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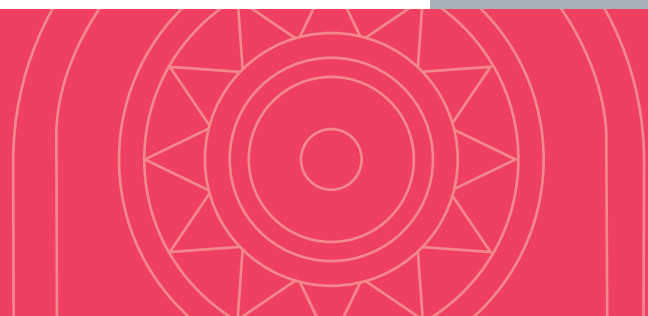
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Nuclear Proliferation International History Project

Russia's Policy in the Run-Up to the First North Korean Nuclear Crisis

1991–1993

By Sergey Radchenko
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Christian F. Ostermann, Leopoldo Nuti and Evan Pikulski, Series Editors

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Russia's Policy in the Run-Up to the First North Korean Nuclear Crisis

1991–1993

By Sergey Radchenko¹

The early 1990s found the Korean Peninsula in a state of uncertainty. Seoul's diplomatic assertiveness and growing economic clout helped lead to rapid improvement of Moscow's and Beijing's relations with South Korea. This rapprochement took place against the general backdrop of lessening international tensions. Socialist regimes crumbled in Eastern Europe. South Korea, too, embraced democratic change. Under these circumstances the life expectancy of North Korea appeared extremely short. Most observers at the time would have found it inconceivable to think that the regime would survive for many more years, much less decades. The North Korean leadership was in a state of deep apprehension. These circumstances provided the external political background for Pyongyang's pursuit of atomic weapons. Kim Il Sung's nuclear ambitions of course predated the end of the Cold War. We know now that he eyed—and sought to procure—such weaponry since at least the early 1960s.² But his intention to build the bomb was not solid and irreversible. The roots of the first North Korean crisis lie partly in the policy choices of key regional players. This paper investigates Russia's policy towards North Korea in 1991-1993, and how this policy may have inadvertently complicated the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Soviet relations with South Korea were on a steep upward curve since 1988. Contacts intensified after the Seoul Olympics.³ While the Soviet Foreign Ministry remained very cautious, and tried to offset improvement of economic ties with Seoul by maintaining a close dialogue with North Korea, other policymakers close to Mikhail Gorbachev insisted on direct engagement with the South even at the cost of upsetting Kim Il Sung. Ultimately, Gorbachev chose to pursue the latter policy, with an eye to a trade and investment windfall that the Soviet-South Korean rapprochement could bring.⁴ Gorbachev's meeting with South Korean

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² Balázs Szalontai and Sergey Radchenko, "North Korea's Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* 53 (August 2006).

³ Sergey Radchenko, "Sport and Politics on the Korean Peninsula - North Korea and the 1988 Seoul Olympics," *NKIDP e-Dossier* no. 3 (December 2012).

⁴ For discussion see Sergey Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries: the Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)

President Roh Tae-woo in San Francisco in June 1990, followed by the Soviet recognition of South Korea, unsurprisingly caused a grave deterioration in Moscow's relations with Pyongyang. The North Korean leadership accused the Soviets of breaking faith: Gorbachev and his foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze repeatedly made promises to Kim Il Sung that development of economic ties with the South would not lead to political relations.

In September 1990 Shevardnadze visited Pyongyang in a desperate bid to rescue the Soviet-North Korean relationship from complete collapse. Kim refused to receive him. Instead of the Great Leader, Shevardnadze saw Foreign Minister Kim Yeong-nam (Kim Young Nam) who delivered an angry tirade denouncing Moscow's betrayal and castigating the Soviets for attempting to impose a German scenario on the Korean Peninsula. Most tellingly, Kim Yeong-nam told Shevardnadze that now that the Soviets breached their commitments to North Korea under their treaty of 1961, Pyongyang would focus its energy on obtaining the nuclear deterrent. This, Kim added, would lead to North Korea's departure from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.⁵ In the following months, Soviet relations with North Korea hovered at a very low point. Gorbachev hoped to weather the storm; now that a decision to normalize relations with the South had been made, he hoped that Kim Il Sung would see the fallacy of stomping his feet and restore a semblance of normality to the Soviet-North Korean relationship. North Korea was not a major issue for Gorbachev; his approach was ultimately pragmatic and relatively patient. In early 1991 he even sent Kim a conciliatory letter, calling him "comrade" and praising his May 1990 proposals for confidence-building on the Korean Peninsula. In the letter Gorbachev stressed that relations between the two countries should be based upon a "balance of interests" and on the premise that each was free to choose its own social system.⁶

