A RHETORICAL HISTORY OF THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS: HOW THREE PRESIDENTS TALKED ABOUT THE BOMB

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RHETORICAL HISTORY OF THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS: HOW THREE PRESIDENTS TALKED ABOUT THE BOMB

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ABSTRACT

This research attempted to analyze the North Korean nuclear crisis using a rhetorical history that evaluated the discursive framings of the George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush administrations. I used an inductive format to use rhetorical criticism to create interpretive lenses for each presidential administration. Studying each presidential administration’s rhetoric provided for a number of thematic elements that informed the context of the crisis.

I found the George H.W. Bush administration deployed a rhetoric of compliance. This rhetorical frame failed to meet the needs of the North Koreans to be seen as legitimate. The William J. Clinton administration used a rhetoric of negotiation. Clinton’s rhetorical posture was unable to account for the suspicions of the Republican Congress elected in 1996 that derailed the Agreed Framework of 1994. The George W. Bush administration utilized a rhetoric of verification. George W. Bush’s rhetorical choices produced the six-party accord, but ultimately may not be able to satisfy the need for complete transparency. This is especially true in light of the events surrounding North Korea and Syria’s nuclear program.

It was concluded that each presidential administration failed to satisfy the exigency of the situation due to a number of constraints. By studying these rhetorical constraints, scholars can better understand the role that presidential rhetoric and history play in how events unfold.
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President George W. Bush brokered a deal to have the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or DPRK, dismantle its uranium enrichment program as well as its nuclear weapons program. This breakthrough is one that stands as a testament to what can be done to achieve a nuclear free world. “North Korea has agreed to disable all of its nuclear facilities by the end of the year, in a move that the Bush administration hailed as a diplomatic victory that could serve as a model for how to deal with Iran, which has defied American efforts to rein in its nuclear ambitions” (Cooper, 2007). President Bush was not the first president to address the North Korean nuclear weapons program. Presidents Clinton and George H.W. Bush also attempted to resolve the challenge presented by North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. The question is, why, after twenty years, has the United States not been able to successfully prevent North Korean nuclear proliferation?

The rhetorical choices of the past three presidents provide a unique vantage point to understand U.S. policy toward North Korea. Each president’s rhetoric reveals their perspective on the issue. By understanding each administration’s rhetorical framings, we can better understand the history of the events. This insight can also reveal how their perceptions served to limit the success of their approach. In other words, this project seeks to provide a rhetorical analysis of the past three administrations to provide a new understanding of why the United States has not yet been able to successfully resolve the North Korean crisis.

In doing this rhetorical history, I will examine rhetorical artifacts of Presidents George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush. In this chapter I cover a brief history of the
North Korean nuclear program, justify my choices of rhetorical criticism and the case of North Korea, review pertinent scholarly literature that informs my project, explain my methodology, and provide a plan of study.

But to better understand the context of North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, an examination of the evolution of North Korea’s nuclear program is necessary. The birth of the North Korean nuclear program began in 1965 when construction on a small nuclear research reactor started thanks to the assistance of the Soviet Union. This reactor began operation in 1967.

A number of reasons contributed to North Korea’s interest in increasing the capabilities of its nuclear program. First, the Soviet Union’s withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Cuba was seen as a major loss by the North Koreans which stimulated interest in a self-reliant military program that involved nuclear weapons. Second, the 1973 oil crisis forced a number of countries to pursue alternate forms of energy to decrease reliance on foreign sources. North Korea had an abundance of uranium, making nuclear power a logical choice. Third, the North Koreans feared the advent of a South Korean nuclear program and weapons acquisition. Fourth, the American placement of tactical nuclear weapons and troops on South Korean soil prompted a need to counter these abilities (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, 2004, p. 1-25). The small reactor built in 1967 was not where the North Korean regime wanted their nuclear program to cease. The advent of the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union demonstrated the power of a nuclear arsenal. Since a small research reactor didn’t lend itself to creating the amounts of nuclear material necessary to start a nuclear weapons program, Pyongyang saw a need to speed up the development of their nuclear program.

Pyongyang used these justifications to upgrade its small nuclear program. Failed attempts to garner information on China’s nuclear program prompted the North Koreans to go back to the
Soviet Union. After resistance from the Soviets, the North Koreans decided to take on this task by themselves. They used declassified information to start work on a 5-megawatt research reactor. This reactor began operating in the mid-1980’s and it provided Pyongyang with 30 kilograms of plutonium after each load (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, 2004, p. 1-25).

The ability of the North Koreans to create their own nuclear reactor prompted the United States to push the Soviets into using their sway with North Korean President Kim Il Sung to sign on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The North Koreans did so in 1985, but only with an incentive from the Soviets: four full-size nuclear power plants (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, 2004, p. 1-25).

In 1989, the Yongbyon reprocessing facility was discovered. This facility gave the North Koreans the ability to separate plutonium from the used uranium loads. This plutonium gave the North Korean regime the ability to create a number of nuclear weapons (Pritchard, 2007, 12-28).

Since 1989, the United States and much of the rest of the world has been in a struggle with Pyongyang to adhere to its commitments under a number of agreements, including the Agreed Framework of 1994, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and other rules under the International Atomic Energy Association. North Korea has been largely unwilling to follow up on these commitments and even withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1993. This act threatened not only the non-proliferation regime, but much of the world (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, 2004, p. 1-25).

Nuclear weapons have inextricably altered the frame of human relations. The scope of nuclear war is no longer one with limitation or containment. It is instead the ultimate all-or-nothing game that risks planetary survival and views human life as acceptable sacrifice. Survival is at stake in a game where few have control over our global destiny. This is especially true in a
post-9/11 world where terrorist acquisition of nuclear materials or a nuclear weapon is a possibility. We can no longer assume that the old paradigm of deterrence will work (Record, 2004). Self-preservation is not a guaranteed interest for all leaders who have control over nuclear weapons. It is now the obligation of all states to pursue responsible control of nuclear energy and weapons. Nonproliferation has stemmed from that need. Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004) buttress the need for analyzing nonproliferation successes and mistakes:

If the histories are inaccurate, or colored by pre-dispositions or ideologies that distort understanding of the actual events, then subsequent decisionmakers could easily learn the wrong lessons and err in confronting future crises. The consequences of such error could be disastrous when the matter at issue relates to nuclear weapons, which have the power to kill hundreds of thousands of people in a flash. (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, 2004, p. ix)

The route to nonproliferation has been a challenging one. Sadly, no one strategy has been effective with every instance of state-based desire for nuclear acquisition. South Korea’s ambition for a nuclear program is proof of this point. Rather than using an incentive-based approach like the one used with North Korea, the United States employed a number of security guarantees, including a vigorous deterrent with the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on the peninsula, and the presence of American troops to assuage the South Korean worries with regards to territorial security.

Iraq represents a different nonproliferation strategy. Attempts to persuade the Iraqi government to stop its nuclear program often met failure or a lack of cooperation. “The discovery in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War that Iraq, an NPT signatory, had secretly embarked on a huge nuclear weapons program prompted the United States to embrace counterproliferation,
which consists of a series of nonwar initiatives designed to prevent hostile states from acquiring nuclear weapons and, in the event of crisis or war, to destroy such weapons and their supporting infrastructure” (Cooper, 2004).

The final strategy, exemplified by the Israelis, involves pre-emption. The Israeli Air Force initiated a first strike on the Osirak nuclear reactor. The “stick” strategy put the Iraqi nuclear program years behind where it had been. Disagreements exist on the utility of the Israeli approach (Betts, 2006).

North Korea’s nuclear ambition has been one of the most challenging of recent decades. The North Korean nuclear program has spanned several presidential administrations. Each presidential administration has tried different strategies to convince the North Korean regime to replace the pursuit for nuclear weapons with other forms of security. For example, in 1994 the Clinton administration secured a deal with Pyongyang, but unfortunately it fell through (Kaplan, 2007). Clinton offered a number of financial and energy incentives to coax Kim Jong-il away from adding to its nuclear arsenal.

President Clinton vastly expanded America's commitments under the formal agreement. The U.S., said Clinton, would finance the fuel shipments and the reactors if the consortium fails to do so. The total value of the U.S. pledge is estimated conservatively at more than $4 billion. In addition to leading the international energy assistance consortium, Washington has pledged to ease its long-standing trade embargo and move toward first-ever diplomatic relations with the North. These concessions provide Pyongyang a degree of political recognition by the U.S. and its allies that it [has long] sought. (Plunk, 1994)

Unfortunately, this deal failed because of the Congressional politics.
Clinton was replaced by Bush, who wanted to separate himself from Clinton in every possible way (Kaplan, 2004). President George W. Bush will likely be identified as the president responsible for disabling North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. Ironically, that conclusion could have been reached early in Bush’s tenure.

Unfortunately, Bush’s descriptions of and language towards North Korea has led it to be less than agreeable participants in talks towards a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. One need only recall Bush’s invocation of the “Axis of Evil” in his 2002 State of the Union Address. Yet Bush has succumbed to the strategies of a number of his predecessors and made a deal which included “carrots” and “sticks” to ensure that North Korea’s nuclear program was a peaceful one (Berry, 2006).

Given the initial historical record, this project seeks to engage in a rhetorical history that examines the discourse of three U.S. presidents about American policy towards North Korea. By doing this rhetorical history, I seek to shed light on the relationship between the specific discourse employed and the historical events that transpired. I argue that the president’s rhetoric reveals their perception of the situation and the way the situation serves to constrain the rhetorical choices available to each president.

JUSTIFICATION

The history of North Korea’s nuclear ambitions provides a situation in which a rhetorical history has importance. This project will investigate why North Korea is important to proliferation and why rhetoric is important to understanding the policy decisions that were made.
North Korea is an excellent case study for nuclear nonproliferation for many reasons. First, North Korea has proven resistant to a number of different non-proliferation strategies. The United States and global community can learn from North Korea when they attempt similar efforts in the future. Second, North Korea has been an important example because of the factors that have prompted them to pursue a nuclear program. Better understanding the contexts that drive nations to pursue nuclear weapons and their impact on rhetorical choices will help aid us in the future. As explained above, the North Korean nuclear program is not one that was built in isolation, but one developed within a larger context. If policymakers understand what precipitates the fears and concerns that drive other countries or groups to pursue nuclear weapons, we might better deal with proliferation. Third, the recent success with North Korea has shown how important nuclear weapons are to national and international security. The nuclear line has been crossed and we cannot go back to a world of purely conventional weapons. Instead, we must view every instance of proliferation as a threat to the non-proliferation system that has been established. If the United States were capable of pulling North Korea away from the brink, especially after they have already tested a nuclear device, we have and can continue to create a world that seeks safety from means other than nuclear proliferation.

Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004) issue a grave warning to all future policymakers and analysts by exposing how close we have come to nuclear war. We must be weary of making the same mistake twice, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons. Underneath the posturing and elaborate negotiations are the lessons that must be learned if we wish to avoid a nuclear Armageddon.
Rhetoric is a necessary aspect to understanding political decisions. First, Wander (1984) argued that the foreign policy rhetoric employed by the president can have a great deal of influence on the public’s perception of appropriate executive politics. We can learn from this type of research the importance of going beyond a limited scope of analysis dedicated to foreign policy.

Second, the way presidents’ talk about things has a great deal of influence on how people interpret them. “Rhetorical history seeks to understand the context through messages that reflect and construct that context. To understand how those symbols and systems of symbols may have suasive potential and persuasive effect, we need both rhetorical criticism’s message-centered focus and rhetorical history’s contextual construction” (Turner, 1998, p. 2-3).

Third, rhetoric is the foundation of presidential power. An administration will not be able to persuade the Congress or the public to back policy initiatives that do not have argumentative support and appeals to values we all hold dear. “Structuring the choices about policy issues in ways that favor the president’s programs may set the terms of the debate on his proposals and thus the premises on which the public evaluates them” (Edwards, 2003, p. 157).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to develop a better understanding of the literature regarding the North Korean nuclear crisis, I have chosen to explicate a number of the important areas regarding my research questions. Three areas of literature that provide a great deal of insight are: the interdisciplinary
research regarding the North Korean nuclear ambitions, the use of rhetoric in foreign policy, and rhetorical criticism of the presidency.

Interdisciplinary Contributions towards the North Korean Nuclear Ambitions

Political science and history have contributed significantly to our understanding of North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. The political science research about the North Korean nuclear crisis is primarily dedicated to diagramming the policy approaches used by the United States. The history research helps explain a more developed context to the steps that were taken by both the United States and North Korea.

Political scientists and historians do an excellent job of analyzing the previous interactions on diplomatic and political levels. But they also tend to fall short by focusing exclusively on the descriptive aspect of history or prescribing a number of policy changes or recommendations. While contributing a great deal of understanding and facilitating discussion on necessary issues like the effectiveness of coercion, preemptive military strike, or cooperation, they only scratch the rhetorical surface of the particular strategies employed.

