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國際學碩士學位論文

Sacrificing the Joker:
An Analysis of the Roh Tae Woo Administration's
Preemptive Decision to Remove US
Tactical Nuclear Weapons

노태우 정부의 한반도 전술핵무기
철수결정 과정 연구

2012年 8月

서울대학교 國際大學院

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**Sacrificing the Joker:
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Tactical Nuclear Weapons**

A thesis presented by

Soyun Park

to

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requirements for the degree of Master of International Studies

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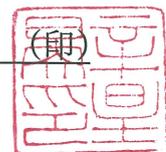
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Sacrificing the Joker:
An Analysis of the Roh Tae Woo Administration's
Preemptive Decision to Remove U.S.
Tactical Nuclear Weapons

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ABSTRACT

Sacrificing the Joker: An Analysis of the Roh Tae Woo Administration's Preemptive Decision to Remove US Tactical Nuclear Weapons

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President Roh Tae Woo declared in 1991 that South Korea no longer possessed US tactical nuclear weapons. That he declared this move preemptively, prior to the United States, is the puzzle that is tackled by this thesis. This thesis is an attempt to look beyond the conventional view that South Korea was pressured to do so by the US or that Roh's decision was an effort to denuclearize North Korea.

This thesis hypothesizes that domestic politics and US commitment to provide South Korea with a continued nuclear umbrella coverage through alternative means were equally important factors. This thesis uses the Information Processing Framework as an analytical tool, which views a policy maker as an active agent and problem solver in his operational

milieu. Roh's operational milieu consisted of US Nuclear Policy, the North Korean Challenge and Domestic Politics that he had to cope with.

All three levels of analysis are required to fully explain Roh's preemptive decision. The prospect of impending new US nuclear policy compelled Roh to act. But to act preemptively and forgo US tactical nuclear weapons was Roh's choice as an active agent. By choosing to act preemptively, Roh also aimed to establish himself as an autonomous, independent and nationalistic leader. This posture was effective in inducing North Korea to have direct talks with South Korea. His preemptive decision also helped him to nip in the bud a potentially explosive domestic issue, i.e., nuclear weapons in South Korea in view of anti-US and anti-nuclear sentiments in the Korean public including vocal, anti-government student demonstrators. Roh made a preemptive move in return for, among others, US commitment to a continued nuclear umbrella coverage for South Korea. Roh's preemptive decision was compatible with the US position and taken after a year of prior, informal consultations with US.

Keywords: *US Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Preemptive Declaration, Denuclearization, Nuclear Umbrella, Active Agent*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALCM	Air-Launched Cruise Missile
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CONUS	Contiguous United States
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DCA	Dual-Capable Aircraft
DJP	Democratic Justice Party
DRP	Democratic Republican Party
GLCM	Ground-Launched Cruise Missile
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCND	Neither Confirm Nor Deny
NPR	Negative Posture Review
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSA	Negative Security Assurance
PNI	Presidential Nuclear Initiatives
PPD	Party for Peace and Democracy
QRA	Quick Reaction Alert

RDP	Reunification Democratic Party
ROK	Republic of Korea
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SNW	Strategic Nuclear Weapons
SSBM	Surface-to-Surface Ballistic Missile
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
TLAM	Tomahawk Land Attack Missile
TNW	Tactical Nuclear Weapons
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

*“Man will never be stronger nor independent if
he lives under perpetual motivation of others.”*

Toba Beta

A. The Puzzle

The Roh Tae Woo administration’s preemptive declaration of the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons on the South Korean soil marked a milestone in South Korean political history. Roh publicly declared on December 18, 1991 that South Korea no longer possessed nuclear weapons; “As I speak, there do not exist any nuclear weapons whatsoever anywhere in the Republic of Korea.”¹ This announcement was made at the same time that the North and South were signing two major agreements—a “Basic Agreement” designed to open the way to “reconciliation, nonaggression, exchanges and cooperation,” and a “Joint Declaration” calling for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. That he

¹ “Seoul Says it Now Has No Nuclear Arms.” *The New York Times*. 19 December 1991.

declared his move preemptively, without provoking unnecessary controversies with the United States, is worth examining. Hitherto, South Korea had not been a maker but a taker of international structure or order. Going against the conventional flow of events, South Korea under President Roh Tae Woo, made a preemptive decision of withdrawing US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea.

Therefore, this thesis proposes that the puzzle is why President Roh Tae Woo decided to remove US tactical nuclear weapons *preemptively*. This thesis will delve into the questions of whether there was a US pressure or whether it was intended to denuclearize North Korea. Furthermore, this thesis will examine whether the action was taken in order to cope with domestic pressures or politics.

B. Literature Review

Some contending theories for the Roh Tae Woo administration's decision to remove US tactical nuclear weapons have been offered and analyzed by scholars and practitioners in the sphere of foreign affairs. One conventional theory is that it was a unilateral action and pressure by the United States. The United States withdrew all nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea as part of its disarmament initiative. This disarmament was a unilateral action taken by the Bush administration that had the effect of withdrawing tactical nuclear weapons from all overseas locations, except air bombs from half a dozen NATO countries in

Europe.² President Bush's so-called Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) were intended to offer a friendly gesture toward the Soviet Union. Another theory is that it was intended for the denuclearization of North Korea. For example, the then US Ambassador to Seoul Donald P. Gregg's reasons for the decision revolved around the denuclearization of North Korea. He articulated that South Korea removed US tactical nuclear weapons because "nuclear weapons in South Korea would make it very difficult to pursue a policy of denuclearization in North Korea."³

In a similar vein, Sung Duk Cha contends that Roh's decision was an expression of indomitable will for the South Korean government to hinder North Korean nuclear developments.⁴ He believed that the decision was intended to trigger North Korea to denuclearize as the removal of weapons from South Korea would forfeit justification for North Korea to deny IAEA inspections.⁵ Peter Hayes and Young W. Kihl wrote in "Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula," that "the most important part of President Roh's November 8 declaration was the ROK government's voluntary renouncement of its

² "The Withdrawal of Nuclear Weapons from South Korea," The Nuclear Information Project 28, September 2005, <<http://www.nukestrat.com/korea/withdrawal.htm>>.

³ Gregg, *Roh Tae Woo Daetongnyeong eul Malhanda (Our views on President Roh Tae Woo)*, Ed. Roh Jae Bong, Donghwa Publishing Company, 2011, p. 111.

⁴ Cha, Sung Duk, *A Study on the North Korean Foreign Policy Decision-making Factors with Special Reference to the Change of Nuclear Policy toward the USA. in the Post-Cold War Era*, Diss. Seoul National University, 1998, p. 216.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

right to possess nuclear reprocessing and enrichment facilities.”⁶ The two scholars attribute South Korea’s above decision to preventing North Korea from becoming a nuclear power. In other words, in their view the suspicion that Pyongyang was building and running a large-scale reactor, was a critical factor that compelled South Korea to make such a move. That is, although Hayes and Kihl also emphasize the North Korean factor, their answers remain silent about the reasons for the preemptive nature of President Roh’s decision. They merely provide general explanations as to why Roh decided to remove tactical nuclear weapons. Up to now, researches regarding the ‘preemptive’ nature of Roh’s decision are virtually non-existent. The articles and books that do mention the preemptive nature are limited to merely several lines, as in Roh’s Memoir. When they do consider the preemptive character of the decision, they fail to elaborate on the reasons, merely mentioning the preemptive nature of the act. This thesis addresses this failure or vacuum and goes beyond the US pressure factor or the denuclearization of North Korea factor. This thesis identifies two other important factors, namely domestic political pressure and US commitment to South Korea with continued nuclear umbrella through alternative means.

In view of the scarcity of scholarly research on this question, this thesis

⁶ Hayes, Peter and Young Whan Kihl, “Peace and Security in Northeast Asia,” New York, USA: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1997, p. 395.

cannot help but rely heavily on my personal interviews with President Roh's Advisor for Diplomacy and National Security Kim Chong Whi on June 27, 2012, as well as memoirs, books and articles written by government officials, their interview articles and press analyses which offer clues as to why South Korea acted preemptively on this issue. These sources, especially memoirs by President Roh Tae Woo, Foreign Minister Lee Sang Ok, and Policy Advisor Park Chul Un and interviews given by these and other officials who served during the Roh Administration are to be utilized. President George H. W. Bush's and Ambassador Donald Gregg's writings in a book edited by Roh Jae Bong also shed light on this issue. Roh Jae Bong, previously a professor at Seoul National University, served as Special Advisor for Political Affairs, Chief of Staff of Presidential Office and Prime Minister during Roh's presidency. The title of his edited book is *Roh Tae Woo Daetongnyeong eul Malhanda (Our views on President Roh Tae Woo)*.

In sum, this thesis on the basis of these sources will be able to provide an answer to the 'why' question, the puzzle, which is a significant topic. Another significance of this project is that the combination of three levels of analysis will provide a richer and clearer picture.

C. Hypothesis

As mentioned above, the puzzle is why President Roh Tae Woo decided to

remove US tactical nuclear weapons preemptively. The preemptive declaration cannot be sufficiently explained by the US Nuclear Policy alone. The factors that could be attested to Roh's preemptive declaration can be answered ultimately by an analysis of the decision-making process of President Roh and his advisors guided by their beliefs and perceptions. Therefore, this thesis will be a three-level analysis. One must first identify the "operational milieu" or policy environment (the world in which the policy will be carried out) and the "psychological milieu" (the world as the actors see it) for President Roh's diplomacy.⁷

In this thesis, the "operational milieu" consists of the US Nuclear Policy, the North Korea Challenge and the domestic politics that Roh had to cope with. The "psychological milieu," then, refers to these challenges as he saw them. The hypothesis is that all three levels of analysis are required to fully explain Roh's decision to withdraw US nuclear weapons preemptively.

First of all, the prospect of the impending new US nuclear policy compelled Roh to act. But to act preemptively and forego US tactical nuclear weapons was Roh's choice as an active agent. By choosing to act preemptively, Roh also aimed to establish himself as an autonomous, independent and nationalistic leader. This posture on his part was effective in inducing North Korea

⁷ Jervis, Robert, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 13.

to have direct talks with South Korea. His preemptive decision also helped him to nip in the bud a potentially explosive domestic issue, i.e., nuclear weapons in South Korea in view of anti-US and anti-nuclear sentiments in the Korean public including vocal, anti-government student demonstrators. In addition to the previously cited two factors, that is, the US factor and the North Korean factor, this thesis hypothesizes that domestic politics and the US commitment to provide a continued nuclear umbrella coverage through alternative means are additional and equally important factors for Roh's preemptive declaration.

D. Levels of Analysis

A decision-making level approach may be neglected were all Korean presidents to behave in the same way when faced with the same external challenges, or if President Roh had absolutely no choice but to make the preemptive declaration under those circumstances.