On 3 January 1991, the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the KGB, and the Ministry of Defense sent Gorbachev a detailed analysis of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and made recommendations on what policy the Soviet Union ought to pursue (these recommendations were approved by Gorbachev on 2 April). The key premise of the paper was the overriding importance of stability in Korea; the question of unification took a decidedly secondary role, being postponed to the indefinite future. This stability was to be achieved through multilateral engagement involving all regional countries, and also through direct dialogue between the Soviet Union and the United States on lessening tensions in

⁵ Cited in Aleksandr Kapto, *Na Perekrstakh Zhizni* (Moscow: Sotsial'no-Politicheskii Zhurnal, 1996), 433-435. See also "A Knock on the Nuclear Door," *Newsweek*, April 29, 1991.

⁶ Cited in Kapto, *Na Perekrstakh Zhizni*, 438.

Korea through confidence-building measures and cessation of military supplies by either power to North or South Korea. The document also spelled out Soviet conditions for continuation of military aid to Pyongyang.⁷ The weapons would have to be strictly defensive and incapable of altering the strategic situation on the Korean Peninsula. It was also proposed to curtail Soviet commitments to Pyongyang's defensive industries and to curb issuance of licenses for new types of weaponry. At the same time the document emphasized development of economic ties with South Korea. It represented a balanced, thought-out approach to Korea, and an effort to sustain relations with Pyongyang at an acceptable level while making the best out of the new relationship with Seoul.

Kim Il Sung, too, was coming to terms with the new realities. He maintained a friendly relationship with the last Soviet ambassador to North Korea Aleksandr Kapto, meeting with him on multiple occasions on the friendliest of terms. Kapto recalled, with surprise, that the 'Great Leader' did not as much as mention changes in the Soviet posture, and abstained from any criticism of Soviet reforms. Pyongyang also reacted with uncharacteristic reserve to increasing criticism of North Korea in the now more open than ever Soviet press. Kim may have realized that given China's intensifying (if secret) dialogue with Seoul, it was unwise to antagonize Moscow as well. From the North Korean perspective the situation even looked auspicious when in August 1991 Soviet hardliners placed Gorbachev under house arrest and staged a coup d'état. Pyongyang promptly expressed support for the plotters, which included high-ranking officials from the KGB and the Soviet military.⁸ Unfortunately for North Korea, the coup failed after only three days, fatally weakening the Soviet Union and Gorbachev, while strengthening forces of Russian nationalism represented by Boris Yeltsin.

This reversal brought new overtones to Moscow's relationship with Pyongyang. In the autumn of 1991 the Soviet Foreign Ministry fell into irrelevance. Its functions were gradually overtaken by the Russian Foreign Ministry even before the Soviet Union ceased to exist. In spite of their ideological aversion to the new Russian regime, the North Koreans displayed relative pragmatism in their efforts to develop a normal relationship with Moscow. Thus, on 11 September 1991, the counsellor of the North Korean Embassy in Russia Park Ryun-il called on his counterpart in the Russian Foreign Ministry, M.V. Ivanov, with the request to

⁷ Military aid to North Korea amounted to 321.1 million rubles in 1981-85 and 1613.2 million rubles in 1986-90; despite economic difficulties, Moscow continued military supplies even as the country stood on the brink of collapse. Memorandum from Konstantin Katushev to Anatolii Chernyaev, July 15, 1991, Gorbachev Fond, Fond 2, Opis 1, Dokument 8997.