One exception is Pritchard (2007) who does attempt to analyze rhetoric. He contributes great insight into the second Bush administration’s framework regarding North Korea. He goes into the role of rhetoric and how it affected the willingness of North Korean diplomats to cooperate with the United States. Pritchard argues that Bush’s use of certain rhetorical descriptions of North Korea and Kim Jong-Il chilled relations on many occasions. The infamous “axis of evil” comment is one that ignited a trend of negative diplomatic relations. “I cautioned Han that the unnecessary and harsh rhetoric coming out of Pyongyang would cast a pall on the U.S. review process, and I
recommended that he urge restraint on the part of Pyongyang. Han cited the rhetoric coming out of Washington as the primary reason for Pyongyang’s response” (Pritchard, 2007, p. 17). North Korean diplomats viewed a number of the U.S. administration’s comments as tantamount to withdrawal from a number of previous agreements. Pritchard, however, does not undertake a thorough review of Bush’s rhetorical choices.

Another exception to the rhetorical dimensions of political science is Cha and Kang (2004). They evaluated the political debate over North Korea and how it has effected the policy options available. Cha and Kang argue that the DPRK is a rational actor that should be engaged before any military options are considered. But they argue that the debate over what options are best have been tainted by demonizing language. “These statements are a small sample of the degree to which discussion on North Korea has become emotionally charged and ideological. Rarely does good policy that serves American and allied interests emerge from such emotional and one-sided debate” (Cha and Kang, 2004, p. 232). They argue that policymakers must try to divorce themselves from their personal feelings on these international problems to ensure that the best option is ultimately the one utilized.

Berry (2006) examines the negotiating strategies used by Clinton and the second Bush. Berry argues that Clinton used a number of different strategies from the use of economic sanctions on a multilateral level to incentives like other forms of nuclear technology that were proliferation-resistant. Bush, in an attempt to separate himself from Clinton, chose to reorient United States policy. Bush chose to stand firm on what approach the North Koreans’ ought to take to denuclearize. Berry goes on to suggest some approaches for future negotiations. “Since neither the acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear power nor the use of coercive methods alone
seem to be viable policy options, negotiations to address the North Korean nuclear weapons program appear to be the best option” (Berry, 2006, p. 20).

Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004) provide insight into the original North Korean nuclear crisis. The three have backgrounds in national security and foreign policy and track North Korea’s original acquisition of nuclear weapons. They lay the foundation for what would develop into the crisis we find ourselves in today. They especially focus on 1993 to 1995 by examining the American and North Korean interactions. They argue that blame lies not with a single actor, but that a number of actions taken by the West produced a North Korean mentality that saw nuclear weapons as necessary for securing territorial integrity. “The Clinton administration believed that if there were a chance Pyongyang could be induced to abandon or defer its program, then U.S. interests demanded that it test that proposition. However loathsome the Pyongyang regime, that proposition could not fairly be tested absent direct negotiations with the North Koreans” (Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci, 2004, p. 383).

Snyder (1999) examines the negotiating styles of North and South Korea. He provides context to the actions that were taken by focusing on how the institutions involved created an atmosphere that lent credence to what many have considered irrational behavior by many of the North Korean officials. “Once again, North Korea has used guerilla tactics and unconventional means necessary for a weaker party to attempt to level the playing field against an overwhelmingly stronger opponent, recognizing that such tactics offer the only possibility for survival” (Snyder, 1999, p. 156).

McCormack (2004) examines the misunderstanding that fuels many of the public and governmental perceptions of North Korea. He argues that North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons is one that is grounded in a bargaining chip rather than an offensive weapon for taking
South Korea or using it as a way to make money from other groups interested in acquiring nuclear weapons. McCormack goes as far to say that the Clinton administration had been very close to resolving Pyonyang’s nuclear ambitions by the end of his administration, but the second Bush administration’s need to separate it from its predecessor dismantled much of the progress previously made. “Both the United States and North Korea today seek and have an equal right to relief from the Damoclean sword of nuclear devastation. The fact that Americans have so little consciousness of themselves as the cause of another state’s fear is a measure of the distance between the center and the peripheries of an empire” (McCormack, 2004, p. 182).

Sigal (1998) provides a critical view of much of America’s previous actions regarding North Korea. He begins by examining how America’s firm stance and unwillingness to cooperate pushed North Korea further towards acquiring nuclear technology and weapons. He argues that the Bush and Clinton administrations pushed tougher measures in a multilateral fashion by appealing to the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. His larger argument is that many of the actors involved have failed to address the insecurities of Pyongyang. “Time and again, domestic politics prompted the Bush and Clinton Administrations to adopt a posture of toughness and inhibited them from making anything like acceptable offers to North Korea. The result was diplomatic deadlock, and worse, a crisis that nearly got out of hand” (Sigal, 1998, p. 13). He goes on to suggest that cooperation and dialogue with the North Korean regime is a necessary prerequisite to progress and ultimately success on the nuclear issue. This prompts a need to evaluate the rhetorical situation, since presidential administrations must be aware of the constraints that exist in the situation to limit what could or should be said. Political scientists also offer recommendations for negotiating strategies of the United States with North Korea. In general, these articles focus more closely on the format and tactics of the
negotiations rather than the rhetorical postures developed by administration officials when they speak publicly about the issue (International Crisis Group, 2003; International Crisis Group, 2007; Perry, 1999). They also focus narrowly on strategies that would make North Korea more willing to accept an agreement (International Crisis Group, 2003; International Crisis Group, 2007). For example, Romberg and Swaine (2003) argue that for the six-party talks to be successful, the U.S. must reach some form of agreement with China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia in order to create a uniform voice that attempts to denuclearize North Korea.

All five powers will need to reach a basic understanding on the key specifics of the negotiation process and objectives. The alternative – an excessively general, uncoordinated, U.S.-dominated strategy possibly centered on unrealistic or unreasonable demands on the North – will almost certainly result in failed negotiations, a further escalation of tension, and perhaps a military conflict that would prove catastrophic for all parties concerned. (Romberg and Swaine, 2003)

By contrast, the International Crisis Group (2007), based on its review of several options for the six-party talks, recommended a bilateral approach between the U.S. and North Korea to resolve the nuclear crisis. While they viewed the six-party talks as a useful framework, they insisted that a bilateral approach.

Political scientists also offered advice on the substance of the negotiations with North Korea, suggesting tactics that could be used to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. Perry (1999) recommended diplomatic incentives be used as a way to induce North Korea to continue following the requirements of the Agreed Framework. “Considering the risks inherent in the situation and the isolation, suspicion, and negotiating style of the DPRK, a successful U.S. policy will require steadiness and persistence even in the face of provocations”
(Perry, 1999). Similarly, the International Crisis Group (2003) argued that a negotiating stance that utilized both incentives and force would serve as the most satisfactory style to resolve the crisis. “[T]he best chance for a satisfactory diplomatic solution is to marry closely the diplomatic path with a credible threat to use military force to terminate the DPRK’s nuclear capability, by regime destruction if necessary” (International Crisis Group, 2003). The ICG argued that a phased diplomatic approach that utilized the diplomatic options first would allow the U.S. to garner international support for force if it became necessary to secure the Korean peninsula.

The format and tactics of negotiations with North Korea contain a rhetorical dimension. Political scientists that focus on these issues highlight the necessary strategic choices available to the U.S. as it attempts to diffuse the situation. Yet, each focuses too narrowly on the range of policy options available to the President without paying sufficient rhetorical attention to the policy of each administration. A full investigation of the history of U.S. negotiation with North Korea involves investigating more than the possible policies the President could have taken: it also requires understanding the rhetorical choice of framing the actions the President did take.

Historians and political scientists have contributed a great deal to the knowledge of North Korea’s nuclear ambitions and program. However, they fail to analyze rhetorical factors that affect diplomacy. Rhetorical criticism can rectify this shortcoming in our knowledge.

Rhetoric and Foreign Policy

A number of rhetorical scholars have evaluated the role of rhetoric in foreign policy. Many of them have examined the United States’ use of foreign policy rhetoric that focuses on presidential administrations and foreign policy situations. All of these
contribute important insight into possible frames that can be used to better disassemble the complexities of foreign policy.

Medhurst (1997) highlights the importance of analyzing rhetoric in the contemporary foreign policy environment by analyzing the use of Cold War rhetoric. He approaches foreign policy rhetoric by analyzing in a realist framework, or in a framework that takes into consideration the varying balances of power between actors and systems. Unlike in previous conflicts that used weapons, soldiers, and missiles to achieve objectives, the Cold War mainly used rhetorical devices. “While the weapons of a hot war are guns, bombs, missiles and the like, Cold War weapons are words, images, symbolic actions, and, on occasion, physical actions undertaken by covert means” (Medhurst, 1997, p. 19). This lends a great deal of credence to better understanding the types of rhetorical devices that are employed during “international showdowns.”

Bostdorff and Goldzwig (1994) studied the rhetoric of President John F. Kennedy during the Vietnam War. They argue that the rhetoric of Kennedy was often framed in terms of defending freedom, though he also employed practical arguments. Kennedy ultimately provided himself with a number of potential avenues for argumentation with rhetorical strategies. Kennedy managed to ultimately make a number of arguments that provide interesting insight into the presidency: that one can argue about contentious issues with practical argument rather than moral trumps and experts should foster most of the policy options for politicians.

A balance between ideas and pragmatics is essential for persuasive success, but presidents still must frame issues with care, for to define an issue in idealistic terms is to give that issue a great deal of significance and to raise expectations that may go unmet. This can expose a president to political criticism for not
devoting enough time and resources to that issue or for failing to find an equitable solution. (Bostdorff and Goldzwig, 1994, p. 522)

No scholarly analysis of the rhetoric used toward North Korea has been published. I intend to build on the previous examinations and add to our knowledge with the study of the rhetoric used on North Korea.

**Rhetorical Criticism and the Presidency**

Presidential rhetoric is an important area for rhetorical critics. The use of rhetoric and its effect upon leadership and power have been studied by numerous rhetorical scholars. Zarefsky (2002) defends the rhetorical dimension of the presidency. He argues that while not all presidential leadership is rhetorical, rhetoric plays a significant role in politics. He especially argues that is true with the advent of the media’s role in politics. He extends the work of other presidential scholars and argues that the role of rhetoric is not just one that deals with the media. “Any rhetor faces a mix of opportunities and constraints, and the rhetors’ choices do much to shape the very situations to which they supposedly respond” (Zarefsky, 2002, p. 38). The role of rhetoric has been the place where presidents have secured what they have considered as necessary. For example, when there is an event where the Constitution does not guarantee the president certain tools, rhetoric is the way to enable the president to attain those tools.

Charteris-Black (2005) discusses the role of metaphor in political language that is used to persuade on controversial issues. He argues that metaphor is a tool that helps develop leadership. “This is particularly true in political contexts where the majority is often unsure or uncommitted on the detailed context of policy. They respond more effectively to messages that explain proposed actions with reference to familiar experiences; successful politicians are those who can
develop their arguments with evidence taken from beliefs about the world around them” (Charteris-Black, 2005, p. 10). He goes on to say that the use of metaphor is necessary for effective politicians. For example, the Cold War was described at times like a game of chess with the United States and the Soviet Union making strategic concessions and power plays. He mentions that the roles of political phrases are important in a world inundated with media.

Joslyn (1986) does analysis of genre in political rhetoric. He argues that there is a great deal to learn from the constraints provided when rhetors speak. He goes on to say that the study of political discourse lends much to communication studies and political science because it reveals: the rhetor’s worldview, the rhetor’s behavioral intentions, the locus and intensity of political conflict, the locus and legitimacy of political power, and the role of the public. “This approach to explaining the patterns in rhetoric across rhetors is extremely helpful. It makes explicit how it is that situations create a kind of necessity for or demand upon rhetors while still allowing rhetorical choice and rule violation” (Joslyn, 1986, p. 310).

Windt (1987) provides a great deal of background on presidential rhetoric. He connects the role of rhetoric to the acquisition of power and leadership. “Scholars of presidential rhetoric, therefore, study the context of rhetorical events, the rhetorical act itself in all its manifestations, and the effects of the address or media meeting on policies, the administration, and its opponents. Presidential rhetoric, then, is only one of the powers available to the President, but in a democracy it may well be the fundamental power upon which all others rest” (Windt, 1987, p. xvi). He goes on to argue that the role of presidential rhetoric in rhetorical studies is one that is necessary to understand public language, argument, and democratic politics.

Ceasar et al. (1987) trace the rise of the rhetorical presidency. They argue that the president’s use of rhetoric is a cornerstone to the ability of the president to govern the nation and
act effectively. They argue that the rise of the rhetorical presidency is due to many factors, such as modern presidential leadership, modern mass media, and the modern presidential campaign. They go on to argue that there is a need to replace the supremacy of the rhetorical presidency.

“No wonder, then, that some politicians, deceived by their own rhetoric, find it difficult to come to terms with the job of governing a nation of complex multiple interests” (Ceasar et al, 1987, p. 20).

Osborn (1986) argues that rhetoric, with depiction, is an essential tool of political power. This depiction is a way to create common values that a community can share to rally around. Depiction, he goes on to say, presents experiences, intensifies feelings that already exist, helps facilitate identification, provides for possible implementation of policy, and reaffirms our common beliefs. Osborn argues that his interpretation of rhetoric as presentation alters our commonly held views that evaluate the meta-message rather than just the complexity of arguments made. “Instead it seeks those moments in which audiences encounter significant presentations of reality, and it strives to illuminate the rhetorical implications of such encounters. This shift in focus suggests not a different but a more inclusive study that expands rhetorical theory into a quest for the roots of public rationality itself” (Osborn, 1986, p. 97).

