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Nuclear Learning:

Nuclear Coercion and the Proliferation Dilemma

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Political Science

by

Myung Chul Kim

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Nuclear Learning:  
Nuclear Coercion and the Proliferation Dilemma

by

Myung Chul Kim

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Arthur A. Stein, Chair

Since 1945 the United States has not used nuclear weapons to attack other states, yet it has used nuclear coercion more actively than any state. Why did the U.S. use nuclear coercion at all against weak states or for non-vital national interests when the U.S. had superior conventional forces? What would have induced U.S. leaders to employ nuclear coercion? Nuclear deterrence theory and nuclear taboo theory cannot adequately explain why, under similar security and domestic environments, Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon were more willing to use nuclear coercion whereas other leaders like Lyndon Johnson overall abstained from using nuclear threats. I argue that while U.S. leaders' learning of the overly destructive damages of *military nuclear use* raised the threshold of using nuclear weapons to attack, the lack of learning

or biased learning of the repercussions of *coercive nuclear use*, especially nuclear proliferation induced by U.S. nuclear threats, allowed many leaders to retain their belief in the coercive power of nuclear weapons. Therefore, they considered and even used nuclear coercion for non-vital matters. Based on the theoretical concepts of nuclear learning and using a historical analysis, my dissertation finds a causal mechanism of nuclear learning that could explain what promoted or hindered learning of the technical and political reality of nuclear weapons and led them to the counterproductive use of nuclear coercion.

This dissertation of Myung Chul Kim is approved.

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2016

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- "The Changing Dynamic of Nuclear Proliferation: from Opaque Nuclear Proliferation to the Declared Bomb" presented at the Midwest Political Science Association National Conference, Chicago, Illinois, April, 4, 2009. (Panel Presentation)

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- Analysis of North Korean Studies: On the Case of North Korea's Nuclear Issue."

*Daehanminkook Haksoolwon (The Journal of National Academy of Sciences)* Vol.  
44 (2005): 103 - 123. (Coauthored with Yongho Kim)

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Since the atomic bombing of Japan in 1945 the United States has not used nuclear weapons to attack others, yet it has used the weapons to coerce its opponents and reassure its allies. While nuclear weapons have been a central part of deterring its major foes from attacking the U.S. and its allies, the U.S. occasionally attempted to change its opponents' behaviors by threatening to use nuclear weapons during crises and regional wars. Not only did the U.S. use nuclear threat against weak states, but also it sometimes over-coerced by risking even a nuclear war with the Soviet Union to prevent a political defeat and preserve its credibility of extended nuclear deterrence. From available records perhaps the U.S. has been the most active user of nuclear coercion.<sup>1</sup>

The continuing coercive use of nuclear weapons by the United States – threatening to use nuclear weapons for deterrence or compellence – while abstaining from using the weapons to attack others raises several questions about existing nuclear theories. First of all, it is not self-evident why the U.S. had to rely on nuclear weapons, instead of conventional weapons to coerce weak states or for non-vital matters. Kenneth Waltz and other scholars claim that nuclear weapons are a poor instrument of coercion, except perhaps for minimum deterrence, due to their destructive power and the lingering radiation contamination.<sup>2</sup> As Byman and Waxman assert,

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<sup>1</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 2; T.V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 20; and Samuel Black, *The Changing Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: Nuclear Threats from 1970 to 2010* (Washington D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*. (New York: Norton & Company, 2003), p. 17; and McGeorge Bundy, “The Unimpressive Record of Atomic

such physical characteristics make it difficult to dominate in crisis escalation because “policy makers cannot use them to ratchet up pressure slowly or inflict limited costs” against a target.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Todd Sechser and Matthew Furman argue that using nuclear compellence during the peacetime did not yield the coercer better outcomes. They believe that nuclear compellence is usually not credible because the coercer cannot seize the disputed prize like a territory by using nuclear weapons, and there would be strong political backlash against the coercer.<sup>4</sup> Even former national security advisor Henry Kissinger who attempted to use coercive nuclear diplomacy during the Nixon era admitted: “the capacity to destroy proved difficult to translate into a plausible threat even against countries with no capacity for retaliation. The margin of the superpowers over non-nuclear state had been widening; yet the awesomeness of their power had increased their inhibitions.”<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the U.S. has superior conventional forces that it not only can threaten to use, but also actually use in a limited way to escalate the crisis and coerce adversaries. Using A conventional threat instead could also help lower the danger of being caught in the “commitment trap” that U.S. could end up in using an excessive force to uphold its deterrence credibility and prestige.<sup>6</sup> Scott Sagan argues that if the U.S. uses nuclear threats in response to non-nuclear attack like chemical or biological attack, “the U.S. president would feel compelled to retaliate with nuclear weapons to maintain his or her international and domestic reputation for

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Diplomacy,” in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, edited by Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamic of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, “Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail,” *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 01 (2013), p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), pp. 66-67, quoted in T.V.Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 2009, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Scott D. Sagan, “The Commitment Trap: Why the United States Should Not Use Nuclear Threats to Deter Biological and Chemical Weapons Attacks,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2000).

honoring commitments.” His argument suggests that the U.S. nuclear threat could be potentially very costly if it fails to coerce its opponent. Nevertheless, the U.S. actively and sometimes overtly used nuclear coercion when it could have used conventional forces for coercion.<sup>7</sup>

Rational deterrence theory presumes that the nuclear balance is one of major factors that drove great powers’ behaviors.<sup>8</sup> However, deterrence theory is inadequate to explain U.S. nuclear behavior because when there was no change in the nuclear balance between the major powers, different U.S. top leaders used nuclear coercion in different ways. For example, President Dwight Eisenhower was more willing to use nuclear coercion than President Truman even though they fought against the same enemies during the Korean War. President Richard Nixon tried to use nuclear threats to end the Vietnam War whereas President Lyndon Johnson mostly abstained from using nuclear coercion during the same war.<sup>9</sup> Although Richard Betts decades ago recognized the importance of understanding the leadership differences in explaining nuclear threats, he stopped short of explaining what made such differences.<sup>10</sup>

Nuclear norms theorists claim that growing norms against nuclear use overall constrained the U.S. from using nuclear weapons. Nina Tannenwald even argues that non-use norms became strong enough to make nuclear use by the U.S. almost unthinkable.<sup>11</sup> Logically, such strong anti-nuclear norms should have also made the coercive nuclear use untenable, if not obsolete.

However, U.S. nuclear threats did not disappear after the pinnacle of the peace movement in

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<sup>7</sup> Black describes that between 1970s and 2010 the U.S. used nuclear threats 25 times, which is the highest among nuclear weapons states. See Black, *The Changing Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons, 2010*, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Metter,” *Adelphi Papers*, Number 171. (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> See chapter three and four for more historical analysis for the cases.

<sup>10</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, p. 177.

<sup>11</sup> Nina Tannenwald, “Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo,” *International Security*, Vol. 29 No. 4 (2005), p. 5.

1960s and even after the end of the Cold War when arguably non-use norms would have become stronger than ever.

George W. Bush's nuclear threats against Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were especially problematic for non-use norms argument. Although many pointed out the 9/11 terrorists attack as a major reason that changed public opinion and drove the U.S. to pursue more aggressive foreign policies, the fact that the U.S. was attacked by terrorists does not in itself explain why the Bush administration used *nuclear* threat against them more explicitly than other post-Cold war presidents. Bush's apparent aim of using nuclear threat to stop their nuclear acquisition is logically dubious for nuclear threat can spur nuclear proliferation, and empirically problematic because the U.S. failed to stop North Korea from going nuclear.

If nuclear coercion, particularly nuclear compellence, is usually not credible unless used under an extreme circumstance, why did the U.S. use nuclear coercion at all against weak states or for non-vital matters when it had superior conventional forces? What would have induced U.S. leaders to employ nuclear coercion? Do leaders have idiosyncratic attitudes about nuclear weapons and do their attitudes ever change thanks to experience? Or has their nuclear thinking been simply constrained by the external factors like the nuclear balance and public opinion? What are the implications of the U.S. nuclear coercive diplomacy on the military non-use of nuclear weapons since 1945 and U.S. nuclear nonproliferation policies? My dissertation intends to address those questions by finding a causal mechanism of the decision to employ nuclear coercive diplomacy.

I argue that while U.S. leaders' learning of the overly destructive damages of *military nuclear use* raised the threshold of using nuclear weapons to attack others from the early years of the nuclear age, the lack of learning or biased learning of the complicated but significant



repercussions of *coercive nuclear use*, especially nuclear proliferation induced by U.S. nuclear threats, allowed many leaders to retain their belief in the coercive power of nuclear weapons. Therefore, U.S. leaders considered and used nuclear coercion even for non-vital national interests, when they were frustrated or dissatisfied with the way in which crises or wars were unfolding. Based on theoretical concepts of nuclear learning and using a historical analysis, I explain what allowed or hindered U.S. leaders' learning of the technical and political reality of nuclear weapons and led them to the counterproductive use of nuclear coercion.<sup>12</sup>

Just few years prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Joseph Nye argued that the improving relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union could be better explained, rather than by superpowers' simple adaptation based on their short-term interests, by their learning of the problems associated with nuclear weapons and their building regimes to resolve such problems. According to his argument, superpowers learned the destructive powers of nuclear weapons, the danger of accidental nuclear use, the danger of proliferation, and stability problems of arms race, except that they were unable to agree on how to jointly limit the size of nuclear forces.<sup>13</sup> As he admits in his conclusion, his nuclear learning concept raises more questions than it answers in part because he did not specify what helped nuclear learning in some issues but not others like nuclear deterrence. Nevertheless, I believe that his nuclear learning model is more useful for

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<sup>12</sup> I do not dispute about whether U.S. nuclear coercion has been incredible or "unimpressive" as McGeorgy Bundy paraphrased. See more, Bundy, "The Unimpressive Record of Atomic Diplomacy," 1993. There is large literature now that discusses the effect of U.S. coercion. The evidence presented by scholars appear to be mixed in supporting the credibility of U.S. nuclear coercion, though at least the newly available documents show that the target of U.S. nuclear threats to a certain degree showed a concern for the U.S. nuclear attack. See Paul C. Avey, "Who's Afraid of the Bomb? The Role of Nuclear Non-Use Norms in Confrontations between Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Opponents," *Security Studies*, 24 (2015). My point is that U.S. leaders' learning about the ramification of nuclear coercion has been imperfect, if not seriously biased, this lack caused security and economic costs.

<sup>13</sup> He acknowledged that unlike other areas of nuclear cooperation there was little progress in limiting counterforce or countervailing nuclear forces due to the inherent uncertainty of understanding nuclear deterrence. In fact, both superpowers continued spending enormous money on nuclear build-ups until the late 1980s when Gorbachev started reversing the nuclear arms race.

explaining U.S. nuclear behaviors than others because U.S. nuclear learning has been consequential than rational deterrence theory assumes, but not so deep enough to change values and identities as nuclear taboo theory assumes.

Nye explains that U.S. leaders' nuclear thinking can be shaped and evolve as they update their prior beliefs by learning from new information experience. He states that "there are different degree of learning along a continuum of ends-means relationships, from very simple to highly complex. Simple learning uses new information merely to adapt the means, without altering any deeper goals in the ends-means chain...Complex learning, by contrast, involves recognition of conflicts among means and goals in causally complicated situations, and leads to new priorities and trade-offs."<sup>14</sup>

Learning the reasons to restrain military nuclear use is relatively simple because of the distinctive physical nature of nuclear weapons. However, given the difficulty of assessing benefits and costs of nuclear coercion, more than simple learning is necessary to recognize the consequences the U.S. could face by using nuclear coercion. As the history shows, the U.S. top officials realized the destructive power of nuclear weapons by observing nuclear tests and learning from the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki sooner than any state or public.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to what nuclear taboo theorists presume, the construction of strong non-use norm was not a necessary condition to induce U.S. leaders to be cautious in using the weapons in the

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph S. Jr. Nye, "Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes" *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1987), p. 380.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 1986); and Wittner, Lawrence Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

battlefield because it was fairly obvious that military nuclear use would be most of the time too disproportional to the political goals that the U.S. could achieve.

However, understanding the immediate and long-term consequences of coercive nuclear use was not so obvious as many leaders assumed. In terms of the benefits, it was difficult to correctly assess the efficacy of nuclear coercion due to inherent uncertainty about other states' intentions. For instance, even if the adversary backed down after the U.S. initiated a nuclear threat, there was no easy way to know whether the outcome was due to U.S. coercion or other reasons, such as the target's domestic politics. Moreover, the costs of nuclear coercion did not usually materialize immediately unless the coercive nuclear diplomacy obviously failed. The public may not have been even aware of the coercive nuclear use for some time if the threat was implicit or sent in private. A target might have determined to achieve revenge after experiencing humiliation by the nuclear threat but it might have taken some time to get stronger enough challenge the coercer again.

Another significant cost that nuclear coercion can cause in the long-term is nuclear proliferation. When the U.S. first monopolized nuclear weapons, nuclear proliferation was not a major issue partly because some U.S. officials believed it would take years if not decades for other states to build their own nuclear weapons without U.S. assistance.<sup>16</sup> However, the development and spread of the gas centrifuge technologies in the early 1950s, which enabled a much easier path to building nuclear weapons, meant that less industrialized states could build

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<sup>16</sup> Shane Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

nuclear weapons sooner than the U.S. believed.<sup>17</sup> China's nuclear test in 1964 indicated that the U.S. could no longer maintain its nuclear monopoly even against non-major powers.<sup>18</sup>

The changing technical reality of nuclear weapons also created and deepened the *nuclear deterrence-proliferation dilemma* (hereafter referred as DPD). Actively utilizing the coercive value of nuclear weapons can increase nuclear proliferation, which could in turn decrease the credibility of nuclear deterrence of nuclear weapon states.<sup>19</sup> Nuclear history shows that nuclear coercion could humiliate a target and alarm other states that see themselves as vulnerable to nuclear coercion. The consequence could be increased proliferation. The more states acquire nuclear weapons to challenge a future nuclear threat, the less nuclear weapon states' deterrence threat stays credible. Therefore, in the world where a moderately industrialized state can build nuclear weapons, it became difficult for the U.S. to achieve the two goals at the same time of employing credible nuclear threats and maintaining its nuclear dominance.

However, it seems that the U.S. leaders rarely recognized the causal link between nuclear coercion and nuclear proliferation, let alone perceived it as dilemma, and they did not completely stop using nuclear coercion even if nuclear threats contributed to inducing nuclear proliferations by humiliating its adversaries and implicitly legitimized the practice of nuclear coercion. For example, the nuclear threat during the Cuban Missile Crisis prompted the Soviet Union to dramatically increase its nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup> China decided to develop its own nuclear weapons

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<sup>17</sup> Scott R. Kemp, "The Nonproliferation Emperor Has No Clothes," *International Security*, (2014) Vol. 38, No. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas L. Miller, "Nuclear Dominoes: A Self-Defeating Prophecy?" *Security Studies* Vol. 23, No.1 (2014).

<sup>19</sup> For a relevant logic of how threat can cause negative reactions from a target, including more weapons build-up, see Robert Trager. 2010. "Diplomatic Calculus in Anarchy: How communication matter" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No. 02 (2010).

<sup>20</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987.

after it had received an overt nuclear threat during the Taiwan Crises in 1954.<sup>21</sup> U.S. nuclear coercion during the Indo-Pakistan conflict in the late 1960s seemed to cause India to carry out peaceful nuclear tests in 1974.<sup>22</sup> North Korea went nuclear in 2006 after President Bush threatened it with conventional and nuclear weapons.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the U.S. sometimes over-coerced in regional conflicts that did not pose a direct security threat in order to defend its allies who would otherwise have acquired their own nuclear deterrent. Arguably one of the reasons that the U.S. had to take a high risk in the conflicts over Berlin, Taiwan, and South Korea would be because the U.S. did not want to let them have their own nuclear deterrent.<sup>24</sup> Preventing its key allies from having their nuclear deterrent without fighting hard for them or rewarding them in return for their abstinence would have been untenable in the long-term.

The lack of institutional learning of the phenomenon is another problem that contributed to inadequate learning of nuclear coercion. The U.S. and other nuclear weapon states at least tried to build some sort of informal and formal institutions to prevent an accidental or inadvertent, or preemptive use of nuclear weapons.<sup>25</sup> However, there is no comparable level of efforts to build institutions to prevent coercive nuclear use.

In short, because of the difficulty of assessing the ramifications of nuclear coercion and the lack of institutional learning of nuclear coercion, leaders often largely relied on their experiences or salient history as an analogy to guide their decision-making with regard to nuclear

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<sup>21</sup> John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 2009, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> Given that North Korean is one of the most closed societies in the world, it is still unknown for sure whether the U.S. nuclear threat was a major cause of its decision to cross the threshold.

<sup>24</sup> T.V. Paul, *Power Versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Francis J. Gavin, "Blasts from the Past: Proliferation Lessons from the 1960s," *International Security* Vol. 29, No. 3 (2004/2005).