However, Roh was, after all, not a robot controlled by the "operational milieu." He was a leader with his own beliefs and perceptions. Moreover, if all Korean presidents would respond the same way to the same domestic and international challenges, it would be hard to praise or blame President Roh. Indeed, as Robert Jervis observed, "the level of analysis problem has important moral

implications.”⁸ In a similar vein, Henry Kissinger once remarked, “as a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make.”⁹ Therefore, this thesis will include a decision-making level analysis.

Levels of Analysis also have analytical implications. One may recall Hermann, whose major contribution is “to highlight the role of the decision process for foreign policy change.”¹⁰ Hermann contends that, “We need a perspective that views major change not as a deterministic response to large forces operative in the international system, but rather as a decision process. Of course, major shifts in international political and economic systems can pose significant requirements for the modification of foreign policy. But policymakers can either anticipate these international changes, respond just in time, or only after suffering dramatic consequences. Furthermore, policymakers can act as agents of change in the absence of any overwhelming systemic force.”¹¹

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹ Isaacson, Walter, *Kissinger*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005, p. 13.

¹⁰ Hermann, Charles F. “Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy.” *International Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (1990), p.21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

CHAPTER TWO

Policy Environment for President Roh: Three-Level Challenges

A. New US Nuclear Challenge

1. Differences between Tactical and Strategic Nuclear Weapons

In order to understand the decision made by the Roh Tae Woo administration as well as other conflicting arguments regarding Roh's pronouncement to withdraw nuclear weapons, one needs to understand the distinction between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons as explained by George Lewis and Andrea Gabbitas. However, the scholarly debate over the definition of tactical nuclear weapons has been extensive and there is no such thing as a precise definition. In this thesis the term "tactical" will refer to any nonstrategic nuclear weapons as well as long-range nuclear sea launched cruise missiles (SLCMs). Despite the somewhat blurred territory of tactical and strategic weapons, it would be convenient to formulate a single definition of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs). That process involves considering which features of tactical nuclear weapons can

be used to distinguish them from the strategic nuclear weapons. To ease complications, a TNW is “any deployable nuclear weapon not regulated under current nuclear arms agreements.”¹²

The first possible approach in defining TNWs is by their range. Generally speaking, weapons that have the range to be delivered from the United States or Russia to another territory have been referred to as a strategic weapon. On the other hand, any weapons that do not have the range to battlefield use have been considered as TNWs. The extremity of the differences makes it difficult to categorize them in some cases. For instance, tactical long-range nuclear SLCMs have similar ranges to strategic nuclear ALCMs. Moreover, strategic bombers that carry nominally strategic bombs have the capability of firing nominally tactical bombs at considerably long ranges.

The second possible approach is defining a TNW based upon the target against which the weapon is intended to be used on. As can be inferred from the name itself, TNWs were initially designed for the purpose of being used against tactical targets on the battlefield. On the contrary, SNWs were commonly designed to target an enemy country’s homeland, whether the target be cities to leadership

¹² Lewis, George and Andrea Gabbitas. “What Should be Done about Tactical Nuclear Weapons?” *The Atlantic Council of the United States*, March 1999.

centers to nuclear missile silos.¹³ In addition, TNWs were oftentimes used against mobile targets while SNWs were almost exclusively intended to be delivered to predetermined geographic points. However, this approach results in an overlap since an airfield or a naval base could also be targeted by both strategic missiles and tactical SLCMs, and a strategic bomber is capable of attacking mobile targets. This approach to the definition had been a useful one in the past because both the US and Russia possessed numerous short-range battlefield weapons that were apparently tactical.

The third approach is to define TNWs in terms of yield. TNWs are generally classified as having lower yields compared to strategic weapons and this difference would possibly serve as the foundation for dividing up the nuclear forces. This poses a problem at least for US weapons since there is considerable overlap of yields between TNWs and SNWs. The US TNWs with the highest yields are a B61 bomb variant with a yield of 170kt and the highest yield selection of the nuclear Tomahawk cruise missile which is about 150kt. Both of these have significantly higher yields than the lowest strategic ballistic missile warhead yield (100kt) as well as the lowest ALCM yield selection (5kt) and the smallest strategic bomb yield. This shows that at the present, it is inaccurate to define TNWs simply based

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

on yield alone.¹⁴

A fourth approach is to sort the two by their delivery vehicle. This method had been adopted by previous nuclear arms treaties and this definition might be regarded as useful if the two countries could agree upon the classification of each type of delivery systems. However, this approach is currently futile because these days each nuclear bomb has the possibility to be assigned exclusively to either strategic or tactical aircraft types, while in actuality, a given bomb could just as likely be delivered by the other type of aircraft.

If the military had the option of choosing between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, it would probably choose strategic in terms of credibility. SNWs are generally considered more accurate and therefore more reliable. However, depending on the distance, tactical nuclear weapons may prove to be more useful.

Since there are complications to these disparate ways to distinguish TNWs and SNWs, tactical nuclear weapons will simply be defined as weapons whose “deployment is not regulated by the START treaties – with the exceptions for strategic ballistic missile defense weapons and long-range nuclear SLCMs”¹⁵ as aforementioned.

The main difference between tactical and strategic weapons is that TNWs

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

“do not have the means for intercontinental delivery, in particular ICBMs, or strategic air force planes, nor do the TNWs usually have a multi-megaton yield.” On the other hand, TNWs are those that are purely defensive such as atomic demolition and surface-to-air missiles. It is assumed that tactical nuclear weapons are intended to deter a nuclear war amidst hostilities while strategic nuclear weapons are intended to deter an all-out nuclear war. In reality the distinction between these two in terms of use is not so acute that they represent two independent weapon types.

2. US Policy on Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe and Asia

Tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) in Europe were initially deployed in Europe by the US and NATO primarily to counter Soviet Union and the WTO (The Warsaw Treaty Organization) strength in manpower and in conventional military weapons. Other rationales became prominent in time, among which was to deter the Soviet Union from using tactical nuclear weapons. In 1974, there were attempts to reduce the presence of US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Pressures began to form around 1970 to decrease the US tactical nuclear weapons and different interest groups had different concerns. One consideration was the cost force and the attendance of US personnel. Other significant arguments were as follows:

- Vulnerability of such elements as QRA aircraft and forward based nuclear

artillery,

- Number and yields of the TNW stockpile were too high to be really functional,
- Command and control of certain elements, such as forward-based nuclear artillery, might prove very difficult once use had been initiated,
- The general Soviet nuclear capability had grown to the point where the original rationales for the weapons were no longer supported by an overwhelming US strategic nuclear superiority,
- Security of the stockpile,
- The original largely political impetus for the large growth in numbers of the stockpile, both from European sources and from various domestic US pressures, was for reasons largely irrelevant to European military requirements.¹⁶

Therefore, the government and the US Department of Defense engaged in hectic debates in early 1974 regarding this issue. Then Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger and some others favored at least partial reductions of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Nevertheless, a consensus was reached that there would be no reductions in the number of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe in

¹⁶ Muller, Harald and Annette Shaper. "US Nuclear Policy after the Cold War," PRIF Reports No. 69. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2004, p.6.

November and December of 1974. Defying expectations, it was rather announced that they would increase the number of Lance missiles in France and Germany.

With the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the deterioration of the Warsaw Pact, it was expected that all US tactical nuclear weapons would be withdrawn from Europe; Soviet Union's tactical nuclear weapons from Eastern European states as well as the newly independent states from the former Soviet Union had been removed. However, this reciprocal result did not ensue. Russia's proposal to negotiate a bilateral treaty failed. The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNI) of 1991-1992 which were unilateral measures that allowed for quick and drastic reductions without a formal arms control agreement and thereby without verification, moved only half of the US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. President George H. W. Bush announced that the number of nuclear bombs in Europe would be reduced from 1500 to 700.

Arguments for maintaining US tactical nuclear weapons after the Cold War have included:

1. TNWs are needed to maintain alliance commitments, particularly in Europe.
2. TNWs are needed to provide a regional nuclear capability that is distinct from the US strategic forces and is thus more credible as a deterrent. By providing a link between US conventional and strategic forces it is argued

that TNWs also make nuclear deterrence more credible.

3. TNWs are needed for use in situations where very low yield nuclear weapons might be needed, e.g., attacks on deeply buried shelters or counter-proliferation missions targeting chemical or biological weapons facilities.
4. TNWs are needed to deter and respond to the use of weapons of mass destruction by third world countries, particularly the use of chemical and biological weapons.
5. TNWs are needed as a “last resort” measure to protect US forces overseas should some crisis arise that could not be dealt with by other military means.
6. TNWs are needed to counter Russian TNWs.¹⁷

However, these arguments seem futile as there is no longer any technical or military need for the US TNWs to be in Europe. According to the 1997 National Academy of Sciences study, there is “no longer a need for US TNWs in Europe” due to NATO’s conventional superiority, the US strategic nuclear forces, and British and French nuclear forces were sufficient to guarantee the security of the US.

Although the agreements that had been made were focused on Europe, the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

Presidential Nuclear Initiatives had a big influence on the presence of nuclear forces in Northeast Asia as well. Unlike Europe where a small number of US tactical nuclear weapons still continue to exist, all tactical weapons were going to be removed from the Asia-Pacific region as well as the nuclear weapons from naval surface vessels and general purpose submarines. South Korea and Japan are faced with greater security threats than the United States' NATO allies.

3. Changing and Challenging International Environment

During the Roh Tae Woo administration the international environment was going through drastic rearrangements against the backdrop of the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as other Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, not to mention South Korea's Nordpolitik and the resultant normalization of South Korea's relations with China and the Russian Federation. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had marked the end of the old world order and a beginning of a new era, obliging the United States to make changes in their security strategies. The United States nuclear forces have undergone substantial changes since the end of the Cold War.

One of the key features of the Cold war was the nuclear arms race as well as other nuclear arms control agreements between the US and the Soviet Union. In September 1990 the US strategic nuclear forces consisted of approximately 13,000

nuclear warheads on nearly 2000 land, air and sea-based launchers. Similarly, the Soviet Union had deployed approximately 11,000 nuclear warheads on about 2500 land, air and sea-based launchers.¹⁸ There has been contention as to whether limiting Soviet weapons and providing information about the capabilities of the Soviet Union when the Soviet Union continued to further pursue more capable systems would actually work in the favor of US security. Regardless, it was generally viewed that the arms control negotiations were some of the very few occasions where the two countries could actually make cooperative efforts and communicate.

When the Soviet Union was fragmented into 15 different countries in 1991, Russia, which continued the legal personality of the Soviet Union, became increasingly anxious. Russia feared that newly-independent countries such as Belarus and Ukraine might choose to use the nuclear weapons as the Soviet Union no longer had control over them. Thus, Russia sought to find a way to hinder them from possibly going out and using them. Russia and the United States did not want other countries than themselves to possess nuclear weapons.