The North Korean nuclear crisis and the U.S. presidency have yet to be taken on by rhetorical scholars. A review of the literature suggests that rhetoric and foreign policy is an important consideration, but American presidential rhetoric and North Korea has remained elusive for rhetorical scholars. This project will attempt to fill the void in foreign policy rhetoric by tracing the rhetoric used by three presidential administrations concerning North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.
METHODOLOGY

I will employ rhetorical criticism to interpret the rhetorical moves that have shaped the U.S. response in dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis. Rather than use a specific lens that has been established by previous scholars, I will rely on the texts to reveal a lens that best accounts for each president’s rhetorical choices. In creating this framework, I will gather a number of speeches by the three presidential administrations. I will review available congressional testimony, public addresses, and interviews that exemplify and illustrate the precise strategies deployed by each president. I will attempt to provide a rhetorical history of this crisis and the lessons we can derive from that history.

I chose to use an inductive reading of the artifacts to form the thematic bases of a rhetorical lens to interpret each president’s discourse. While this rhetorical history, like all history, may not account for every statement made by presidential administration officials, its aim is to create the basis of an interpretation to make sense of the rhetorical dimension of the past three presidents’ handling of the nuclear issue in North Korea.

This rhetorical history aims to use the events that have transpired to inform the understanding of each president’s rhetorical choices. Hindsight helps illuminate the number of dimensions that contributed to the choices that were made by presidential officials. This contribution helps develop a more cohesive context that enables scholars to better comprehend why a deal with North Korea took multiple attempts, especially when the deals made are strikingly similar.

I hope to use rhetorical criticism to understand the relationship that presidential rhetoric had on the situational reality of diplomacy with North Korea. We can use the
relationship between the texts and contexts to reveal presidential perceptions and how language constrained the choices available to each president. The goal is not to investigate the actual substance of the negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea, but to trace the president’s public comments about North Korea to reveal how each understood the crisis.

PLAN OF STUDY

In the following chapters I will independently examine the presidential administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Each examination will map out the types of rhetorical strategies that were employed to frame the North Korean nuclear desire. Since it is likely that each president utilized multiple formats that included different types of behaviors, I will select particular speeches that attempt to represent historically accurate events. This will be done by examining the context of the presidency. This context includes items like the relationship the president has with Congress, the president’s approach towards foreign policy, and other questions that describe the political and cultural environment.

Chapter Two will examine the rhetorical history of George H.W. Bush’s administration and his foreign policy dialogue regarding North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.

Chapter Three will examine Bill Clinton’s rhetorical history of addressing North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.

Chapter Four will examine the rhetorical history of the George W. Bush administration and approach to curb North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.
Chapter Five will conclude the study by summarizing the findings and providing implications.
North Korea signed on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985 in an agreement with the Soviet Union for assistance in constructing four nuclear reactors (Soderberg, 2003; NTI, 2006). However, the failure of the Soviet Union to follow through on the agreement, because of its collapse in 1991, created a situation where North Korea failed to have its initial expectations met. The response to this failure has framed much of the ongoing debate about North Korea’s nuclear program. Rather than acknowledging the driving motivations for North Korea’s nuclear program, the international community chose to frame the ambitions in terms of a violation of their ratification of the NPT.

North Korea’s failure to acquiesce to the “international consensus” of declaring its nuclear sites and fissile material in violation, created an environment that emphasized compliance. The burden shifted on to the North Koreans. They were expected to fulfill their obligations under the NPT before other issues would be addressed. President Bush explicitly used this frame when discussing North Korea’s nuclear ambitions in a news conference with President Roh of South Korea, stating: “While rapid progress is being made between the North and South, I expressed my concern that the North fully implement its IAEA obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty” (Bush, 1992b). The United States’ reaction to North Korea’s intransigence was to suspend all negotiations with North Korea until it fulfilled its initial requirements.

This chapter will trace the rhetorical moves of President George Herbert Walker Bush in relation to the North Korean nuclear controversy. In doing so, I will examine the historical
backdrop, explain the thematic basis of a rhetoric of compliance, and show how Bush’s rhetorical choices were consistent with this perspective. I will argue that Bush engaged in a “rhetoric of compliance” informed by the historical and situational factors of the day. Specifically, I will argue that the end of the Cold War put North Korea in a vulnerable position, and that Bush’s use of compliance failed to meet the rhetorical exigency of the time. A rhetoric of compliance is based on: 1) de-prioritizing North Korea versus other foreign policy issues, 2) downplaying direct communication between high-ranking officials, 3) addressing the issue through secondary countries, notably U.S. allies, 4) requiring North Korea to meet the initial demand of the U.S. before actual talks can occur, and 5) withholding legitimacy for those countries that do not meet U.S. demands. I conclude by arguing that Bush’s emphasis on compliance failed to recognize North Korea’s needs which limited his ability to successfully manage the issue.

TEXTS FOR ANALYSIS

Texts from a wide variety of sources were analyzed, including speeches, congressional testimony, and newspaper coverage. Speeches were collected from two sources: the Miller Center of Public Affair’s Presidential Archive at the University of Virginia and the George Bush Presidential Library at Texas A & M. The Miller Center contains fifteen of President Bush’s most noted speeches including his Inaugural Address and State of the Unions. I used these speeches to help assess the foreign policy priorities of the Bush administration. The George Bush Presidential Library contains public papers and speeches of President Bush. I found twenty-three relevant articles using a keyword search.
Additionally, statements by Administration officials were acquired through a search of Lexis-Nexis Congressional. A search of congressional hearings from the 101st and 102nd Congresses found five hearings that directly examine the nuclearization of North Korea. Two were held during the 101st Congress (1989-1990) and three during the 102nd Congress (1991-1992).

Additional comments by President Bush and other White House officials were found in newspaper stories on the issue. A search in Lexis-Nexis News for “North Korea” and “nuclear weapons” in the New York Times produced 319 stories. From the results gathered, I chose a sample of ten documents that were specifically about North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, to determine who was talking about North Korea, when, and to whom. The documents chosen were picked due to there applicability to this project.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

President George H.W. Bush’s views are most accessible in his public addresses, documents, and the statements of his advisors. All of these rhetorical texts help reveal his character, values, and public philosophy. By analyzing these texts, we can better frame the political ideologies that represent President Bush’s attitudes towards North Korea.

North Korea was not the only foreign policy issue that President Bush faced. Several other issues dominated the foreign policy agenda including the fall of the Soviet Union and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. President Bush’s inability to deal with every international issue is highlighted by the fact that issues of nuclear proliferation, like North Korea, were often neglected. Rather, the Bush administration had to be selective when engaging issues that the President considered to be the most important or strategic. For example, Bush’s choice to focus
on the Soviet Union and democracy promotion and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait all signal what issues the President deemed to be the most salient.

The North Korean regime instituted a policy of juche, or self-reliance, from its inception in 1948. President Kim Il Sung promoted juche as a way to create an internationally powerful North Korea (Olsen, 1986, p. 851-853). In contrast, the South Koreans had opened their markets up to the West and used a policy of interdependence. The new alliances that South Korea had entered into in the 1980’s provided it a number of sources for military technology and national defense. North Korea’s self-reliance forced it to pursue its own military developments. “The defense of the state, and providing the means to accomplish that vital task, makes the military and its needs crucial to North Korean society” (Olsen, 1986, p. 853).

North Korea failed to keep pace with the acceleration of South Korean economic growth since 1975 (Perry, 1990, p. 173). North Korea chose to align with the Soviet Union to gain legitimacy and power. South Korea’s booming manufacturing and electronic industries helped it achieve remarkable amounts of growth and success on the international stage (Perry, 1990, p. 173). North Korea, which had been the powerhouse after the end of the Korean War, was now playing second fiddle to the country that decided to connect with the West, and specifically with the United States (Perry, 1990, p. 174).

The downfall of the Soviet Union had a profound impact on the United States-North Korean relationship. Previously, North Korea had garnered legitimacy via its relationship with the Soviet Union. The relationship the two nations shared provided a vast amount of resources for Pyongyang. “The DPRK appears increasingly left behind by the economic advances of capitalist East Asia and by the demise of communism elsewhere. It is being pushed into an unhealthy isolation” (Perry, 1990, p. 173). Ultimately, the downfall of the Soviet Union forced
the hand of the North Korean regime. The North Koreans had to find another way to attain respect and power internationally.

Complicating the loss of North Korea’s strategic ally, domestic problems were overwhelming Pyongyang’s ascent to power. The policy of self-reliance closed out a great deal of investment into the North Korean economy and by the end of the Cold War, North Korea had missed out on much of the economic boom present in the Pacific Rim (Perry, 1990, p. 173). Food scarcity and an electronics industry that has failed to keep pace with South Korea also threatened the legitimacy of Pyongyang’s government (Perry, 1990, p. 175-178). “[T]he oil crisis, coupled with falling prices for what they had to sell, led to trade imbalances, foreign debt, and eventual default on that debt” (Perry, 1990, p. 179). Either the North Koreans could attempt to follow the South Korean role and make strategic concessions to the United States or they could follow the path of Iraq, attempting to garner power via bargaining chips.

South Korea’s ascent to regional power stems from its relationship with the United States. South Korea allows for an American military deployment on its soil. It had to sacrifice its own nuclear program and a great deal of its own military independence. The result was a great deal of foreign investment and increasing international legitimacy. As a result of such cooperation, the United States has chosen to closely consult on most of the decisions about North Korea and to allow South Korea to lead most of the diplomatic efforts (Litwak, 2007, pp. 249-250).

In contrast to the cooperation between the US and South Korea, Iraq chose to seek power independently. While being a signatory to the NPT, they still sought to develop a nuclear weapons program (Litwak, 2007, pp. 126-128). Not until after they chose to invade Kuwait, and the subsequent international response, did the global community learn of Iraq’s clandestine nuclear program. The progress Iraq made since ratifying the NPT in 1969 demonstrated the
ability for a government to engage in secretive programs while still being party to international agreements.

The end of the Cold War also ushered in an era of United States supremacy on the international stage. The lack of a major power to counter the United States gave America the ability to try to leverage its desires on other nations previously protected under the security umbrella of the Soviet Union.

Ever since it became clear that an exhausted Soviet Union was calling off the Cold War, the quest has been on for a new American role in the world. Roles, however, are not invented in the abstract; they are a response to a perceived world structure. Accordingly, thinking about post-Cold War American foreign policy has been framed by several conventionally accepted assumptions about the shape of the post-Cold War environment. (Krauthammer, 1990, p.23)

The lessons learned from the Cold War influenced the assumptions that the United States had about dealing with security issues, especially when it came to communist states.

The downfall of the Soviet Union marked a major shift in the paradigm of international affairs. The Cold War was one of the most important battles the United States had fought, not just because of its lasting effects on nuclear proliferation, but also because it was a greater ideological conflict. Beyond the ideological face-off, the United States learned that strategies of containment were successful (Tehranian, 1998). This had broader implications for the way the United States would frame future foreign policy conflicts, including North Korea. “[Containment] managed to limit the expansion of the Sino-Soviet bloc beyond its own borders. But old ideas, particularly successful ones, never die. They continue to overshadow and cloud our understanding of new realities” (Tehranian, 1998). In a commencement address at Texas A & M
University, Bush echoed this sentiment: “While we hope to move beyond containment, we are only at the beginning of our new path. Many dangers and uncertainties are ahead” (Bush, 1989b). One of the dangers Bush is referencing is the threat of nuclear proliferation. While Bush does not reference North Korea in his commencement address, he is making a larger reference to those who would use the fallout of the Cold War as a way to speed up the proliferation of nuclear weapons or nuclear programs. The threat of nuclear weapons and the rise of American power gave the US the opportunity to exercise its new role in the world in the Middle East.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the international community quickly focused on responding to the crisis. The United Nations backed the United States’ call to defend Kuwait against its larger neighbor and aggressor, Iraq. In an address before a joint session of Congress, Bush outlined the need to succeed against Saddam Hussein:

This is the first assault on the new world that we seek, the first test of our mettle.

Had we not responded to this first provocation with clarity of purpose, if we do not continue to demonstrate our determination, it would be a signal to actual and potential despots around the world. America and the world must defend common vital interests – and we will. (Bush, 1990)

Bush’s description of the Gulf War defines his priorities in a broader sense. His sentiments define defeating Iraq as a key to ensuring other shared global interests. Members of the administration argued that dealing with Iraq was an excellent way to demonstrate the military might of the United States as well as underscore the need to peacefully resolve international conflict. The end of the Cold War changed the world from a bipolar struggle to a unipolar moment. The United States sought opportunities to assert its leadership and power to control global affairs. Iraq, like North Korea, is paradigmatic of a rhetorical strategy used by the United
States to confront small states that violated international norms. This “rhetoric of compliance” would transcend Iraq and become a major strategy for addressing North Korea’s nuclear program.

The argument made by members of the Bush administration was that acting on Iraq was a signal to North Korea to abide by international laws and norms (Webb, 1991). So in this way, Bush established a framework of how America deals with global problems. He necessarily has to decide what lies at the heart of America’s goals for the world. The assumption that Iraq would make dealing with North Korea easier proved to be incorrect.