<sup>25</sup> Joseph S. Jr. Nye, "Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes," 1987.

coercion.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, I first examine if U.S. leaders' past experiences would have significantly affected their decisions regarding nuclear weapons after they came into the office. In addition, because complex nuclear learning seldom occurs to leaders, their ideologies and organizational positions would consist of a large part of their nuclear attitude in a similar way of deciding their attitude about using conventional forces. Their ideological and organizational positions would shape their nuclear attitude as well as their attitude about using conventional forces. Thus, I hypothesize that the more leaders are conventional hawks in terms of their propensity of using conventional forces, the more they are likely to use nuclear coercion. Finally, leaders' nuclear attitudes can change as they learn new information about nuclear weapons, domestic and international security environment, and experience significant events. Most of all, their learning of the prospect and perils of nuclear proliferations could restrain leaders from using explicit nuclear coercion because their efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation could also limit their freedom of politically using nuclear weapons. Thus, I also assess if the U.S. coercive nuclear behaviors are correlated with the U.S. top leaders' perceptions about nuclear proliferation.<sup>27</sup>

The main goal of my dissertation is to build a new theory of nuclear learning and partly test it with by comparing it to nuclear deterrence and taboo theory. Therefore, instead of reviewing all U.S. nuclear history, I focus on, by using available historical sources, analyzing coercive nuclear behaviors in three events of the Korean War in the early 1950s, the Vietnam War in the late 1960, and the North Korean and Libyan nuclear crises from 1994 to 2006. The time and leadership variations between three cases allows testing whether the U.S. coercive nuclear behaviors were influenced by nuclear balance or non-use norms or by leaders' particular

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 220.

<sup>27</sup> Given the limited number of cases and the fairly subjective variables of the phenomenon, it would be methodologically infeasible to test causality in a scientific way. Therefore, in my dissertation I intend to examine correlation, not causation, between nuclear attitudes and leaders' use of nuclear coercion.

nuclear attitude. Nina Tannenwald claims that in the early atomic age nuclear deterrence did not operate due to U.S. virtual nuclear monopoly.<sup>28</sup> To the contrary, I demonstrate that the U.S. nuclear behaviors significantly varied during the wars depending on the top decision makers' nuclear attitudes and nuclear deterrence was not uniformly applied across the wars.

The plan of my dissertation follows: in the next chapter, I discuss existing literature about U.S. nuclear behaviors, and present my nuclear learning theory and hypothesis. In chapter three I compare Harry Truman's nuclear attitude with Eisenhower's and examine whether their attitudes made any difference in how they used nuclear coercion during the Korean War. In Truman's case, his decision concerning the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings seemed to cast a deep shadow over him, whereas Eisenhower's past experience as a military commander during the World Wars overall shaped his nuclear attitudes. Such different nuclear attitudes affected how they utilized nuclear weapons during the Korean War. In chapter four, in a similar manner, I compare Lyndon Johnson's nuclear attitude with Richard Nixon's and discuss its implications for nuclear coercive diplomacy during the Vietnam War. The Cuban Missile Crisis was obviously one of major events that led top leaders of the Kennedy/Johnson administration to realize the danger of nuclear war and treat nuclear weapons as a different kind. Ironically, the same crisis led Nixon to believe in the power of nuclear weapons and develop his 'madman theory'. Also Nixon's observation of how Eisenhower used nuclear coercion affected his own nuclear attitude. Based on those experiences Nixon tried his version of nuclear brinkmanship in the 1969 nuclear alert and other nuclear threats later on. In chapter five, I discuss cases of the U.S. nuclear diplomacy for nuclear nonproliferation in the post-Cold war period. Specifically, I

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<sup>28</sup> Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 33.

analyze why President George Bush was able to induce Libya to dismantle its WMD programs but failed to dissuade North Korea from going nuclear. One of important reasons of the failure was not only that compellence threat against North Korea lacked credibility due to the quagmire of the Iraq war, but also that the U.S. did not provide a way for North Korea to save face let alone assure its security. In concluding chapter, I discuss the theoretical and policy implications of my dissertation.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Existing Nuclear Theories and Nuclear Learning Theory

#### Literature Review

Before the nuclear age almost no other great powers restrained themselves from using any type of weapons when they believed it would benefit their interests. Thus, the United States' non-use of nuclear weapons astonished many scholars and practitioners.<sup>1</sup> Yet, they paid far less attention to the fact that the United States has been using nuclear threats more actively than any state. Most recently, scholars have debated whether nuclear weapons would help a state prevail in a crisis.<sup>2</sup> But they did not address why the U.S. attempted to use nuclear coercion at all, especially against weak states, despite the tactic's strategic and non-strategic limitations. One exception is Richard Betts's book *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* that analyzed then-known cases of U.S. nuclear blackmail in the context of the security competition between two superpowers.<sup>3</sup> But since then there has been no follow-up research on the subject.

Neo-realists and constructivists have debated why the U.S. has not attacked other states with nuclear weapons since 1945. In his debate with Scott Sagan Kenneth Waltz argued that great powers feared nuclear retaliation from the target's nuclear patron. His rational nuclear

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, "An Astonishing Sixty Years: The Legacy of Hiroshima," Nobel Prize Lecture, December 8, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 53, No. 2 (April 2009); Matthew Kroenig, "Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve: Explaining Nuclear Crisis Outcomes," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (January 2013); and Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail," *International Organization* Vol. 67, No. 01 (2013).

<sup>3</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987).

deterrence theory treats a state as a rational and unitary actor and takes the distribution of military power, particularly the nuclear balance, as an explanatory factor.<sup>4</sup> The implication of nuclear deterrence theory is that the U.S. would be more likely to use nuclear coercion and to use it explicitly when it has had nuclear superiority, but it would abstain from nuclear coercion after it lost its nuclear dominance.

Nuclear norms theorists criticized Waltz's argument for the reason on the grounds that his theory could not explain the non-use of nuclear weapons in the asymmetric dyad between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. A growing literature has claimed that the U.S. did not use the weapons mainly because of nuclear non-use norms constructed by domestic and international political movements.<sup>5</sup> Especially nuclear taboo theory, represented in the work of Nina Tannenwald, disputes nuclear deterrence theory by pointing out cases where U.S. did not use nuclear weapons even when there was no significant risk of nuclear retaliation and the use of tactical nuclear weapons could have provided important military advantages. Tannenwald argues that it was taboo-like norms promoted by moral repugnance for the consequences of nuclear use that restrained the U.S. She also argues that such moral stigmatization made nuclear use almost unthinkable.<sup>6</sup> Thus her theory should imply that the stronger nuclear non-use norms become, the

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: Norton & Company, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald, "Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboos," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Peter Gizewski, "From Winning Weapon to Destroyer of Worlds: The Nuclear Taboo in International Politics," *International Journal* Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1996); T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); T. V. Paul, "Taboo or Tradition?: The Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons in World Politics," *Review of International Studies* Vol. 36, No. 4 (October 2010); and George H. Quester, *Nuclear First Strike: Consequences of a Broken Taboo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Nina Tannenwald, "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use," *International Organization* Vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer 1999); Nina Tannenwald, "Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo," *International Security* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Spring 2005); and Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945*

less likely the U.S. would use nuclear coercion because it could generate high political and moral costs.

Nuclear deterrence and taboo theorists may defend their argument on the basis that the scope of their theories is about military, not political nuclear use. However, because their theories are based on generic propositions about states' behaviors, there is no apparent reason that their theory cannot be applied to other U.S. nuclear behaviors including nuclear coercion. Nevertheless, especially non-use norms theorists overall underrated the importance of the U.S.'s political use of nuclear weapons. Even though Nina Tannenwald acknowledged that U.S. sometimes coerced other states with nuclear threats, she did not discuss further the implications of the coercive use of the weapons for the nuclear taboo. Likewise, although T.V. Paul recognized other "possible use of nuclear weapons for purposes beyond destroying or deterring its opponents", he did not elaborate whether and how other uses of the weapons could strengthen or weaken the tradition of non-use.<sup>7</sup> Given the U.S. extensive history of using nuclear threats, norms theories need to engage more in the debate about the coercive use of nuclear weapons.

Lately realists disputed the validity of nuclear taboo theory's core argument that nuclear use became almost *unthinkable*.<sup>8</sup> Press, Sagan and Valentino conducted a survey experiment which showed that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. citizens might support nuclear use if it is

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> T.V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Colin Gray, "To Confuse Ourselves: Nuclear Fallacies," in John Baylis and Robert O'Neill, eds., *Alternative Nuclear Futures: The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the Post-Cold War World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sagan, "Realist Perspectives on Ethical Norms and Weapons of Mass Destruction," in *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives*, eds. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Daryl G. Press, Scott D. Sagan, and Benjamin A. Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107, No. 1 (February 2013).

recognized as the best option for protecting their vital interests, such as destroying terrorists' military arsenal.<sup>9</sup> What their research implies is that nuclear use is still conceivable to people and the nuclear non-use norm is neither deeply internalized nor universal as taboo theory claims, but may be contingent on factors besides moral opposition<sup>10</sup> Although their research opened up the possibility of testing nuclear norms theory in a more scientific way, it lacked external validity because the subjects were ordinary citizens who were not part of formal decision making process. Thus, further research is required to verify the relevance of their research to real world cases by investigating what sort of nuclear thinking top U.S. leaders previously have followed or would be likely to follow in a crisis.

I dispute the premise of nuclear deterrence and taboo theories that leaders are passively constrained by external factors like the nuclear balance or domestic and international public opinion, especially in the realm of nuclear diplomacy. Although external factors define the available options that leaders can take, they are secondary to leaders' nuclear attitude in terms of causal impact because those factors are framed by and filtered through leaders' perceptions. For instance, nuclear revolution did not equally apply to most leaders, contrary to what suggestions of a nuclear revolution implied.<sup>11</sup> The awesome destructive power of nuclear weapons has restrained some leaders, but encouraged others to take an excessive risk during a crisis to prevent a political loss, even if an escalation strategy could lead to a nuclear war. As Richard Betts demonstrated in the cases of the 1973 Middle East war and the Carter doctrine in 1980, U.S. leaders were willing to escalate even if the U.S. no longer had a clear nuclear superiority against

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<sup>9</sup> Press, Scott D. Sagan, and Benjamin A. Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons," 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Lynn Eden, "The Contingent Taboo," *Review of International Studies*. 36 (2010).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1989).

the Soviets.<sup>12</sup> Scott Sagan and Jeremy Suri also showed that nuclear parity in the late 1960s did not stop Nixon from trying to exploit the power of nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup>

Non-use norms also have a limit in restraining leaders because of leaders' capacities to control information and set the agenda before the public learns the situation and exerts its influence. Leaders can insulate their nuclear diplomacy from the public by sending a private or implicit signal to a target. When their operations are revealed they can dodge criticisms by denying their direct involvement in the coercive diplomacy until they leave office. They can even manipulate public opinion by feeding to the public information favorable to their policy position.

I claim that leaders' idiosyncratic nuclear attitudes have a more independent role in planning and executing their nuclear diplomacy than nuclear deterrence theory assumes, but they are not as malleable as nuclear taboo theory presupposes.<sup>14</sup> Thus, I take the analytical middle road of nuclear learning theory, which assumes that leaders' prior beliefs matter in their nuclear choice and they can also evolve as they learn from their experience and from new information. However, as Joseph Nye presumes, leaders may change their core values and goals only if they understand the contradictions and tradeoffs between their goals and means through complex learning.<sup>15</sup> I specify my nuclear learning theory in the next section.

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<sup>12</sup> Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, chap. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Scott Sagan and Jeremi Suri, "The Madman Nuclear Alert: Secrecy, Signaling, and Safety in October 1969," *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Francis Gavin suggests the importance of leaders' distinct nuclear thinking as he explains President Richard Nixon's nuclear behaviors. See Frances J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), chap. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph S. Jr. Nye, "Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes" *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1987).

## Nuclear Learning Theory

My nuclear learning theory argues that because most leaders are nuclear novices who would not have learned the complex ramifications of coercive nuclear use, they are more likely to use nuclear coercion just as they would use coercion with conventional forces. Thus, on average conventional hawks tend to use nuclear coercion more aggressively than conventional doves. To the contrary, if leaders come to understand the proliferation ramifications of coercive nuclear use, particularly the deterrence-proliferation dilemma, they will be more likely to abstain from nuclear coercion. One caveat is that if leaders become overly concerned for nuclear proliferation, they could be more willing to use extreme force including nuclear attack to stop nuclear proliferation even if their basic nuclear attitudes are close to conventional doves.

For a dependent variable of my theory I specify coercive nuclear diplomacy in four different types. First of all, because *compellence* – using a threat to force a target to do a specific – is believed to be much harder to achieve than *deterrence* – using a threat to force a target to refrain from certain action – I define nuclear compellence to be a more aggressive form of nuclear threat-making than nuclear deterrence.<sup>16</sup> Second, leaders can make their nuclear coercion more explicit by clearly stating their intentions, mobilizing obvious nuclear force, and using a strong form of diplomatic statement. In contrast, leaders may prefer to engage in a more implicit and nuanced form of nuclear coercion by being ambivalent about their intention of threatening or dispatching military force that may or may not involve nuclear weapons. These two categories

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<sup>16</sup> For more discussions about deterrence and compellence, see Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamic of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin eds, *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy* (Washington D.C. United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003).

combined can specify four types of nuclear coercion: explicit compellence as the most aggressive form of nuclear coercion, implicit deterrence as the least aggressive type, and implicit compellence and explicit deterrence as mid-level threats. In reality, it would be difficult to clearly identify each type because leaders' interpretations of each nuclear strategy may depend on contexts.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, this typology would be analytically useful to understand the threat level of nuclear coercion that leaders intended to impose. The 2x2 table below shows the typology and relevant cases.

Table 1: The Typology for Nuclear Coercion

	Deterrence	Compellence
Explicit Threat	Eisenhower's threat to China during the Taiwan crises	Eisenhower's threat to end the Korean war
Implicit Threat	Truman's warning during the Korean	Nixon's 1969 nuclear alert

Nuclear learning theory is based on four propositions: understanding the ramifications of nuclear coercion requires a complex learning; almost all leaders are nuclear novices; leaders' dispositional characteristics such as their political ideologies and their simple learning from experiences shape their overall nuclear attitudes; the evolving nature of nuclear weapons changes the political reality.

First, it requires complex learning for leaders to realize the ramifications of using nuclear coercion. Nuclear weapons created dilemmas and paradoxes that perplexed leaders who tried to

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<sup>17</sup> Betts suggest that "the opposing side may see the threats they pose in different ways – what one side considers as an innocent deterrent, the other may see as a pernicious compellent." See Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, p. 6.

understand the consequences of nuclear use.<sup>18</sup> In particular it is a complicated task because of uncertainties about states' intentions and the nature of coercive nuclear diplomacy. To measure the success or failure of nuclear coercion, observers need to understand "the context of a coercive nuclear use, the accumulated and long-term impacts of nuclear coercion, and most of all the target's internal decision-making in the face of nuclear threats".<sup>19</sup> Such an assessment would be very hard even for well-trained nuclear strategists.

Second, given the complexity of understanding nuclear strategies, most leaders are *nuclear novices* or "nuclear amateur strategists" paraphrasing James DeNardo.<sup>20</sup> Not only do most leaders lack sophisticated knowledge about nuclear weapons and nuclear but also they are usually too busy to study it during their tenure. Sometimes incumbent leaders could gain some knowledge and lessons by joining policy discussions about nuclear weapons and personally experiencing a nuclear crisis, but such knowledge and lessons rarely transfer to succeeding leaderships because they were seldom institutionalized. As a result, whenever new leadership enters office, they usually have no clear guidance about how to utilize nuclear weapons for coercive means.

Third, under these kinds of uncertainties, leaders would be more likely to make a nuclear choice that confirms their prior beliefs shaped by individual ideologies, organizational roles, and simple learning of experiences and history. Such a lack of complex learning or the existence of biased learning could lead them to miscalculate the evidence and choose an inefficient or damaging strategy.

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamic of Coercion*, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> James DeNardo, *The Amateur Strategist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).



Previous researches demonstrated that leaders' ideological value orientation affects their preferences of using military force. Thus, on average, leaders of a conservative party are more likely and explicitly to use nuclear coercion than leaders of a liberal party. Those having conservative values incline to have "an assertive, militant foreign-policy posture through military strength" whereas liberals tend to rely less on military force but put more emphasis on international institutions, multilateralism, and international collaboration.<sup>21</sup> An exception would arise if liberals were strongly and continually criticized for being weak on foreign policy, and they could rather choose more aggressive foreign policies to fend off the political criticism.

My fourth proposition is that the evolution of the science and technology of building nuclear weapons also changes their political reality. Both nuclear deterrence and nuclear taboo theories agree on one thing, that the disproportional firepower and lingering radiation effects have raised the threshold of using the weapons to attack other states. However, barely recognized by existing theories is that the proliferation resistance of nuclear weapons – that indigenously building and operationalizing them are more difficult and take a longer time than other weapons – has lowered the bar of using them *politically* for the U.S. because such a characteristic of nuclear weapons provided a greater advantage for the first developer to utilize them as a bargaining leverage against those without them, rather than just use them to destroy the. At the dawn of nuclear age, top leaders were coming to believe that U.S. nuclear weapons gave them a tremendous political power over non-nuclear weapon states whose nuclear acquisition would be years if not decades later, at least according to the initial U.S. estimation. Thus, the U.S.'s nuclear monopoly incentivized it to use nuclear coercion against non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) and helped reassure its non-nuclear allies by providing a positive nuclear security

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<sup>21</sup> Brian C. Rathbun, Joshua D. Kertzer, Jason Reifler, Paul Goren and Thomas Scotto, "Taking Values Personally: Personal Values and Foreign Policy Beliefs," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 60 (2016).

assurance – a commitment to protect them by extending its nuclear deterrence, and also helped influence neutral states by providing a negative security assurance – a promise to not attack first with nuclear weapons unless it is attacked by them.<sup>22</sup>

However, the development and spread of gas centrifuge technologies in the late 1950s provided a much easier path to nuclear weapons.<sup>23</sup> In the mid 1960s about two dozens states already had latent nuclear capabilities, meaning that they could build nuclear weapons in a relatively short period once they determined to go nuclear.<sup>24</sup> The changing technical reality meant that U.S. nuclear dominance could not continue unless the U.S. put great effort into preventing proliferation. As I argued in introduction, those changes deepened the nuclear deterrence-proliferation dilemma (DPD) for the U.S.