⁸ A. Panov, V. Al'tov, *Severnaia Koreia: Epokha Kim Chen Ira na Zakate* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2004), 88

acquaint him with the ministry's structure and the establishment of relations for future work. Among other things, Park requested to set up meetings between the North Korean Ambassador in the USSR, Son Seong-pil (Son Song Pil), the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, and Boris Yeltsin. He also called on the Russians to send a delegation to Pyongyang in order to "develop bilateral relations." Ivanov merely promised to report on these requests to the Russian leadership.⁹

A month later Ambassador Son explained his view of the relationship between Moscow and Pyongyang in a conversation with the Chairman of the International Committee of the Supreme Soviet A.S. Dzasokhov [[Document No. 3](#)]:

After this year's August events [attempted coup d'état in the USSR] the Soviet Union witnessed great changes. They can be appraised in different ways but, as the leadership of the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] stressed repeatedly, these changes are an internal affair of the Soviet Union. And although relations between our countries recently experienced certain problems, the leadership of the DPRK and its entire people wish the Soviet people to overcome the crisis as soon as possible and [to achieve] new successes.

Behind all these approaches was Kim Il Sung's realization of the North Korean economy's precarious dependency on Moscow's economic and military aid and technical expertise. These hopes notwithstanding, the North Koreans quickly discovered the limits of their relationship with post-coup Russia. Far from reciprocating Pyongyang's bid to develop a political dialogue, the new Russian leadership immediately threatened to impose economic sanctions if Kim Il Sung did not come clean about his nuclear program.

The roots of Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions go back to the late-1950s—early 1960s. North Korea was a founding member of the Dubna nuclear research center (a facility that trained nuclear scientists for the Soviet bloc). In the early 1960s, the Soviets received clear signals that their ally was interested in the expansion of uranium mining and obtaining nuclear technologies. North Korea is said to have approached Beijing for advice on constructing the bomb after China's first nuclear test in 1964. There is, however, inherent

⁹ Memorandum of conversation between M.V. Ivanov and Park Ryun-il, September 11, 1991. GARF: fond 10026, opis 1, delo 2290, listy 32-33.

difficulty in distinguishing facts from rumor and separating what constituted genuine pursuit of the Bomb and where North Korea was motivated simply by resolving its intractable energy problem—well into the 1980s, North Korea's interest in atomic energy was primarily related to the imperative of alleviating energy deficit in the country.¹⁰ Pyongyang, which had benefited from a Soviet-built reactor and research facility from the 1960s, repeatedly approached Moscow with the request to build a nuclear power plant in North Korea. The Soviets finally agreed in December 1985 to supply four reactors of the type used at Chernobyl but only on the condition that the North Koreans adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Kim obliged and North Korea joined the treaty, which carried a requirement of signing a safeguard (or inspections) agreement.¹¹

North Korea had eighteen months to sign the safeguards agreement, which was later extended to another eighteen months but these deadlines were missed. In the meantime, United States satellite photography uncovered suspicious nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. In response to growing pressure, Pyongyang insisted that any inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must also include US bases in South Korea. It was not an unreasonable demand. At the time the US had both nuclear gravity bombs and also tactical nuclear weapons at its bases in the South. Why, the North Koreans asked, did they have to allow inspectors at Yongbyon without US reciprocity? However, the US policy at the time was that the presence of American nuclear weapons in South Korea was unrelated to Pyongyang's obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. "The big thing," President George H.W. Bush told his South Korean counterpart Roh Tae-woo in July 1991, "is not to link US presence with the illegal things they are doing."¹² North Korea also came under mounting pressure from Moscow to sign the agreement with the IAEA or else risk losing Soviet supply of fuel for its nuclear reactor.¹³ Gorbachev reportedly discussed the subject with President Roh Tae-woo in April 1991, when they met at Cheju Island in a summit the North called an "antinational crime."¹⁴

After Gorbachev's effective marginalization by the fall of 1991, the question of what to do about North Korea's failure to sign the safeguards agreement passed over to the Russian Foreign Ministry, in particular, into the hands of Georgii Kunadze, the Deputy Foreign

¹⁰ Balázs Szalontai and Sergey Radchenko, "North Korea's Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper 53* (August 2006).

¹¹ Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: a Contemporary History* (Indianapolis, IN: Basic Books, 2002), p. 264.

¹² Memorandum of Conversation between George H.W. Bush and Roh Tae-woo, July 2, 1991, George H.W. Bush Presidential Library.