As for the United States, the attempted coup against President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union in August 1991 evoked grave concerns not only regarding the

¹⁸ Arkin, William. "Taking Stock: US Nuclear Deployments at the End of the Cold War," *Greenpeace*, August 1992.

future of the Soviet Union, but also particularly about the nuclear command and control in the Soviet Union. This was especially more so after the US learned that the Soviet Defense Minister and the chief of the General Staff had taken sides against Gorbachev. The end of the Cold War had left the United States nuclear stockpile in great flux. The regular rhythm that had been carried out for the past four decades had been broken. There had been no new warheads that were being produced and fielded and none were in the pipeline for the foreseeable future. Rather the major activity had been the withdrawal of large numbers of warheads from sites in the US and overseas and storing them at depots while they awaited their turn to be dismantled at the nuclear weapons destruction plant located in Texas.¹⁹ These changes in the composition of nuclear forces also came with a drastic reduction in the numbers as well as the locations of US nuclear weapons at home and overseas.

Arms control treaties and packages of arms control and disarmament initiatives were formalized, contributing to the great reductions and shifts in the nuclear stockpile. The INF Treaty was signed in December 1987 and went into effect in June 1988. This indicated that all US and Soviet land-based missiles between 500 and 5500 km range were to be eliminated over the next three years.

¹⁹ Muller, Harald and Annette Shaper. "US Nuclear Policy after the Cold War," PRIF Reports No. 69. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2004, p. 6.

From the US side, these constituted the Pershing II ballistic missiles and Ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in five European countries. Consequently, missiles were withdrawn from three Pershing II bases in Germany and six newly-built GLCM bases in the UK, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. The INF Treaty led West Germany to retire its US supplied W50 Pershing 1A missile warheads and 100 were actually removed from two bases in Germany.

The US and the Soviet Union signed a Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) in July 1991 after almost a decade of extensive negotiations. This went into effect in late 1994. The START I treaty limited the US and successors to the Soviet Union to 6000 warheads attributed to 1600 strategic offensive delivery vehicles, which included land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers. This treaty also limited each side to 4900 warheads attributed to ballistic missiles, 1540 warheads attributed to heavy ICBMs and 1100 warheads attributed to mobile ICBMs. Warheads are assigned to missiles and heavy bombers by counting rules that assign each deployed missile or a warhead number. The number of warheads assigned to ICBMs and SLBMs tends to equal the number that is actually deployed on that type of missile, but the number assigned to heavy bombers is usually far less than the number of bombs that each type of bomber is able to carry. The START treaty calls for reducing the number of warheads attributed and carried on

multiple warhead missiles.

The parties depend on their own national technical means and other cooperative measures that have been created to supplement information received through the national technical means to monitor forces and verify compliance with START I. Through the START I parties are obliged to exchange extensive data regarding the numbers and locations of affected weapons as well as types of on-site inspections that include baseline inspections, inspections of eliminated equipment and frequent monitoring of certain facilities. The parties are also required to notify each other when activities occur.

In May 1992, the US, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed a Protocol to START I that included these four former Soviet republics to be the successors to the Treaty. Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus all agreed to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as non-nuclear weapons states. They also agreed to the removal of strategic weapons deployed in their territories. The three countries arranged to return nuclear warheads to Russia, as the Russians had desired.

Partly in response to the attempted coup against President Gorbachev, George Bush announced initiatives to reduce tactical nuclear weapons. President Gorbachev happily accepted Bush's offer to join the bilateral action on October 5. The results were as follows:

- The mutual removal of all tactical nuclear weapons from US and Soviet surface ships, attack submarines and land-based naval aircraft (amounting to a total of over 4000 nuclear weapons from both forces),
- The mutual elimination of all US and Soviet ground-based tactical nuclear systems, including nuclear artillery shells, missile warheads and nuclear mines (including some 2000 US and 10,000 Soviet weapons),
- The mutual standing down of all US and Soviet strategic bombers from their 24-hour alert status,
- Mutual proposals to go beyond the existing START agreement,
- Mutual decisions by the United States and the USSR to place their nuclear forces under a single command structure.²⁰

Although the mutual agreement was generally meant to be imposed upon Europe, the terms of these initiatives also would have significant impact on Northeast Asia. According to estimates by analysts, the US had stored approximately 150 nuclear warheads, including 21 landmines, 70 artillery shells and 60 gravity bombs located on Kunsan Air Base in South Korea during the mid-1980s. Kunsan had apparently been the sole forward base for US nuclear weapons stored in Asia.²¹ The following table summarizes the United States tactical nuclear

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²¹ “The Withdrawal of US Nuclear Weapons from South Korea.” *The Nuclear Information*

weapons before and after the 1991-1992 initiatives took action. These show a large reduction in the areas of deployment:

Table 1: US TNW Consolidation from 1991 to 2001²²

US TNW Consolidation from 1991 to 2001		
	1991 TNWs Locations	2001
Army/Marine Corps		
Lance	Europe, CA, NM, NY, TX	—
Artillery	Europe, Korea, CA, NM, NY, TX	—
Navy		
B-57 depth bomb	Europe, Pacific, AK, CA, FL, HI, ME, TX, VA	—
SLCMs	Europe (IT), Pacific (Guam), CA, HI, NJ, SC, VA	GA, WA
Air Force (Navy/Marine Corps) Tactical Bombs		
B-57 bomb	Europe, Pacific, NM, NV	—
B61-2, -5 bombs	Europe, Pacific, Korea, CA, FL, HI, NM, NV, VA	—
B61-3, -4, -10 bombs	Europe, Pacific, CA, FL, HI, NM, NV, VA	Europe, NV, NM

In this connection, the following table shows the shift in the number of US nuclear weapons deployed by country since 1975 (peak period). Eleven countries and two US territories (Guam and Puerto Rico) hosted 10,311 warheads in 1975, a number that declined to 6,551 warheads in eight countries (and Guam) in 1985. With the retirement of nuclear weapons in the 1980s (atomic demolition munitions, surface-to-air missiles, Honest John and Pershing missiles), and the 1991 decision to eliminate tactical nuclear weapons altogether, the bulk of the

Project. 28 September 2005. <<http://www.nukestrat.com/korea/withdrawal.htm>>

²² Handler, Joshua. "The 1991-1992 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) and the Elimination, Storage and Security of Tactical Nuclear Weapons," *Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 2003.

weapons (artillery shells and Lance missile warheads) were eliminated after 1985.

Table 2: US Nuclear Weapons Overseas²³

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2000</u>
Germany	5116	3396	325	190
United Kingdom	1018	1268	300	100
Turkey	467	489	150	95
Italy	439	549	150	95
Greece	232	164	25	0
Netherlands	96	81	10	10
Belgium	40	25	10	10
South Korea	683	151	0	0
Guam	1213	428	0	0
Canada	240	0	0	0
Spain	512	0	0	0
Philippines	225	0	0	0
Puerto Rico	30	0	0	0
TOTAL	10,311	6551	970	500

4. US Ambassador Lilley’s Confidential Report to President Roh

President Roh assumed his office in February 1988. According to my personal interview with President Roh’s Advisor for Diplomacy and National Security Kim Chong Whi, it was revealed that Ambassador James R. Lilley and General Louis C. Menetree, the Commander of US Forces in Korea, came to call on President Roh on March 29, 1988. Ambassador Lilley wanted only one other

²³ Arkin, William. “Taking Stock: US Nuclear Deployments at the End of the Cold War” *Greenpeace*, August 1992.

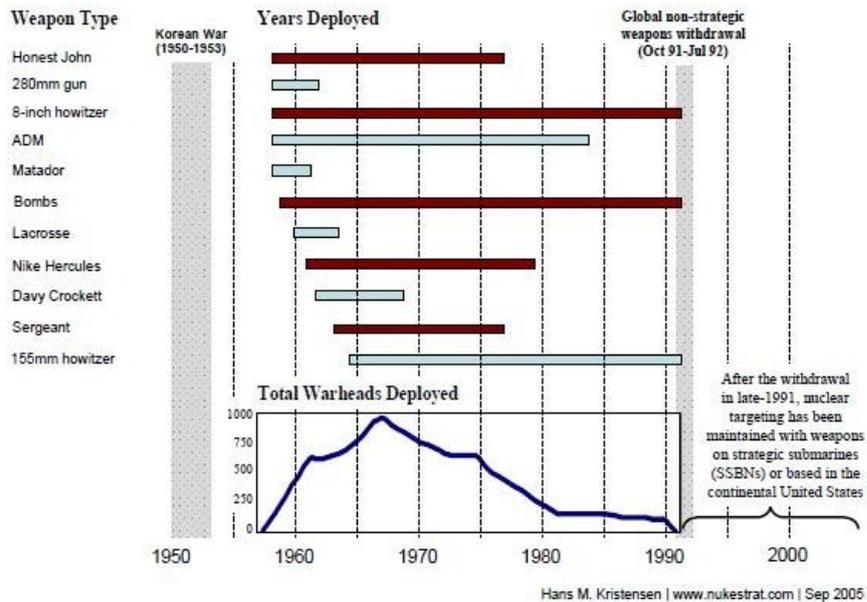
Korean to be present—it was advisor Kim. The two American officials made a confidential report to President Roh about the existence of US nuclear weapons in South Korea, which were first introduced into South Korea during President Syngman Rhee's period. Each following South Korean President was also informed of the same subject on a strictly confidential basis in view of the NCND policy regarding their deployment of US nuclear weapons. On the day, the US tactical nuclear weapons issue was raised for the first time during Roh's period.²⁴

According Hans M. Kristensen, in his separate presentation made at the National Assembly in Seoul on April 28, 2005, on Korean soil, five systems were initially deployed in 1958 followed by a rapid build-up that peaked at nearly 1000 warheads in 1967. Overall, eleven different nuclear weapon systems were deployed, although not necessarily at the same time. The following figure shows that the last weapons (artillery shells and bombs) were withdrawn in late 1991.

²⁴ Kim, Chong Whi. Personal Interview. 27 June 2012.

Table 3: US Nuclear Weapons in South Korea²⁵

US Nuclear Weapons In South Korea



Nuclear weapons did not arrive in South Korea until well after the end of the Korean War. Once they did arrive, they were followed by a massive build-up of nearly 1,000 warheads within one decade, or an average of eight new warheads introduced every month for 10 years.