Therefore, I argue that because nuclear proliferation can weaken the status and bargaining power of nuclear weapons states, leaders' understanding of the prospect and the ramifications of nuclear proliferation, which I define as their nuclear proliferation attitude is one of important factors that shapes the extent to which they utilize the political values of nuclear weapons, especially for coercing their adversaries. Related hypotheses are:

H1-1: the more leaders are pessimistic about the consequences of nuclear proliferation, the less likely they are to use nuclear weapons for coercion because their efforts to stop nuclear

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<sup>22</sup> For more discussions about relations between security assurance and nuclear proliferation, see Jeffrey W. Knopf, *Security Assurances and Nuclear Nonproliferation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Scott R. Kemp, "The Nonproliferation Emperor Has No Clothes," *International Security*, (2014) Vol. 38, No. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.

proliferation through negotiations and by building formal and informal institutions would also limit their freedom of using nuclear weapons to coerce non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS).

H1-2: the more leaders are optimistic about the consequences of nuclear proliferation partly because they believe nuclear deterrence would work for almost all states, which would eventually stabilize relations between nuclear weapons states (NWS) even if nuclear weapons spread out, the less they show restraint in using nuclear coercion, particularly against non-nuclear weapon states as they would not expect that nuclear coercion against them would generate high political costs.

Nuclear pessimists are more likely to realize the fact of the DPD and pursue the non-conventionalizing of nuclear weapons by abstaining from using them for coercion, and to be more willing to pay a high cost for nuclear nonproliferation, and reserve military nuclear use as a last resort. In contrast, because nuclear optimists are likely to fail to recognize DPD due to their insensitivity to nuclear proliferation, they tend to conventionalize nuclear weapons by treating them as more or less like other weapons, to be more willing to use them for coercion, but unwilling to pay a high cost to prevent nuclear nonproliferation.

H1-3: the more leaders learn about the increasing chance and negative consequences of nuclear proliferation, the more likely they would become a proliferation pessimist and refrain from using nuclear coercion.

Following the debate between Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan, scholars have argued about the impact of nuclear proliferation on the stability of international relations.<sup>25</sup> Surprisingly there are few empirical works that examine what actual U.S. top leaders' proliferation attitude are.<sup>26</sup> This lack is perhaps because of the conventional wisdom that all U.S. leaders must be nuclear pessimists given their public opposition to nuclear proliferation. Although it is highly unlikely that many U.S. leaders would think like a Waltzian optimist that the more nuclear weapons spread the better for world stability, it is also questionable whether most leaders would genuinely believe, as a Saganian pessimist presumes, that nuclear proliferation would significantly destabilize the world order. Most leaders would fall somewhere within the middle of spectrum. For example, President John F. Kennedy can be described as one of leaders who was much concerned for nuclear proliferation especially to China and Germany, whereas President Richard Nixon did not particularly worry about nuclear proliferation compared to other security issues because he believed that nuclear proliferation was inevitable.<sup>27</sup>

My historical observation is that due to their ideologies and political interests many U.S. leaders have often prioritized other political and security goals over nuclear nonproliferation, deviating from how a genuine nuclear pessimist would otherwise have behaved. Contrary to Sagan's prescription, it seems that many leaders have acted like *myopic pessimists* who were somewhat concerned for the consequences of nuclear proliferation but pursued policies anyway

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1-2 (2015); Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Recasting the proliferation optimism-pessimism debate," *Security Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2002); Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*. (New York: Norton & Company, 2003); and David J. Karl, "Proliferation Optimism and Pessimism Revisited," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (2011).

<sup>26</sup> Although Matthew Kroenig examined U.S. military branches' nuclear proliferation thinking, especially U.S. Navy, he did not analyze top decision makers like U.S. president or secretary of state. See Kroenig, "The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?," 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Frances J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 105.

that could hurt their nonproliferation efforts. As a result, the U.S. enforced nuclear nonproliferation policies selectively and inconsistently.<sup>28</sup> Just the opposite case would be that some leaders worried so much about nuclear proliferation, like *paranoid pessimists*, that they were willing to use extreme measures like preemptively attacking or using nuclear threats against states pursuing nuclear acquisition. Such extreme measures could be counterproductive because although using force may delay a target's nuclear acquisition for few years, it cannot eradicate the root problems unless the regime is completely changed.

In short, realizing the importance of the DPD would induce leaders to restrain from using explicit nuclear coercion. They would realize the benefits for stopping nuclear proliferation and maintaining their nuclear dominance, which would give them far more long-term benefits than any short-term strategic gain. However, it seems that historically such realization has been rare because many leaders were preoccupied with their ideological belief or their short-term strategic calculations. Thus, they often prioritized other goals like containing communism, securing alliance commitment, and using foreign affairs for their domestic political benefits.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that as the U.S. learned more about the problems of nuclear proliferation, its nuclear threats became less blunt and more restrained than its practice in the first two decades of the Cold War. However, the U.S. has not completely abstained from using nuclear threats yet, and it is questionable how long and successfully it can continue pursuing the two incompatible goals of effectively using nuclear weapons for coercion and preventing nuclear proliferation.

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<sup>28</sup> For more discussions about the issue, see Asli Ummuhan Bali, *Similar States, Disparate Treatment: Explaining Inconsistent Enforcement in the International Nonproliferation Regime* (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, Aug 2010).

<sup>29</sup> For one of the most critical views on U.S. nuclear nonproliferation policies, see Shane Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 2010

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Nuclear Attitudes of Truman and Eisenhower during the Korean War

Despite the initial outbreak of the Korean War and the humiliating setback by the intervention of China, President Harry Truman did not actively use nuclear leverage against North Korea and the Chinese communists. However, President Dwight Eisenhower not only considered using nuclear weapons, but also he employed nuclear coercion more forcefully than Truman to end the war in 1953.<sup>1</sup> Historians dispute whether Eisenhower's nuclear threat was genuine or bluff, and whether the threat helped end the war.<sup>2</sup> However, the overall consensus is that atomic diplomacy played a far larger role under Eisenhower than Truman. What could explain their different nuclear attitudes and what are the implications of such differences?

The explanation based on the logic of nuclear balance is not satisfactory because although the Soviet Union tested nuclear weapons in 1949, ending the United States' nuclear monopoly, the U.S.'s nuclear capabilities had a clear superiority over the Soviet Union all during the Korean War, from 1950 to 1953. In fact, after the Soviet atomic test in mid-October 1949 Truman himself approved the expansion of U.S. atomic stockpile and "production facilities for fissionable materials." In January 1950, he also approved the hydrogen bomb, the so-called 'super bomb' development.<sup>3</sup> As a result, U.S. nuclear power was increased dramatically.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The part of ideas about Eisenhower's nuclear diplomacy was inspired by Marc Trachtenberg's advice.

<sup>2</sup> For the recent review on the debate, see Michael Gordon Jackson, "Beyond Brinkmanship: Eisenhower, Nuclear War Fighting, and Korea, 1953-1968," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Shane Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 71-73.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel F. Wells, Jr. "The Origins of Massive Retaliation," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 97 (Spring 1981), pp. 49-51.

According to Richard Betts, “Soviet nuclear capability to strike the U.S.” caused a relatively little concern throughout the war.<sup>5</sup>

The norms argument is also inadequate because, although both Truman and Eisenhower to some degree were concerned for reputational and moral consequences of military nuclear use, such norm factors did not restrain Eisenhower from exploiting nuclear leverage as much as they constrained Truman. And it is also highly questionable whether in the early 1950s there was any sort of the convergence of a normative expectation that superpowers would refrain from nuclear use when push came to shove. Public opinion about nuclear weapons was also volatile.

According to one poll, after the U.S. plans to build The H-bomb became public, “73 percent of the American public favored all-out development” of the bomb.<sup>6</sup>

I argue that the difference in using nuclear leverage between Truman and Eisenhower can be better understood by looking into their overall nuclear attitudes shaped by their experiences and learning about nuclear weapons and strategies. Despite their sometimes-inconsistent nuclear policies that puzzled scholars, the nuclear attitude differences between them were fairly consistent. Truman abstained from using atomic diplomacy, declined General Douglas MacArthur’s requests to use nuclear weapons, and asserted civilian control of nuclear weapons, whereas Eisenhower more actively used nuclear coercion, seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons, and loosened civilian control of nuclear weapons. One similarity between them would be that both presidents did not fully understand that nuclear technologies for civilian uses could be transferred to building nuclear weapons more easily than they believed. In the meantime, their pursuit of nuclear superiority incentivized nuclear aspiring states to pursue the weapons. In other

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<sup>5</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Shane Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 2010, p. 73.

words, their nuclear learning was not deep enough to understand the dilemmas and tradeoffs in nuclear policies.

### **Truman's Implicit Nuclear Deterrence vis-à-vis Eisenhower's Nuclear Compellence**

Although Truman discussed the possible use of nuclear weapons at the outbreak of the Korean War, he did not enthusiastically play a nuclear diplomacy card to coerce the communists.<sup>7</sup> There was one widely known attempt of sending a nuclear threat, after the U.S. had to retreat after the massive Chinese intervention in November 1950. In a November 30 news conference Truman said:

“We will take whatever steps are necessary to meet the military situation,” and “That includes every weapon that we have.” When a reporter asked him “Does that mean that there is active consideration of the use of the atomic bomb?”, he replied, “There has always been active consideration of its use. I don’t want to see it used,” but Truman said use of the bomb “always has been” under consideration.<sup>8</sup>

Truman retracted his statements very soon when it alarmed the public and allies about the possible use of nuclear weapons and a third world war. As British Prime Minister Attlee flew to

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<sup>7</sup> According to the record, when Truman raised the possibility of nuclear use on June 25, 1950 when the war broke out, he was advised that it was possible to “knock out [Russian] bases in the far east.” “Memorandum of Conversation, by Ambassador at Large (Jessup),” Washington, June 25, 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, vol. 7, Korea, 159-60, quoted in Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 2009, p. 46. Truman’s inquiry about the possibility of using nuclear weapon was much less enthusiastic and specific than what Eisenhower did in 1953. See the next section for more about Eisenhower’s discussion about the use of the weapons.

<sup>8</sup> Public Papers, *Truman*, 1950, p. 727, quoted in Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear balance*, 1987, p. 33.



the U.S. and urged the president not to use nuclear weapons in Korea, Truman made clear that “he had no intention of using the bomb.”<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy that Eisenhower showed a quite different attitude to his British ally. When Eisenhower met with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill few months after the armistice, at the December 1953 Bermuda Conference, he said, “if hostilities in Korea resumed, the United States would feel free to use the atomic bomb.”<sup>10</sup>

There was no further evident nuclear sabre-rattling in public by Truman during the war. Overall, his nuclear threat was at best implicit deterrence, the least aggressive type of nuclear coercion because the signal was ambiguous and it did not demand that the communist should take a specific action.

In contrast, Eisenhower’s nuclear coercion was more extensive and explicit. Moreover, he used nuclear threats more than just to deter adversaries. In particular he tried to compel the North Korean and Chinese communists to agree to the armistice. His nuclear threats were signaled in public and private by militarily demonstrating his willingness to escalate. After the armistice talks began in June 1951, it took more than two years until the armistice was finally signed on July 27, 1953, and few people expected that the war would continue so long while “the battle line rested only within a few miles of the preliminary armistice line signed on November 27, 1951.”<sup>11</sup> Once President Eisenhower was inaugurated in January 1953, he was eager to end the Korean War even if it meant using atomic weapons. First, Eisenhower announced in his State of the Union Address on February 2nd, 1953 “the Seventh Fleet would no longer shield the coast of the People’s Republic from attacks by Chiang Kai-Shek’s National forces based on

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<sup>9</sup> CIA report, December 7, 1950, in Harry S. Truman Library, Presidents’ Secretary’s File (Carrollton Press Collection), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Eisenhower. *Mandate for Change* pp. 180, 248, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> William Stueck, *Rethinking The Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 145.

Formosa.”<sup>12</sup> Chiang quickly reaffirmed his determination to recapture the mainland.<sup>13</sup> The National Chinese force in Taiwan was eager to take revenge and return to the mainland China. Eisenhower’s statement could have implied that by unleashing the Nationalist forces U.S. might escalate its fight in Korea into other regions.

Secondly, the U.S. used a private channel to warn the Communists. On May 1953 Secretary John Foster Dulles visited India and warned Prime Minister Nehru that if the armistice talks broke down the United States would escalate. According to Sherman Adams, assistant to the president, “This message was planted deliberately in India so that it would get to the Chinese Communists.”<sup>14</sup> In the actual talks at the Panmunjom, the U.S. officials sent a message to the Chinese that if the armistice broken down, the United States would “remove the restrictions of area and weapons”.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the air strikes against North Korea were escalated to “unprecedented levels, including attacks on the North Korean irrigation system and its hydro-electric plants along the Yalu River.”<sup>16</sup> According to Conrad Crane, there were obvious signs that “U.S. patience was wearing thin, which increased the possibility of the use of atomic bombs,” and “rumors about Eisenhower’s threat to raise the ante unless a ceasefire was negotiated were rampant throughout

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<sup>12</sup> Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953 – 1961 (Washington: GPO, 1960 – 1), 1953, 16-17, quoted in Andrew Erdmann, “‘War No Longer Has Any Logic Whatever’: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Thermonuclear Revolution,” in *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945*, eds. John Lewis Gaddis, Philip H. Gordon, Ernest R. May, and Jonathan Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 99-100.

<sup>13</sup> William Stueck, *Rethinking The Korean War*, 2002, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report*, p. 48, quoted in Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> Edward C. Keefer, “President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korea War,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 10, No. 30 (Summer 1986), p. 280.

<sup>16</sup> Barry M. Blechman and Robert Power, “What in the Name of God is Strategic Superiority?,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 4 (Winter 1982), pp. 591-592; Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (New York: Times Books, 1982), quoted in Erdmann, “‘War No Longer Has Any Logic Whatever’”, 1999, p. 100.

Korea”.<sup>17</sup> Combined with other public and private threats, conventional attacks escalated in early 1953 might have sent a fairly obvious signal to the Communists that the cost of protracting the war by avoiding an armistice would be overwhelming.

My interview with defectors from North Korea seemed to confirm that the rumor actually existed. In the an interview, Dr. Hwang Jang Yub, the former secretary of the North Korean Labor Party and a chancellor of Kim Il Sung University said that unfortunately he could not directly answer my question about whether the North Korean leaders actually received Eisenhower’s nuclear threats, because during the Korean War he was in Moscow as a doctoral student to studying political philosophy. However, he remembered that he heard that China preparing twelve retreat paths from *Sinuiju* to *Sanhaekwan* in Manchuria in case of US massive attacks including atomic bombs.<sup>18</sup> I had another phone interview with Ms. Kim Young Soon, who was a close friend of Sung Hae Lim, the wife of the Kim Il Sung, as well as a sister of Kim Suk Cheon, an Army general during the Korean War. One of the very interesting stories she told me is that near the end of the Korean War, there was a rumor among North Koreans that if the newly elected Eisenhower attacked North Korea, he would ‘eat breakfast in Seoul, eat lunch in Pyongyang, and eat dinner in Shinuijoo (the northern province in North Korea)’, which would indicate that North Koreans thought if US reinitiated a new offensive attack the US could push back again to the northern border of North Korea. This suggest that fear of Eisenhower’s offensive propensity had spread widely among the North Korean people.

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<sup>17</sup> Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950 – 1953*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000b), p. 164.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Hwang also contributed to establish North Korean ideology in the early stage of the North Korean regime construction, and he was once a mentor of Kim Jung Il, the son of the founding father Kim Il Sung. I appreciate Yongho Kim at Yonsei University for helping me to have an interview with him in August 2010.