¹³ "DPRK urged to place nuclear facilities under international supervision," *Xinhua*, April 19, 1991.

¹⁴ "North Korea Brands South Korea-Soviet Summit an 'Antinational Crime'," *The Associated Press*, April 27, 1991.

Minister with oversight of Asian affairs. On 20 September 1991, Kunadze asked Ambassador Son Seong-pil to come in for a talk [[Document No. 1](#)]. In a testy meeting, he demanded North Korea to sign the agreement, telling Son that linking this problem with America's nuclear presence in South Korea was illegal. North Korea's obligation under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Kunadze said, "has a universal character and cannot be linked to the satisfaction of any kinds of preliminary demands." Furthermore, Kunadze told Son that in case of "further procrastination" with the agreement, Russia would not only stop its involvement in the construction of a nuclear power plant in North Korea but also cease all military cooperation, including the sale of MiG-29 fighter planes. Son was also warned that Russia could stop supply of fuel to North Korea, referring here not to nuclear fuel, but to oil. Russia, Kunadze concluded, wanted to see North Korea as a member of "the civilized world community."

In his recollections, Kunadze noted that the North Korean reaction to the Russian position was "very rough and negative." "[They] insistently repeated that the question of the IAEA safeguards agreement does not concern Russia. That they will only discuss this question after the cessation of the hostile policy of the USA."¹⁵ The archival record mostly confirms Kunadze's recollections, although the tone of the conversations appears decidedly 'rougher' on the Russian side, while the North Korean Ambassador's comments seem fairly reserved. He did say that the safeguards agreement was a matter to be decided between North Korea and the IAEA, while the question of nuclear inspections in the South concerned Pyongyang and Washington. Neither of these had anything to do with North Korea's relations with Russia. In the end, he promised that North Korea would take the matter towards signing the safeguards agreement into consideration but only "if the international pressure ceases." Son's exchange with Kunadze was a good demonstration of Pyongyang's tactic, which was to sell North Korea's compliance with IAEA demands at as high a price as possible. There was no inherent incompatibility of aims between the DPRK and the broad "international community"—just a big difference in the understanding of how to get there. Kim Il Sung's take on the matter was that compliance was only one in a complex set of variables, and the only one he personally controlled. Solving the equation then required other variables to be put into place. Kim had in mind a number of issues like his various inter-Korean initiatives, as well as direct dialogue with the United States, which he had tried to address in years past but with very little success. He clearly wanted to use the prospect of compliance to make

¹⁵ Electronic messages from Georgii Kunadze to the author, 1 November 2014 and 12 February 2015.

headway on these other issues.

Whereas Kim's approach was by nature give-and-take, Kunadze's comments reflected a very different mindset: one wherein North Korea was perceived as a regime that had nothing to give and everything to take, not an asset but a liability to democratizing Russia. Formulation of Russian foreign policy was at the time in the hands of Andrei Kozyrev, a committed liberal who saw the future in Russia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community of nations and who heartily despised Russia's Communist past and, by extension, legacies of Soviet involvement with in the Communist camp and the Third World. Traditional Soviet allies like North Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam were basically forgotten. Sustaining ties with these countries, all of which were long-time recipients of Soviet economic and military aid, was seen as inimical to Moscow's economic but especially political interests. Consequently, there was no interest on the part of the new Russian leadership to consider the broader context or allow any linkage between nuclear inspections and other items on Kim Il Sung's agenda. Figuratively speaking, the Russians were all stick and no carrot. The expectation in Moscow was that Kim would have no other option but to capitulate, and this expectation was very well aligned with Washington's views on this matter.

In recollections he shared with this author, Georgii Kunadze offered very interesting insights about Moscow's views of North Korea in the early 1990s. Unlike the Soviet Union, which, he wrote, had "ideological" reasons for supporting North Korea, Russia saw this relationship as devoid of any kind of "ideology." The Russian leadership, according to Kunadze, was willing to maintain "normal" relations with Pyongyang but this normality was subject to Kim Il Sung's agreement to discuss North Korea's debt to Russia, his readiness to pay for the supplies of Russian goods (which were no longer offered on credit), as well as his implementation of the provisions of the NPT. While Kunadze's emphasis on "normality" as a desirable benchmark in the Russian-North Korean relationship is entirely reasonable, this emphasis arguably fails to account for the historical background of this relationship. Normality could not be achieved overnight, and insisting on radically reorienting bilateral relations (especially in a situation where Russia held most of the cards) was fraught with a backlash.¹⁶

One wonders whether it was possible to somehow avert the collapse of the Russian-North Korean relationship in the 1990s. Kunadze does not think so: "They had no money to pay for our supplies, and we had no ability to continue [these supplies] on credit.