The necessity of addressing Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait limited the Bush administration’s handling of North Korea. The focus on other issues forced the Bush administration to forego negotiations with North Korea. Instead of negotiations, the Bush administration stood resolutely behind the South Korean government and pressed for their lead on denuclearizing their counterparts. A majority of Bush’s rhetoric about North Korea was to Asian allies. Before the Korean National Assembly in Seoul, President Bush announced: “We are pleased that our September announcement about nuclear weapons helped lend momentum to the effort to make Korea safe from nuclear proliferation. And we’ve worked with others in the region to send a multilateral message to North Korea” (Bush, 1992a). President Bush highlights the active choice of the United States to not directly engage North Korea and to use international pressure to force Pyongyang to make initial progress.

Other members of the administration pursued similar strategies. Secretary of State Baker relied on China to pressure the North Koreans (New York Times, 1991). Baker also engaged the Soviet Foreign Minister in pressuring North Korea to abide by the requirements of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) (Gordon, 1989). Secretary of State Baker told Soviet officials that
"nuclear proliferation, notably North Korea's reactor program, remains dangerous” (as cited in Gordon, 1989).

One response to the collapse of the Soviet Union was for the United States to make a goodwill act to the rest of the world in the hope of inducing adversaries into reciprocating. The United States withdrew all of its tactical nuclear weapons from other countries, including South Korea. This move by the United States was an unprecedented one. Whether the Bush administration knew the limits of military power projections or there were other interests motivating the act, the United States created an environment where progress on nuclear proliferation could be addressed.

North Korea followed the announcement of the United States by coming to the table with South Korean President Roh Tae Woo. The product of this negotiation between North and South Korea was the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This agreement prohibited South Korea from acquiring a nuclear weapons program and, in turn, prohibited the DPRK from engaging in the same. This agreement included multilateral inspections for verification. The goodwill from the Joint Declaration also prompted North Korea to make good on its initial requirements under the NPT.

In 1992, North Korea concluded the comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA. This came six years after they had become party to the NPT. The American withdrawal of their tactical nuclear weapons and offering to open their military sites to verification had a great deal of impact on the North Korean willingness to finalize their NPT commitments (Sterngold, 1991).

However, shortly after the IAEA inspected the declared nuclear sites of the North Koreans, another roadblock to denuclearization spurred tensions on the peninsula. The IAEA found that the reports submitted by North Korea on the amount of reprocessed plutonium were
not consistent with the number of fuel rods that had been taken from the reactors. The United States imposed sanctions on the North Koreans for fears of missile proliferation (Arms Control Association, 2003). These two problems removed any possibility of the success of the Joint Declaration. The Bush administration’s efforts on North Korea were brought to an end with the election of William Jefferson Clinton as president in 1992.

RHETORIC OF COMPLIANCE

The first element in Bush’s rhetoric of compliance is Bush’s de-prioritizing North Korea versus other foreign policy issues. A search of the George Bush Presidential Library’s collection of public papers and speeches returns twenty-three results when searching for “North Korea.” Closer examination reveals that only half of them refer to the North Korean desire to acquire nuclear weapons. This reveals an important insight into President Bush’s worldview. It’s important to understand that the lack of focus on the North Korea issue is an important rhetorical consideration. The plethora of events that controlled much of the Bush agenda impacted President Bush’s ability to directly speak about or to the events that were occurring in North Korea. For example, a keyword search for “Iraq” in the George H.W. Presidential Library returns 487 artifacts. A keyword search for “Soviet Union” returns 713 artifacts. The focus that the Soviet Union and Iraq received during President Bush’s administration demonstrates the type of prioritization that other issues received over North Korea. Also, other scholars have noted the lack of attention North Korea received during Bush’s administration because they felt that the North Korean regime did not have enough financial resources to develop an adequate nuclear weapons program for years (Sanger, 1991; Rosenthal, 1992). Bush’s infrequent discussion of North Korea illustrates its low priority.
Bush’s lack of attention is not inconsistent with a rhetoric of compliance, though. On the contrary, a rhetoric of compliance does not require a great deal of focus. Instead, it places the blame, and the onus on action, to those “defiantly” resisting international law.

This lack of prioritization is important to future administrations because it indirectly allowed the North Koreans to balk on implementing the IAEA requirements. The advancements North Korea made while the rest of the world was focused on the fall of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War proved to be difficult for not just the Bush administration, but future administrations as well. The goal of the Bush administration was to give Pyongyang the ability to claim their willingness to meet international requirements rather than actually meeting the requirements. Senator Alan Cranston argued that, "all the recent publicity about the ease with which Iraq was able to develop a nuclear weapon secretly could well have emboldened the North Koreans to believe that they can sign on the international proliferation safeguards and still proliferate" (as cited in Crossette, 1992).

Second, a rhetoric of compliance downplays direct communication between high-ranking officials. Direct communication can be interpreted as a symbolic benefit for the transgressor. This is especially likely in foreign relations. Direct communication confers legitimacy on all participants. By contrast, failure to communicate symbolically denies legitimacy to those who are not given space to talk. President Bush did not engage in direct talks with members of the North Korean government. This choice is evident in a news conference in Seoul when President Bush said: “Our policy is not going to shift. We're not going to start having dialogue with North Korea” (Bush, 1992b). Instead, he chose to focus on South Korean and Chinese officials. Even after the United States pulled its tactical nuclear weapons out of South Korea, a demand the North Koreans made as a prerequisite to verification measures, the United States sent embassy
staffers to discuss implementing requirements of the NPT (Murray, 1992). These types of talks, however, were strictly low-level and lacked the kind of legitimacy that North Korea would have desired (Poneman, 2003). An anonymous official in the Bush administration said that the Americans wanted “to keep [their] fingerprints off [the Joint Declaration]” (as cited in Sanger, 1992). President Bush extended the sentiment when he “quietly warned the South Korean leadership against moving too fast in dealings with the Communist North” (Sanger, 1992).

The third element of the rhetoric of compliance is addressing the issue through secondary countries, notably U.S. allies. The chief partner in combating North Korea’s nuclear program was South Korea. Their choice to call upon the assistance of the West gave them an integral tie to the United States. President Bush made his choice of a strategic ally in the region clear before the Korean National Assembly: “At every point, South Korea’s approach was open, sincere, and fair. Each good-faith action increased the call for the North to make a positive response. Today the prospects for real peace on this peninsula are brighter than at any point in the past four decades” (Bush, 1992a). Framing the U.S. position vis-à-vis South Korea signaled that the burden to act was on the North Koreans. President Roh also received a great deal more attention than Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong-il. In 1989, President Roh visited Washington, D.C. in an attempt to build more American support for his initiatives on the Korean Peninsula (Gordon, 1989). When the United States pulled its tactical nuclear weapons out of South Korea, it was the South Koreans that used this as a way to leverage the North Koreans into reciprocating. President Bush echoed the sentiments of South Korea in this respect as a way to build solidarity between the two countries (Sterngold, 1991). It was also South Korea that announced the cancellation of
the Team Spirit joint military exercise\(^1\) to demonstrate its willingness to work with North Korea on the nuclear issue (Murray, 1992). In November of 1991, Secretary of State Baker told South Korea that the Americans were going to extend their strategy of using other states when it wanted to incorporate Japan, China, and the Soviet Union to block North Korea’s nuclear program (Friedman, 1991). At a press briefing, a senior State Department official said that the U.S. was “starting to build some multilateral diplomacy to deal with [North Korea]” (as cited in Friedman, 1991). All of these moves suggest that the United States chose to tie their greater North Korean strategy to the South Koreans.

China, as a fellow communist state, was also deemed as an important influence on the North Koreans. The Bush administration pursued the support of Beijing in ensuring that North Korea would adhere to the NPT. In 1991, Secretary of State Baker traveled to Beijing for high-level talks. These talks included the need to reign in Pyongyang’s nuclear program. China had expressed its concern over North Korea acquiring nuclear weapons, but had been resistant to use more direct measures to obtain North Korean compliance (New York Times, 1991). This strategy could have also impacted the North Korean’s willingness to cooperate with the United States. The United States would give China high-level talks, something the North Koreans desired, but refused to engage directly with high-level members of the North Korean regime.

Fourth, the rhetoric of compliance requires North Korea to meet the initial demand of the U.S. before additional talks can occur: declaring the amount of fissile material that had been withdrawn from the nuclear reactors and allowing a full inspection of all nuclear sites. In a news conference before foreign journalists, President Bush said: “I am convinced that the move should be up to North Korea to meet the international standards, to comply with IAEA and other rules.”

\(^1\) Several hundred thousand troops participated in the event. Team Spirit military exercises were held as a symbolic show of support by the U.S. for South Korea. The military cooperation also improved military coordination and increased the deterrent value against North Korea.
The strategy resembles a quid pro quo, in that Bush spoke of meeting certain wishes the North Korean government had proposed to the United States for North Korea allowing international inspectors into sensitive sites. President Bush extended his sentiment in a news conference: “If North Korea fulfills its obligation and takes steps to implement the inspection agreements, then President Roh and I are prepared to forgo the Team Spirit exercise for this year” (Bush, 1992b).

The rhetoric of compliance was an attempt to enforce the current international non-proliferation regime. Rather than press North Korea into signing a new agreement, like future administrations, the Bush administration chose to push Pyongyang to respect the NPT. President Bush went on to echo this sentiment as he demanded that North Korea fulfill its original requirements of the NPT before the South Korean National Assembly: “I call on North Korea to demonstrate its sincerity, to meet the obligations it undertook when it signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty 6 years ago. North Korea must implement in full all IAEA safeguards for its nuclear facilities without exception, and I might add, without delay” (Bush, 1992a). This strategy invokes a timeliness question that North Korea needs to address. Rather than having the globe address some other objections before action is taken, the light is focused on the North Koreans and they are expected to fulfill their responsibilities in a timely manner. President Bush extended his strategy in a letter to Congressional leaders saying how the U.S. will continue “to press North Korea to honor its nonproliferation commitments” (Bush, 1993). A rhetoric of compliance cannot be an open requirement, instead it must have a element of quick response.

Finally, a rhetoric of compliance also withholds legitimacy for those countries that do not meet U.S. demands. President Bush makes that clear by noting the work of the South Korean government to create an atmosphere where a larger dialogue about reunification can take place.
In a speech before the South Korean National Assembly in Seoul, President Bush said: “This progress is a tribute to the policies of President Roh and the Government of this Republic. South Korea has systematically eliminated any possible action that could justify the North's pursuit of such deadly weapons” (Bush, 1992a). Later in a news conference in South Korea, President Bush said: “[W]e are not going to permit North Korea to make an end run to start in talking to us about upgrading before these fundamental problems that President Roh has talked about have been solved” (Bush, 1992b). He clearly states that the needs of the South Koreans must be addressed before there will be any direct engagement between North Korea and the U.S.

The Bush administration believed that high-level meetings would be seen as a reward to the North Koreans for their “bad behavior”. The Bush administration wanted to ensure that Pyongyang was not under the impression that they could have close relations with top officials while they pursued their nuclear ambitions. Symbolically, the refusal to engage in high-level meetings minimized the perceptual respect that the United States shows to those who defy international nuclear laws and norms. This rhetorical act frames the nuclear question in a bigger context of inter-state behavior. The refusal to address other issues of importance to the North Korean government until they address the verification measures outlined by the United States is an absolute stance that America and its allies are in the right. This is a rhetorical move that puts the focus on the other rather than on America. The “silence” or lack of negotiations is not just a stance of being uninterested, but a way to force the hand of the North Korean regime. Wit, Poneman, and Gallucci (2004) argue that a great deal of the reluctance to give North Korea high-level talks was because they believed it would be seen as rewarding bad behavior. The sentiment of many administrations prior to Bush felt that the burden fell on the North Koreans to make
good on implementing verification measures before high-level officials would engage the North Koreans (p. 22).

President Bush adopted the strategy of his predecessors, but he added an indirect form of pressure in a speech before the National Assembly in Seoul:

In the years ahead, we must work together as equal partners to meet the evolving security needs of the Korean Peninsula. Peace through strength is a policy that has served the security interests of our two nations well. (Bush, 1989)

President Bush chooses to highlight the success of previous diplomatic strategies that emphasize strength. This strategy of “strength” is one that creates a rhetorical dominance, but one that is not overly aggressive. This shifts the burden of proof on to the North Korean regime and limits the good nature of actions that they might take.