## Differences in Nuclear Attitude between Truman and Eisenhower

### a. Usability of nuclear weapons

The historical records show that their perceptions about the usability of nuclear weapons were different. First, Truman overall put nuclear weapons in a separate category from other conventional weapons whereas Eisenhower was more willing to use the weapons as another tool of war. For example, in when Atomic Energy Commissioner Thomas E. Murray raised a concern over Truman's public statement that “atomic weapons [were] in a moral category separate from so-called conventional weapons and perhaps separate from biological and chemical methods of warfare”, Truman told Murray that “the atomic bomb was, in fact, far worse than gas and biological warfare because it affects the civilian population and murders them wholesale.”<sup>19</sup> When General Douglas MacArthur asked several times for permission to use atomic bombs, Truman declined them all and in April 1951 discharged him from the duty partly for his insubordination.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, Eisenhower's explicit deliberation over using nuclear weapons in Korea was much more extensive than Truman's. On February 11 1953, two weeks after his inauguration, the president and other participants discussed using nuclear weapons in the 131st National Security Council (hereafter NSC). During the discussion of the situation in Korea, Eisenhower expressed the view that “we should consider the use of tactical atomic weapons on the Kaesong

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<sup>19</sup> Murray to Truman, 16 Jan. 1953, and Truman to Murray, 19 Jan. 1953, Atomic Bomb folder, Box 112, General File, PSF, HSTL, quoted in S. David Broscious, “Longing for International Control, Banking on American Superiority: Harry S. Truman's Approach to Nuclear Weapons,” in *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945*, eds. John Lewis Gaddis, Philip H. Gordon, Ernest R. May, and Jonathan Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 131.

area, which provided a good target for this type of weapon.” Secretary Dulles discussed the moral problem and the inhibition on the use of the A-bomb and expressed his opinion that “we should try to break down this false distinction [between conventional and atomic weapons].” Then, the president urged the start of diplomatic negotiations with our allies about the use of atomic weapons.<sup>21</sup> One month later, on March 31, 1953, Eisenhower again raised the question of civilian experts of the use of atomic weapons at a special meeting of the NSC. Although Eisenhower admitted that there were not many good tactical targets to attack “it would be worth the cost if, through use of atomic weapons, we could (1) achieve a substantial victory over the Communist forces and (2) get to a line at the waist of Korea.”<sup>22</sup> Again, Eisenhower intensely discussed the use of atomic weapons at subsequent NSC meetings in May 1953. At the 143rd NSC meeting, when General Bradley stated that Air Forces had been making four airfields in North Korea targets for recent attacks, Eisenhower inquired whether these airfields might not prove a targets that would test the effectiveness of an atomic bomb. After the discussion, Eisenhower had reached the point of “being convinced that we have got to consider the atomic bomb as simply another weapon in our arsenal.”<sup>23</sup>

The record of the next 144th NSC meeting on May 13, 1953 reveals a more detailed picture of how far the administration considered the use of the weapons. While General Slayton

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<sup>21</sup> “Memorandum by the Deputy Executive secretary S. Everett Gleason, 11 February 1953,” In 1988. *The Minutes of Meetings of the National Security Council, First supplement microform*, Real 1. Maryland: University of Publications of America: 2–3; “Memorandum of Discussion at the 131st Meeting of the National Security Council, 11 February 1953,” *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1952-1954. Korea Vol. 15*, p. 770. Hereafter, the Foreign Relations of the United States is denoted as FRUS.

<sup>22</sup> “Memorandum of Discussion at a Special Meeting of the National Security Council, 31 March 1953,” *FRUS, 1952-1954. Korea Vol. 15*, pp. 826–827.

<sup>23</sup> “Memorandum of Discussion at the 143rd National Security Council meeting, 6 May 1953,” in *The Declassified Documents Reference System*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?locID=uclosangeles&sl3=KE&srchtp=adv&c=1&bl1=AND&pd11=01&pd22=31&py22=1955&sortType=RevChron&docNum=CK2349126047&bl2=AND&vrsn=1.0&py11=1953&pm11=01&pm22=12&ste=23&sl2=KE&n=10&tx1=143rd+National+Security+Council+meeting+&sl1=KE>.

Bradley briefed the Council on the military implications of the six possible alternative courses of action in Korea, he stated that none of courses of action that involved operations outside of Korea could really be effectively carried out without the use of atomic weapons. General Hull also mentioned that “the military were most anxious to make use of atomic weapons” in any of the courses in the plan, and “their use would be highly advantageous from the strictly military point of view.” Eisenhower was also not satisfied with the argument that “atomic weapons could not be used effectively in dislodging the Chinese” from their present position in Korea. And he suggested that “it might be cheaper, dollar-wise, to use atomic weapons in Korea than to continue to use conventional weapons against the dugouts which honeycombed the hills along which the enemy forces were presently deployed.”<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the memos of the 145th NSC meeting on May 20, 1953 also show that the JCS provided the NSC with an oral briefing on the most advantageous courses of action including the possible use of atomic weapons in the event that current truce negotiations broke down. In response, Eisenhower advocated using atomic weapons in Korea if truce negotiations broke down and they “decided to extend the war in an effort to gain a military decision.”<sup>25</sup> In June while the negotiations for the armistice had been taking place, the Secretary Dulles assured South Korean Ambassador Yang that there would be a security pact between the United States

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<sup>24</sup> “Memorandum of Discussion at the 144th Meeting of the National Security Council, 13 May 1953,” *FRUS, 1952-1954. Korea Vol. 15*, p. 1014.

<sup>25</sup> “Memorandum of Discussion at the 145th Meeting of the National Security Council, 20 May 1953,” in *The Declassified Documents Reference System*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?locID=uclosangeles&sl3=KE&srchtp=adv&c=1&bl1=AND&pd11=01&pd22=31&py22=1955&sortType=RevChron&docNum=CK2349051919&bl2=AND&vrsn=1.0&py11=1953&pm11=01&pm22=12&ste=23&sl2=KE&n=10&tx1=5%2F20%2F53+NSC+&sl1=KE>.

and Korea and the Communists would know that the United States would retaliate with atomic weapons on Vladivostok and Port Arthur if they again attacked Korea.<sup>26</sup>

The discussions in the NSC show the administration's serious contemplation of using nuclear weapons in the Korean War. Nevertheless, Roger Dingman argues that Eisenhower only attempted to derive political and diplomatic rather than tactical military advantage from the possession and deployment of nuclear weapons, and for the first six months of the administration, coercive atomic diplomacy was not a component of the strategy to end the Korean War.<sup>27</sup> He argues that under the Eisenhower administration, the NSC deliberations about the role of atomic diplomacy in ending the war were more "discursive than decisive."<sup>28</sup> However, Matthew Jones claims that Eisenhower was keen for the military to study using tactical nuclear weapons against particular targets in North Korea in the first few months after the inauguration.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Conrad Crane's analysis based on the reports of the JCS showing that the plan to use atomic weapons was more concrete and thorough than the critics' description.<sup>30</sup> For instance, on May 19, 1953, the JCS proposed "air and naval operations against China and Manchuria, an offensive to seize a position at the narrow Korean waist, and the tactical and strategic use of atomic weapons." The report shows that after briefing six courses of action from A to F, outlined in NSC 147, the JCS suggested that from the military standpoint "no course of action beyond "A" or "B" should be undertaken without a concurrent decision to employ atomic weapons on a sufficiently large scale to ensure success." The JCS pointed out that

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<sup>26</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), 17 June 1953," *FRUS, 1952-1954. Korea Vol. 15*, p. 1196.

<sup>27</sup> Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1988/89), p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew. Jones, *After the Hiroshima: The United States, Race and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945 – 1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 153.

<sup>30</sup> Conrad C. Crane, "To avert Impending Disaster: American Military Plans to Use Atomic Weapons during the Korean War," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No.2 (2000a), p. 82.

a piecemeal or limited employment would jeopardize the success of the mission. And the JCS recommended that in the event the proposed course was adopted, “air, naval, and ground operations, including extensive strategic and tactical use of atomic bombs should be undertaken so as to obtain maximum surprise and maximum impact on the enemy, both militarily and psychologically.”<sup>31</sup>

The records of the NSC and JCS meeting shows SHOW that immediately after its inauguration the Eisenhower administration was serious about using nuclear weapons to end the Korean War and retaliate against Communist states if they reinitiated hostilities after the armistice. And the discussions on nuclear weapons were more detailed than critics argue. This evidence suggests that in 1953 the U.S. could have used nuclear weapons if push came to shove.

#### b. Delegation of Nuclear Weapons

Truman’s decision to put nuclear weapons under the control of a civilian agency, not the military, was one of significant decisions in U.S. nuclear history. John Lewis Gaddis states “by denying the military control over atomic weapons, he asserted civilian authority over how wars were to be fought”.<sup>32</sup> According to Peter Feaver, the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 initially settled the debate of who would be in charge of nuclear weapons. Although the military tested the assertive civilian control during his presidency, Truman’s decision in 1948 “marked the

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<sup>31</sup> “Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, 19 May 1953,” *FRUS, 1952-1954. Korea Vol. 15*, pp. 1061–63.

<sup>32</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), p. 55.



highpoint of civilian commitment to assertive control over nuclear weapons.”<sup>33</sup> In his address in Milwaukee in October 1948, Truman declared that “because the power and world significance of atomic energy, I was convinced that it had to be placed under civilian control.”<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, Eisenhower was more tolerant of military control as he authorized the pre-delegation of the authority to use nuclear weapons to some military authorities. According to Feaver, Eisenhower’s greater delegation to the military meant that his nuclear policy would be “more in alignment with conventional weapons policy”.<sup>35</sup> He also authorized the dispersal of weapons to bases around the world. Accordingly, “nuclear weapons were integrated to all aspects of force procurement, deployment and war planning”.<sup>36</sup>

### **Nuclear Learning from Past experiences**

As described above, the different attitudes between Truman and Eisenhower about coercive nuclear diplomacy, usability of nuclear weapons and delegation of nuclear weapons are quite consistent and noticeable. I argue their different nuclear attitudes were not simply responses to external environments during the Korean War, but largely formed by their learning from experiences. The brief review of their histories shows that their learning in the past affected how they perceived nuclear weapons during the Korean War.

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<sup>33</sup> Peter D. Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 127. For more explanations about the origins of Truman’s assertive civilian control, see his chap. 4

<sup>34</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Address in Milwaukee, Wisconsin,” October 14, 1948, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1989&st=&st1=>, quoted in Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 2009, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Peter D. Feaver, *Guarding the Guardian*, 1992, p. 152 and p.154.

<sup>36</sup> Morton H. Halperin and Madalene O’Donnell, “The Nuclear Fallacy,” *Bulletin of the American Scientists* Vol. 44, No. 1 (January/February, 1988), p. 8, quoted in Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, p. 60.

When Truman became president after President Franklin Roosevelt's death, he had little experience in foreign policy. According to McCullough, as a senator Truman paid little attention to foreign affairs, and he had not been included in Roosevelt's inner circle of advisers.<sup>37</sup> John Gaddis also characterized him as "inexperienced and ill-informed vice president".<sup>38</sup> It seems that Truman got his basic nuclear attitudes only after he became president by learning about the awful power of the weapons. After his first briefing about them from Secretary of War Henry Stimson and General Leslie Grove, he wrote "he did not know whether we could or should use the bomb because he was afraid that it was so powerful that it could end up destroying the whole world".<sup>39</sup>

Because Truman was the first and only president who ordered an atomic bombing, the legacy of Hiroshima and Nakasaki seemed to cast a deep shadow over his mind. He recalled, "Ever since Hiroshima I had never stopped thinking about the frightful implications of the atomic bomb. We knew that this revolutionary scientific creation would destroy civilization unless put under control and placed at the service of mankind."<sup>40</sup> He also stated "the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was lesson enough for me. The world could not afford to risk war with atomic weapons."<sup>41</sup>

In contrast, even before he entered the White House Eisenhower's past learning from his experiences in commanding the U.S. forces in the World War II led him to believe in the great benefit of exploiting U.S. firepower, including nuclear weapons, and its industrial capacities. He already considered his escalation strategy to "substitute nuclear weapons for conventional from

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<sup>37</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 335.

<sup>38</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Broschius, "Longing for International Control, Banking on American Superiority," 1999, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Years of Decisions* (Garden City: NY, 1955), p. 523, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>41</sup> Truman, *years of Decisions*, 542; and Margaret Truman eds, *Where the Buck Stops: The Personal and Private Writings of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), p. 206, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 24.

his early days in office.<sup>42</sup> Andrew Erdmann describes that without question, in the twentieth century “Dwight D. Eisenhower is the man most experienced with national security affairs elected to the American presidency”.<sup>43</sup>

His memories of fighting against Hitler led him to believe that the conflict with the Soviet Union would be “another chapter in the historical struggle between liberty and tyranny”.<sup>44</sup> Initially, knowing the limited stockpile of U.S. nuclear weapons he did not perceive nuclear weapons as an ‘absolute weapons’. Nonetheless, he recognized the “revolutionary part” of the weapons because they “removed the consideration of time and space that previously provided the first line of U.S. defense.” Thus, in 1947 he already planned with the JCS a future U.S. military strategy that “assumed the use of nuclear weapons.”<sup>45</sup> He also believed that U.S. could maintain a strong deterrent to communist aggression while reducing American conventional forces through an increased reliance on the U.S. air power and tactical nuclear weapons. In short, according to Erdman, Eisenhower entered the White House “with a world war strategic mind-set, modestly revised to suit the nuclear Cold War.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Nuclear Proliferation Attitudes of Truman and Eisenhower**

As Truman tried to categorize nuclear weapons as a different kind from conventional ones, he hoped to prevent nuclear proliferation while utilizing the peaceful benefits of nuclear

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<sup>42</sup> Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew P. N. Erdman, “‘War No Longer Has Any Logic Whatever’: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Thermonuclear Revolution” in John Lewis Gaddis eds. *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945*, 1999, p. 89. Erdman offered in this book chapter one of the most extensive sources about Eisenhower’s history regarding his nuclear learning. This section is mostly drawn from it.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

energy. In his early days in office he pursued an international control of nuclear energy as a solution to the dilemma of the dual usage of nuclear power. However, his plan for international control ended in less than six months.<sup>47</sup> According to Maddock, a few U.S. leaders understood “the danger of nuclear spread-out” in the early atomic era. Truman’s nonproliferation measures eventually failed as the U.S. pursued nuclear monopoly first and superiority later during his presidency. The U.S. proposed the Baruch Plan partly due to its public commitment to international control, but made the plan in a way of “winning public support while remaining unacceptable to the Soviets.” Once the plan failed because of the mistrust between the U.S. and Soviets, the important factions within the Truman administration actively worked to share nuclear weapons technology with Great Britain, although their goal was eventually prevented by the intervention of the Congress.<sup>48</sup>

As it became clear that international control became infeasible, he came to conclude that since “we can’t obtain international control we must be strongest in atomic weapons.”<sup>49</sup> Despite his hope of containing the spread of nuclear weapons, he made critical decisions to expand the U.S. nuclear arsenal and develop the thermonuclear bomb. In the end, he was a myopic proliferation pessimist because he initially hoped to stop nuclear proliferation but he pursued U.S. nuclear superiority anyway without clearly understanding the long-term ramifications.

Eisenhower did not enter the White House with a clear vision of how to curtail nuclear proliferation. Rather he was more preoccupied with ending the Korean war and winning conflicts with the communists. Unlike Truman, he overall perceived nuclear weapons as another means of

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<sup>47</sup> McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival* (New York: Random House, 1988), 166.

<sup>48</sup> Shane Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 78. Maddock did a great work of analyzing extensive sources of U.S. nuclear nonproliferation policies in 1950s and 1960s. This section was largely drawn from his work.

<sup>49</sup> Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 11, quoted in *Ibid.*, 48.

military weapons. Thus, it would be fair to say that his nuclear proliferation attitude did not much matter in deciding his way of utilizing nuclear weapons in the Korean war. However, Eisenhower had some concerns for nuclear proliferation, and from 1953 to 1956 he initiated several studies of nonproliferation measures<sup>50</sup>. The Atoms for Peace was one of his administration's responses to the problem. Eisenhower initially hoped that the Atoms for Peace proposal could persuade states to give up nuclear weapons in return for receiving benefits of nuclear energy for peaceful use.<sup>51</sup> However, arguably the Atoms for Peace may have heightened proliferation problem because "Israel, India, and Pakistan acquired much of their early civilian capabilities under this program" and later they converted them to build nuclear weapons.<sup>52</sup>

Despite his early aim of preventing nuclear proliferation, his nuclear policies in other areas raise a question of whether he had a genuine concern for the proliferation problem. Not only did he dramatically increase U.S. nuclear stockpiles, but he also ordered several H-bomb tests over the Pacific. The Japanese fishermen in *the Lucky Dragon* got seriously ill and one of them died by the radiation fallout caused by a hydrogen bomb test in 1953, code named *Bravo*, and the incident provoked a worldwide protest against atmospheric nuclear testing.<sup>53</sup> Responding to the protest, he tried to secure a nuclear test ban with the Soviets, but it also failed because of Cold War suspicions in general and disagreement about onsite inspection in particular. He also subordinated nuclear nonproliferation policies to other U.S. security goals like maintaining

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<sup>50</sup> For more about Eisenhower's nonproliferation policies, see Shane Maddock, "The Fourth Country Problem: Eisenhower's Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1998).

<sup>51</sup> T.V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence Scheinman, "Shadow & Substance: Securing the Future of Atoms for Peace," *IAEA Bulletin* Vol. 45, no. 2 (December 2003), pp. 7-9, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>53</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement 1954 - 1970* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1997), p. 2.

“NATO unity.” His ignorance of the “multiple avenues of potential proliferation” also contributed to the failure of developing an effective nuclear proliferation policy.<sup>54</sup>

#### Epilogue: How North Korea Received the Nuclear Coercion

In assessing the credibility of nuclear coercion, the target’s perception to a threat is critical. Nevertheless, there are a fairly small number of studies on the topic largely due to the difficulty of finding credible documents about communist states. As a part of the effort to understand North Korea’s threat perceptions during the war, I analyzed North Korea’s important historical sources, most of which were opened to public in the post-Cold war period. The analysis below shows that North Korea noticed Eisenhower’s nuclear threats. However, it is noteworthy that there was almost no way that U.S. officials in the early 1950s would have known such perceptions due to extremely secretive nature of North Korean society. As I said in the beginning, American experts in this field are still debating whether Eisenhower’s nuclear threats were decisive in ending the Korean war. Thus, U.S. leaders’ boasts that U.S. nuclear threats ended the Korean War would be very likely based on spurious belief, not concrete evidences. The next chapter discusses president Richard Nixon’s strong belief in the efficacy of U.S. atomic diplomacy and his attempt to use it during the Vietnam war.