The peak of nearly 1,000 warheads coincided with the overall peak for the US nuclear stockpile which reached 32,000 in 1967. The weapons deployed to Korea were mainly battlefield weapons intended for use in artillery attacks, tank

²⁵ Kristensen, Hans M. "The Withdrawal of Nuclear Weapons from South Korea." *The Nuclear Information Project*, September 2005. <<http://www.nukestrat.com/korea/withdrawal.htm>>.

battles, and air attacks. North Korea did not have nuclear weapons at the time nor did it have a weapons of mass destruction program, so the US nuclear weapons were intended purely as means of defeating a large conventional attack. The decline after 1967 occurred first because some early-generation weapons were retired, but also because the US government realized that the military had deployed far more weapons than it needed. Moreover, in the early 1970s the US Congress got involved over political and security concerns which revealed that ambassadors to host nations often were not aware that nuclear weapons were deployed in the country. Some of the weapons were deployed without adequate security. In some sense, this really marked the beginning of the end for nuclear weapons in South Korea. Although the South Korean government managed to persuade the Carter administration not to withdraw nuclear weapons altogether, the end result was never in doubt. The Reagan administration maintained the force level, but never increased it. The warheads for the Lance missile never made it to Korea but were left stranded in Guam.

According to Advisor Kim Chong Whi, “there was no US pressure whatsoever to remove the nuclear weapons.” Soon after the meeting at the Blue House, Advisor Kim reported to President Roh about his judgment that the US will eventually withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea, because the US was already considering similar withdrawal from Europe. Therefore, Kim

suggested that “We should propose to the US side the removal of tactical nuclear weapons preemptively, before US announces it sooner or later, so that we may use it as a bargaining chip for our negotiations with North Korea and propose to create a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.” Having got a nod from President Roh, Advisor Kim began informal talks with Ambassador Lilley initially and then with his successor Ambassador Gregg.²⁶ These clandestine informal exchanges continued more than a year, according to Security Advisor Kim.

The former US Ambassador to South Korea, Donald P. Gregg, confirms the fact that informal exchanges continued for more than a year in his article regarding this issue. Ambassador Gregg writes as follows.

Firstly, “In 1989, South Korea and the US were becoming increasingly concerned about a nascent nuclear weapons program in North Korea. In discussions with National Security Advisor Kim Chong Whi, it became clear to us both that the unacknowledged but widely known presence of US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea would make it very difficult to pursue a policy of denuclearization in North Korea.”

Secondly, “We both recognized that as soon as pressure was applied to North Korea about its secret nuclear weapons program, the presence of US weapons in the South would become an issue. The US had a long-standing policy

²⁶ Kim, Chong Whi. Personal Interview. 27 June 2012.

of ‘neither confirm nor deny’ [NCND] regarding all nuclear deployments, but this would have been utterly useless in the face of the determined student protests that would be certain to arise.”

Thirdly, “I know, from long association with the US military, that we would not move to any weapons under pressure from a foreign country, and informally asked Kim if he thought that his government might agree to the idea of removing the US weapons before they became an issue. After suitable checking at Blue House, Kim replied, equally informally, that he thought such an idea could be discussed.”

Fourthly, “A highly sensitive but extremely sensible series of discussions then took place over the next several months involving the Blue House, the US Embassy, two successive commanders of US Forces Korea, and the Department of State. All concerned saw the wisdom of removing the weapons ‘ahead of necessity,’ and all recognized and respected the pragmatism of their counterparts. In the fall of 1990, I was able to send a message to Washington saying that the President of Korea and the commander of US forces in Korea both recommended the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Korea.”²⁷

In view of the above, one may revisit Security Advisor Kim Chong Whi’s

²⁷ Gregg, Donald, *Roh Tae Woo Daetongnyeong eul Malhanda (Our views on President Roh Tae Woo)*, Ed. Roh Jae Bong, Donghwa Publishing Company, 2011, pp. 111-113.

earlier assertion that “There was no US pressure whatsoever for Roh’s preemptive declaration.” Did the US exercise pressure or power to remove its tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea? To exercise power is to get others to do what they would not otherwise do.²⁸ According to this definition, the US did *not* exercise power or pressure on South Korea because South Korea itself preemptively proposed what the US wanted, voluntarily. On the other hand, one cannot deny that there was an international challenge for the United States to reduce or remove tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and South Korea.

B. North Korean Challenge

1. South Korea’s Nordpolitik

As North Korea competes with South Korea for prestige and power in international community, it prefers to establish direct contacts with US or Japan and thereby to avoid direct talks with South Korea. However, President Roh compelled North Korea to have direct talks with South Korea by conducting Nordpolitik. And South Korea’s removal of tactical nuclear weapons was aimed to promote Nordpolitik including inter-Korean relations. South Korea’s Nordpolitik under President Roh was his flagship policy and his decision to preemptively remove tactical nuclear weapons was also designed to promote inter-Korean

²⁸ Baldwin, David A., *Economic Statecraft*, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 9.

relations, which was one of the key objectives of Nordpolitik. According to Lee Yong Joon, Roh's policy towards North Korea was in one word, "encirclement." By preventing South Korea's friendly countries, Japan, US and others, from directly contacting North Korea ahead of inter-Korean talks, Roh's government intended to nudge North Korea toward direct talks with South Korea. As Roh's North Korean policy was an integral part of Nordpolitik, this section touches upon its definition and objectives. As already mentioned, the preemptive removal of tactical nuclear weapons was designed to promote Nordpolitik in general and inter-Korean relations in particular.

According to Park Sang Shik, Nordpolitik can be defined by President Roh's own words: "I will approach the communist bloc more vigorously in order to realize peaceful coexistence between South and North Korea and ultimately peaceful unification."²⁹

Roh's above definition shows that Nordpolitik consists of two parts—a northern diplomacy part aiming at the overall communist bloc on the one hand, and an inter-Korean policy part targeting North Korea on the other. It also indicates linkage between Roh's northern diplomacy and inter-Korean policy.

The term 'northern policy' and 'northern diplomacy' have often been used

²⁹ Park, Sang Shik. "Northern Diplomacy and Inter-Korean Relations in Korea Under Roh Tae Woo," ed. James Cotton, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1993, p. 257.

as synonyms in academia since the early 1990s. In this thesis, however, northern policy is defined to be broader than northern diplomacy as it includes inter-Korean policy. In order to highlight the comprehensiveness of the northern policy, the term ‘Nordpolitik’ will be preferred over ‘northern diplomacy,’ although the terms Nordpolitik and northern policy will be used interchangeably. Therefore, Korean term for Nordpolitik or northern policy should be *Bukbang Jeongchaek* and northern diplomacy *Bukbang Oegyo*. Inter-Korean policy, then, should be *Daebuk Jeongchaek*. In this regard, Foreign Minister Lee Bum Seok is widely believed to have used the term *Bukbang Jeongchaek* or northern policy for the first time as a South Korean government official, when he spoke at the National Defense University in Seoul in 1983.³⁰ At the time, however, he did not mention the whole communist bloc as a target group of countries but only named the Soviet Union and China. That is, he stated simply that “...our most important diplomatic task is to pursue the northern diplomacy successfully which aims at normalizing relations with the Soviet Union and China.”³¹

This reveals, at least, two things. Initially the primary target countries are the neighboring communist giants, the Soviet Union and China. In other words, if it were somehow possible, South Korea would have preferred to normalize relations

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

³¹ Lee Bum Seok as quoted and translated by Park Sang Shik.

with the two neighboring powers first during his period and not with distant East European countries such as Hungary. Under Roh's period, however, it was Hungary that eventually became the first country in the Soviet bloc to normalize relations with South Korea.

Both President Chun Doo Hwan and his Foreign Minister Lee Bum Seok as well as President Roh Tae Woo later on saw the linkage between the northern diplomacy and the inter-Korean policy. Foreign Minister Lee, for example, went on to state, "Our most important foreign policy goal in the 1980s is to prevent the war on the Korean peninsula." This statement is in the same vein as Roh's stated goals of "peaceful coexistence between South and North Korea" or "ultimately peaceful unification" when laying out Nordpolitik.

One may argue that the linkage was less clear in Lee's statement and more explicit in Roh's declaration. In fact, Kim Hak Joon argues that "a concept of linkage" was absent in the policies of the Fifth Republic,³² that is, when Lee served as Foreign Minister. However, it would be fair to say the linkage was envisaged even during the Fifth Republic, although less clearly than under Roh's presidency during the Sixth Republic.

It should be noted that originally Nordpolitik was advocated to South

³² Kim Hak Joon, *The Republic of Korea's Northern Policy: Origin, Development, and Prospects*, Ed. James Cotton, p. 259.

Korea by Morton Abramowitz,³³ when he was in charge of the Korean desk at the US State Department during the period.³⁴ Abramowitz advised Seoul to follow the example of West Germany's Ostpolitik adopted by Prime Minister Willy Brandt. Kim Hak Joon is of the view that Abramowitz made the first clear reference to a northern policy.³⁵ As the German leader "popularized" the term Ostpolitik, which had been drafted by his advisor Egon Bahr,³⁶ both Abramowitz and Lee Bum Seok seem to have been inspired to use a similar term, Nordpolitik, for South Korea's possible new foreign policy initiatives.

Broadly speaking, the objectives of Nordpolitik are the same as South Korea's previous foreign policies, namely, national security, economic prosperity, peaceful reunification and national prestige. These four foreign policy goals of the Republic of Korea have remained the same since its inception, despite later changes of its regimes.³⁷

However, these broad objectives need to be analyzed as they can be differentiated in their details during different regimes of South Korea. During Roh's presidency, the first objective of promoting national security was to be

³³ Abramowitz, Morton, "Moving the Glacier: The Two Koreans and the Powers," Adelphi Papers, no 80 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991)

³⁴ Kim, Hak Joon, "The Republic of Korea's Northern Policy: Origin, Development, and Prospects in Korea under Roh Tae Woo," p. 250.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³⁶ Sarotte, M.E. *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik 1969-1973*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

³⁷ Park, Sang Shik., p. 219.

achieved in an unprecedented way—it was through encouraging North Korea to open up and change. North Korea’s opening and change were seen to be essential prerequisites for peaceful coexistence and peaceful reunification of the two Koreas. Prior to the Nordpolitik era, South Korea’s policy emphasis was on a strategy of supremacy over North Korea,³⁸ rather than any attempt to change North Korea, *per se*.

In other words, whereas previous Nordpolitiks aimed to promote security by obtaining supremacy over North Korea, under Roh’s presidency the Nordpolitik’s objective was to bring about changes in North Korea so as to reduce the threat to South Korea.

The second objective of promoting economic prosperity would be achieved through South Korea’s expansion of its new market in the Soviet Union, China and East European countries. This expansion of market was timely in the face of the growing protectionist trends in its traditional market in the West and the Third World.³⁹ Moreover, there existed complementarity in the trade between South Korea and the communist bloc.⁴⁰

The third objective of promoting peaceful reunification was clearly spelled

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁰ Lee Ki Young, “The Roles of the United States and Japan in Trade between South Korea and the Communist Bloc,” *Gukjejeongchi Nonchong* (Journal of International Politics) 22.2 (1988) pp. 225-240.

out in President Roh's "Special Declaration in the interests of National Self-esteem, Unification, and Prosperity" on July 9, 1988. The July 9th Declaration stated the following six points:

1. Promotion of personnel exchanges in various fields between South and North Korea and permission of visits to South and North Korea by Korean residents abroad;
2. Encouragement of exchanges of correspondence and mutual visits for separated families;
3. Promotion of trade between South and North Korea and treatment of South-North trade as internal trade;
4. Promotion of balanced economic development between South and North Korea, and permission of trade between countries friendly to South Korea and North Korea, provided it does not involve goods for military use;
5. Ending of counter-productive diplomatic competition between South and North Korean representatives at international forums; and
6. Support of North Korea's improvement of relations with the United States, Japan and other countries friendly to South Korea and pursuit of improved relations with the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries.⁴¹

⁴¹ Roh, Tae Woo, *Special Declaration in the Interest of National Self-esteem, Unification and Prosperity*, Korean Overseas Information Service, 1988, p. 18.