President Bush also chose to back initiatives the South Koreans pursued, like the Joint Declaration. The Joint Declaration was an agreement that allowed for verification of all nuclear sites in both North and South Korea and it included a ban on further nuclear weapons development. This strategy of elevating the South Koreans as an equal to the United States placed the North Koreans in an inferior role. The North Koreans were viewed as a global nuisance. President Bush commended the South Koreans in a news conference with President Roh: “I told President Roh that he deserves tremendous credit for the progress that has been made toward reunification on the peninsula. His November 8th announcement set the standard for a nonnuclear peninsula which I fully endorse” (Bush, 1992b). But President Bush did not allow the progress on the Joint Declaration trade-off with previous calls for North Korea to comply with the IAEA and the NPT. President Bush also provided other rhetorical “carrots” to induce North Korean action, like the cancellation of the Team Spirit joint military exercise. Bush
went on to define the willingness of South Korea and the United States as an act that removed all need for North Korea to drag its feet on inspections.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the greater history of the George H.W. Bush presidential administration with regard to North Korea. The way that the Bush administration rhetorically framed its relations with North Korea was based on a “rhetoric of compliance.” To substantiate this claim, I investigated the speeches of President Bush and news articles that allowed us to interpret what a “rhetoric of compliance” is in this context. There are five elements associated with a “rhetoric of compliance”: 1) de-prioritizing North Korea versus other foreign policy issues, 2) downplaying direct communication between high-ranking officials, 3) addressing the issue through secondary countries, notably U.S. allies, 4) requiring North Korea to meet the initial demand of the U.S. before actual talks can occur, and 5) withholding legitimacy for these countries that do not meet U.S. demands. Only when a country adheres to its obligations will it be given greater credibility and legitimacy. The Bush administration clearly adopted this strategy in its dealings with the issue of North Korea’s nuclear proliferation in the early 1990’s.

A rhetoric of compliance was a constraining rhetorical frame for Bush because it did not account for North Korea’s needs for international legitimacy that it had previously enjoyed via the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War allowed the U.S. to pursue objectives that it viewed as necessary to its continued success, many of which were founded on the strategy of containment. The use of containment against North Korea failed to successfully end the North Korean nuclear program.
Arriving to office in 1993, President William Jefferson Clinton relied on domestic issues, especially the economy, to replace foreign affairs as a central factor in the election. His strategic decision to minimize foreign policy paid off. “The previously very popular incumbent lost the election because of the economy” (Pilarski, 1993). James Carville, Clinton’s campaign strategist, used the recession that the U.S. had fallen into as a way to de-emphasize the foreign policy successes (e.g. the fall of the Soviet Union and Iraq) of Bush.

The lack of focus on foreign policy in the election proved to be more than just a tactical choice. As Governor of Arkansas, President Clinton had little experience in international affairs. Foreign policy took a backseat in the early stages of Clinton’s administration. “Clinton, by contrast, had initially immersed himself in domestic matters, did not even travel much overseas, except when he had to for G7 summits and the obligatory early visit to neighboring Mexico” (Martin, 1999). With his time and energy, not to mention expertise, he focused on domestic affairs. Given his situation, it wasn’t surprising that Clinton appears to have simply continued Bush’s approach toward North Korea in the early stages of his presidency.

Initially, Clinton continued to utilize a rhetoric of compliance that emphasized North Korea succumbing to international pressure by allowing IAEA inspectors to have full access to all of the North Korean nuclear sites. In a speech before the Prime Minister of Israel in 1993 Clinton directly draws upon the rhetoric of compliance: “[T]he United States is very concerned and very disappointed that North Korea has at least for the time being chosen to eject the IAEA inspectors and to withdraw from the international regime of which they are part” (Clinton,
1993a). This demonstrates President Clinton’s urge to the North Koreans to meet the criteria set forth by the IAEA. He also extends the Bush trend of defining the United States as the superior on the question of following international law. In an interview with Dan Rather, President Clinton said: “I hope and pray that they will change their mind and return to the family of nations committed to restraining nuclear proliferations” (Clinton, 1993b). Clinton’s call underscores his positioning of North Korea as not belonging to the family of nations, demonstrating U.S. supremacy in international law.

Despite adopting Bush’s strategy early on, however, Clinton ultimately displayed a different diplomatic strategy than Bush. Rather than play the waiting game with North Korea, the Clinton administration committed itself to engagement after a number of diplomatic failures (Rosenthal, 1994). Not surprisingly, a different negotiating strategy compelled a different rhetorical strategy.

I will argue that President Clinton ultimately utilized a “rhetoric of negotiation.” Clinton’s rhetoric revealed a stance toward North Korea that downplayed forced compliance with the NPT, and instead emphasized the need for the U.S. and North Korea to come together and reach a mutually-satisfying agreement. The rhetoric of negotiation refocused the entire diplomatic scheme by: 1) prioritizing the issue of North Korea, 2) involving direct negotiation between high-level officials, 3) proceeding in an open-ended manner allowing for the needs of all parties to be considered, and 4) assuming the legitimacy of all states. Each of these thematic elements helps demonstrate the vast difference between a rhetoric of compliance and a rhetoric of negotiation. All of these thematic elements help demonstrate the vast difference between a rhetoric of compliance and a rhetoric of negotiation.
TEXTS FOR ANALYSIS

Texts were collected from presidential speeches, documents from administration officials, and newspaper coverage. Speeches were collected from the American Presidency Project. I searched for “North Korea” and “nuclear” during the Clinton administration. The search results in 354 artifacts. From the original search, I narrowed the list down to artifacts that were focused narrowly on foreign policy issues and documents exclusively about the American response to North Korea’s nuclear proliferation. Twenty-five were selected as representative of Clinton’s rhetoric and are the basis of this chapter.

Additional comments and addresses were collected from newspapers stories. A search of Lexis-Nexis News for “North Korea,” “nuclear,” and “Clinton” in the New York Times during the years of his administration produced 1,177 documents. I narrowed the documents to those that contained responses from American officials regarding North Korea’s acquisition of nuclear weapons. The documents chosen were those that applied most thoroughly to my project. Twelve were selected as representative of the administration and used to corroborate the artifacts from the Presidency Project.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In March 1993, North Korea issued a declaration about their intent to remove IAEA inspectors and to withdraw from the NPT (Poneman, 2003). The IAEA subsequently confirmed that it was unable to confirm that North Korea was not diverting nuclear material for the production of a weapon. The United States immediately reacted by granting talks with North Korean officials to determine if they could prompt the regime to suspend its withdrawal from the NPT. One day before the withdrawal was to be finalized, the North Koreans agreed to suspend
their withdrawal (Poneman, 2003). While North Korea still rejected IAEA inspections and further adherence to the NPT, their willingness to cooperate was evident.

It had also become known that North Korea had withdrawn fissile material from the reactor at Yongbon and was planning to do so again (Litwak, 2007, pp. 252-253). According to CIA officials, there was enough plutonium to create one or two nuclear weapons (Litwak, 2007, p. 253). The second round of plutonium withdrawal was estimated to produce enough material to create an additional four to five nuclear weapons (Poneman, 2003). The U.S. was worried that an increasingly nuclear North Korea would cause other regional actors to seek nuclear weapons (Gelb, 1993).

Aside from the pressure North Korea faced from the international community by withdrawing fissile material, there was also was pressure from within North Korea. “The [Republic of Korea’s] gross national product appears to have grown by the late 1980s to roughly six times that of the DPRK. And because of the difference in rates of economic growth between the two Koreas the gap is widening and has been widening since 1975” (Perry, 1990, p. 173). However, the stakes for the elites in Pyongyang grew to be more dangerous. As the nuclear danger increased, the economic troubles grew worse for North Korea (Litwak, 2007, p. 253). The dilemma for North Korea was that attempts to build a nuclear weapons program hurt their economy by devoting limited resources to the project, and those economic pressures served to further destabilize the region. Yet, if North Korea could acquire a nuclear arsenal, it would give them the leverage necessary to secure concessions from the West (Litwak, 2007, p.253).

Despite the mounting frustration about North Korea’s unwillingness to immediately allow IAEA full access, the Clinton administration persisted on a diplomatic solution (Gordon, 1993). President Clinton commented that: “we have some hope for the continuing discussions. If
you’ve asked me have I given up on the discussions, the answer is no” (as cited in Gordon, 1993). The complexity of the negotiations forced administration officials to rethink their original diplomatic strategy.

The initial reaction to North Korean defiance of international norms was to resume the Team Spirit joint military exercise and for the U.S. to press the United Nations Security Council to adopt sanctions against North Korea. President Clinton also chose to reinforce the American military presence by deploying anti-ballistic missiles in South Korea as a deterrent to aggression from the North (Litwak, 2007, p. 254). Ambassador Robert Gallucci, the chief United States negotiator with North Korea, said, “This had an escalatory quality that could deteriorate not only into a war but into a big war” (as cited in Litwak, 2007, p. 253). The lack of regular contact between the U.S. and North Korea made the risk of miscalculation alarmingly high (Poneman, 2003).

The same day that Clinton announced support for multilateral sanctions, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter arrived in North Korea to meet with Kim Il Sung. While the Clinton administration did not ask former President Carter to negotiate with the North Koreans, they nevertheless agreed with his choice to engage (Litwak, 2007, p. 255). After meetings with Kim Il Sung, Carter managed to get North Korea to freeze its nuclear program and resume high-level talks with the U.S. (Poneman, 2003). President Clinton described the Carter talks as something that “certainly gives us the basis of seeking a solution” and announced that high-level bilateral dialogue would continue (as cited in Litwak, 2007, p. 255). Ambassador Gallucci described Carter’s role in the process: “President Carter went to North Korea, and then President Kim Il Sung decided that he would indeed freeze the program and go back to the negotiating table. And
I think President Carter played a key role in moving them from one position to another position” (Gallucci, 2004).

As a result of the accord between Kim Il Sung and Carter, President Clinton was able to make a significant alteration to American foreign policy. Rather than extend the strategy of compliance, Clinton saw the possibility of utilizing a new rhetorical posture. The reality of the situation in North Korea was that the previous strategy, embodied in the rhetoric of compliance, had failed and was continuing to fail to address the underlying concerns of Pyongyang. Ultimately, President Clinton was able to broker a deal with North Korea in the 1994 Agreed Framework. The agreement between the United States and North Korea would halt and dismantle the North Korean nuclear program in exchange for energy assistance, including shipments of heavy fuel oil until the construction of two light water nuclear reactors could be completed (Poneman, 2003). The benefit of the light water nuclear reactors is that they are proliferation-resistant (they use more of the fissile material in the reactor rather than using less that can be reprocessed for a nuclear weapon). This agreement sought to go beyond the NPT and reward North Korea’s willingness to address the security concerns of their regional neighbors.

However, the 1994 Agreed Framework faced a number of difficulties that ultimately created a situation more dangerous than before. The 1994 midterm elections resulted in a Republican controlled Congress and proved to be a difficult road bump for the Agreed Framework. A number of House Republicans argued: “There is significant evidence that nuclear weapons development is continuing” (as cited in Marshall and Gertz, 1999). The Republican critics of the Agreed Framework argued that the U.S. was giving in to nuclear blackmail and that there were no provisions to ensure that North Korea was actually shutting down its nuclear weapons program (Snyder, 2004; Litwak, 2000; Marshall and Gertz, 1999). This furthered the
conservative belief that the North Korean regime was not trustworthy. This attitude stemmed from a number of Republican officials who had worked with President’s Reagan and Bush (Sakamoto, 1999). Congressional Republicans sought to limit the amount of fuel going to North Korea until verification measures were in place to protect against diversion to military functions (Sakamoto, 1999).

Another trouble that plagued the Agreed Framework was North Korea’s unwillingness to allow IAEA special inspections, one of the prerequisites and a firm requirement of Congressional Republicans, which would ensure that their nuclear program was exclusively civilian. The North Korean defiance halted the construction of the light water nuclear reactors. The North Korean attitude was that the United States was trying to slow progress on their end of the Agreed Framework. The official North Korean party released a statement saying: “Abrogation of the DPRK-US Geneva Agreement and blocking the construction of light-water reactors are the position of the Republican Party” (as cited in Sinmun, 1999). This frustration eventually proved to be the downfall of the Agreed Framework as the North Koreans were able to invert the rhetoric of compliance on to the Americans. The North Koreans felt that the only thing impeding progress was the delay of heavy oil shipments and the slow nature of the nuclear reactor’s construction. The rest of this chapter will trace Clinton’s rhetorical choices surrounding his choice to engage in negotiations with the North Koreans.

RHETORIC OF NEGOTIATION

The Clinton administration’s choice to engage in a rhetoric of negotiation contained four elements. First, the Clinton administration made dealing with North Korea a high priority issue as opposed to the previous administration. Second, high-level officials from the U.S. sought to
engage the North Koreans in direct communication rather than using regional allies to allay concerns and demand cooperation. Third, the Clinton administration chose to open the diplomatic channels so that North Korea could provide input into the negotiations rather than assuming that they would just meet previous agreements. Fourth, Clinton pursued a strategy of bringing North Korea to the negotiating table as an equal rather than as an entity below the U.S. The rhetoric of negotiation is an inversion of the thematic elements of a rhetoric of compliance.

The suspension of North Korean withdrawal from the NPT marked a new form of diplomacy for the United States. North Korea agreed to suspend withdrawal from the NPT because they believed that it would be an important political symbol to garner legitimacy from the United States (Litwak, 2007, p. 252). South Korean officials saw the North Korean act as a way to “gradually bring the North back into the world community” (Litwak, 2007, p.253). The American move to respond to North Korea’s act of threatening to withdraw from the NPT reflected a prioritization that inverted the kind of focus that the previous administration had taken. The Clinton administration’s focus privileged the North Korean government’s concerns regarding their own safety and stability. The North Koreans had been calling on a “package solution” that would address all of the issues that have motivated a drive for nuclear weapons (Litwak, 2007, p. 252). North Korea’s desires for nuclear weapons were framed as an international issue rather than just a regional one by the U.S. The paradigmatic shift created a place where regional allies of the United States could not resolve this issue alone.