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<sup>54</sup> Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 2010, pp. 81-83.

## North Korea's Threat Perception

The multivolume North Korean history, *Chosun Junsu* [*Chosun's War History*]<sup>55</sup> and the collection of Kim Il Sung's writings, reveal North Korea's threat perception about Eisenhower's attempt to end the War with nuclear threats. First of all, the *Chosun Junsu* several times depicts President Eisenhower as a crazy warmonger. It also states "on September 4, 1952 in the election campaign speech, the evil warmonger Eisenhower revealed his desire to extend the [Korean] war by saying that the US economy and industry system is concentrated on the war, and its economy is a war-economy".<sup>56</sup> It is notable that North Korea's description of Eisenhower is far more negative and hostile than that about President Truman.

It also describes Eisenhower's New Look strategy as "*Shingongsae*" [New Offensive]. The word *Shingongsae* is mentioned 55 times in a single chapter for the period from late 1952 to 1953, which may indicate how seriously they took Eisenhower's New Look strategy. And it summarizes *Shingongsae* with two points: 1) forming new front line by conducting amphibious attacks on the northern part of the North Korean rear 2) using the Air Force and Navy, attacking the main land of China, containing the seashores of China and attacking China rear by using Chiang Kai-Shek's clans.<sup>57</sup> It also explains that after Eisenhower's return from his visit to Korea, "the US imperialists immediately prepared *Shingongsae*, and deployed enormous forces from warships to jetfighters, and gave more power to the army of the South Korean puppet regime,

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<sup>55</sup> *Chosun* is the traditional name of the last Korean dynasty that was annexed by Japan in 1910. North Korea prefers to call itself *Chosun* as a symbol of independence. *Chosun Junsu* is one of the largest volumes, which is consisted of more than 40 books. The access to the volume is limited because of the sensitive political relation between North and South Korea.

<sup>56</sup> *Chosun Junsu: HyundaiPheon*. [Korean War History: Modern Era]. Vol 27. (Pyongyang: *Kwahak Paekkwajun*, 1981), p. 274. All Korean language passages in the *Chosun Junsu* are translated by the author unless specified otherwise.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 275.

and even planned to use Japanese militarists and Chiang Kai-Shek's mercenaries".<sup>58</sup> Moreover, it has a specific part describing the Eisenhower administration's atomic diplomacy: "since 1953, the US imperialists were precipitating *Shingongsae* and repeatedly reviewed *the strategic use of atomic bombs* in the JCS, and they discussed using Chiang's puppet divisions and bombing the air fields, railroads, and production areas in Northern China".<sup>59</sup>

One interesting point is that, according to the source, Kim Il Sung emphasized ideological consolidation as a means to defeat the Eisenhower's *Shingongsae* which was a main reason for his purging domestic dissidents. It states "in order to concentrate all our abilities on destroying *Shingongsae* by consolidating the revolutionary spirit of our labor party, Comrade Kim Il Sung summoned the Fifth All-Member Labor Committee Congress in December 1952".<sup>60</sup> It further states that "in the discussion of the Congress, the plot of the reactionary spies such as Park Hun Young, and Lee Seung Yeop, was detected. As Eisenhower committed to a *Shingongsae*, they planned to overthrow our party and regime by coordinating with the enemy and attempting a coup. However, under the great direction from Comrade Kim Il Sung, their reactionary plot was revealed, and they received the solemn punishment".<sup>61</sup> It finally concludes "it was the purge of the reactionary spies and ideological solidification of the party in the Fifth All-Member Congress that would advance ultimate victory in the war."<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, in parts of the collection of Kim Il Sung's writings's writings, he mentioned again that they should eliminate domestic dissidents having ideological problems in order to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p, 276.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p, 276.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p, 276.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-83.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p, 284.



counter Eisenhower's *Shingongsae* and win the war.<sup>63</sup> Also in his speech to the Fifth All-Member Congress on December 15, 1952, he declared "The US imperialists and their scientists are praising their atomic weapons and bacteriological weapons in order to justify their war and predatory policy."<sup>64</sup> Finally, on December 18, 1952 in the concluding session of the same Congress, he declared that:

There is no doubt that the US imperialists will perish. Initially some people were scared of atomic weapons without good reasons, but [we] do not fear them because we now know them. It looked scary when the US imperialists monopolized atomic bombs and boasted about them, but there is no reason to fear them today when other countries have also built them.<sup>65</sup>

Based upon these sources, it is likely the North Korean regime recognized Eisenhower's New Look strategy and Eisenhower's nuclear threat, though it did not admit it as a serious danger, which might be a necessary position to take to defend their prestige regardless of their actual perception of the nuclear threat. It is also noteworthy that Kim Il Sung and his faction used Eisenhower's *Shingongsae* as a justification for eliminating their domestic opposition and consolidating the power of their regime.

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<sup>63</sup> Kim Il Sung, *Kim Il Sung's Writing Collection* (Pyongyang: Chosun Labor Party Press, 1980), pp. 440-441.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp, 389-390

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 438.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Nuclear Attitudes of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon during the Vietnam War

During the Cold War many scholars and practitioners believed that coercive nuclear diplomacy was more or less irrelevant in the Vietnam war due to the nature of the civil war and the political environment in the late 1960s. For example, McGeorge Bundy, a special assistant for national security affairs at the White House during the Kennedy and Johnson administration, said “The assumption of the time that Vietnam was no place for nuclear warfare was so strongly held, indeed, both in the government and in the country, that no memoir writer of the Washington of the day has bothered to explain it”.<sup>1</sup> Richard Betts also stated “few with any sensitivity to political realities would expect nuclear threats to be relevant to revolutionary civil wars in the third world, such as the Vietnam War”.<sup>2</sup> However, newly revealed documents from the Vietnam era show that in October 1969 the Nixon administration launched a global nuclear alert, code-named Joint Chiefs of Staff Readiness Test, aimed at coercing the Soviets into pressuring the North Vietnamese to accept American terms in the coming truce negotiation in Paris.<sup>3</sup> The October nuclear alert was one of the largest exercises conducted by the U.S. military, yet it was carried out unknown to the public, so secretly that only a few of Nixon’s close advisors knew about the goals and implications of the operation. In addition to the secret nuclear

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<sup>1</sup> McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 536.

<sup>2</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Sagan and Jeremi Suri, “The Madman Nuclear Alert: Secrecy, Signaling, and Safety in October 1969,” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring, 2003); and William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball, *Nixon’s Nuclear Specter: The Secret Alert of 1960, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015).

alert in 1969, the Nixon administration used nuclear threats during the India-Pakistan conflict in 1971, and the Middle East war in 1973.<sup>4</sup>

Nixon's active use of coercive nuclear diplomacy is quite different from how Lyndon Johnson perceived nuclear weapons. Johnson not only opposed nuclear use during his presidential campaign, but also after he was elected he did not seriously consider using nuclear weapons in the war. Although some prominent military and political leaders recommended him to use or threaten use of nuclear weapons, he did not accept their recommendations.<sup>5</sup> Why would Nixon have wanted to use nuclear coercion at all in the Vietnam War where strategic and political environments for credibly threatening nuclear use were much less favorable during Johnson's era? Again, the difference in perceiving and utilizing nuclear weapons between Johnson and Nixon raises a question about the validity of existing nuclear theories.

The logic of nuclear balance cannot explain the difference because from the late 1960s most U.S. leaders recognized that the U.S. lost its nuclear superiority as the Soviets dramatically increased their nuclear arsenals. According Richard Betts, the Johnson administration began to admit that superpowers were in a position of nuclear parity.<sup>6</sup> In 1971 Nixon himself expressed his recognition of nuclear parity in his interview with a English journalist Henry Brandon: "In the fifties, I was A strong supporter of...brinkmanship...massive retaliation...It was a viable policy: that when the United States had enormous nuclear advantage...Today the nuclear equation does not hold."<sup>7</sup> Nixon also stated in the meeting with the committee on Arms Control

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<sup>4</sup> T.V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 74-77.

<sup>5</sup> Nina Tannenwald, "Nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2006), p. 678 and 691.

<sup>6</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> Oval Office Conversation no. 460-23, Nixon and Henry Brandon, 4:01-5:08 pm, 26 February 1971, WHT, RNPL, quoted in Burr and Kimball *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, 2015, p. 51.

and Disarmament: “The Soviets and Americans were now equal...in this room we know – and Soviet intelligence knows – that we have weakness.”<sup>8</sup> If nuclear balance strictly dictated state behaviors, the Nixon administration should have shown as much restraint if not more than the Johnson administration.

The norms factors may be relevant in this period because, given the unpopularity of the war, both presidents seemed to be very sensitive to domestic political opinion. However, the norms argument is inadequate to explain the difference because if anti-war and anti-nuclear movements had restrained U.S. governments, they would have had effected more on the Nixon administration than the Johnson administration. As Johnson’s strategy of ratcheting up conventional bombings did not produce the desired outcome while casualties of U.S. soldiers increased, domestic and international protests against the war went grew and spread widely. The unpopularity of the war became more evident as Nixon entered the White House. On October 15 1969, “a quarter of million people came to Washington for a moratorium on the war.”<sup>9</sup> The documents show that both Nixon and Kissinger were clearly aware of the limits on their freedom of action, constrained by the domestic political situations.<sup>10</sup>

Most recently scholars have argued that Nixon and Kissinger used nuclear threats because they believed Nixon’s nuclear brinkmanship strategy, based on generating a reputation of recklessness and even craziness, would make an incredible nuclear threat credible and successfully coerce adversaries even under severe strategic and political constraints<sup>11</sup>. However, they did not clearly explain why under similar situations some leaders thought using nuclear threat in the Vietnam war was viable whereas others thought it was absurd. I attribute such a

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<sup>8</sup> Meeting between President Nixon and Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, 21 March 1972, editorial note, FRUS: 1969-1972, vol. 14, 218, quote in Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 110.

<sup>9</sup> Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 1988, p. 538.

<sup>10</sup> Burr and Kimball *Nixon’s Nuclear Specter*, 2015, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012; and Burr and Kimball, *Nixon’s Nuclear Specter*, 2015.

difference to their different experiences of major events in the early Cold War. Johnson and his top advisors had personally experienced the 1962 Cuban missile crisis during which the U.S. more than ever before almost faced an all-out nuclear war with the Soviets. It seems that such dramatic events shaped Kennedy/Johnson and their top official's nuclear attitudes so that they treated nuclear weapons as non-conventional, which, they believed, should not be used short of an extreme situation like a massive Soviet invasion of Western Europe. That experience also might have led them to be more sensitive to nuclear proliferation and put greater effort than other administrations to stop it.

However, Nixon along with his top advisors seemed to draw different lessons from the same event. What Nixon learned from the missile crisis was apparently not that the U.S should be more cautious with nuclear weapons, but that it should behave more recklessly to overcome the credibility problem imposed by superpower nuclear parity. He lamented that the U.S. had lost the freedom of action that it had until early 1960s. Nixon also derived his nuclear diplomatic strategy, represented by his 'madman theory', from his observation of Eisenhower's atomic diplomacy during the Korean War, the two Taiwan Crises in 1954 and 1958, and the 1956 Suez Crisis. He repeatedly said that he saw that nuclear threats worked before and they would work now.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Nixon's nuclear learning seemed to be fairly spurious. His belief that the communists backed down mainly because of Eisenhower's nuclear threat was not based on credible facts. Scholars are still debating about the efficacy of Eisenhower's atomic diplomacy and the debate will not be resolved until China, Russia, and North Korea fully reveal their

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<sup>12</sup> Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, 2015, p. 51.

classified documents. Despite Nixon's *strong* conviction in the power of nuclear coercion, it would be fair to say that such a strong belief was unwarranted.

Lastly, nuclear attitudes in Nixon's nuclear policies were internally less coherent than Johnson's were. The incoherence in Nixon's nuclear policy would be most noticeable in the implications of his madman theory for nuclear nonproliferation. The theory supposes that by manipulating reputations and the risk of escalation a coercer can make incredible nuclear threat credible without having nuclear superiority. The implication of madman theory would be that a weak nuclear state could win in a competition of risk-taking against a stronger nuclear state if the weak could generate enough fear and uncertainty. If that was true, nuclear proliferation should be fundamentally dangerous, because a small nuclear state could blackmail the U.S. Nevertheless, both Nixon and Kissinger were not particularly concerned about nuclear proliferation. They thought it was 'inevitable and may be even desirable' if close allies acquired the weapons.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, Johnson had more consistent nuclear attitudes. By regarding nuclear weapons as a different type of weapon, he tried to curtail nuclear proliferation; overall abstained from nuclear threats; and tried to achieve arms control with the Soviets. Shane Maddock criticizes him for delaying the launching of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty prioritizing other security and domestic goals.<sup>14</sup> Maddock's criticism would be right in the sense that he could have pursued stronger nuclear nonproliferation policies if he had been determined to do so. Nonetheless, his nuclear policies including nuclear nonproliferation have been at least more consistent and less counterproductive than Nixon's were.

In the first part of this chapter I describe and compare the nuclear coercive diplomacy of the Johnson and the Nixon administrations during the Vietnam war. Second, I explain their

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<sup>13</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 105.

<sup>14</sup> Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 2010.

different nuclear attitudes possibly shaped by their experiences of major crises. Finally, I discuss the implication of the difference.

### **Nuclear Coercion during the Vietnam War**

The Johnson administration did not completely abstain from using nuclear threats, but records are sparse. The known cases were at best implicit nuclear deterrence, not backed by any tangible military action or explicit verbal warning. According to Nina Tannenwald, a few top officials including McNamara and Rusk apparently issued some vague threats that implied nuclear use. For example, *the New York Times* reporter recorded McNamara's remarks to American reporters on 22 April, 1966: "We would use nuclear weapons only after fully applying non-nuclear arsenal...But 'inhibitions' on using nuclear weapons are NOT 'overwhelming'... 'We'd use whatever weapons we felt necessary to achieve our object.'" But, he toned down his remarks the very next day as they raised a concern about ABOUT nuclear use.<sup>15</sup> Apparently, the Soviets were concerned about a possible nuclear use by the Johnson administration in 1965, but there is no reliable evidence that the U.S. was deliberately trying to use nuclear coercion against the Soviets.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, Nixon clearly intended to use nuclear coercion against Moscow, Peiping and Hanoi during the Vietnam war, although he wanted to keep it secret from the public and even his

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<sup>15</sup> 'Background Briefing With Secretary McNamara,' Memo, 22 April 1965, US Policy in the Vietnam War, 1954–1968, VI01501, Vietnam Conference, June 1997, Box 3, National Security Archive. Emphasis in original. quoted in Nina Tannenwald, *Nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2006), p. 688.

<sup>16</sup> Ilya Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee 1996), 73. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 689.

NATO allies. I define Nixon's nuclear alerts in 1969 as implicit nuclear compellence. His nuclear threats were implicit as the threats were designed to warn the communists but not be overly provocative. Nevertheless, what Nixon tried to achieve was compellence as its aim was to change the opponents' behaviors and agree on the armistice by enunciating a threat to use nuclear weapons.

Between October 13 and 30, 1969, the U.S. conducted worldwide military exercise, officially known as the Joint Chief of Staff readiness test. The major purpose of the operation was to send a warning to North Vietnam and the communist patrons supporting Hanoi that the U.S. was ready to escalate with massive force including nuclear weapons if they did not agree to the U.S. terms at the coming armistice negotiation in Paris. According to William Burr and Jeffrey Kimball, the operation alert may have been one of the largest and most extensive secret military operations in U.S. history. It involved massive military forces, such as 'attack aircraft, strategic bombers, Polaris submarines, aircraft carriers, and destroyers.' It was also a highly secret operation as only President Nixon, and his close advisors like his national security adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, Kissinger's military assistant, Colonel Alexander Haig, and the president's chief of staff, Harry Robbins Pursley, knew about the alert's "underlying policy goals and its relationship to the Vietnam War."<sup>17</sup> Nixon and Kissinger also sent messages to Moscow through private diplomatic channels that if there were no major progress in the peace negotiation by November 1, the U.S. would "be forced to take measures of the great consequences".<sup>18</sup>

Overall, the 1969 nuclear alert did not bring about the outcome that Nixon aimed to achieve. The war continued after the November 1 deadline despite the alert. Still it is unclear how exactly Moscow and Hanoi received the U.S. nuclear alert. What we know is that even though

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<sup>17</sup> Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, 2015, pp. 1-3.

<sup>18</sup> Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 1988, p. 539.



the 1969 alert did not succeed, the Nixon administration did not renounce using nuclear coercion at later times. Nixon's nuclear threats in the 1971 India-Pakistan war and the 1973 Middle East war vindicated his continuing belief in the power of nuclear coercion.<sup>19</sup> Also according to Sagan and Suri, the 1969 alert was potentially very dangerous because part of the operation was poorly managed and some low level military officials did not completely follow the instructions of not directly provoking Moscow. For instance, some B-52 bombers flew over "the Arctic ice, on routes toward the Soviet Union and back, without the use of ground-based navigational aids from radar sites in Alaska".<sup>20</sup> Sagan pointed out flights without the navigation aids in 1962 accidentally entered the Soviets' defense warning net.<sup>21</sup> Apparently in 1969 Washington did not know about the earlier incident.<sup>22</sup>

## **Johnson and Nixon's Nuclear Attitudes**

### **a. Johnson's Nuclear Attitude**

In his presidential campaign in 1964, Johnson strongly opposed the Republican rival Barry Goldwater's position on nuclear weapons that embraced their use against communists and

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<sup>19</sup> For more details about two cases, see Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 1987, pp. 123-129.