The fourth objective of promoting national prestige was to be achieved through the expansion of relations with communist and/or non-aligned countries as they appreciated South Korea's new initiatives as evidenced by, among others, their participation in the Seoul Olympics in 1988. The fact that all East European countries (except for Albania), the Soviet Union and China all took part in the 1988 Olympics highlighted the enhanced prestige of South Korea as a result of Nordpolitik.

2. Inter-Korean Relations

Inter-Korean Agreements of historic importance were produced under Roh Tae Woo's presidency. The Agreement on reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation between the South and North was concluded on 19 February 1992. This is called the Basic Agreement. The Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korea Peninsula was issued on 19 February 1992. The Basic Agreement and the Joint Declaration were received as historic milestones in inter-Korean relations and hailed as great achievements of Roh's Northern Policy.

The fact that the two important inter-Korean agreements came into existence about one year later since the November 8, 1991 Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiatives suggests a connection between the 1991 Declaration and the 1992 Inter-Korean agreements. By the announcement of the

1991 Declaration, South Korea tried to induce North Korea to trust South Korea's sincerity for creating a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. And, more importantly, North Korea may have found it somewhat difficult to delay signing the agreements as it lacked any more excuses, which were exhausted by South Korea's preemptive November 8, 1991 Declaration. Perhaps the November 8 Declaration had a more direct, positive impact on creating a favorable atmosphere for Russia-ROK normalization of relations. For one thing, one year later, the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation was signed on 19 November 1992.

There were some significant developments on the Russian side during the period between 1991 and 1992. In 1991, the Soviet Union still existed under Gorbachev, who signed with President Roh the Declaration on General Principles of Relations between the Republic of Korea and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Moscow on November 14, 1990. In 1992, the USSR disappeared and Gorbachev was no longer its leader. The Russian Federation and its first leader Boris Yeltsin emerged. President Yeltsin visited the Republic of Korea on November 18-20, 1992. The Korean-Russian Joint Statement was issued and the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation was signed on the same day, that is, November 20, 1992.

A sort of chain-reaction could be observed. The East-West, USA-USSR détente emerged, which created an opportunity for South Korea's launching of the Northern Policy starting with the Special Declaration in the Interest of National Self-Respect, Unification and Prosperity on July 7, 1988. Hungary and other East European countries began to establish diplomatic relations first. Then the USSR (later the Russian Federation) followed suit, paving the way for China to normalize relations with South Korea.

This chain of events put tremendous pressure on already isolated North Korea to change or, at least, to reach the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between the South and North as well as the Joint Declaration of Denuclearization of the Korea Peninsula both on February 19, 1992. However, as far as North Korea was concerned, reaching an agreement and its implementation could be two different things. North Korea renounced the 1992 Basic Agreement and the 2000 Joint Declaration.

3. North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development

After the Korean War, it became reasonably clear that North Korea began to develop nuclear aspirations. These aspirations bore fruit decades later, triggering the second Korean nuclear crisis in 1990. In the 1960s, the Soviet Union had provided North Korea with a research reactor and some training for Korean

engineers. As the North Koreans became more proficient with nuclear technology, Kim Il Sung apparently decided to make use of this newfound know-how to build a nuclear weapon. Although Kim asked Russia and then China to give them assistance to develop nuclear weapons in the 1970s, he was flat-out denied. This did not hinder North Korea's nuclear endeavors, however; Kim came to conclude that North Korea would have to get a bomb by itself. In 1989, US satellites captured evidence that North Korea's nuclear efforts were reaching fruition. A large facility in an advanced state of construction near Yongbyon was detected, leading the US to correctly conclude that a nuclear weapons program was under way.⁴²

C. Domestic Politics Challenge

Roh's Advisor for Diplomacy and National Security Kim Chong Whi was convinced and concerned that US nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea would develop into a domestic issue and a rallying point for anti-US and anti-nuclear student demonstration. He shared this view with his American counterparts, who were equally concerned. This consideration was a factor that led to both sides agreeing on the desirability of removing nuclear weapons from South Korea, before their existence becomes a political issue.

⁴² Lee, Yong Joon, *Game ui Jongmal (End of the Game)*. Korea: Hanul Publishers, 2010, p. 127.

Other domestic factors may also have induced President Roh toward making the decision. For one thing, President Roh wanted to achieve success in his Northern Policy to boost his extremely weak domestic support. He won the presidential election thanks to the division of the opposition, which failed to offer a single candidate to the electorate. With an extraordinarily high turnout of over 89 per cent of the registered voters Roh won a plurality with 35.9 per cent. The so-called three Kims—Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong Pil from the opposition—won 27.7 percent, 26.5 percent and 7.9 percent respectively.⁴³ The result was a narrow and even miraculous victory for President Roh, although he took the legitimate credit for winning a direct election made possible by his famous June 29, 1987 Declaration.

Roh reveals in his memoir that it was Advisor Kim Chong Whi who first recommended to Roh this historic declaration in early 1987 during Kim's New Year greeting at Roh's residence. Advisor Kim confirms this in my personal interview with him. At the time, Kim was a professor at the Defense College and was not yet appointed as Roh's Advisor. At any rate, thanks to his June 29, 1987 declaration, Roh could claim to have won the presidency legally. Still, it was not a decisive victory. Moreover, President Roh's ruling party (the Democratic Justice Party, DJP) failed to capture a majority of seats in the National Assembly. This

⁴³ "Opposition Cries Foul in South Korea Voting," *The Fort Scott Tribune*, 17 December 1987.

unprecedented failure by a ruling party was contrary to predictions by many observers before the general election held on April 26, 1988.

The April 1988 election weakened Roh's domestic power base considerably. Roh reacted quickly on two fronts. On the domestic front, he merged three parties into one big ruling party. Among the three Kims, Kim Young Sam (RDP) and Kim Jong Pil (DRP) joined, while Kim Dae Jung (PPD) chose to remain in the opposition. On the external front, he launched his Northern Policy. He wanted to use external achievements to compensate for weakened domestic support.

His November 8, 1991 Declaration was an important tool with which to promote his northern policy achievements both in inter-Korean relations and in overall ties with former socialist countries including China, the Soviet Union and East European countries. He began to normalize relations in a reverse order. Hungary was the first target country, which would trigger domino effects to more challenging bigger countries such as the Soviet Union and China. As will be shown in following sections, the November 8, 1991 Declaration received wide support from those target countries. To that extent, the Declaration helped promote Roh's Northern Policy, which in turn helped boost his political support in domestic politics. For instance, Roh used his Northern Policy as legitimate reasons for domestic reforms including the three-party merge. He also used his achievements

in Northern Policy to cancel his campaign promise to undergo a mid-term evaluation (confidence vote) in consultation with the opposition leader, Kim Dae Jung, who supported the cancellation of a mid-term evaluation.⁴⁴ Kim had reason to fear that President Roh might pass the evaluation thanks to his Northern Policy achievements. The result would be a much strengthened presidency, which is the last thing an opposition leader wants. Although Roh became a democratically elected president through a popular vote unlike his fellow ex-general and friend, President Chun Doo Hwan, he continued to be perceived as having associated with President Chun, who came to power after the bloody crack-down on Gwangju uprising in 1980.

Roh and Chun were classmates at the Military Academy, jointly took part in the 1980 coup d'état, and captured power through it in the wake of President Park's assassination. Thus, Roh was perceived to be an accomplice in the coup as well as the crack-down on the Gwangju uprising. This was a source of anti-Americanism, because the opposition believed the US army commander had cooperated in the crack-down by allowing the release of Korean troops, which were supposed to be under the US General's control and command. The US general rejected the allegation. Still, Roh as well as Chun was perceived to have

⁴⁴ Lee, Sang Ok, *Jeonhwangi eui Hanguk Oegyo* (Korea's Diplomacy in Transition). Korea: Life and Dream Publishers, 2002, p. 421.

waged the coup d'état. In fact, under similar charges, both were tried and served a prison term during the Kim Young Sam period, after the fact. Therefore, as Advisor Kim had contended, it was advisable to remove US nuclear weapons before they become a political issue. Preemptive removal was the best policy.

As shown in the above, as early as in the fall of 1990, President Roh and the commander of US forces in Korea both recommended the removal of tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea. In other words, internal decision was already made in the fall of 1990, after extensive secret consultations between the United States and South Korea. The following is the summary of public opinions, which began to assert themselves, interestingly, in the fall of 1990.

It seems that, with the decision already made internally, both US and South Korean sides began to engage in testing and gathering public opinions and rallying public support for this decision. On September 11, 1990, Heritage Foundation organized a seminar on "Tension Reduction on the Korean Peninsula and US Policy Options." In the seminar Congressman Stephen L. Solarz proposed to resolve North Korean nuclear issue by linking it to the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons, which, he argued, were not required for the defense of South Korea.

Specifically, Congressman Solarz proposed that North Korea should sign the IAEA security protocol and receive IAEA inspections in return for the

agreement not to deploy nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula by the US, USSR, and China. Mr. Bill Richardson, the director of Korea desk at the US State Department, pointed out that (IAEA inspection) was a treaty obligation for North Korea to abide by. Therefore, any inducements such as the removal of US nuclear weapons were not appropriate.

On February 4, 1991, *The New York Times* made a similar argument in its editorial. Leon Sigal revealed that he was the author of the editorial in his book entitled *Disarming Stranger: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea*, 1991.

On February 11, 1991, the Korea-US Relations commission jointly chaired by Dr. Robert Scalapino and Dr. Kim Kyong Won also proposed “it would be worthwhile if South Korean government eventually could declare non-existence of nuclear weapons on its soil.”⁴⁵

On March 28, 1991, William J. Taylor from CSIS gave a lecture at the Korea Press Center, touching upon lessons of the Gulf War which may be considered by South Korea. He also argued for the removal of US nuclear weapons from South Korea, saying that the Gulf War proved the superiority of US weapons and that the US-South Korea alliance was sufficient for deterring North Korea.⁴⁶ Both Dr. Scalapino and Mr. Taylor suggested that it should be up to the South

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 423.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 425.

