

# **Paranoid, Potbellied Stalinist Gets Nuclear Weapons: How the U.S. Print Media Cover North Korea**

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# 1993-1994 Crisis

- N. Korea blocked IAEA inspectors
  - N. Korea unloaded 8,000 fuel rods
  - N. Korea threatened to withdraw from NPT
  - 1 million casualties in war?
- 
- 1994 Agreed Framework

# 2002-2006

- 2002 Agreed Framework collapses
- IAEA inspectors expelled
- Plutonium reprocessed
- Reactor restarted
- Ballistic missile tests
- 2003 NPT withdrawal
- 2006 North Korean test

# Outline of talk

- **Narrative of Conflict**
  - Terms of Agreed Framework
  - Collapse of Agreed Framework
  - Uranium enrichment
- **Recurrent Themes**
  - A backward, paranoid country
  - Narcissism
  - Blackmail
  - Liars & cheats

# Terms of Agreed Framework

- “North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear programs in exchange for food and fuel.” (NY Times, 3/6/03)
- “North Korea was to have abandoned its nuclear aspirations and was to submit to continuous inspections in exchange for shipments of nuclear fuel from the United States and its allies.” (Boston Globe, 12/28/02)
- “North Korea would freeze its nuclear weapons program. In return, it would be supplied with conventional fuel and ultimately with two light-water reactors that could not produce potential weapons-grade fuel.” (Washington Post, 10/15/06)

# Range of Portrayals of U.S. obligations

- Food and fuel
- 1 light-water reactor
- 2 light-water reactors
- Fuel & reactors

# Agreed Framework: Actual Terms

- N. Korea closes existing reactor
- N. Korea gets 2 light-water reactors via int'l consortium by 2003
- N. Korea gets heating oil
- **Normalization of relations in stages**
- **U.S. pledges not to attack N. Korea with nuclear weapons**

# N. Korea Breaks Agreed Framework

- “My predecessor, in a good-faith effort, entered into a framework agreement. The United States honored its side of the agreement; North Korea didn’t. While we felt the agreement was in force, North Korea was enriching uranium.” (George W. Bush)
- “[U.S.] assistance was halted in 2002 after the discovery of a uranium-based nuclear weapons program.” (Boston Globe, 6/22/04)
- “Last fall Pyongyang declared that accord invalid after conceding that it was developing a covert program to enrich uranium.” (NY Times, 3/6/03)

# Or did U.S. Break it?

- “When Republicans won control of Congress in elections just after the October 1994 Accord was signed, many of them denounced the deal as appeasement. Unwilling to take on Congress, President Clinton... did little easing of sanctions until 2000. Washington pledged to provide two nuclear power plants “by a target date of 2003,” but concrete for the first foundation was not poured until August 2002. It did deliver heavy fuel oil as promised but seldom on schedule. Above all, it did not live up to its promise in Article II of the Agreed Framework to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations” – end enmity and lift sanctions” (Leon Sigal)

# Covert enrichment (Kelly Version)

- “North Korea’s stunning admission last week that it had been cheating for years on its commitment to freeze its nuclear weapons program.” (NY Times, 10/20/02)
- “”The United States and North Korea have been in a standoff since October, when North Korean officials admitted to pursuing a covert program to produce weapons-grade uranium in violation of the 1994 pact.” (Washington Post, 3/20/03)
- “In recent months, North Korea has taken a series of steps that indicate it plans to resume trying to produce nuclear weapons. The first came last October, when Pyongyang defiantly acknowledged to a visiting American official that it had a program to produce highly enriched uranium.” (Boston Globe, 3/4/03)

# North Korean version

- Minister Kim [Gye Gwan] told me... that he had been stunned by Kelly's statement. He reported Kelly's statements to his superiors... setting off furious internal consultations. After an all-night meeting of its top officials, North Korea detonated its own verbal explosion the next day. First Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju... told Kelly and the U.S. delegation that the reclusive nation "is entitled to have nuclear weapons" to safeguard its security in the face of a growing U.S. threat. After a debate of their own, the Americans interpreted the statement to be an admission that Kelly's charge was true." (Don Oberdorfer, Washington Post, 11/10/02)

# Problems with Kelly Version

- Based on anonymous sources
- North Koreans denied admission (“a translation error,” Newsweek, 10/23/06)
- By 2007 U.S. saying had “moderate confidence” N. Korea pursuing enrichment

# A Backward Country Led by a Paranoid Pygmy

- “The Weird and Scary Saga of how an Isolated, Bankrupt Nation Went Nuclear,” (Newsweek cover story title, 10/23/06)
- “North Korea is a hermit state ruled by a potbellied, five-foot-three paranoid Stalinist who likes to watch Daffy Duck cartoons.” (Bill Keller in NY Times, 1/11/03)
- “...led by world-class paranoids and fantasists capable of believing their own propaganda... Such a regime may be beyond reasoning or, even worse, deterring in a conventional sense.” (Jim Hoagland in Washington Post, 10/12/06)

**BOOKS**  
Our review, after page 54

**The Economist**  
JUNE 17TH • 23RD 2000

**AFTER ASSAD**  
pages 18 and 24-26

**TOMORROW'S STOCKMARKETS**  
pages 19 and 69-72

# Greetings, earthlings



Canada	US\$ 95	South Africa	R22.00
China	US\$ 12.00	Spain	US\$ 12.00
Europe	US\$ 12.00	Sweden	US\$ 12.00
India	US\$ 12.00	Switzerland	US\$ 12.00
Japan	US\$ 12.00	Taiwan	US\$ 12.00
Latin America	US\$ 12.00	USA	US\$ 12.00
Mexico	US\$ 12.00	UK	US\$ 12.00
New Zealand	US\$ 12.00	USSR	US\$ 12.00
Philippines	US\$ 12.00	Other countries	US\$ 12.00

# Narcissism

- “Whenever the North Koreans act up, one has to assume in part at least that they are trying to get the world’s attention.” (Robert Einhorn quoted in NY Times, 6/19/06)
- “Maybe North Korea is just jealous of all the attention Iran has been getting as a result of Tehran’s recent nuclear bad behavior, and craves a spotlight of its own.” (NY Times editorial, 6/20/06)
- “North Korea has a long history of doing things simply... to bring the world’s attention back to the Stalinist state.” (Washington Post **news story**, 6/20/06)

# Blackmail

- “Pyongyang's belief in nuclear ICBMs as a passport not only to regime survival but also to profitable blackmail.” (LA Times op-ed, 7/15/06)
- “a regime that sees its survival only in building nukes and missiles to blackmail the world.” (William Safire in NY Times, 7/3/03)
- “The North Korean leader uses his nuclear arsenal as a tool of economic blackmail. He must constantly cheat just enough on his current deal to ensure future payments.” (Jim Hoagland in Washington Post, 9/25/05)

# Why North Korea escalates

- Narcissism
- Blackmail
- **Tit-for-tat (Leon Sigal)**
- **Deter U.S.**

# Conclusion and Recommendations

- No (or less) anonymous sources
- Diversify pool of pundits and quoted experts
- More international opinions
- North Korean opinions
- Less surreptitious editorialization