<sup>20</sup> 88. Message 211841Z Nov 69, 15th Air Force to SAC, Subject: Problems Encountered in SEAGA Operation, FOIA. Quoted in Sagan and Suri 2003, 175.

<sup>21</sup> Scott Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) pp. 73-77, quoted in Sagan and Suri, "The Madman Nuclear Alert," 2003, p. 175.

<sup>22</sup> Sagan and Suri, "The Madman Nuclear Alert," 2003, pp. 174-175.

encouraged the delegation of the authority to use nuclear weapons to the military.<sup>23</sup> Johnson stated in his campaign speech in Detroit in September:

“Modern weapons are not like any other. In the first nuclear exchange, 100 million Americans and more than 100 million Russians would all be dead. And when it was all over, our great cities would be in ashes, our fields would be barren, our industry would be destroyed, and our American dreams would have vanished. As long as I am president I will bend every effort to make sure that day never comes.”<sup>24</sup>

He also said in a campaign speech:

“Make no mistake. There is no such thing as a conventional nuclear weapon. For 19 peril-filled years no nation has loosened the atom against another. To do so now is a political decision of the highest order. And it would lead us down an uncertain path of blows and counterblows whose outcome none may know. No President of the United States of America can divert himself of the responsibility for such a decision.”<sup>25</sup>

Bundy thought there was obviously politics in his campaign against Goldwater’s nuclear attitude, but he emphasized that Johnson had ‘passionate conviction’ in it.<sup>26</sup> Bundy also believed

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<sup>23</sup> McGeorge Bundy, “The Presidency and Peace,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 42, no. 3 (April 1964), p. 364, quoted in Thomas A. Schwartz, “Moving Beyond the Cold War: The Johnson Administration, Bridge-Building, and Détente” in eds. by Francis J. Gavin and Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the New Global Challenges of the 1960s*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> LBJ Speech, September 7, 1964, Public Papers of the President, Lyndon, quoted in Schwartz, “Moving Beyond the Cold War,” 2014, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson *Public Paper*, 1964. P. 1051, quoted in Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 1988, p. 537.

<sup>26</sup> Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 1988, p. 538.

that in Johnson's mind Vietnam was a great pain but it "never came anywhere near the level of importance that would require" using the bomb. To Johnson the bomb was "never a merely conventional weapon".<sup>27</sup>

According to George Herring's analysis of the Johnson administration's Vietnam war strategy, Johnson and his advisors Bundy, Rusk and William, as "veterans of the Cuban missile crisis", believed that a nuclear exchange would be an "unspeakable calamity" and they believed in their great responsibility of preventing nuclear war. They also committed to limit the war as much as possible in terms of "the geographical area of the conflict and the volume of force used," while they asserted their own operational control over their use, rather than the military's.<sup>28</sup>

Lyndon Johnson stated in his memoir that the full meaning of the Cuban missile crisis was that "Nuclear blackmail is not an effective instrument of national policy, at least if the threatened nation is strong and determined." He believed that leaders in the world gradually realized the meaning of the change.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, although some senior military leaders and the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. raised the possibility of nuclear use during the war, Johnson and his top advisors rejected their ideas.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 1988, p. 537.

<sup>28</sup> George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 180.

<sup>29</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspective of the Presidency 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 438.

b. Nixon's Nuclear Attitude: the Madman theory<sup>31</sup>

Scholars labeled Nixon's nuclear brinkmanship the 'madman strategy' as Nixon himself referred it as a 'madman theory'. His basic strategy was to fully utilize the coercive value of nuclear weapons by manipulating the risk of escalation and projecting an image of an irrational and reckless leader who might even commit a suicidal action. According to Francis Gavin, by using the strategy Nixon and Kissinger wanted to overcome the limits imposed by strategic nuclear parity and domestic political opposition to the large spending on a nuclear arms buildup.<sup>32</sup>

Nixon seemed to develop his madman theory by learning lessons from two major events. First, the Cuban missile crisis led him to believe somewhat contradictory lessons: first the U.S. could have prevailed in the crisis for its nuclear superiority, and second brinkmanship would work if a coercer can scare a target as Khrushchev did. On the one hand, Nixon often stated that Kennedy was able to win in the crisis because the U.S. had a clear strategic nuclear superiority, but such a strategic advantage had disappeared when he became a president. Gavin even describes that Nixon was almost 'obsessed with nuclear strategic superiority.'<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, he was very impressed by former Soviet general secretary Khrushchev. He told in a *Time* magazine interview in 1985 that he thought Khrushchev was the most brilliant world leader because he projected a reputation for 'rashness, bellicosity, and

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<sup>31</sup> William Burr and Jeffrey Kimball did a thorough job of putting sources about Nixon's nuclear thinking in their book, *Nixon's Nuclear Spector: The Secrete Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War*. The discussion about the Nixon's nuclear learning and his developing the madman theory in this section was largely drawn from their work.

<sup>32</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 112.

<sup>33</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 111.

instability'...and "he scared the hell of people"<sup>34</sup> He also mentioned in his memoir that Khrushchev's belligerent manner in the 1950s had convinced Western leaders that he "would have no qualms about using" his missiles "to unleash a nuclear war".<sup>35</sup> According to Burr and Kimball, Nixon drew lessons from these histories and came to believe that projecting a reputation of 'madness' could make the 'incredible threat credible' in the era of nuclear parity between superpowers and in asymmetric conflict against 'revolutionary' forces that lack nuclear capabilities.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, Richard Nixon as vice president closely observed how Dwight Eisenhower employed nuclear threats during the Korean War in 1953, and such experiences seemed to shape his overall nuclear attitude and his particular nuclear strategy. He repeatedly said in interviews with journalists, on the presidential campaign trail, and to his advisors in private that he believed that it was Eisenhower's threat of using nuclear weapons that forced the communists to come to the negotiating table and agree to the armistice<sup>37</sup> For instance in a meeting with southern delegates at the Republican convention in August 1968, when he was asked about how to end the war in Vietnam, he referred to his experience of how Eisenhower handled the Korean war:

How do you bring a war to a conclusion? I'll tell you how Korea was ended. We go in there and had this messy war on our hands. Eisenhower...let the word go out diplomatically to the Chinese and the North [Koreans] that we would not tolerate this continued ground war of attrition. And within a matter of months, they negotiated. Well,

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<sup>34</sup> *Time*, July 23, 1985, quoted in Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>35</sup> Nixon, *RN*, p. 129. quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>37</sup> Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 1988, p. 538; and Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, p. 51.

as far as negotiation [in Vietnam] is concerned that should be our position. We'll be militarily strong and diplomatically strong.<sup>38</sup>

Nixon also told his White House Chief of Staff, H. R. Haldeman, that Eisenhower's nuclear threats induced the ending of the Korean war. Haldeman also recalled him saying:

They'll believe any threat of force that Nixon makes because it's Nixon. I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that "for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about communism. We can't restrain him when he's angry- and he has his hand on the nuclear button" ... and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace.<sup>39</sup>

Henry Kissinger also shared Nixon's ideas of the madman theory. Leonard Garment, a special White House consultant, recalled in 1997 that Kissinger briefed him on what he should do in his meeting with the Soviet officials [in Moscow in July 1969]: "If the chance comes your way, Kissinger told me, convey the impression that Nixon is somewhat "crazy" ... at moments of stress or personal challenge unpredictable and capable of the bloodiest brutality. Today, anyone familiar with Nixon's foreign policy knows about the "madman" strategy."<sup>40</sup> According to

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<sup>38</sup> According to Burr and Kimball, those were Nixon's off-the-record remarks, obtained by a local journalist. See more "What Dick Nixon Told Southern Delegates," *Miami Herald*, 7 August 1968, I and 22A, quoted in Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, 2015, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, p. 53; See more in Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 52; *Time*, July 23, 1985; Haldeman, *The Ends of power*, pp. 82-82.

<sup>40</sup> Leonard Garment, *Crazy Rhythm* (New York: Times Books, 1997), 174, 176-77, quoted in Burr and Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter*, p. 54.

Seymour Hersh, in a Vietnam strategy meeting where Kissinger met Daniel Ellsberg and Thomas Schelling on 26 December 1968, Kissinger responded to Ellsberg's criticism of the escalation strategy in the Vietnam by saying that "How can you conduct diplomacy without a threat of escalation? Without that there is no basis for negotiations."<sup>41</sup>

### **Nuclear Proliferation Attitudes**

The different nuclear attitudes of Johnson and Nixon were also manifest in their approaches to nuclear nonproliferation. Nuclear proliferation became a major issue for the Johnson administration as China conducted its first nuclear test in October 1964. China's nuclear test raised a serious concern about a "chain reaction", which could lead to nuclear acquisition by Israel and West Germany.<sup>42</sup>

In response to the China's test, in November 1965 Johnson appointed former Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric as a chair of the Gilpatric committee. The committee issued a secret report on January 1965, which warned of an "increasingly grave threat" of nuclear proliferation to the U.S. security and urged a "concerted and intensified effort" to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.<sup>43</sup> It is not entirely clear how far the Gilpatric report affected Johnson's nonproliferation policy, but Johnson continued negotiations with the Soviets and its major allies to conclude the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, which in 1968 the U.S. and the Soviet Union

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<sup>41</sup> Hersh, *Price of Power*, p. 49; Daniel Ellsberg, *Rolling Stone*, 8 November 1973, pp. 37-38, quoted in Burr and Kimball, 2015, p. 62.

<sup>42</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, pp. 116-117.

<sup>43</sup> Report by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation, 21 January 1965, Johnson Administration, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter FRUS] 1965, vol. 11, doc. 64 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office [GPO], 1965), <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v11/d64>. Quoted in Nicholas L. Miller, 2014. "Nuclear Dominoes: A Self-Defeating Prophecy?," *Security Studies* Vol 23, No.1 (2014), p. 34.

finally agreed to sign.<sup>44</sup> Many scholars and practitioners still believe that the NPT launched by the Johnson administration was one of major successes for nuclear nonproliferation.

However, Nixon's nonproliferation approach was very different from Johnson's. According to Francis Gavin's analysis, Nixon and Kissinger believed that given the political and military of nuclear weapons, the spread of nuclear weapons was "not only inevitable but also potentially desirable" if the weapons were acquired by U.S. close allies. Therefore, they thought there was not much merit in spending their political capital for the purpose of halting nuclear proliferation.<sup>45</sup>

As a Republican presidential nominee Nixon undercut Johnson's nonproliferation effort by insisting that Senate in September should halt the NPT ratification "until the Czech invasion could be fully assessed."<sup>46</sup> After he was elected, Nixon advised his staff not to pressure other states to ratify the treaty when he finally approved sending it to the Senate for ratification.<sup>47</sup> The President himself said in the NSC meeting that [NPT] "treaties don't necessarily get us very much".<sup>48</sup>

Most of all, Nixon selectively enforced the treaty, as the administration did not put hard pressure on France and especially Israel to stop their nuclear weapons development. In fact, Avner Cohen's recent research shows that Nixon and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir made a deal that the U.S. would not press Israel to give up its nuclear weapons in return for to which

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<sup>44</sup> T.V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapon*, 2009, p. 71.

<sup>45</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, pp. 105-106.

<sup>46</sup> Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 2010, p. 282.

<sup>47</sup> Roger Kelly Smith, "The Origins of the Regime, Nonproliferation, National Interests, and American Decision-Making, 1943-1976." (PhD Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1990), p. 370. quoted in Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 117.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the NSC, 29 January 1969, National Security Council Draft Minutes, box H-12, Nixon Presidential Materials, U.S. National Archives, College Park, Maryland, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 117.



Israel would maintain the opaque status of its nuclear weapons.<sup>49</sup> Shane Maddock even argues that Nixon discarded “all but the most symbolic efforts at enforcement” of the treaty.<sup>50</sup>

### **Nixon’s Spurious Nuclear Learning**

Given the available records, there is no doubt that both Nixon and Kissinger were much more serious about exploiting their nuclear leverage in a crisis than the Johnson administration had been, and they did not put a sincere effort in stopping nuclear proliferation. What has not been discussed much by previous researchers is that leaders’ nuclear learning could be sometimes unfounded and could mislead them. First, it is unclear whether Nixon’s conviction in the efficacy of nuclear coercion was based on evidences or just followed his prior beliefs. Considering the inherent difficulty of assessing the success of nuclear coercion and circumstances that Nixon had before and during his presidency, the latter would be more likely to be the case. As I discussed in the previous chapter, there are no credible sources discovered yet that could definitely conclude that Eisenhower’s nuclear threat ended the Korean War. Scholars still are debating if Stalin’s death in the spring of 1953 and China’s mounting costs from waging the protracted war were more decisive than other factors. I agree with the notion that Eisenhower’s nuclear threats during the war were not a bluff given what he talked and planned with his political and military advisors. My research also shows that North Korean

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<sup>49</sup> Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel’s Bargain with the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 2010, pp. 251-252.

leaders recognized Eisenhower's nuclear threats. But we still do not know what led Chinese and North Korean communists to agree on the armistice.

Second, leaders can learn very different lessons from the same major event depending on their prior beliefs and their level of exposure to information. It is noteworthy that, as Gavin describes, Kennedy and Johnson's top advisors strongly denied the argument that U.S. prevailed in the Cuban missile crisis because of its nuclear superiority, whereas Nixon who was not an incumbent official during the crisis believed that it was U.S. nuclear superiority that compelled the Soviets.<sup>51</sup> Again it is more likely to be the case that Nixon's conviction about the crisis outcome was not based on credible evidence. Here Nixon's descriptions about the missile crisis are notable. On 14 February 1969 in the NSC meeting Nixon mentioned about the leverage Kennedy had by saying that "Kennedy saw 5-1 in 1962... We can't do this today."<sup>52</sup> But three years later he doubled the ratio of the leverage in the meeting with Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament by saying that "In 1962, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, it had been 'no contest' because we had a ten to one superiority."<sup>53</sup> Regardless the correctness of the ratio, the change between two conversations seems to be dramatic.

Finally, Sagan and Suri raise an important point that a government's learning from the past mistakes is not always easy. Apparently Nixon and Kissinger made a similar mistake, as the previous administration had, of poorly organizing and executing the risky military operation that could cause an accidental nuclear use, partly because they did not learn about "the limits to their control over nuclear operations."<sup>54</sup> Albeit such learning is a different concept to what I defined in

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<sup>51</sup> Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Note on NSC meeting, 14 February 1969, DNSA, item no. KT00006, 3. Quoted in Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 2012, p. 111.

<sup>53</sup> Meeting between President Nixon and Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, 21 March 1972, editorial note, *FRUS: 1969-1972*, vol. 14, 218, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>54</sup> Sagan and Suri, "The Madman Nuclear Alert," 2003, p. 180.

my nuclear learning theory, learning of past organizational errors could have also made U.S. leaders more cautious in conducting nuclear diplomacy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Coercive Nuclear Diplomacy After the Cold War: North Korea and Libya

Despite the expectation that nuclear weapons would become obsolete in world politics in the post-Cold war era, nuclear proliferation to terrorists and states oppositional to the United States has been one of the major concerns for U.S. governments. Combined with diplomatic negotiation and economic sanction, the U.S. used implicit and explicit threat to use military force, sometimes including nuclear weapons, to prevent Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea from acquiring weapons. Specifically President George W. Bush in his State of Union address on January 29, 2002 designated Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as ‘axis of evil’ and he repeated this remarks in other places.<sup>1</sup> The concept of “preemptive and preventive action” in Bush’s *National Security Strategy* (NSS), issued on September 2002 was widely perceived around that time as a signal that U.S. was willing to use a radical force, even tactical and bunker-buster nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup> In fact, during the second North Korean nuclear crisis from 2003 to 2007, the U.S. dispatched F-117 stealth bombers, which can launch bunker-buster bombs, to Korean Peninsula at least four times and made the deployment public apparently to coerce North Korea to return to the nuclear negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

During the Bush presidency, those states under U.S. pressure to give up nuclear weapons took a very different path. Although both Iran and Iraq resisted U.S. demands to fully open their

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<sup>1</sup> For the full statement of the address, see <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the NSS, see “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. September 2002; [www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> For more detail analysis of the U.S. coercive diplomacy during the second North Korean Crisis, see Yongho Kim and Myung Chul Kim, “North Korea’s Risk-taking vis-à-vis the U.S.,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XIX, No. 4 (Winter 2007).

nuclear facilities for inspection by the IAEA, U.S. decided to invade Iraq and toppled the Saddam regime in 2003. Libya gave up its nuclear weapons program in 2003 whereas North Korea went nuclear overtly by conducting a test in 2006. Given the salient issue of nuclear proliferation, it is important to know how U.S. coercive diplomacy affected those four states' different decisions, and it is also relevant to the theme of my dissertation. I argue that the reason why North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear weapons programs in 1994 was that the U.S. threat to use force was backed by a credible assurance to not go to war against it. Without former President Jimmy Carter's intervention to prevent the breakdown of the nuclear negotiation, the 1994 crisis could have escalated to a military conflict and possibly a catastrophic regional war. Apparently the Bush administration opposed the way the 1994 crisis was handled. His administration initially tried to coerce North Korea to give up nuclear weapons completely while not even allowing a meaningful dialogue with U.S. diplomats to resolve the conflict. That approach was quite different from what U.S. did with regard to Libya. With the mediation of Great Britain, in 2003 the U.S. had a direct negotiation with the Qadhafi regime.