Korean government to make a non-nuclear declaration, in view of US inability to do so because of its Neither Confirm Nor Deny Policy regarding the presence (or absence) of nuclear weapons anywhere. Therefore, Foreign Minister Lee Sang Ok speculates that these people had informal contacts and understanding with US government officials on this issue.

In mid-April, 1991, *Foreign Affairs* carried an article, written by William Crow and Romberg, which also advocated the removal of nuclear weapons from South Korea. Interestingly on April 8, 1991, the leading conservative paper in South Korea, *Chosun Daily*, also called for the removal of US nuclear weapons in order to rid North Korea of any excuses for developing its own nuclear weapons.⁴⁷ Domestic opinion was largely in favor of the removal of nuclear weapons.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 427.

CHAPTER THREE

Roh's Response: Preemptive Non-Nuclear Declaration

A. Summary of Events Leading to Roh's Decision

Here is the summary of key events leading up to the preemptive decision:

- In March 1988, President Roh was briefed on the presence of nuclear weapons in South Korea by the US Ambassador and the US Army Commander in Korea. Advisor Kim Chong Whi proposed to Roh the preemptive removal with a view to promoting inter-Korean relations.
- In 1989, the US satellites captured evidence that North Korea was making efforts to develop its nuclear program.
- In 1989, the then US Ambassadors Lilley and Gregg started informal talks with Advisor Kim Chong Whi on how to deal with tactical nuclear weapons in Korea.
- Both sides saw the wisdom of removing the weapons 'ahead of necessity' or preemptively.

- On July 2, 1991 President Roh visited the US and discussed with President Bush the issue of removing US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea.
- In the fall of 1990, after several months of consultations, Ambassador Gregg reported to Washington that President Roh and the commander of US forces in Korea both recommended the removal of tactical nuclear weapons.
- On July 2, 1991, President Roh, for the first time, formally raised the issue of removing US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea and informed President Bush of his plan to announce Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiatives.
- On September 27, 1991, President Bush declared that “all US tactical nuclear weapons were being withdrawn from deployment outside the continental limits of the US.”
- On November 8, 1991, President Roh announced Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiatives.

B. Roh’s First Formal Proposal

On the other hand, President Roh Tae Woo states in his Memoir that it was he who first raised formally the issue of removing US tactical nuclear weapons in

South Korea; it was during his summit meeting with President George H.W. Bush at the White House on July 2, 1991. During the summit, he declared that “If the following three conditions are met, I will be able to accept the removal of tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea. First, the US should continue to clearly provide a nuclear umbrella coverage to South Korea. Second, North Korea must accept comprehensive IAEA inspections of all nuclear facilities and materials. Third, North Korea must stop the construction of nuclear fuel reprocessing facilities and dispose of them. If you agree, we (South Korea) will start negotiations with North Korea. I request that the US publicly announce its continued existing position of not having direct negotiations with North Korea regarding nuclear issues.”⁴⁸ Bush agreed, saying that “We will never have direct negotiations with North Korea on nuclear issues and will not link US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea with North Korea’s nuclear issue.”⁴⁹

Having obtained Bush’s agreement, Roh explained in detail his plan to announce Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiatives. Then on September 27, 1991, Bush officially declared that “all US tactical nuclear weapons were being withdrawn from deployment outside the continental limits of the US.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Roh Tae Woo, *Roh Tae Woo Hoegorok*, Vol. II, Chosun News Press, 2011, pp. 374-375.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.375.

⁵⁰ Gregg, Donald, *Roh Tae Woo Daetongnyeong eul Malhanda (Our views on President Roh Tae Woo)*, Ed. Roh Jae Bong, Donghwa Publishing Company, 2011, pp. 111-113.

On the eve of this declaration, South Korea was given a prior notification from the US Administration. That is, on September 27, 1991, US Ambassador Gregg to South Korea delivered this notification to South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Yoo Jong Ha in Seoul, and President Roh read this message early in the morning arriving at Hawaii from his visit to Washington. Roh announced his full support for the US declaration on the same day.⁵¹ On November 9, 1991, Roh declared that “[South Korea] will use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, and will not manufacture, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons.”⁵² After the announcement, it took some time for the nuclear weapons to be withdrawn from South Korea; Roh put his words into action when he publicly announced on December 18, 1991 that South Korea no longer possessed nuclear weapons: “As I speak, there do not exist any nuclear weapons whatsoever anywhere in the Republic of Korea.”⁵³

On May 5, 2011, President George H.W. Bush wrote a letter to President Roh, saying that “I also remember with gratitude your wise decision to agree to the removal of American tactical nuclear weapons from the soil of your country. Your flexibility on this key issue played an important part in my decision in 1991 to

⁵¹ Lee Sang Ok, *Jeonhwangi ui Hanguk Oegyo (Korea's Diplomacy in Transition)*, Sam gwa Kkum, 2002, p. 465.

⁵² “Denuclearization was Pre-emptive Move Against Pyongyang: Roh.” *The Korea Times*. 10 August 2011.

⁵³ “Seoul Says it Now Has No Nuclear Arms.” *The New York Times*. 19 December 1991.

remove all American tactical nuclear weapons from foreign soil.”⁵⁴ This letter shows that Roh agreed to the removal and showed flexibility on the issue. It is not clear what he meant by “flexibility.” Was it about Roh’s agreement to forego reprocessing and enrichment rights? As shown in the following section, Roh did agree on this issue about which US had a strong view. However, Roh himself was against nuclear weapons and also against reprocessing and enrichment. In addition, as far as Roh’s three conditions, especially the US commitment for continued nuclear umbrella, were met, Roh could afford to be flexible on the tactical nuclear issue.

1. Continued US Nuclear Umbrella Coverage

As mentioned in the above, when Roh and Bush formally agreed on the removal of nuclear weapons in South Korea, Roh’s first and key condition was that a continued US nuclear umbrella coverage should be provided to South Korea. The US continues to abide by these commitments. Cheon Seonghwun outlines, among others, the history of the US Nuclear Umbrella for South Korea and contrasts “Pre-existing ‘Conditional’ Negative Security Assurance” which includes the elder Bush and Roh period on the one hand and “President Obama’s Nuclear Posture Review” and “Negative Security Assurance” on the other. The key point here is that the US

⁵⁴ Roe Jae Bong, *ibid.*, p. 86.

Negative Security Assurance remained the same notwithstanding the removal of tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea.⁵⁵

Notwithstanding the elder Bush's unilateral initiative, the US nuclear umbrella coverage for South Korea remained intact largely due to the "conditional" negative security assurance (NSA). In 1978 the Carter Administration first publicly announced the conditional NSA policy. At the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance stated that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon states which joined the NPT or "any comparable internationally binding commitment not to acquire nuclear explosive devices." However, he added that an *exception* could be made in the case of an attack on the United States, its territories or armed forces, or its allies, "by a non-nuclear weapon state allied to or associated with a nuclear weapon state in carrying out or sustaining the attack."⁵⁶

It is because of this *exception* clause—known as the Warsaw Pact exclusion clause—that the pre-existing NSA is considered *conditional*. Taking the example of the Korean peninsula, its key effect is that even if North Korea were a non-nuclear member state of the NPT, the United States could still retaliate against

⁵⁵ Cheon Seonghwun, "Changing Dynamics of US Extended Nuclear Deterrence on the Korean Peninsula," Special Report, November 10, 2010, <[Http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports](http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports).>

⁵⁶ "Speech of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance at the 1978 UN Special Session on Disarmament," UN Document A/S-10/AC.1/30.

it with nuclear weapons if it attacked South Korea with or without using chemical or biological weapons. This condition, as a strategic linchpin hooking up America's pledge of a nuclear umbrella coverage with South Korea's security, served as an important safeguard to deter North Korean invasion. In other words, by leaving open the option of nuclear retaliation against North Korea (whether it develops nuclear weapons or not) in the event that it were to invade South Korea as it did in 1950, this maximized the deterrent effect of the ROK-US alliance and discouraged the North Korean leadership from making military provocations.

The United States released a new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) on April 6, 2010. The Obama Administration's NPR delivers the following five points as the core of the new nuclear policy:

- Preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism;
- Reducing the role of US nuclear weapons in US national security strategy;
- Maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at reduced nuclear force levels;
- Strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring US allies and partners;
- Sustaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal.

The status of US extended nuclear deterrence is directly relevant to the second point. The NPR establishes that the "fundamental role" of its nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attacks against the United States and its allies. The

NPR amends the pre-existing conditional negative security assurance to clarify a new, strengthened NSA strategy: “The United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations.”

A major feature of this new NSA is that it has eliminated the *exception* clause of the pre-existing conditional NSA. As long as non-nuclear weapon states join the NPT and carry out their obligations, even if they attack the United States or its allies with chemical or biological weapons, to say nothing of conventional weapons, the United States clearly declares that it will not retaliate with nuclear weapons.⁵⁷ The Obama administration leaves open a slim window of nuclear retaliation in the future case of drastic advance of the biological weapon technologies. The NPR says that “Given the catastrophic potential of biological weapons and the rapid pace of bio-technology development, the United States reserves the right to make any adjustment in the assurance that may be warranted by the evolution and proliferation of the biological weapons threat and US capacities to counter that threat.”⁵⁸

In other words, as opposed to the past when the option was preserved for nuclear retaliation against North Korea in the event of an invasion of South Korea,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 16.

if North Korea joins the NPT and abandons its nuclear weapons, the United States promises not to use nuclear weapons to repel North Korean aggression.

According to Hans M. Kristensen, post-1991 nuclear umbrella forces for South Korea include:

- CONUS-based DCA (F-15E/F-16)
- Long-range bombers
- Tomahawk TLAM/N
- SLBM/SSBN
- ICBM

Today's US nuclear umbrella in the region is maintained by all elements of the nuclear arsenal:

- Tactical fighter-bombers based in the United States.
- Long-range bombers with cruise missiles or gravity bombs.
- Sea-launched cruise missiles for attack submarines.
 - Long-range ballistic missiles on Trident submarines.
 - Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM).

There is a new flexibility in nuclear planning today that does not distinguish between strategic and tactical weapons systems but permits use of all elements of the posture in regional contingencies. The above US commitment to

continued nuclear umbrella for South Korea was a key condition for Roh's preemptive declaration.

2. Roh's 1991 Declaration in Detail

President Roh Tae Woo issued the Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiatives in Seoul on November 8, 1991. At the outset, he said he was announcing "an important decision to help build a durable structure of peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia."⁵⁹ He declared the following to be his policy:

First, the Republic of Korea will use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, and will not manufacture, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons.

Second, the Republic of Korea will continue to submit to comprehensive international inspection all nuclear-related facilities and materials on its territory in compliance with the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and with the nuclear safeguards agreement it has concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency under the Treaty, and will not possess nuclear fuel reprocessing and enrichment facilities.