First, a rhetoric of negotiation involves a prioritization of North Korea. President Clinton established one of his initial foreign policy goals as controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. He saw the danger of allowing these types of weapons to spread throughout the world and made a priority of his administration to limit their growth. In a
statement before reporters shortly after North Korea agreed to suspend its withdrawal from the NPT, Clinton said: “Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the highest priorities of my administration, and we will continue to press the North Koreans strongly” (Clinton, 1993c). North Korean acquisition of nuclear weapons was a serious threat to American and Asian security for the Clinton administration. Therefore, he saw the need to address the issue by making Pyongyang a serious priority for American diplomats, officials, and negotiators. Clinton, over a year later, stressed the importance of dealing with North Korea in an interview: “No problem is more important to the United States and its allies than stopping the proliferation off nuclear materials and weapons in general and specifically ending North Korea’s nuclear program” (Clinton, 1994). President Clinton continued to demonstrate the importance of composing a feasible option that would resolve the issues motivating North Korea’s nuclear program.

In addition to Clinton’s direct comments, he gave North Korea more of his attention. During the previous administration, President Bush highlighted North Korea in twenty-three artifacts and he highlighted Iraq in 487 artifacts. This demonstrates the kind of rhetorical focus that occurred during the last administration. President Clinton, by contrast, highlighted North Korea over 500 times. While every reference was not a full-length speech, the dramatic increase in the number of occurrences shows how much more important North Korea was to President Clinton.

Second, a rhetoric of negotiation involves direct high-level communication. This form of communication includes high-level officials having direct contact from the two countries, including a willingness to confer, to meet, or to negotiate on issues of mutual importance when conflict arises. The symbolic nature of engaging in direct high-level talks demonstrates a mutual
degree of legitimacy being bestowed by the parties involved. The previous administration refused to engage with the North Koreans because they viewed their authority is illegitimate and dangerous. Rather than communicating directly, President Bush opted to have regional allies convey expectations.

The Clinton administration chose to engage in direct high-level communication with North Korea on several issues. President Clinton recognized the importance of negotiations to the U.S. in an interview on “Meet the Press”: “I spend a lot of time on [North Korea]. It’s a very, very major issue” (Clinton, 1993f). President Clinton’s willingness to go out of his way to express the importance of dealing with North Korea shows a dedication to resolution. Just a few months later, Press Secretary Myers told reporters: “President Clinton reaffirmed the United States desire for a diplomatic resolution of the issue” (Myers, 1994). Secretary of State Warren Christopher extended Clinton’s comments in a press briefing early in the Clinton Presidency: “In North Korea, it’s clear that Asia looks to the United States to take a lead in dealing with the North Korean nuclear threat…it’s certainly significant that the world will be looking at the United States and the negotiations that are going to start” (Christopher, 1993). Secretary Christopher makes clear that the role of the United States will be a central one in resolving North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.

Third, a rhetoric of negotiation is an open-ended form of dialogue where no single party controls the issues for discussion. The discussions that were held by members of the Clinton administration were open to the concerns of the North Koreans. However, the Bush administration refused to allow North Korea to pursue alternate suggestions to the nuclear issues until they came into compliance with the NPT. There was an expectation involved that precluded addressing issues outside of American concern.
In a news conference with President Kim Yong-Sam of South Korea, President Clinton commented: “[W]e are prepared to discuss with North Korea a thorough, broad approach to the issues that divide us, and once and for all resolve the nuclear issue” (Clinton, 1993h). Rather than focusing solely on the North Korean pursuit of nuclear weapons, President Clinton acknowledges that a comprehensive dialogue could benefit all parties involved. President Clinton outlined the benefits of open-ended dialogue to reporters following a discussion with the Chinese President Jiang Zemin:

[W]e have discussed with them some other options, perhaps taking a more comprehensive approach to all the differences between us in an attempt to demonstrate again to North Korea that they have nothing to be afraid of from an honest dialogue with the South and from allowing the inspectors to come back in.

(Clinton, 1993g)

President Clinton’s language indicates that the United States is not narrowly focused on its own goals. Instead, the language demonstrates a willingness to find a shared ground where concerns from both parties and mutually agreed solutions can be openly discussed. After North Korea announced its intent to withdraw from the NPT, President Clinton told reporters at a news conference in Tokyo: “We're going to have to let us continue the negotiations. Until there is a rupture that seems final, I don't think we should talk about what would happen at that point” (Clinton, 1993d). President Clinton demonstrated his willingness to avoid military confrontation. His speech seems to indicate that there is a willingness to work cooperatively with the North Korean government rather than just expect them to follow the non-proliferation regime blindly. This change in rhetoric marked an opportunity for the Clinton administration to make
compliance with the NPT beneficial to the North Koreans, much like the Soviet Union did in 1985.

A rhetoric of negotiation seeks to prompt independent action rather than insisting upon meeting previous requirements. By having a country find its own motivation for meeting international standards, there is a mutual respect involved. In a speech for the South Korean National Assembly, Clinton argued: “[T]he guarantee of our security must rest in the character and the intentions of the region's nations themselves” (New York Times, 1993). He is articulating how North Korea must find its own interest in preserving stability and addressing important issues that jeopardize the safety of the Korean peninsula, like nuclear proliferation. In a press briefing, Ambassador Gallucci said: “[The Agreed Framework] also provides for North Korea to receive a great deal in the way of things it values” (Gallucci, 1994).

Fourth, a critical part of the rhetoric of negotiation is drawing the target nation into the greater international framework as an equal. This means granting the opposing nation the legitimacy involved in cooperation. An expectation to blindly fulfill international norms does not convey respect. For example, the Bush administration chose to highlight the status of the North Koreans as subservient to those who were committed to international agreements, while the Clinton administration sought to convey legitimacy to the North Koreans from the outset and induce them into following international norms by the use of specific incentives.

Clinton described the strategy of the 1994 Agreed Framework before the South Korean National Assembly: “We must create a new vision of how we, as a community of neighbors, can live in peace” (New York Times, 1993). The use of negotiation also underscores a strategy of defining a mutual interest for both parties involved. In reference to the Agreed Framework, Ambassador Gallucci, before the press corps, said: “I think this -- honestly think that this
agreement is in their interest, but very much in the interests of South Korea, Japan and the
United States and the rest of the world” (Gallucci, 1994). The strategy of incorporation
contributes a mutual respect that garners participation rather than demanding it. Clinton extended
the call for shared security in the White House press room: “[the Agreed Framework is] a crucial
step toward drawing North Korea into the global community” (as cited in Sanger, 1994).
Defining a shared view of the world is an important step in understanding the motivations and
concerns of the North Korean officials. Clinton went on to tell the South Korean National
Assembly: “[T]he goal of all these efforts is to integrate, not isolate, the region’s powers”
(Clinton, 1993e). He echoed that sentiment more than a year later when he made remarks about
the Agreed Framework: “The United States and North Korea have agreed to ease trade
restrictions and to move toward establishing liaison offices in each other’s capitals. These offices
will ease North Korea’s isolation” (Clinton, 1994). The Clinton administration committed itself
to create a more equal playing field for North Korea to better understand their underlying
concerns.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed how I selected my historical texts for analysis and a
historical context of the Clinton administration. President Clinton’s domestic expertise prompted
him to pursue a extension of the previous administration’s foreign policy, with regard to North
Korea. After a number of problems that potentially could have escalated to a regional war,
former President Jimmy Carter helped broker a deal that gave President Clinton the ability to
formulate a new rhetorical posture, the rhetoric of negotiation.
The rhetoric of negotiation broke from the rhetoric of compliance and has four elements. A rhetoric of negotiation: 1) prioritizes the issue of North Korea, 2) involves direct negotiation between high-level officials, 3) proceeds in an open-ended manner allowing for the needs of all parties to be considered, and 4) assumes the legitimacy of all states. Each of these thematic elements helps demonstrate the vast difference between a rhetoric of compliance and a rhetoric of negotiation. All of these elements helped reshape the diplomatic framing from not only President Clinton, but also his leading officials.

President Clinton was forced to alter the Agreed Framework after the Republican Congress found information that North Korea was engaging in missile and drug sales. The Republicans wanted to have President Clinton pursue a more comprehensive policy that made cracking down on missile proliferation and the drug trade a prerequisite to continued shipments of heavy oil and assistance building the light water nuclear reactors (Gordon, 2002). This set the stage for the next presidency to grapple with the inherent belief of the Republican Congress that North Korea was not trustworthy. Ultimately, the rhetoric of negotiation was a limiting perspective for Clinton because it did not account for the perceptions of the Congress.
In 2001, George Walker Bush became President after a controversial election with then Vice President Al Gore. Where his father had very little to say about North Korea, George W. Bush immediately addressed the topic. Early on in his term, there was a division within the administration about pursuing Clinton’s Agreed Framework. At a joint press briefing in 2001 with Swedish officials, Bush’s Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said the administration “plan[s] to engage with North Korea to pick up where President Clinton left off. Some promising elements were left on the table and we will be examining those elements” (as cited in Arms Control Association, 2003). While Powell was prompting the administration to pursue the previous agreement, President Bush and a number of his foreign policy advisors saw North Korea as incapable of legitimately following through on their end of the nuclear deal. At a press briefing in 2002, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said: “[T]here’s no question the President has concerns. We have not been provided with sufficient information by the North Koreans, and concerns remain about their compliance with the agreed framework” (Fleischer, 2002a). This signaled the transition from the Clinton administration to the Bush administration. A thorough review would eventually be conducted with a number of recommendations being made on how to alter the way the U.S. would engage North Korea.

In this chapter, I will argue that President Bush employed a “rhetoric of verification.” A “rhetoric of verification” incorporates: 1) vilification of the opposing state’s regime, 2) an unwillingness to agree on progress until the opposing state accepts its blame in the failure of previous agreements, and 3) preconditioning future agreements on full transparency in
implementation of the six-party accord. Such a perspective is useful because it helps illuminate both why Bush would initially abandon the deal almost completed by Clinton and why he would complete a similar deal seven years later.

TEXTS FOR ANALYSIS

Texts for this chapter were collected from the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It is an extensive collection of speeches, documents, and manuscripts from the American presidents. I did a keyword search for “North Korea” and “nuclear.” That search resulted in 581 artifacts. To narrow the number of artifacts down, I attempted to gather as many as possible that contained thematic elements such as the initial Bush reaction to North Korea when he entered office, his push for a multilateral approach to resolve the issue, and statements from his officials that helped contextualize the Bush administration’s worldview. From the thirty artifacts selected, I was able to build from the specific language used by Bush administration officials and create a thematic lens to evaluate the speech regarding North Korea.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A number of the conservative officials that had served under President Reagan and the previous President Bush, as well as a number of Republican members of Congress, helped frame the way the administration would negotiate with the North Korean regime. This framing was one founded on a lack of trust. The Agreed Framework was viewed by a number of conservative officials as problematic for the United States because it was seen as unverifiable and dangerously
lenient towards a regime famous for not making good on agreements. Scott Snyder describes how the Republican sentiment eventually framed the Bush administration’s posture:

Republican critics such as Senator John McCain have charged that “the [Clinton] administration could have given less and received more” in 1994. The same thinking informs the Bush administration’s current approach to North Korea, embodied in its call for “complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement as the only long-term solution to North Korea’s nuclear weapons threat. (Snyder, 2004)

The only way the Bush administration would be willing to work with the North Koreans is if they would accept a framework that would ensure the end of a non-civilian nuclear program.

After Secretary of State Powell’s comments before the Swedish officials in 2001, the Bush administration made good on a full examination of the previous administration’s strategies regarding North Korea. The result of this comprehensive review was a number of recommendations that encapsulated further progress to be made in a comprehensive way. This meant that North Korea had to engage in controls on arms trading, drug smuggling, and human rights (Poneman, 2003). This approach became known as the “bold initiative.” President Bush first referred to the “bold initiative” in his statement on the North Korean nuclear weapons program in 2002: “In June 2001, we offered to pursue a comprehensive dialogue with North Korea. We developed a bold approach under which, if the North addressed our longstanding concerns, the United States was prepared to take important steps that would have significantly improved the lives of the North Korean people” (Bush, 2002c). This shift in the Agreed Framework was troublesome for the North Koreans because it included measures that were not previously agreed upon in the original 1994 agreement.
The new requirements established by Bush’s “bold initiative” rendered the Agreed Framework obsolete. Congressional Republicans put the brakes on funding the American requirements of the Agreed Framework, signaled by Powell’s comments in 2002 that continued aid to North Korea was doubtful and President Bush’s comments days later saying that oil shipments were ending (BBC News, 2007). President Bush also decided that Chairman Kim Jong-il was an untrustworthy person to work with. During President Bush’s news conference with the South Korean President, he commented: “I worry about a regime that is closed and not transparent” (Bush, 2002b). These concerns eventually became the grounding for all future diplomacy from the Bush administration.