In this chapter, I explain how U.S. coercive diplomacy against North Korea and Libya produced different outcomes of North Korea's declared nuclear proliferation and Libya's nuclear reversal. Because these events occurred fairly recently, it is very hard to find credible primary sources to learn the exact decision-making of the U.S. and its adversaries. Therefore I rely mostly on the secondary literature, which provide at least circumstantial evidence to better understand the incidents.

## North Korea and Libya's Different Nuclear Paths<sup>4</sup>

In 2004 during the Bush administration, the United States succeeded in ending Libya's WMD program whereas it failed to prevent North Korea's nuclear acquisition in 2006. Considering the similar domestic and international situations of Kim Jong-il and Muammar Qadhafi regarding nuclear proliferation issues, the contrast in their final decisions is puzzling. The similarity of conditions North Korea and Libya provides a rare opportunity to compare two cases that are similar except for some key variables.

From the systemic level, the security environments of North Korea and Libya provide favorable conditions to generate a demand for nuclear weapons. Despite the armistice agreed to in 1953, North Korea is still in the state of war with South Korea and the U.S. It faces more than 600,000 troops of the Republic of Korea and the large U.S. military force including U.S. air forces and a heavy artillery division. As a communist country having an experience of all-out war and still hostile relations with the U.S., North Korea would have seen the fall of Saddam Hussein in the Iraq War seriously increasing the existential threat. The summit record of the Foreign Ministry of Japan, leaked to the NHK, one of the major Japan broadcasting corporations, shows the fear Kim Jong-il was experiencing. In conversation with Japan's former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in the 2002 summit, Kim Jong-il reportedly said that he was afraid of facing the same consequences as Iraq if North Korea gave up nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup>

In case of Libya, the security environment in early 2000 was no better than North Korea's. Initially, Libya's vast geographical size, and permeable borders made it vulnerable to

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<sup>4</sup> The part of this chapter was presented in the Midwest Political Science Association conference in April 2011.

<sup>5</sup> The source is from the website of the Korean news agency, YTN, which obtained the information from the NHK. [http://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0104\\_200911092314240340](http://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0104_200911092314240340)

external intervention and threats. Bowen argues that to deter external interference, the regime attempted to create an image of Libya as a powerful regional player and actively developed its reputation for being “dangerous and unpredictable.”<sup>6</sup> As a result of Libya’s hostile behaviors and its sponsorship of terrorism, Libya was under comprehensive sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the UN Security Council. It was also diplomatically isolated because of its military interference with other states in the Middle East and Northern Africa as well as its antagonistic relations with Israel. In response to Libya’s involvement in terrorist attacks against American and other western targets, the Reagan administration severed all diplomatic and economic ties. It froze Libya’s financial assets and imposed extensive economic sanctions, and American oil companies withdrew from that country. In 1986 the U.S. shot down two Libyan aircraft over the Gulf of Sidra and bombed two Libyan cities (Tripoli and Benghazi), which reportedly wounded Qadhafi and killed his adopted daughter.<sup>7</sup> Given Libya’s proximity to Iraq and weaker deterrence power than North Korea, Libya would have perceived the Iraq war at least as serious a security threat as North Korea had. This similarity suggests that the existence of a security threat alone cannot explain North Korea and Libya’s contrasting choices about their nuclear weapon programs.

The Domestic situations of both states were not very different. Both states were autocratic regimes, dominated by a strong dictator. Kim Jong-il had been controlling North Korea more than 15 years since the death of his father, Kim Il-sung who was also the dictator of North Korea for more than 50 years. Qadhafi also had ruled over Libya since his revolution overthrew the monarchy of King Idbris in 1969.

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<sup>6</sup> Wyn Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation: Stepping Back from the Brink*, in Adelphi Paper, 380 (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson and Christopher A. Whytock, “Who “won” Libya?: The Force-Diplomacy Debate and Its Implications for Theory and Policy,” *International Security* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Winter 2005/06), p. 59.

Etel Solingen argues that the domestic political and economic situation shapes the regime's political survival model, which is the crucial variable to decide whether a state will "nuclearize" or "denuclearize." Thus, nuclear aspirants are more likely to emerge from a domestic political landscape dominated by "inward-oriented coalitions", which base their political survival on import-substitution industrialization and military-industrial complex. In contrast, nuclearization is less likely to happen for states whose "outward-looking coalitions", based on its regime survival on the export-orient industrialization and open economy, dominate domestic politics, as was the case of most East Asian states except North Korea.<sup>8</sup> According to Etel Solingen, both states' regimes pursued their political survival on the basis of inward-looking models and later attempted to reform their political survival models. Their economic structures were closed and relied on the import substitute industrialization. North Korea's Juche Ideology (meaning self-sufficiency) is the principal foundation of its economic philosophy.

Libya's economy is also highly inward-looking mainly because of Qadhafis's anti-capitalistic ideology and enormous oil reserves. The military-industrial complex plays a central role in domestic politics for both states. Solingen argues that Libya gave up its inward-looking strategy and tried to translate its economy to an outward-looking model, which was the important reason that the regime ended its nuclear weapons programs.<sup>9</sup> However, she does not clearly explain why North Korea went nuclear despite its efforts to reform its economy as Libya did. After North Korea suffered a serious famine in late 90s due to the heavy flood and following drought, it tried to reform the economy and even opened Shinui-Ju and Kaesung areas in North Korea to attract foreign investment. This does not necessarily mean that Kim Jong-il wanted to

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<sup>8</sup> Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia & Middle East*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225



completely change its regime's economy to an outward looking-model, but it was more likely that he was as serious about transforming its economy as Qadhafi was.

Finally, the individual level analysis alone may not adequately explain the different paths. Jacque Hymans argues that psychological factors such as identity and emotions are the critical influences on decisions about nuclear weapons programs. According to his view, if decision makers are "oppositional and nationalist", having high pride for their states as well as high fear of neighboring states, they are more likely to decide to go nuclear.<sup>10</sup> North Korea and Libya's leaders are both oppositional and nationalistic. The elites of North Korea are oppositional to the United States, South Korea and other western states, calling them the enemy of communism. The decision-makers in Libya are also oppositional to Israel and western states, especially the U.S. Moreover, the elites of both states are nationalistic in that they heavily emphasize the pride and prestige of their states. The combination of fear and pride should have produced the chemistry for the decision to go nuclear for both regimes. The summary of the comparisons for the three levels of analysis is in table 2 below.

In conclusion, North Korea and Libya's external and internal conditions must have raised demand for nuclear weapons, and therefore should have produced similar outcomes. However, only North Korea became a declared nuclear state whereas Libya completely gave up its nuclear weapons as well as other WMD program. Next, I will show that these contrasting outcomes can be better understood by analyzing the bargaining processes between these two states and the U.S.

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 35-40.

Table 2: Similar Conditions in the Three Levels of Analysis for North Korea and Libya

Levels of Analysis	Detail Issues	North Korea	Libya
International System	Regional security environment	Antagonistic. Facing strong armies of South Korea and US	Diplomatically isolated. Active intervention in regional conflicts
	Relations with U.S	Antagonistic: Korean War, Pueblo Crisis, Axis of Evil, Seeking an end of US sanctions	Antagonistic: Libya Terror, US bombing in 1986, Candidate of US regime change policy, Seeking an end of US sanctions
State Level	Regime Type	Dictatorship: Kim Jong-IL	Dictatorship: Qadhafi
	Regime Goal	regime survival	regime survival
	Method of Power Transition	Family Succession: Kim Jong-il's son Kim Jung-un	Family Succession: Qadhafi's son, Saif al-Islam,
	Domestic Survival Model	Inward-Looking	Inward-Looking
Individual Level	Leader Type	Oppositional to imperialism capitalism, especially to US and South Korea	Oppositional to imperialism and capitalism, especially to US and Israel

		Nationalistic: Juche Ideology (Self-reliance)	Nationalistic: nationalism represented by pan-Arab movement / Self-reliance concept in Qadhafi's Green Book
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### North Korean Nuclear Crises

North Korea's deteriorating security environment and its domestic concerns for regime survival obviously raised the demand for nuclear weapons. The end of the Cold War and the reform of Chinese economy made North Korea the sole communist state and isolated it from international society. North Korea's nuclear program had been opaque until the U.S. intelligence reveal suspicious activities in nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and in early 1993 the IAEA requested a special inspection of those facilities. In response to the IAEA's request, on March 11, 1993, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT, which provoked the first North Korean nuclear crisis.<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the first crisis, North Korea refused to have an IAEA special inspection, and strongly criticized the request as an unjust measure. Upon the North Korea's proclamation of withdrawing from the NPT, the Clinton administration held a bilateral negotiation with North Korea and attempted to resolve the problem peacefully.<sup>12</sup> However, as negotiations became prolonged, in May 1994, North Korea escalated the crisis by unloading

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<sup>11</sup> Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The first North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

spent fuel from the five-megawatt graphite-moderated reactor at Yongbyon, which could be used in making nuclear weapons. In response to North Korea's reactions, in June 1994, the Clinton administration requested the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions against North Korea. Robert Gallucci confirmed at a House hearing on June 9, 1994 that "several measures to reinforce U.S. forces in South Korea" had been undertaken.<sup>13</sup> President Clinton also stated in his memoir:

I was determined to stop North Korea from developing a nuclear arsenal, even at the risk of war. In order to make absolutely certain that the North Koreans knew we were serious, Perry continued the tough talk over the next three days, even saying that we would not rule out a preemptive military strike.<sup>14</sup>

However, the crisis was in the end resolved without a fight, producing a settlement, not just because the U.S.'s demonstrated its willingness to escalate but because it provided incentives to back down. When the tension was high, on June 15, 1994 Jimmy Carter visited Pyongyang and prevented the breakdown of the negotiation by providing the North Korea government "a face-saving way out."<sup>15</sup> Soon after Carter's visit, President Clinton announced that North Korea would return to negotiations with the United States. The overall negotiation process between North Korea and the U.S. was very. However, the U.S.'s credible commitment finally persuaded North Korea to freeze its nuclear program in return for assurance from the U.S. and economic aid including heavy oils and two light water reactors, as described in the Agreed

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<sup>13</sup> *New York Times*, June 3, 1994, p. A1.

<sup>14</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), p. 591.

<sup>15</sup> For more descriptions about Carter's role, see Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical*, p. 362 and 398.

Framework.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the deal was possible because their demands of both sides in the negotiations were eventually compatible. The goal of Clinton administration was not a regime change, but a policy change in North Korea. North Korea did not want to go to war with the U.S. even if it desired nuclear acquisition.

However, North Korea's demand for nuclear weapons could not have been completely eliminated by the Agreed Framework for several reasons. First of all, North Korea had expected to transform the 1953 armistice to a permanent peace agreement and had expected the Clinton administration to normalize relations, but this had not happened. Thus, its security concern remained. Moreover, the Clinton administration was unable to fully keep its promise to send fuels and provide financial aid for the construction of the light water reactor due to opposition from the Republican Party and some Democrats in the U.S. Congress. This might have made North Korea suspicious of the U.S. commitment to carry out the agreement.

Meanwhile, North Korea's domestic political situation changed, possibly leading to weaken its commitment to the nuclear agreement. Fear for the regime's survival, incremented by the economic crisis, forced the North Korea reformulate North Korea's domestic politic and put the military at the center. As a result, since 1994 the top military figures' position in the power hierarchy has risen sharply, as shown in the table 3.<sup>17</sup> The strength of military factions in North Korea's domestic politics may have increased the utility of having nuclear weapons for Kim regime. It is possible that Kim, Jong-il would have used a covert nuclear weapon program to soothe the dissatisfaction of military faction urging more hawkish actions toward the U.S. and South Korea.

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<sup>16</sup> For more explanations about the negation between U.S. and North Korea, see Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Stranger: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> For more discussions about North Korea's military first policy, see Yongho Kim, *North Korean Foreign Policy: Security Dilemma and Succession* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 11.

Table 3. North Korea's Top 20 Leaders in the Political Hierarchy<sup>18</sup>

<b>2006 ranking</b>	<b>Name (Age)</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>1994 ranking</b>
<b>1</b>	Kim Jong-il(65)	Chairman of the National Defense Commission	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	Cho Myong-rok(79)	The first vice chairman of the National Defense Commission	<b>89</b>
<b>3</b>	Kim Yong-nam(79)	President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly	<b>8</b>
<b>4</b>	Jon Byong-ho	Workers' Party secretary	<b>11</b>
<b>5</b>	Kim IL-chol	Minister of the People's Armed Forces	<b>90</b>
<b>6</b>	Choi Tae-bok(77)	Workers' Party secretary	<b>15</b>
<b>7</b>	Kim Yong-chun(71)	Army chief of staff	<b>88</b>
<b>8</b>	Pak Pong-ju(68)	Premier	<b>188</b>
<b>9</b>	Ri Yong-mu(84)	Vice chairman of the National Defense Commission	<b>55</b>
<b>10</b>	Yang Hyong-sop(82)	Vice chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly	<b>19</b>
<b>11</b>	Kim Ki-nam(81)	Workers' Party secretary	<b>24</b>
<b>12</b>	Hong Sok-hyong(78)	Workers' Party secretary for North Hamgyong province	<b>20</b>
<b>13</b>	Hong Song-nam(78)	Workers' Party secretary for South Hamgyong province	<b>17</b>
<b>14</b>	Kim Kuk-tae(83)	Workers' Party secretary	<b>25</b>
<b>15</b>	Ri Yong-chol	First vice director of the organization and guidance department of the Workers' Party	<b>109</b>
<b>16</b>	Choi Yong-rim(78)	Secretary general of the Supreme People's Assembly	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	Han Song-ryong(84)	Workers' Party secretary	<b>12</b>
<b>18</b>	Hyon Chol-hae(73)	Vice director of the politburo of the military	<b>98</b>
<b>19</b>	Pak Jae-gyong(74)	Vice director of the politburo of the military	<b>177</b>
<b>20</b>	Jong Ha-chol(74)	Workers' Party director for propaganda	<b>65</b>

Even though North Korea's motivation for seeking a uranium program are still unclear, North Korea might have perceived the uranium nuclear program as a kind of insurance in cases

<sup>18</sup> Source: *Joongang Daily*, January 3, 2007. See the website: <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2866692>

the other methods to guarantee its regime survival fail. U.S. was also tracking North Korea's covert activities for acquiring a uranium nuclear program, especially from A.Q. Khan in Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> John McLaughlin who was the CIA's deputy director until 2005 said in interview with a CNN reporter that "We had suspected for a long time that they were working on a cover uranium enrichment program. But we didn't have confidence enough to say that we had a critical mass of data."<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, it was unlikely that North Korea would have decided to become an overt nuclear weapon state in the near future unless its regime survival was in danger. However, the Bush administration's regime change policy transformed the whole bargaining situation. Right after the 9.11 terrorist attack, North Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated "the very regrettable incident once again reminds us of the danger of terrorism" and that "North Korea as a member state of the United Nations opposes all types of terror and terror-supporting activities whatsoever."<sup>21</sup>

However, Washington refused to deal, let alone negotiate, with North Korea. The Bush administration consistently called for Pyongyang's compliance with complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID) as a precondition for lifting economic sanction or for just having a bilateral meeting with North Korea. In the meantime, the U.S. toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in just two months after the initiation of the war on Iraq. In this situation, for North Korea the U.S's CVID policy was obviously unacceptable because it was just like disarming itself without any assurance of the regime's survival. Therefore, the situation might

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<sup>19</sup> Mike Chinoy, *Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>21</sup> *Chosun Chungang T'ongsin* September 12, 2001; *Chosun Ilbo* September 13, 2001, p. 21, quoted in Kim and Kim, "North Korea's Risk-taking," pp. 54-55.

well have rather increased the value of acquiring nuclear weapons for deterrence against the U.S.

In the end, the quagmire in the Iraq war and the pulling of the U.S. troops from South Korea might have signaled the unintended message that credibility of U.S. coercion had decreased and therefore, the costs of becoming a self-declared nuclear state also had been reduced. As the U.S. bogged down in the war, Washington transferred U.S. troops in South Korea into Iraq. On July 22, 2004, Washington reportedly informed South Korea at the 10<sup>th</sup> FOTA (Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative) that 6,000 U.S. troops would be withdrawn from South Korea by 2004 and 6,000 more by the end of 2005.<sup>22</sup> Washington and Seoul announced that 12,500 U.S. troops in South Korea would be withdrawn by 2008.<sup>23</sup>

Obviously, the transfer of the U.S. troops in South Korea to Iraq made U.S. threat against North Korea less convincing. Finally, on October 9, 2006, North Korea conducted an underground nuclear test and announced it through its official media, KCNA.<sup>24</sup> In short, given decreasing credibility of the US commitment to preventing North Korea's nuclear acquisition, North Korea might have foreseen more opportunities than risks from nuclear armaments and decided to test nuclear weapons.