¹⁶ Electronic messages from Georgii Kunadze to the author, 1 November 2014 and 12 February 2015.

Besides, the DPRK refused even to begin talks on paying back its debts.” One potential difficulty with this explanation is that it conflates economic and political aspects of the relationship. True, Russia was broke—as was North Korea, so there were natural limits to the economic ties between the two countries. But there was clearly also something else—that is, Moscow’s political unwillingness to sustain this seemingly unpopular relationship. This was perhaps in part a product of ideological considerations, referred to above, and also in part a result of the peculiar domestic environment, wherein Yeltsin and his liberal foreign minister had to ward off attacks from nationalists and communists. In this sense, taking a soft line on North Korea was difficult at a time of Yeltsin’s bitter struggle with domestic Stalinists, some of whom looked to Pyongyang for inspiration. In retrospect, Kunadze regretted that “the North Korean problématique became a part of our internal policy.”¹⁷

One should perhaps mention an additional motive in the Russian position: the financial aspect. During Gorbachev’s visit to Cheju-do, South Korea extended a generous credit to the Soviet Union (to the order of three billion US dollars). The new Russian leadership wanted access both to these funds and to additional credits from Seoul. There was a sense in Moscow that by taking a hard line on North Korea, Russia could ingratiate itself with the South Korean government, bolstering economic and financial cooperation between the two countries. Thus, in November 1991 Kunadze wrote to the Chairman of the Russian Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov (who was due to visit South Korea in early December), urging him to tell the South Koreans that Russia would be “prepared to terminate cooperation with the DPRK in the military and nuclear spheres, review and downsize programs of other aid to Pyongyang, in case if the North Koreans refuse to immediately join the IAEA system” [[Document No. 4](#)]. Khasbulatov obliged.¹⁸ Andrei Kozyrev turned up in Seoul in March 1992 with additional reassurances of Russia’s tough stand concerning North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. An internal Russian summary of the results of that trip confirmed that “Seoul is grateful for our firm position in relation to the nuclear program of the DPRK” but also noted that the South Koreans were very worried by continued military collaboration between Moscow and Pyongyang (evidenced in the visit of the CIS Chief of Staff to North Korea). The thrust of the memorandum (which was, again, prepared by Kunadze) was that these surviving contacts were really not worthwhile, especially if they would antagonize Seoul. Kunadze highlighted the price of the question: Kozyrev had won South Korea’s agreement to

¹⁷ Electronic messages from Georgii Kunadze to the author, 1 November 2014 and 12 February 2015.

¹⁸ “Russia urging North Korea to scrap nuclear weapons development,” *AFP*, December 9, 1991.

have credits to Russia (suspended in the wake of Soviet collapse) “unfrozen.” Russia would inherit 75% of the remaining funds from the original loan offered to Gorbachev.

Intriguingly, Russia’s pressure on North Korea increased just as Kim Il Sung began to move towards a more conciliatory attitude. The end of 1991 saw a high point in the intra-Korean dialogue with the exchange of prime ministerial visits between the North and the South. On 13 December the two sides initialed an agreement on reconciliation, nonaggression, exchanges, and cooperation amid anticipation of a coming Kim-Roh summit. A fortnight later the two sides signed another agreement, pledging not to test, manufacture, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons. As a gesture of peace South Korea cancelled the Team Spirit military exercises. In an important development that helped alleviate Kim Il Sung’s sense of insecurity, the Bush Administration declared in September 1991 that it would remove all tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea (as a part of a broader deal arranged with the Soviets). Shortly thereafter, nuclear gravity bombs were also withdrawn from the Korean soil. At the same time, Washington edged closer towards a bilateral dialogue with North Korea, and in January 1992 the two sides held a formal meeting in New York. Finally, on 30 January 1992 Pyongyang finally signed the long-delayed safeguards agreement.¹⁹ Worsening relations between Russia and North Korea went against this general trend towards amelioration of tensions on the peninsula.

