were enemies of the United States and that they would be targets of future US aggression. Shortly after Bush's State of the Union Address, the administration released its National Defense Strategy which claimed the right to preemptively attack countries it saw as threats to US hegemony. Naturally, North Korea took these developments seriously and prepared a strategy to defend itself against a US attack.

Less than a year after Bush's speech, North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). And, six years after that, on May 25, 2009, North Korea conducted a nuclear weapons test in a remote north-eastern area of the country which triggered a 4.7 magnitude earthquake. Experts now believe that North Korea has a stockpile of between 6 to 9 nuclear weapons.

North Korean leaders were forced to develop a nuclear arsenal to defend themselves against US aggression. It was a reasonable response to Bush's saber rattling.

On November 30, 2010, North Korea announced that it had opened its first uranium enrichment plant. According to the Christian Scientist Monitor:

"For the first time, North Korea made its uranium enrichment program a matter of written record Tuesday with the proud claim in the country's leading newspaper of a modern facility that is already operational....

That revelation... marks another step toward North Korea's emergence as a nuclear power. The North's "modern uranium enrichment plan" was still under construction but was already "equipped with several thousand centrifuges," according to the newspaper. In recent years Pyongyang has already exploded two nuclear devices with plutonium at their core." ("It's official: North Korea says 'modern' nuclear plant is operating", Christian Scientist Monitor)

So, the North has nukes and has thus spared itself a fate similar to Iraq's. No doubt, leaders in Tehran are looking on with envy. If Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program already, they surely must be considering one now.

Virtually all of the western media have condemned North Korea's recent shelling of Yeonpyeong which killed a number of innocent civilians. But the media leave out important

details which help to explain why the North acted as it did. South Korea missionary, Gene Matthews breaks down the incident like this in *The Progressive*:

“North Korea has always felt threatened by joint military exercises of the U.S. and South Korea, and has always protested against them,” he says. “This time, North Korea stated that the exercises were taking place in North Korean territory and that if shots were fired during the exercise they would retaliate. Shots were fired (not at the North, it should be pointed out but out toward the ocean) and the North retaliated.” (“Keeping Perspective on North Korea”, Matthew Rothschild, *The Progressive*)

So we can see that, however foolish, this was not an act of aggression on the part of the North, but defense. The US/South Korea military exercises are intentionally provocative. The North merely did what it felt it had to do to send a message that it will defend its borders. US citizens would expect nothing less if Russia and China were carrying out military maneuvers on the Canadian border or off the coast of San Diego.

Barack Obama is following in the footsteps of the early Bush administration. Bush eventually learned that hostility does not work with North Korea, so he backed down. After 6 years of belligerence, Bush caved in to nearly all of North Korea’s demands and got nothing in return. The UN’s nuclear watchdog agency, the IAEA, did not gain access to Kim Jong-il’s nuclear stockpile or to its “Top-Secret” file on weapons programs. Nor were IAEA inspectors allowed to conduct surprise “go anywhere, see anything” inspections. None of Bush’s main objectives were achieved, in fact, the ex-president even had North Korea removed from the State Department’s list of “supporters of terrorism”. All the while, the North continued to develop its long-range ballistic-missile delivery system, the Taepodong 2, which will eventually be able to strike cities in the US.

The Bush policy turned out to be a disaster and was viciously criticized by former supporters on the right. Here’s what Claudia Rosett, of “The Rosett Report” (a favorite at the *Weekly Standard* and the *American Enterprise Institute*) said at the time:

“The lesson to date is that America, faced with nuclear blackmail, will bow down, dignify and fortify tyrants, fork over loot, and celebrate the process as a victory for diplomacy. Were North Korea to detonate a nuclear bomb over Los Angeles tomorrow, I start to wonder if Condi Rice and Chris Hill, would describe the cataclysm as “troubling” and then re-cast it as a candid and informative addendum to North Korea’s promised declaration of its nuclear program.”

And here’s a blurb from neocon John Bolton:

“The only good news is that there is little opportunity for the Bush administration to make any further concessions in its waning days in office. But for many erstwhile administration supporters, this is a moment of genuine political poignancy. Nothing can erase the ineffable sadness of an American presidency, like this one, in total intellectual collapse.”

Now Obama wants to resume hostilities with the North, while expecting a different outcome than Bush; tougher sanctions, more military exercises, more pressure from allies, and a stubborn refusal to conduct bilateral negotiations. It’s madness. There’s been no change in

the approach at all. If anything, Obama has taken a harder line than Bush.

And what does the North want?

The North wants what it has always wanted. It wants the US to honor its obligations under the 1994 Agreed Framework. That's it. All Obama needs to do to end the current standoff, is to keep his end of the bargain. Here's how Jimmy Carter summed it up in a Washington Post op-ed (November 24, 2010):

“...in September 2005, an agreement that reaffirmed the basic premises of the 1994 accord. (The Agreed Framework) Its text included denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, a pledge of non-aggression by the United States and steps to evolve a permanent peace agreement to replace the U.S.-North Korean-Chinese cease-fire that has been in effect since July 1953. Unfortunately, no substantive progress has been made since 2005...

This past July I was invited to return to Pyongyang to secure the release of an American, Aijalon Gomes, with the proviso that my visit would last long enough for substantive talks with top North Korean officials. They spelled out in detail their desire to develop a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and a permanent cease-fire, based on the 1994 agreements and the terms adopted by the six powers in September 2005....

North Korean officials have given the same message to other recent American visitors and have permitted access by nuclear experts to an advanced facility for purifying uranium. The same officials had made it clear to me that this array of centrifuges would be “on the table” for discussions with the United States, although uranium purification – a very slow process – was not covered in the 1994 agreements.

Pyongyang has sent a consistent message that during direct talks with the United States, it is ready to conclude an agreement to end its nuclear programs, put them all under IAEA inspection and conclude a permanent peace treaty to replace the “temporary” cease-fire of 1953. We should consider responding to this offer. The unfortunate alternative is for North Koreans to take whatever actions they consider necessary to defend themselves from what they claim to fear most: a military attack supported by the United States, along with efforts to change the political regime.” (“North Korea’s consistent message to the U.S.”, President Jimmy Carter, Washington Post)

There it is in black and white. The US can end the conflict today by just keeping its word. Unfortunately, the United States never had any intention of meeting its obligations under the terms of the Agreed Framework or of resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. From the very beginning, the US stalled on its promise to build 2 lightwater reactors to meet the North’s electrical needs. None of the essential components–turbines or generators–were ever delivered. A foundation was built for one of the reactors, but nothing more. The US also agreed to organize an international consortium to guarantee funding for the reactors, but never followed through. The US never made any effort to keep its end of the bargain. So, (reluctantly) the North withdrew from the NPT and build 9 nuclear weapons. Of course, none of this appears in US media where it might interrupt the daily flow of anti-North Korea propaganda.

Bottom line: The reason there is no peace in Korea is because Washington doesn’t want peace. It’s that simple.

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