### **Libya's Nuclear Program Dismantlement**

On December 19, 2003, the Libyan government announced that after having talks with the United States and Britain about Libya's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), it was voluntarily getting rid of all substances, equipment, and programs that could lead to production

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<sup>22</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* July 31, 2004, p. 1, quoted in Kim and Kim, "North Korea's Risk-taking," 2007, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> *Donga Ilbo* October 7, 2004, p. 3, quoted *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.



of internationally banned weapons. Etel Solingen and Gawdat Bahgat attributed the Libya government's decision to its deteriorating domestic conditions, following Qadhafi's radical change of his domestic policy.<sup>25</sup> Although their emphasis on the Libya's domestic conditions may shed some light on the Libya's decision, Libya's nuclear decision cannot be properly understood without considering the regional security environment and its strategic interaction with the United States. I argue that the U.S. commitment to engage Libya, supported by Britain's role as a mediator, and its initial military victory in the Iraq war, were critical reasons in persuading Qadhafi to give up WMD including its nuclear program. Although his troubles in domestic politics and the economy were relevant factors in Qadhafi's decision, it is unlikely that Libya would have given up the entire nuclear programs without the U.S. engagement. If U.S. pushed Libya into a corner without any assurance of his regime's survival as it did to North Korea, Libya would rather have accelerated its nuclear weapon programs as a deterrent to U.S. coercion as well as a future bargaining chip against the U.S.

Soon after the 1969 revolution, Qadhafi's pursuit of nuclear weapons began when his deputy Abd Al-Salam Jallud sought tactical nuclear weapons from China. Qadhafi repeatedly portrayed his search for nuclear weapons as a key aspect of his self-reliant economic model and as a central pillar of his populist, nationalist policy.<sup>26</sup> However, in late 1990s and early 2000, Qadhafi regime was facing serious challenges to sustain his survival for its economic failures and domestic oppositions. In particular, Libya's economy was heavily dependent on oil revenues and was one of the least diversified economies in the Middle East. And this situation has made Libya

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<sup>25</sup> Gawdat Bahgat, *Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007); and Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Meghan L. O'Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and State Sponsors of terrorism* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2003), pp. 204-205.

more vulnerable to economic sanctions. The economic sanctions from the US and the UN Security Council seriously damaged the Libyan government's ability to raise revenue to sustain its political coalition. In 2003 Libya produced 1.488 million barrels per day, less than half of its production in 1970.<sup>27</sup>

Solingen argues that Libya pushed domestic reforms earlier than its 2003 nuclear decisions, which suggests that Libya's abandonment of nuclear weapons can be explained as another way of reforming its domestic political survival model. In 2000 Qadhafi proclaimed the end of his anti-imperialist struggle, and in 2002, Libya conducted a series of domestic economic reforms. Therefore, Solingen concludes that the "demonstration effects of Iraq war" were not a compelling reason to end the weapon programs.<sup>28</sup>

However, Libya's behavior regarding its nuclear weapons program since the beginning of the domestic reform does not confirm her explanation well. If Libya's nuclear decision was exclusively affected by its change of domestic platform, according to Solingen's logic, Libya should have already been on the path of denuclearization at the time of its domestic reform, which had began in 1999. Contrary to the direction of domestic reforms, Libya, however, continued to pursue nuclear weapons technology up until late 2003. On October 4, 2003, just two months before its announcement of the WMD dismantlement, the German-flagged ship, *BBC China*, was intercepted by the Italian Coast Guard in the Mediterranean following a request from the US government. The boat, "containing a consignment of centrifuge parts for nuclear programs that had been manufactured by a company in Malaysia," was en route to Libya from Dubai.<sup>29</sup> Further investigation revealed that tubes for nuclear weapons were sent to Libya in four

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<sup>27</sup> Gawdat Bahgat, *Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East*, 2007, p. 139.

<sup>28</sup> Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*, 2007, p. 228.

<sup>29</sup> Wyn Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation*, 2006, p. 38.

shipments through a trading company in Dubai between December 2002 and August 2003.<sup>30</sup> During this period, Libya continued to receive sensitive nuclear technology from the A.Q. Khan network, including additional centrifuges, thousands of parts for centrifuges, and a blueprint for nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup> Regarding the BBC China incident, Solingen mentions “it is unclear whether the interdiction caught Libya in a game of deception or whether Libya had disclosed the shipments to the United States and Britain prior to the interdiction.”<sup>32</sup> But she did not provide any supporting evidence that can explain why the Libya would disclose its blunt violation of nuclear nonproliferation norm that could seriously damage its bargaining position in its ongoing negotiation with the US and UK, nor suggest a plausible answer for why Libya kept pushing its nuclear weapons program until the last moment of its final decision to renounce its WMD program.

Although it is likely that nuclear weapons became more or less a liability for the Qadhafi regime in early 2000s, Qadhafi’s decision to give up them in 2003 cannot be explained exclusively with the domestic conditions. It is because the influence of domestic factors can go either way to compelling “denuclearization” or “nuclearization,” depending on Libya’s bargaining situation. Despite its troubles in domestic politics and economy, Libya could have decided to go nuclear rather than give up its nuclear weapons program if U.S. had not recognized Qadhafi regime and assured its survival. And Libya would have not given up the program if it had become evident that nuclear weapons were the only means to deter the U.S. threat as well as to suppress domestic opposition by diverting its attentions to the external threats.

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<sup>30</sup> Bill Gert, “Libyan sincerity on arms in doubt,” *Washington Times*, 9 September 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Mario Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restrain* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), 154; “Libya Nuclear Chronology: 2000-2003.” *National Threat Initiative*. Sources from [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/Libya/4132\\_5205.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Libya/4132_5205.html)

<sup>32</sup> Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*, 2007, p. 214.

One may ask why the Bush administration committed to engage Libya whereas it refused to deal with North Korea that had a much more advanced nuclear weapons program than Libya's. First of all, the bargaining would have been less feasible without Britain's pivotal role to persuade the Bush administration to engage Libya. The British government resumed diplomatic relations with Tripoli in July 1999, after Libya admitted responsibility for the murder of a London policeman in 1984. Since then, Britain played a role in providing a crucial "back-channel" as Libya could not approach the U.S. directly.<sup>33</sup> According to U.S. Ambassador Robert Joseph who was involved in the negotiation with Libya in 2003, Colonel Qadhafi expressed the concern to Prime Minister Tony Blair, before he announced the deal, that Libya would be attacked because it had now admitted that it possessed WMD programs. In response to Qadhafi's concern, on 18 December 2003 in an unprecedented conversation between Qadhafi and Blair, lasting almost thirty minutes, the Prime Minister Blair gave assurance that a Libyan statement would be "met with positive statements" by the United States and United Kingdom. Then, in a following discussion with President Bush on the phone, Bush reportedly agreed with Blair that from the U.S. and UK "there would be positive consequences" if Libya ended its WMD programs.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Blair and Bush remained intensely interested and closely involved throughout the course of the negotiations. They were briefed at each step by their intelligence officers participating with the Libyans, and they were also willing to engage with Colonel Qadhafi, even by sending messages to him through intelligence envoys.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, during the negotiation, the U.S. and Britain told Libyans that there would be more progress on the negotiation regarding its WMD program if Libya made concessions on

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<sup>33</sup> Wyn Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation*, 2006, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Joseph, *Countering WMD: The Libyan Experience* (Fair Fax, Virginia: National Institute Press, 2009), p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

issues related to the Lockerbie terror case. On 15 August 2003, the Libyan government wrote to the Security Council addressing the acceptance of responsibility for the actions and paying compensation to the Pan Am families. Immediately, Britain drafted a resolution to lift the UN sanctions, which the Security Council voted 13 – 0 to adopt on 12 September 2003, while the U.S. abstained from the vote. Bowen points out that the termination of UN sanctions, as a direct result of a UK-sponsored resolution following the conclusion of the Lockerbie affair, demonstrated to Libya that its negotiation partners could be expected to “fulfill their commitments vis-à-vis WMD.”<sup>36</sup> Qadhafi’s eldest son, Saif Aleslam al-Qadhafi, later mentioned how he perceived the commitment to Libya. In explaining why Libya gave up its WMD, he said “we were on a dangerous path, and had problems with the West. When the West came and told us that it didn’t want to fight us, but to be partners with us – why persist in being hostile to it.”<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the British role as a mediator U.S. domestic politics might have influenced to engage Libya in ending the program rather than coercing Libya with U.S. military force. According to Flynt Leverett, who worked on Middle East policy in the Bush administration’s National Council during the diplomatic negotiations with Libya, U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Power and a few other members inside the U.S. government formed ‘an informal coalition’ in order to pursue a “more constructive course with Libya.” The main function of this coalition was to prevent the influence of the neo-conservatives in the Department of Defense and the Bureau of Arms Control in the State Department, which opposed offering positive incentives to induce improved behavior.<sup>38</sup> In addition, British officials

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<sup>36</sup> Wyn Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation*, 2006, p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> Mario Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 2009, p. 162.

<sup>38</sup> Flynt Leverett, “Why Libya gave up on the Bomb.” *The New York Times* January 23, 2004, Quoted in Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation*, 2006, p. 61.

at the highest level had reportedly persuaded the White House to keep then Under Secretary of State John Bolton (Bureau of Arms Control, US State Department) away from the Libyan negotiations because he strongly opposed reaching a deal under which the Bush administration would “abandon its goal of regime change in Libya.”<sup>39</sup> As a result, the neo-conservatives were sidelined “when crucial decisions were made.”<sup>40</sup> This was also confirmed by Mohamed Elbaradei, the former director of IAEA. He was initially angry at the fact that he was informed about the negotiation nine months after Libya had been engaged with British and American officials for the deal to give up its WMD programs. Later he heard from an official in MI6 that the real reason for the extreme secrecy governing the Libyan negotiations was to protect the talks from U.S. hard-liners who tried to block a peaceful resolution of the Libyan case.<sup>41</sup>

Another possible factor that raised the U.S. commitment toward Libya is the U.S. interest in Libya’s huge oil reserve. Since the so called ‘Oasis Group’ – Conoco-Phillips, Marathon Oil and Amerada Hess – was constructed, they kept up the pressure on the U.S. Congress and the White House to retain their oil concessions in Libya from the mid-1980s.<sup>42</sup> The Bush administration was under great pressure from U.S. commercial interests, which were influenced the decision regarding Libya’s WMD program, the Bush administration, of which the U.S. oil companies were major political supporters, should have been under higher pressure to engage Libya than other administrations.

However, Libya would not have easily given up the weapon programs if U.S had only engaged without imposing a credible threat. A U.S. non-credible threat would have reduced the

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<sup>39</sup> Hirsh, Michael. “Bolton’s British Problem: Fresh complaints of bullying dog an embattled nominee,” *Newsweek* 5/2/2005, p. 30, quoted in Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation*, 2006, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Flynt Leverett, “Why Libya gave up on the Bomb” 2004, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Mohamed Elbaradei, *The AGE of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times* (New York: Metropolitan books, 2011), p. 150.

<sup>42</sup> Wyn Bowen, *Libya and Nuclear Proliferation*, 2006, p. 67.

costs of becoming a declared nuclear weapons state, and thereby increased Libya's attempts to commit to gain more from the bargaining, which would certainly protract the negotiation process. The Iraq war might have been a real threat to Libya because the Bush administration pursued actual regime change of Iraq for the sake of getting rid of WMD programs. Elbaradei's interview with Qadhafi seems to suggest that Qadhafi recognized the possible security threat coming from possessing nuclear weapons. In the interview, Qadhafi told that "he had reached the conclusion that weapons of mass destruction would not add to Libya's security."<sup>43</sup>

One may argue that it was easier for Qadhafi to give up his nuclear program because Libya's nuclear program was not sophisticated, remaining at the early stages of nuclear weapons buildup. However, this assessment is incorrect given the IAEA's estimation on the level of the Libya's nuclear capabilities. The IAEA assessed that when Libya gave up the nuclear program in 2003, it was just within three to seven years of producing a weapon.<sup>44</sup> Elbaradei also said that he was worried when he saw Libya's nuclear program because "the uranium conversion equipment had been assembled methodically and thoughtfully in a modular pattern, evidence of the sophisticated outside assistance the Libyan had received".<sup>45</sup>

I do not argue that the U.S. military threat alone ended Libya's nuclear programs, as some U.S. officials, such as the former UN Ambassador John Bolton asserted, nor deny that Libya's domestic predicaments were conducive to the Libya's nuclear reversal. The military threat without a U.S. assurance would have created a more dangerous situation and possibly spurred Libya's nuclearization. Nevertheless, the security environment in 2003 shaped by the U.S. war in Iraq was obviously unfavorable for Qadhafi to pursue nuclear weapons. After the

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<sup>43</sup> Mohamed Elbaradei, *The AGE of Deception*, 2011, p. 152.

<sup>44</sup> Mario Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 2009, p. 161.

<sup>45</sup> Mohamed Elbaradei, *The AGE of Deception*, 2011, p. 151

collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Qadhafi no longer had another superpower backing, and he had to face “the hegemon he had been attacking for decades – and face it alone”.<sup>46</sup> He admitted this by announcing himself that “his confrontation with the superpower is a thing of the past.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover, U.S. engagement with Libya might have relieved its security concern and led it to the path of denuclearization.

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<sup>46</sup>Mario Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 2009, p 164.

<sup>47</sup> Galadari, Mohammed A. R. Galadari, “Which Way Reform in Libya?” *Khaleej Times*, 11 March, 2006, quoted in Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 2009, p. 165.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusion**

My dissertation shows that the United States employed nuclear coercion in different ways, depending on top leaders' peculiar nuclear attitudes. Their learning of the technical and political meaning of nuclear weapons shaped their nuclear behavior and, though such learning was filtered and framed by their prior beliefs. Living in the shadow of Hiroshima and Nagasaki President, Harry Truman refrained from using nuclear threats during the Korean War, whereas President Dwight Eisenhower, the former general in World War II, enthusiastically employed nuclear coercion in the same war. President Lyndon Johnson, the veteran of Cuban Missile Crisis, abstained from using nuclear coercion even though he escalated the Vietnam War with airstrikes, whereas President Richard Nixon carried out a secret but massive nuclear alert despite his acute recognition of domestic political and strategic constraints. George W. Bush, advised by neo-conservatives, designated North Korea as an 'axis of evil' and threatened to use force to dismantle its nuclear programs without starting a meaningful dialogue, whereas he directly engaged Libya before it gave up its WMD programs.

The large variance among leaders in employing nuclear coercion suggests that scholars need to reconsider their theories about U.S. nuclear behavior. First, nuclear deterrence theory, based on an assumption of a unitary actor, is inadequate to explain the learning/experience phenomenon and other U.S. nuclear behaviors. For instance, the unitary actor model is applied to explain U.S. decisions regarding the supply side of nuclear proliferation. Matthew Kroenig's model presumes that the U.S. did not provide sensitive nuclear materials and technologies to

other states because it would hurt U.S. freedom of action to project its power, whereas non-superpowers like France and China provided sensitive assistance because they lacked the ability to project power globally.<sup>1</sup> However, once we look at U.S. enforcement of nuclear nonproliferation policies, the U.S. clearly deviated from the model's prediction. As Asli Bali demonstrated, the U.S. selectively and inconsistently enforced punishment for the violating the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Francis Gavin and Avner Cohen also showed that Nixon, albeit secretly, admitted France and Israel's nuclear weapons development while saying in public that he opposed nuclear proliferation.<sup>3</sup> Such selective enforcement was less about U.S. concerns for projecting its military power globally, and more about U.S. domestic politics and leaders' perceptions about U.S. adversaries and allies. Existing nuclear theories need to revisit their core assumptions, as they are inconsistent with some of newly revealed history.

Second, constructivists, particularly nuclear taboo theorists, rightly said that leaders' perception matters and scholars should look into subunit factors for understanding major powers' behaviors.<sup>4</sup> However, they did neither clearly explain what are the origins of leaders' nuclear attitude, nor clarify how they can change. A further research is necessary to explore more why leaders perceived the physical nature of nuclear weapons and attempted to utilize them in different ways under a similar situation.

Finally, recent nuclear theories exclusively focused on the non-military use of nuclear weapons since 1945. But to explain the phenomenon, they need to analyze broader U.S. nuclear

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Asli Ummuhan Bali, *Similar States, Disparate Treatment: Explaining Inconsistent Enforcement in the International Nonproliferation Regime* (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, Aug 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Frances J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); and Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, eds., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

behaviors, especially its use of nuclear coercion. It is possible that U.S. leaders did not use nuclear weapons militarily partly because of “usability dilemma” that military nuclear use could destroy the coercive value of nuclear weapons, the very value many leaders wanted to preserve.<sup>5</sup> According to this logic, many leader’ incentive to use nuclear weapons militarily would be far lower than nuclear taboo theory presumes.

The policy implication of my nuclear learning theory is that leaders should reserve coercive nuclear use as a last resort, if they cannot officially renounce it, because nuclear coercion is not politically costless, as many leaders believe. The leaders of the United States used nuclear coercion partly because they thought it would be diplomatically more effective than having a negotiation without imposing a nuclear threat as well as it would be militarily less costly and politically less risky than using a conventional force for coercion. We may have to hold our final judgment on the former of their belief until we can have more access to credible sources about the target states’ decision-making. However, it seems that the latter does not hold true anymore in the world where weak and small states can build their own nuclear deterrent if they determined to do so. Flying nuclear bombers and dispatching fleets and nuclear submarines to an adversary for coercion would be relatively cheap for the U.S. military and opaque to its public. However, such military actions can leave a deep resentment and humiliation to a target for being a subject of nuclear coercion. If a target decides to go nuclear for such experiences and succeed in acquiring its own nuclear deterrent, it can cause far more troubles to the U.S. in the future than any other security concerns that the U.S. would have.

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<sup>5</sup> For more explanations about usability dilemma, see Joseph S. Jr. Nye, “Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes” *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1987), p. 388.

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