⁵⁹ Cheon, Seongwhun. "Changing Dynamics of US Extended Nuclear Deterrence on the Korean Peninsula." *Pacific Focus*, 26 (April 2011).

Third, the Republic of Korea aspires for a world of peace free of nuclear weapons as well as all weapons of indiscriminate killing; and we will actively participate in international efforts toward a total elimination of chemical-biological weapons and observe all international agreements thereon. We will faithfully carry out this non-nuclear, no chemical-biological weapons policy. Then Roh went on to point out, “Now, there can be no reason or justification for North Korea to develop nuclear weapons or evade international inspection of its nuclear facilities.”⁶⁰ Then he proposed, “Just as the Republic of Korea has done, North Korea also should renounce unequivocally the possession of nuclear reprocessing and enrichment facilities. As soon as North Korea takes these steps, beginning with the signing of the nuclear safeguards agreement, we will initiate bilateral discussions on other military-security issues, including the nuclear issue, and seek to resolve them through South-North high level talks.”⁶¹

It was a very comprehensive declaration, which covers not only nuclear weapons but also biological, and chemical weapons. It declared that South Korea will not possess even “nuclear fuel reprocessing and enrichment facilities.”⁶² This was clearly designed to put pressure on North Korea to give up the latter’s “nuclear

⁶⁰ “South Korea Renounces Nuclear Arms and Roh Urges to Do the Same” *The LA Times*, 9 November 1991.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Sterngold, James. “Seoul Says it Now Has No Nuclear Arms” *The New York Times* 19 December 1991.

fuel reprocessing and enrichment facilities,” by South Korea setting an example first.

3. Roh’s Opposition to Possessing Reprocessing and Enrichment Facilities

Roh says, “If we had braved our friendly countries’ opposition and pursued these facilities, we could not have prevented North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, and US-South Korea security relations would have experienced turbulence. We could foresee a situation where our nuclear reactors would not be provided with necessary materials.”⁶³

He once again reiterates his firm belief, saying, “Our possession of reprocessing and enrichment facilities would have destroyed US-South Korea alliance, and North Korea, the Soviet Union, China, Japan would not have sat idly by.” Conscious of criticism leveled against him for his failure to emulate Japan, which was allowed to have these facilities, Roh says, “even Japan acquired permission to do so only ten years ago. If we really want them, we need to have economic power strong enough to ignore US influence, possess technology sophisticated enough to build facilities independently without French or US

⁶³ Hyun, Hong Choo, *Ambassadors’ Memoir: US-Korea Relations Through the Eyes of Ambassadors*, Washington D.C.: Korea Institute of America, 2009, p. 370.

assistance, and arouse no suspicion from any country about developing nuclear weapons –our situation is different from Japan.”

However, in some quarters of South Korean society, criticism does exist concerning this part of the President Roh’s pledge. After all, South Korea or any other members of IAEA, can legitimately possess nuclear fuel reprocessing and enrichment facilities if they deem it necessary for economic reasons. Japan is a good example, as aforementioned. That is why some Korean scholars such as Dr. Kim Tae Woo accused this part of declaration of giving up important nuclear-related sovereign rights.⁶⁴

In fact, South Korea had all the economic reasons to retain reprocessing and enrichment facilities, as it was operating the No. 9 commercial nuclear energy reactor and planning to build more reactors to meet domestic energy needs. Even Foreign Minister Lee Sang Ok conceded that the decision should have been taken not only from the perspective of diplomatic and security concerns but also from the comprehensive view reflecting economic, scientific or technological aspects of reprocessing and enrichment.⁶⁵ President Roh, however, made it clear in the November 8 Declaration that “My decision is based on a firm assessment that our

⁶⁴ Kim, Tae Woo, “Consolidation of Peace or Giving up of Nuclear Sovereign Rights,” *Wolgan Shindong-A*, December 1991.

⁶⁵ Lee Sang Ok, *Jeonhwangi ui Hanguk Oegyo*, 2002, p. 469.

national security will continue to remain solid.”⁶⁶

C. Different Approaches of Presidents Park and Roh

In defense of his non-nuclear decision, Roh refers to the experiences of Presidents Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan. This shows that Roh used historical analysis and attempted to learn the lessons of history. Thus it is fitting to explore these lessons in detail.

President Carter’s earlier plan to remove US troops and US nuclear weapons from South Korea alarmed South Korea’s President Park Chung Hee so much that the latter allegedly attempted to acquire or develop nuclear weapons on his own. According to previously classified US diplomatic cables, President Park Chung Hee made attempts to develop nuclear weapons until 1978. Peter Hayes and Chung In Moon in their feature essay carried in *Global Asia* write extensively on their findings based on their study of a recently declassified set of the CIA documents. According to the two authors, these documents show that “considerably greater proliferation of missiles and fissile materials and related

⁶⁶ Sterngold, James. “Seoul Says it Now Has No Nuclear Arms,” *The New York Times* 19 December 1991.

technology was going on even after 1976 and up to 1978 than was previously known. Most accounts have the proliferation activity ending in 1976.”⁶⁷

The most important of the CIA documents in this regard, in the opinion of the co-authors, is “South Korea: Nuclear Developments and Strategic Decision-making,” issued in June 1978 and released in 2005 under a routine 25-year declassification program. These findings concerning President Park’s attempts are pertinent to this study of President Roh Tae Woo’s later decision to remove nuclear weapons preemptively. Both President Park and Roh pursued national security and deterrence against North Korea’s persistent threats. President Park’s plan was to acquire nuclear weapons, whereas President Roh’s way was to remove US tactical nuclear weapons, supporting the US Administration’s overall global strategy of removing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and Asia. In late 1974, President Park authorized a program to develop nuclear weapons technology. In January 1976, he ended negotiations with France to obtain reprocessing technology, and by December 1976 he suspended the nuclear weapons program under immense pressure from the United States.

Sung Gul Hong in his important study published in 2011 revealed that Park’s proliferation activity “continued after 1976, partly in response to the

⁶⁷ Hayes, Peter and Chung, In Moon. “Park Chung Hee, the CIA & the Bomb,” *Global Asia*, Fall 2011.

withdrawal of US nuclear weapons included in the pullout of the 2nd Infantry Division.”⁶⁸ It was clear that Park was motivated to pursue nuclear weapons by the unilateral withdrawal of the US 7th Infantry Division in 1971, and on-going discussion of further withdrawals. Park also feared US abandonment of South Korea after the Vietnam War, despite Korea’s much appreciated sending of combat troops to Vietnam. North Korea’s audacious aggressions intensified against South Korea. Its attempted commando raid on the Blue House in January 1968, followed three days later by the seizure of the US submarine the USS Pueblo, created a climate of fear. In addition, Nixon and Kissinger’s opening to China without prior consultation with South Korea left Park wondering if Washington would also open a channel to the North behind South Korea’s back.

South Korea’s confidence in the United States declined still further after January 26, 1977, when incoming President Jimmy Carter ordered the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the ROK with the 2nd infantry division. The CIA report said that South Korean nuclear researchers believed that “while bowing to US preferences on the line of work they pursue, certain activities can and should be undertaken to keep Seoul’s nuclear option open.”⁶⁹

In the 1978 report, the CIA found:

⁶⁸ “Korea’s Nuke Ambition Lasted Until 1978: CIA Documents,” *The Korea Times*, 26 September, 2011.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

- “No evidence that any nuclear weapons design work is under way at present.
- “No evidence of any current activity related to the acquisition of a reprocessing capability.
- “No evidence of stockpiling of fissile material.
- “No evidence of work on weapons fabrication.”⁷⁰

However, the report argued that overall the most important factor would be South Korea’s “perception of the reliability of the US security commitment and, conversely, the imminence of the North Korean threat.” It is no wonder that Roh, having learned from Park’s experience insisted on strong and continued US commitment to a nuclear umbrella coverage for South Korea.

D. Roh’s Beliefs in Autonomous, Independent and Nationalistic Diplomacy

The above sections have elicited a discussion of how Roh coped with three-level challenges with his preemptive declaration. It was as if he had killed three birds with one stone by throwing it preemptively. Still one query lingers, which is the question of where Roh derived this response. This requires an analysis

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of his beliefs and the role that his beliefs played in his actions. This thesis would argue that Roh had strong beliefs in autonomous, independent and even nationalistic diplomacy. His beliefs played an important role in pursuing Nordpolitik and non-nuclear decision.

1. Evidence Found in Roh's Nordpolitik

President Roh himself makes it clear that his July 7, 1988 Declaration sets out his philosophy, direction and goals in conducting Northern Policy and inter-Korean relations.⁷¹

To the worldwide audience of his declaration, he wanted to clearly register his own *Judokwon* in the matter of the Korean Peninsula. *Judokwon* can be translated as “leadership” or “initiative.” The full title of the Declaration is “A Special Declaration in the interest of National Self-Esteem, Unification and Prosperity.” He stated, “Today, I promise to make efforts to open a new era of national self-esteem, unification and prosperity by building a social, cultural, economic and political community in which all members of Korean society can participate on the principles of independence, peace, democracy and welfare. To that end, I declare to the nation and to the world that the following policies will be

⁷¹ Roh, Tae Woo, *Roh Tae Woo Hoegorok (Roh Tae Woo's Memoir)* Vol. II, Chosun News Press, 2011, p. 144.

pursued...” The key ideational term both in the title and the main body of his Declaration is “national self-esteem.” His autonomous, independent and nationalistic thinking is contained in his key word, “national self-esteem.” In fact, he pointedly explains that “This Declaration was made independently without prior consultation with the United States.”⁷²

Only two days earlier, that is, on July 5, 1988, President Roh instructed Vice Minister Shin Dong Won to see US Ambassador James R. Lilley at his Embassy and deliver a copy of the Declaration to Lilley, along with Roh’s message that “US may convey a copy to the Soviet Union and China and inform the two countries of US support for the Declaration.”

As South Korea had no direct channel of communication with the Soviet Union or China, President Roh conveyed the above message, he said. Ambassador Lilley expressed to Vice Minister Shin that “the Korean Declaration will bring about changes in US policy towards North Korea.” The Soviet Union and China, upon receiving a copy of the Declaration, highly evaluated the Declaration as “proactive and constructive.”⁷³

Incidentally, North Korea’s response was cool. Kim Il Sung denounced “Roh’s Declaration as an attempt to perpetuate the national division” when he

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

received visit by the East German Defense Minister several days later.

This important Declaration was drafted by a team headed by Roh's policy advisor, Park Chul Un. The team consisted of working level officials from the Ministries of defense, foreign affairs, security and unification.

Park Chul Un said, "I gave prior notification to the leader of the North Korean delegation during secret talks or through the '88 hotline' when we made new proposals or policy changes toward North Korea. ... Detailed prior briefing to the North Korean side was very useful to building mutual trust."