In January of 2002, during the State of the Union Address following 9/11, President Bush said: “States like [North Korea, Iran, and Iraq] and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world” (Bush, 2002a). In describing the member nations of this axis, President Bush announced that the U.S. would use any means necessary to make sure that these states could not sell weapons of mass destruction to terrorist organizations. This challenge angered the North Koreans and caused them to threaten the sustainability of the Agreed Framework (BBC News, 2002). Further North Korean irritation was caused by a release from the White House that declared the North Koreans could not be certified as keeping up with their part of the Agreed Framework (BBC News, 2002). Press Secretary Fleischer extended on the release saying: “[W]e will not certify their compliance with the three provisions required under law for the program to continue” (Fleischer, 2002a).

In October of 2002, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, James Kelly, visited North Korea. He represented the first high-level talks between the Bush administration and the North Koreans. Kelly was sent to confront the North Korean officials with
information that suggested they had continued a covert nuclear weapons program (Poneman, 2003; Snyder, 2004). Not only did this prove to be the final straw to break the back of the Agreed Framework, but the North Koreans admitted to the crime of continuing a uranium enrichment program (Poneman, 2003).

The immediate reaction to North Korea’s concession was that the Korean Energy Development Organization\(^2\) (KEDO) froze all shipments of heavy oil. In response, the North Koreans expelled all IAEA inspectors, withdrew from the NPT, and restarted the previously frozen nuclear reactors (Poneman, 2003).

The deteriorating situation compelled a new rhetorical posture from President Bush. One option he could have used was to return to a rhetoric of compliance initiated by his father. Instead, the response from the Bush administration was to initiate a new kind of diplomatic strategy that centered around a multilateral approach to resolving North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. President Bush chose to invite China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and North Korea to engage in six-party talks with the United States (Snyder, 2004). President Bush argued that the only way to adequately convince North Korea to pursue non-nuclear options was to have all of the major regional powers to stand uniformly. Press Secretary Ari Fleischer described the Bush strategy: “So taken together, we have an opportunity to begin to address this problem with an international coalition and we're going to work with our allies and friends and partners on it” (Fleischer, 2002b). The Bush administration sought to isolate North Korea and give its neighbors no reason to cooperate with the North Korean regime.

Initially, the North Korean regime was reluctant to engage in the six-party talks. After the failure of the Agreed Framework, North Korea began to take more provocative maneuvers. In

\(^2\) The Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was created after the 1994 Agreed Framework as the implementation mechanism. KEDO was responsible for transporting heavy oil and constructing the nuclear reactors.
January of 2003, North Korea announced its intent to withdraw from the NPT (BBC News, 2007). Only a few months later, in August, they announced their withdrawal from the 1992 Joint Declaration (BBC News, 2007). These actions renewed the Bush administration’s drive to garner multilateral support for drawing North Korea to the negotiating table. In the 2003 State of the Union Address, President Bush said: “America is working with the countries of the region, South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia, to find a peaceful solution and to show the North Korean Government that nuclear weapons will bring only isolation, economic stagnation, and continued hardship” (Bush, 2003a).

In August of 2003, the North Koreans agreed to participate in the six-party talks (BBC News, 2007). Bush’s multilateral framework of isolating Pyongyang faced a number of problems. North Korea’s unwillingness to agree to give up its nuclear program marked the crux of the negotiations for the next three years. In July of 2006, North Korea test-fired missiles into the Sea of Japan, despite the international community warning them not to. North Korea chose to follow up the missile tests with a nuclear test in October (CNN, 2007). This marked a new age for the Korean peninsula and escalated the need for the six-party talks to continue.

Ultimately, in February 2007, the North Koreans agreed to take the first steps in a nuclear agreement that included inspection and verification of nuclear sites. The U.S. agreed to provide heavy oil and after verifying that the nuclear program was shutdown. In addition, they would discuss with North Korean diplomats on proliferation-resistant nuclear reactors. The U.S. provided additional incentives to North Korea to help induce a deal, including normalized relations, providing security assurances against regime change, and additional humanitarian assistance (Kaplan, 2007).
RHETORIC OF VERIFICATION

First, a rhetoric of verification vilifies the opposing state’s regime. President Bush wanted to let the North Korean dictator, Chairman Kim Jong-il, know that his form of governing was one that was incompatible with Bush’s worldview. Ari Fleischer described the President’s view of Pyongyang in a press briefing in November of 2001: “[D]uring the campaign, in referring to the government of North Korea, [Bush] referred to the tyrants who are doing everything they can to be a 21st century menace” (Fleischer, 2001b). The skepticism of the conservative opponents of the Agreed Framework built steam during Bush’s presidential terms. In an interview with the press, Bush said: “I just can’t respect anybody that would really let his people starve and shrink in size as a result of malnutrition” (Bush, 2003b).

While Bush attacked Kim Jong-il, he was quick to create a difference between the regime in Pyongyang and the rest of the North Korean people. Bush went on to tell the press: “It’s a sad, sad situation for the North Korean people. That’s one people – I’ve assured the – our partners in this effort that we deeply care about the plight of the North Korean people” (Bush, 2003b). The President was able to create a clear distinction between Kim Jong-il and those who were subject to his will. The sentiment was continued by President Bush in 2006 when he remarked on the nuclear test in 2006: “Today’s claim by North Korea serves only to raise tensions, while depriving the North Korean people of the increased prosperity and better relations with the world offered by the implementation of the joint statement of the six-party talks” (Bush, 2006a).

Second, the rhetoric of verification is premised on an unwillingness to agree on additional progress until the opposing state accepts its blame in the failure of previous agreements. This sentiment was an extension of the lack of trust the Bush administration had for North Korea’s leaders. As early as March of 2001, Fleischer was describing the dominant view the president
had regarding North Korea: “[Bush] has expressed his own personal skepticism about the intentions of the government of North Korea, and that’s where the matters stand” (Fleischer, 2001a). The Bush administration used this suspicion of North Korean diplomatic goodwill as a simple way to reverse the Clinton administration’s progress on the Agreed Framework. In his 2003 State of the Union Address, President Bush said: “Throughout the 1990s, the United States relied on a negotiated framework to keep North Korea from gaining nuclear weapons. We now know that that regime was deceiving the world and developing those weapons all along” (Bush, 2003a). Blaming North Koreans minimized their ability to fault the lack of progress on the American reluctance to continue shipments of heavy oil and construction of the light water nuclear reactors. Press Secretary Fleischer preempted the North Koreans when he told reporters at a press briefing: “The United States is complying, and this is a message to North Korea that it’s important for them to do so as well” (Fleischer, 2002a).

The final part of a rhetoric of verification is preconditioning future agreements on full transparency in implementation of the six-party accord. Bush’s framing of the North Korans as untrustworthy necessitates that any solution be open and accessible. From the outset of diplomacy between the U.S. and North Korea, President Bush has demanded visibility and he extended that demand in his statement on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program: “We are also united in our resolve that the only option for addressing this situation is for North Korea to completely and visibly eliminate its nuclear weapons program” (Bush, 2002c). The Bush administration did not want to face the same critics of the Agreed Framework who claimed that negotiations facilitated the continuation of a convert weapons program. National Security Advisor Steve Hadley echoed President Bush’s demands in a press briefing: “The question that we need to have answered in this coming round…is getting concrete about a process by which in
a verifiable way the North Koreans will reveal their nuclear program and agree to a schedule and manner for dismantling them” (Hadley, 2005). Michael Green, Senior Director at the National Security Council for Asian Affairs, continued to push for verifiability: “We’ve talked to our counterparts in Tokyo and Seoul, Beijing and Moscow, and we think that it lays out a framework for leading to the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and nuclear programs” (Green, 2005). Even Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice echoed the President’s calls saying: “I don’t think anybody believes that the North Koreans have yet been as forthcoming as one would expect in a plan to dismantle their nuclear weapons program and nuclear weapons verifiably” (Rice, 2005). The entire Bush administration consistently called for North Korea to make the process of dismantling their nuclear weapons program transparent.

The framing of the North Koreans as suspicious and habitual breakers of agreements does make it difficult to produce an actual agreement. Since Bush spent most of his presidency attacking North Korea, he would need some rhetorical defense of his move to cut a deal with Pyongyang. Several elements of a rhetoric of verification supported the shift in Bush’s foreign policy.

One early way President Bush framed the North Korean nuclear problem was by describing how states can dislike their opponent’s leaders, but still engage in diplomatic initiative that benefit all parties involved. During a news conference with the South Korean president, Bush said: “President Reagan referred to Russia as the “evil empire,” and yet, was then able to have constructive dialogue with Mr. Gorbachev” (Bush, 2002b). The Bush administration also sought to remind all Americans of the plight of the North Korean people: “The oppressed and impoverished people of North Korea deserve that brighter future” (Bush, 2006a). A rhetoric of verification allowed Bush to focus on a leader, but not lose sight of strategic interests.
The six-party talks became a way for the Bush administration to utilize the other major actors in the area as a way to broker a deal that was satisfactory to all parties involved. President Bush sought a uniform message that would eventually force the North Koreans to come to the negotiating table and successfully disarm:

> It ought to be clear to us now that we must continue to work together to make it abundantly clear to the leader in North Korea that there's a better way forward. When he walks away from agreement, he's not just walking away from a table with the United States as the only participant, he's walking away from a table that others are sitting at. (Bush, 2006b)

By utilizing additional regional powers, the Bush administration aimed to force the North Koreans into an agreement that would resolve the nuclear issue. Secretary of State Rice continued the push for multilateral talks at a press briefing on the President’s visit to China in 2005: “The advantage of the six-party talks, vice what we had tried to do before, is that we no longer are in a situation where these North Korean commitments are to the United States. These North Korean commitments are to the United States, Japan, China, South Korea, and Russia” (Rice, 2005). Bush was able to divert attention away from the U.S.-North Korean tensions by emphasizing the role of other countries. North Korea could no longer merely break away from the U.S. – it would leave other important states at the table as well.
CONCLUSION

This chapter has covered the transition from the Clinton administration to the Bush administration. The Bush administration, grounded in a deep suspicion of the North Korean regime, refused to continue Clinton’s deal because its lack of transparency. President Bush opted for a different kind of diplomatic posture, the rhetoric of verification. The rhetoric of verification has three essential elements, including: 1) vilifying the opposing state’s regime, 2) laying blame upon the opposing party, and 3) preconditioning future agreements on full transparency in implementing the six-party accord. This diplomatic maneuvering coincided with the most recent nuclear deal that Bush administration officials achieved.

Implementation of the six-party accord has slowed in 2008, due mainly to the U.S. demands that North Korea detail its involvement with a potential nuclear reactor in Syria (Powell, 2008). While verification provides Bush with a simple means to negotiate with North Korea, it might also create a situation ripe for disaster. Recent demands for additional information from North Korea suggest that it may be difficult to convince Bush that North Korea has lived up to its end of the bargain. In this case, while the rhetoric of verification may have been a necessary posture to broker a deal, it may prove incompatible with finalizing the deal.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

The North Koreans, after the Korean War, learned the value of nuclear weapons: the threat of nuclear weapons, alone, was enough to change the atmosphere of any conflict; President Truman’s threat of using nuclear weapons during the Korean War established a mindset that the North Koreans have been chasing ever since; and from the Soviet Union, and later China, they also learned that nuclear weapons represent the most significant deterrent to regime change. So in 1965, North Korea began construction of a civilian research reactor with the help of the Soviet Union. This research reactor was the birth of the North Korean nuclear program and would eventually become the mold for the North Korean military nuclear program. The North Korean nuclear program continued to advance with further assistance from the Soviet Union and China. In 1985, North Korea agreed to the NPT when the Soviet Union offered to help construct more nuclear reactors. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea did not receive its expected incentive for signing on to the NPT. What followed was a tug of war between the North Korean regime and the rest of the world.

This project sought to uncover how three presidents approached the potential for North Korea’s acquisition of nuclear weapons. Analyzing the drive for nuclear weapons is important for several reasons. First, the importance of resolving issues of nuclear proliferation. The threat posed by nuclear weapons jeopardizes all of humanity. Second, North Korea has proven to be resistant to a number of nonproliferation strategies used by various presidential administrations. By learning about how countries adapt to nonproliferation strategies, we can learn more about
the motivations of countries pursuing nuclear weapons programs. Third, we must understand the underlying motivations for why countries pursue not only nuclear weapons, but why countries sign on to international agreements. To address the motivations of countries when succumbing to international norms allows policymakers to better understand and adapt policy strategies to situational factors. Ultimately, better informed policymaking can affect and possibly produce better policy decisions.

We must investigate the rhetorical history of these events to uncover the role presidential rhetoric plays in the success or failure of international agreements. First, the way presidents frame international issues has a great deal of impact on the way the public perceives appropriate executive politics. The scope of presidential power hinges on the ability of the public to understand the implications to the decisions presidents make. For example, the public’s perception of how the president frames issues of nuclear proliferation affects the amount of power the public deems as acceptable for the president to use when confronting the issue. Second, the way the administration talks about issues also impacts the way the public perceives the issues at hand. For example, when the president frames issues of North Korea around a lack of trust, the public may tend to believe that North Korea will be an untrustworthy partner. Third, rhetoric is the foundation of presidential power and therefore a thorough investigation of presidential rhetoric will help us explore the president’s values, assumptions, and goals. Investigating rhetoric can reveal the perspective of the President as it relates to this issue. This project went a step further to compare the President’s perceptions to the historical record to make an interpretive judgment.

The literature review examined the contributions from a number of fields. First, I examined the contributions from historians and political scientists. Historians documented the
events that make up the North Korean nuclear crises. Political scientists examined various policy strategies and recommended a number of policies that might best address North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Second, I examined the literature on foreign policy rhetoric. Rhetorical scholars have examined the role of rhetoric in how foreign policy issues are framed and how that affects the public debate and implementation of political strategies. Third, I examined the role of rhetorical criticism and the presidency. Presidential rhetoricians have argued that there are intricate connections between the way presidents frame issues and their salience in Congress and the public. Issues that the President deems important are often the ones that create a priority for members of Congress and the public. All of the literature reviewed helped inform my scholarly investigations.

The methodology of my project was to use rhetorical criticism to unpack the worldview held by the different administrations so that I could understand how those worldviews help explain the historical events. Dozens of speeches, presidential conferences, and official testimony were examined to create the best interpretive lens for explaining each President’s rhetorical posture.

In Chapter Two, I evaluated the presidency of George H.W. Bush, explained the historical background for North Korea, and outlined the rhetorical themes of the Bush administration.

The two most important foreign policy issues President Bush tackled were the fall of the Soviet Union and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. The intensity of these issues, placed high on his agenda, made dealing with North Korea an afterthought. The fall of the Soviet Union meant that the U.S. was the main global power in the world. This provided a unipolar moment where the Bush administration dealt with less important issues the way we dealt with the Soviet Union,
via containment. The fall of the Soviet Union also eliminated the North Korean route to legitimacy, via proxy. This provided a unique situation for North Korea because it was not powerful enough to stand alone. It opted to continue advancing its nuclear program despite the calls from the United Nations and the U.S. to comply with the obligations of the NPT.

Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait proved to be a major issue of the Bush presidency. While the containment strategy had not kept Iraq from being aggressive regionally, it had precluded them from developing a military structure that could endanger the strategic power of the U.S. It also created an interesting backdrop to the situation in North Korea where the U.S. was willing to defend its allies from aggressors.

North Korea had advanced its nuclear program while the U.S. was dealing with the Soviet Union and Iraq. They had created a plutonium reprocessing program that provided them with the fissile material necessary for a nuclear weapon. But, the U.S. still did not make North Korea a priority.

President Bush’s approach to North Korea is best understood as the “rhetoric of compliance.” A rhetoric of compliance is based on: 1) de-prioritizing North Korea versus other foreign policy issues, 2) downplaying direct communication between high-ranking officials, 3) addressing the issue through secondary countries, notably U.S. allies, 4) requiring North Korea to meet the initial demand of the U.S. before actual talks can occur, and 5) withholding legitimacy for these countries that do not meet U.S. demands.

The chapter concluded by discussing the failure of the rhetoric of compliance. Bush’s rhetorical posture was not able to account for the needs of North Korea. The loss of their strategic ally, the Soviet Union, and the nuclear reactors they had expected made for a situation where compliance did not fulfill the needs of the North Korean regime.
Chapter Three traced the rhetorical history of the Clinton administration in regards to North Korea. I covered the history of the Clinton administration, their dealings with North Korea, and then revealed the rhetorical themes that were conveyed by President Clinton and his officials.

President Clinton initially extended the rhetoric of compliance, the strategy established by the Bush administration. Clinton made domestic issues, especially the economy, the priority in his campaign. Foreign policy was something minimized at the beginning of Clinton’s administration.

However, a number of brazen moves by the North Koreans made the situation more volatile than before. For example, the North Koreans removed the IAEA inspectors and announced their intent to withdraw from the NPT. The North Koreans had also planned to withdraw more material from the reactor at Yongbon. Even if North Korea did not have a nuclear device, they had enough fissile material to make a number of them. The international community responded with economic sanctions which the North Korean regime believed to be tantamount to a declaration of war.

Fortunately, former President Jimmy Carter volunteered to discuss the North Korean nuclear program with Chairman Kim Il Sung. Carter was able to reach an agreement with the North Koreans that included a freeze of their nuclear program and a willingness to allow IAEA inspectors back into the country. Carter’s efforts created the groundwork for the eventual Agreed Framework between the U.S. and North Korea. North Korea’s willingness to engage in diplomacy created an opportunity for a new rhetorical posture by President Clinton, best described as a “rhetoric of negotiation.”

The rhetoric of negotiation refocused the entire diplomatic scheme by: 1) prioritizing the issue of North Korea, 2) involving direct negotiation between high-level officials, 3) proceeding
in an open-ended manner allowing for the needs of all parties to be considered, and 4) assuming the legitimacy of all states.

The chapter concluded by noting the failure of the rhetoric of negotiation. While Clinton was able to broker a deal with North Korea, this rhetorical posture was insufficient to address the concerns of Congress. An unsupportive Republican Congress blocked the implementation of the Agreed Framework.

In Chapter Four, I evaluated the presidency of George W. Bush, documented the major historical events, and developed the rhetorical posture for the second Bush administration.

The Bush administration was initially divided on how to handle the North Korean issue. Some in the administration, such as Secretary of State Colin Powell, wanted to continue the Agreed Framework of the Clinton administration. Others officials, like Vice President Dick Cheney, wanted to create a new agreement that required full transparency. The Republican Congress and a number of the neoconservative officials in the Bush administration felt that the Agreed Framework required trust with a country that had proven itself to be untrustworthy. The more conservative side eventually prevailed, especially in light of recently revealed information: the North Koreans had not stopped pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

With the Agreed Framework dead in the water, the Bush administration opted for a multilateral approach to resolving the North Korean nuclear question. The strategy was known as the six-party talks. These talks included Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, the U.S. and North Korea. This strategy aimed at precluding the North Koreans from being able to walk away from the U.S. alone.

A number of incidents occurred making any agreement with North Korea both more pressing and more difficult. First, the North Koreans test-fired missiles into the Sea of Japan in
July of 2006. Then, the North Koreans tested a nuclear device in October of 2006. These events combined to provide a unique opportunity for both North Korea and the U.S. The six-party talks finally yielded an agreement.

The Bush administration’s approach to North Korea is best described as a “rhetoric of verification.” A “rhetoric of verification” employs: 1) vilification of the opposing state’s regime, 2) an unwillingness to agree on progress until the opposing state accepts its blame in the failure of previous agreements, and 3) preconditioning future agreements on full transparency in implementation of the six-party accord.

A rhetoric of verification ultimately could fail to resolve the North Korean nuclear weapons program. The Bush administration potentially could have set up a rhetorical frame that is incapable of resolving the larger question of trust, especially when one looks at the current events surrounding North Korea and Syria.

IMPLICATIONS

The rhetorical history of three president’s efforts to limit North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons provides several important conclusions. First, the rhetorical choices of each president serve to reveal and constrain their ability to resolve the crisis. This is not because one rhetorical strategy is preferable to another for any given administration, but because some presidents established a rhetorical posture that made success impossible. President George H.W. Bush was unable to adequately address the underlying interests of the North Koreans. His insistence on meeting NPT requirements failed to account for their insistence on being seen as legitimate. President Clinton was unable to account for the ability of Congressional Republicans to dominate discussions of implementation. The overarching lack of trust of North Korea by
Congressional Republicans changed the initial nature of the 1994 Agreed Framework. That attitude of distrust eventually founded the strategy of President George W. Bush. An inherent attitude of skepticism towards the North Korean regime’s ability to make good on agreements has produced a situation that may not be resolved before the end of Bush’s presidency. Bush’s requirements for verification may prove to be an impediment to certifying North Korean efforts.

Presidential statements regarding North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons also revealed their differing perceptions of the event as a “crisis.” Windt (1987) argues that “situations do not create crises. Rather, the President’s perception of the situation and the rhetoric he uses to describe it mark an event as a crisis” (p. 126). The President then establishes a policy that is necessary to resolve the crisis. The language also quickly shifts between the ethical, military, and political contexts. From this we begin to bring to light the beliefs, assumptions, and larger worldview of our elected officials, especially the President.

Crisis is ultimately something that is defined by the way politicians describe the events they face. Regardless of how each individual presidential administration defined the North Koreans, they each referred to the same events. But, their divergent rhetorical postures revealed how each president understood the “crisis” differently. It is what each president sought to pull out of those events that defined how they framed their rhetorical postures. Murray Edelman (1988) argues that:

Political developments and the language that describes them are ambiguous because the aspects of events, leaders, and policies that most decisively affect current and future well-being are uncertain, unknowable, and the focus of disputed claims and competing symbols. Even when there is consensus about what observably happened or was said, there are conflicting assumptions about
the cause of events, the motives of officials and interest groups, and the consequences of courses of action. So it is not what can be seen that shapes political action and support, but what must be supposed, assumed, or constructed. (Edelman, pp.104-105)

Political officials can only describe and interpret events from their own worldview. By describing the rhetorical themes in each president’s rhetoric, we can better understand how each president chose to define the situation and analyze how well their rhetorical postures were adapted to the situation they were given.

President George H.W. Bush saw the North Korean nuclear program as something of relative unimportance to the American global agenda, and this reveals the underlying attitude of the Bush presidency. The assumption was that the U.S. was a potentially unchallengeable power that could resolve small incidents by merely demanding its expectations be met. President Bush established an ethical ally out of the South Koreans that North Korea should necessarily want to mimic because of their ascent to power internationally from cooperating with the U.S.

Likewise, Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush defined the events unfolding on the Korean peninsula as important for their administrations. President Clinton, after the Carter meetings, attempted to characterize the North Koreans as a potential equal and ally in the region. However, his failure to address the exigency of future situational constraints, a Republican Congress, culminated in a larger failure for American foreign policy. The solution presented by Clinton was unable to address the “crisis” as seen by the Congress. Their differing interpretations of the events built a situation that the Clinton administration was not able to manage. President Bush’s agreement has seemingly been informed by both the first Bush and Clinton administrations. The six-party talks have been successful at isolating the North Korean
government and forcing them to come to the negotiating table with a group of international powers that resolutely demanded that North Korea end its military nuclear program. But, Bush’s rhetoric revealed an inherent attitude that limited his potential options for success. The president has no limitations on the kinds of policy they can make, but the way each president describes events and frames issues of importance establish certain criteria that they must abide by. Clinton and Bush are examples of presidents that were constrained by their rhetorical choices. Imagine if the presidents had been able to use different rhetorical frames: What would have happened if the first President Bush had met directly with the North Koreans and offered an incentive to fulfill their obligations under the NPT? What would have happened if President Clinton had included more stringent verification measures with the Agreed Framework? Each hypothetical might have resulted in a successful disarmament of the North Koreans. This might have also prevented the North Korean decision to test their first nuclear device. Yet, neither was possible within the linguistic constraints provided by each president.

My project does not deny the validity of threats, but it does call into question the remedies that administrations call for and the way they engage in framing events. I cannot say that future presidents must use a specific kind of rhetorical posture to adequately resolve crises, but that the public must be aware of the integral role rhetoric plays in how international events unfold. For it is ultimately the administration’s rhetorical choices that define, view, and engage the world. A president that defines the North Korean regime as evil and a menace to the world cannot implement a policy that demonstrates trust and compassion for that regime. Likewise, a president likely cannot provide additional incentives to a country for doing what it has already agreed to do. Presidential discourse, and in particular rhetorical history, informs the intricacies of these events.
While the findings of this project are not meant to be generalized to other foreign policy issues, the method employed can be used to analyze other foreign policy issues. Many important foreign policy issues have been neglected by rhetorical scholars even though they are ripe for rhetorical insight. For example, rhetorical analysis of the Bush administration’s handling of Iranian nuclear efforts could easily add to our knowledge of this issue. Rhetorical critics could compare the rhetorical choices made by different presidential administrations and the policy options that are available to satisfy the rhetorical situation. The current Bush administration has defined the Iranians as cheaters and accused them of creating nuclear weapons. Bush’s rhetorical choice limits the range of possible political options available to resolve the problem. The lessons to be learned from rhetorical analysis can help the public, and members of Congress, understand the complexities inherent in the rhetorical choices of each presidential administration.

Another example of how discursive choices impact policy is the war on terrorism. The Bush administration, along with other policymakers, defines terrorists through their singular goal to demolish our way of life. While there are terrorists that do seek to end our existence, this rhetorical posture creates a situation where the American military must destroy every terrorist, in every context. This could prove to be an unending war of attrition not a war to preserve our livelihood. However, there are other descriptions of terrorism that evoke much less concern, especially those used prior to 9/11. Some have defined terrorism as a mere annoyance while others have expressed a belief that terrorism is a problem affecting other parts of the world. Responsible policymakers must acknowledge and accept how their discursive choices affect the democratic process that, as a country, we have fought so valiantly for. A rhetorical history of U.S. policy toward terrorism could inform our current understanding of policy against the terrorists.
Finally, this project suggests several possible avenues for future research. One example would be studying the rhetorical postures of the North Korean regime regarding the nuclear crisis with the U.S. Rhetorical analysis could trace the posture of North Korea in their public statements about U.S. attempts to limit their nuclear program. Scholars could compare the rhetorical framing by both the U.S. and North Korea to uncover the degree to which rhetoric has affected the talks. Additionally, researchers might also shed light on other important concerns that the North Koreans have that might better inform how we make decisions regarding North Korea.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued)


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