Therefore, it is highly likely and even safe to assume that he gave North Korea prior notification about the coming July 7 Declaration by President Roh, since Park Chul Un had maintained secret inter-Korean talks since 1985, that is, even before President Roh assumed Presidency, succeeding President Chun Doo Hwan.⁷⁴

Given the fact that the US side was given the copy of the Declaration only two days earlier, Park's prior notification to North Korea about the same Declaration should be viewed as nationalistic thinking indeed.

In summarizing and evaluating Roh's policies toward North Korea and Nordpolitik, Park Chul Un himself noted, "Our efforts to improve national

⁷⁴ Park, Chul Un, *Bareun Yeoksa reul Wihan Jeungeon (Witness to Right History)*, Random House Joong Ang, 2005, Volume 1, p.185. & Volume 2, p. 34.

condition and to lay down foundation for national unification have produced sprouts of hope for resolving inter-Korean issues. My evaluation is that, as a nation based on national self-esteem and independent sovereignty, we have opened up a new horizon for the era of global diplomacy.”⁷⁵ His emphasis again on national self-esteem and independent sovereignty is noted.

US Secretary of State James Baker wrote an article in *Foreign Policy*, a leading magazine, proposing 6 party (2+4) talks on the Korean peninsula in November 1991. He was planning to formally propose this idea to South Korea in the coming visit at the end of 1991. It was unusual for a State Secretary to make an open policy proposal, because rejection by the target country would create an embarrassing situation. Everybody’s conjecture was that it would not be easy for the South Korean government to reject such a proposal. However, the Roh Administration used the diplomatic channel to reject his proposal.⁷⁶

2. Evidence Found in Roh’s Preemptive Decision

President Roh made it clear to the US side that “Even in the area of nuclear issues, US should not hold direct talks with North Korea.” Accordingly, “It was we who could make Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiatives,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Lee Yong Joon, *Game ui Jongmal (End of the Game)*. Korea: Hanul Publishers, 2010, p. 72.

apart from US withdrawal of its nuclear weapons. As we maintained independence in this way, even North Korea came to have negotiations with us,” claims President Roh in his Memoir.⁷⁷

He also contends that, “I thought we needed to make a preemptive move to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons. That is why we needed to clearly demonstrate that it was we who had a leading role in inter-Korean issues, by making a preemptive non-nuclear declaration ahead of the United States.”⁷⁸ The quote clearly shows that Roh was strongly pursuing autonomy and independency, which, he thought, were essential in persuading North Korea that its negotiation partner is South Korea and not the United States.

According to Ambassador Hyun Hong Choo, the United States wanted to have bilateral dialogue with North Korea to discuss nuclear issues, but the Korean government opposed it on the grounds that direct contact between the two would undermine the North-South dialogue that had just begun to produce some visible results.⁷⁹

He remembers that while the United States restrained itself by not vigorously pursuing direct contact with North Korea, he could sense that there was

⁷⁷ Roh, Tae Woo, *Roh Tae Woo Hoegorok (Roh Tae Woo's Memoir)* Vol. II, Chosun News Press, 2011, p. 366.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

⁷⁹ Hyun, Hong Choo, *Ambassadors' Memoir: US-Korea Relations through the Eyes of Ambassadors.* p. 58.

significant resentment among some US officials who sometimes openly questioned the soundness of US policy, arguing that it was becoming “a hostage of South Korean politics.” In this context, Hyun asserts that the Korean government agreed to a one-time meeting between senior officials of the United States and North Korea on the condition that it would not be a negotiating process of normalization of relations, and that the meeting would mainly serve the purpose of persuading the North to accept IAEA inspections at its nuclear facilities.⁸⁰

In this connection, Hyun goes into detail, “On 21 January 1991, Under Secretary of State Arnold Kanter met with the senior secretary of the North Korean Workers’ Party, Kim Yong Soon, who was known as a confidant of Kim Il Sung, North Korea’s president. The meeting went as planned, and the dialogue followed a pre-reviewed script. There was no agreement nor any hint of potential future meetings. In the UN, Under Secretary Kanter gave me a call and explained how the meeting went. There were no unexpected deviations from the understandings between South Korea and the United States about this meeting.”

Hyun further mentions that, “There was one puzzling episode, however. In June of 2000, when President Kim Dae Jung met with Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang at the historic first meeting between the leaders of the South and the North, Kim Jong

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.58.

Il said, much to the surprise of President Kim, that North Korea did not want US troops to pull out from the South, even after unification. Kim Jong Il continued to say that this position had already been made known to the United States when Kim Yong Soon met with Kanter in New York in January of 1992. Upon hearing this, I was puzzled because I did not recollect any mention of US troops when Kanter had debriefed me. I checked the memo and questioned the Foreign Ministry whether they had any record of that. The result was negative. In a private conversation with me months later, Mr. Kanter denied hearing anything about US troops from Kim Yong Soon. Whether this was a case of miscommunication or not, I still do not have a clue.”⁸¹

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

“The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself.”

Michel de Montaigne

President Roh Tae Woo decided to remove US tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea “preemptively.” The definition of “preemptive” in President Roh’s decision can be construed as the following:

First, it was preemptive because the decision was made before necessity forced either South Korea or the US government to withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea. In other words, the decision was taken before the nuclear weapons in South Korea became a political issue or a serious cause for South Korean student demonstrations.

Second, it was preemptive in the sense that it preempted North Korea

from using the nuclear weapons in South Korea as an excuse for refusing to receive IAEA inspection or as a legitimate reason for developing its own nuclear weapons in North Korea.

Third, it was preemptive in the sense that the decision was taken before the US formally raised the issue to South Korea. .

Fourth, it was preemptive in the sense that Roh formally proposed and announced the decision first, ahead of the US government.

At the same time, it is important to note the following:

First, it was not against US position or interest. It was compatible with and even promoting US position or interest for non-proliferation. Second, and therefore, it was not a unilateral decision on the part of President Roh.

As soon as President Roh Tae Woo became aware of the impending US plan to remove tactical nuclear weapons from its overseas bases, it was wise of him to go with the inevitable flow before it reached the Korean peninsula sooner or later. Therefore, Roh made a preemptive move before the US made its specific request concerning tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea in return for, among others, US commitment to continued nuclear umbrella. Roh's decision was a preemptive one against North Korea as well. Well before North Korea committed itself to nuclear disarmament, Roh made the November 8, 1991 Declaration to remove nuclear weapons.

His move was designed to promote his Northern Policy, whose aim was to improve relations with the Soviet Union, China, East European countries and, last but not least, North Korea. Specifically, Roh's design was to achieve a breakthrough in Inter-Korean relations and also persuade North Korea to give up nuclear weapons program altogether through his preemptive declaration. To the extent that Roh's decision helped the two Koreas to produce the Basic Agreement and the Joint Declaration on February 19, 1992, Roh's preemptive decision achieved success. However, as North Korea persisted in its pursuit of nuclear weapons development and finally achieved its nuclear goal, one cannot characterize Roh's decision as a real, long-term success. At the same time, as long as his decision was favorably received by the Soviet Union and China, the two giant targets of Roh's Northern Policy, which eventually decided to normalize relations with South Korea, Roh's decision was a timely one.

Overall, Roh's Declaration played an important role of promoting his Northern Policy, which in turn helped him gain domestic support and legitimacy.

Instead of being a passive agent, President Roh chose to be an active agent of change. His preemptive decision to remove tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea as well as his overall Northern Policy shows him as an active agent of change to cope with international and domestic challenges he faced. He also had to deal with value complexity concerning this issue. He had to promote two values at

the same time, that is, how to maintain and promote national security and US-South Korea alliance, on the one hand, and how to accommodate the US plan to withdraw its nuclear weapons from South Korea and the US demand for South Korea's renouncement of reprocessing and enrichment rights, on the other. President Roh resolved this value conflict by agreeing to the US plan on three conditions and also by insisting that the non-nuclear declaration be made by himself, not by the United States.

President Roh's beliefs in autonomous, independent and nationalistic thinking also played a role in guiding him toward preemptively removing US tactical nuclear weapons. In this way, he could more effectively persuade North Korea to denuclearize and nip the challenge in the bud before it became a real issue in South Korea's domestic politics. As an active agent, guided by his beliefs and perceptions, Roh reacted preemptively and proactively to his policy environment, consisting of US nuclear policy, North Korean challenge and domestic politics. Before making the preemptive declaration, Roh made sure that US accepted the three conditions, the key of which was a continued US nuclear umbrella coverage for South Korea.

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KOREAN ABSTRACT

國文抄錄

노태우 정부의 한반도 전술핵무기 철수결정 과정 연구

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國際協力專攻

노태우 대통령은 1991년 한국이 더 이상 핵무기를 보유하고 있지 않다고 선언하였다. 그가 무슨 이유로 미국에 앞서 선제적으로 동조치를 취하였는지가 본 논문의 연구과제이다. 본 논문은 그 이유가 미국의 한국에 대한 압력 또는 북한을 비핵화 하려는 노력이었다는 전통적 견해를 넘어 보려는 시도이다.

이 논문의 가설은 한국의 국내정치와 다른 방식의 지속적인 미국 핵우산 제공 약속이 동등하게 중요한 요인이었다는 것이다. 본 논문은 정보 처리 체계(Information Processing Framework)를 분석도구로 사용하고 있으며, 정책결정자가 그의 운행의 장(場)에서 능동적 행위자 및 문제 해결자라는 견해를 따른다. 노대통령의 운행의 장은 그가 대응해야 하는 미국의 핵 정책, 북한의 도전 및 한국의 국내정치로 구성되어 있다.

노대통령의 선제적 결정을 충분히 설명하기 위해서는 3단계의 분석이 모두 필요하다. 다가오는 미국의 새로운 핵 정책은 노대통령으로 하여금 행동하게 하였다. 그러나 선제적으로 행동하고, 미국의 전술 핵을

철수하는 조치는 노대통령이 능동적 행위자로서 스스로 선택한 것이었다. 선제적 행동을 선택함으로써 노대통령은 자신을 자립적, 자주적 그리고 민족주의적 지도자로서 부각시키려고 하였다. 이러한 자세는 북한으로 하여금 한국과의 직접대화에 임하도록 유도하는데 효과적이었다. 또한 그의 선제적 결정은 목소리가 크고 반정부적인 학생 데모 참가자들을 포함, 한국 내의 반미, 반핵 정서를 감안할 때, 한국 소재 핵무기라는 잠재적으로 폭발적인 국내 이슈를 사전에 제거하는데 도움이 되었다. 노대통령은 미국의 지속적인 핵우산 제공 약속을 확보한 후, 그 반대급부로 그의 선제적 결정을 내린 것이다. 그의 선제적 결정은 미국의 입장에 부합하는 것이었으며, 미국과의 일 년여에 걸친 사전 비공식 협의 후에 내려진 것이었다.

주요어: 미국 전술 핵, 선제적 선언, 비핵화, 핵우산, 능동적 행위자

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