Unfortunately, early hopes of rapprochement on the Korean Peninsula were not realized. Although the IAEA inspections got off to a good start in mid-1992, the North Koreans proved reluctant to open up some facilities, citing military secrets and fuelling suspicions that Pyongyang was hiding weapons-grade plutonium. South Korea’s electoral cycle (1992 was an elections year) prevented politically risky engagement with Pyongyang, and the December 1991 agreements were allowed to wither on the vine. But what really changed the equation was the announcement of the 1993 Team Spirit exercises, interpreted in Pyongyang as a direct security threat. Frustrated that their dialogue with South Korea and the United States failed to produce substantive results, and that their agreement to inspections led only to mounting pressure and recriminations, the North Koreans announced on 12 March 1993 that the country would withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This announcement set the stage for the first North Korean nuclear crisis.

Where was Russia in all of this? Following a precipitous souring of bilateral relations in 1991, North Korea’s erstwhile ally disengaged itself from Kim Il Sung and his many

¹⁹ See discussion in e.g. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*.

problems. Russia's reaction to the North Korean announcement of withdrawal from the NPT was to carry out its threats, first articulated in September 1991, to impose economic sanctions. These were not as sweeping as Kunadze had threatened and only concerned cooperation in the nuclear sphere (training and exchange of specialists, assistance in the construction of a nuclear power plant, and supply of nuclear fuel). Russia, Kunadze argued in an internal memorandum dated May 27, 1993, "cannot regard with indifference such actions on the part of the DPRK, or of any state, which lead to the undermining of the international regime of nuclear non-proliferation. ... We called upon the DPRK to review its decision and return to the treaty; we are encouraging it to do so even now, using different diplomatic means" [[Document No. 5](#)]. It is worthwhile pointing out that as of mid-1993, the Russian Foreign Ministry had "no information to the effect that the DPRK possesses nuclear weapons" [[Document No. 6](#)].

North Korea's response to the Russian sanctions was (in the words of an internal Russian assessment) "reserved... The Korean side expressed regret on this account in general terms" [[Document No. 6](#)]. In discussing the negative impact of sanctions on Russia itself, the Foreign Ministry highlighted marginal economic loss. According to an assessment prepared by Kunadze, Russia's refusal to supply nuclear fuel to Pyongyang would cost it 185,000 US dollars, while the failure to service the North Korean cyclotron would leave Russia another 15,000 US dollars shorter. Kunadze also suggested that in view of the sanctions, it was unlikely that Russia would ever recover the 1.75 million US dollars invested in finding an appropriate site for the North Korean nuclear power plant. It is telling that in assessing the consequences of Russia's *political* decisions with regard to North Korea, the Foreign Ministry preferred to highlight *economic* losses. The loss of *political* leverage was not seriously explored. Yet, unbeknownst to the Russians, Pyongyang was already engaged in secret but intense dialogue with the United States, leading, on 12 June, to a joint statement issued by representatives of the US and of North Korea, whereby Pyongyang suspended its decision to withdraw from the NPT in return for American security guarantees. In the course of negotiations that took place in the following months, leading to the conclusion of the Agreed Framework, Russia was effectively sidelined and played practically no role in resolving North Korea's nuclear problem.

In February 1992 the Institute of the Far East—Russia's leading Asia policy think tank—prepared a set of recommendations for the new Russian leadership. The document—titled "On Our Policy Towards Korea"—highlighted Russia's unique position as

the only regional player with good ties with both North and South Korea. The analysts (who were mainly Korea specialists from the same institute but also Foreign Ministry experts) proposed that Russia should continue to “stand on two legs” on the Korean Peninsula. “Skewing of our position in the direction of one of the Korean states will inevitably lower the potential for our influence in the region,” the document read. “We will be useful partners for Pyongyang if we develop relations with Seoul. We will be taken into account in Beijing and in Tokyo, in Washington and in Seoul, if we keep our presence in Pyongyang. In their turn, both North and South Korea are interested in a strong Russia, capable of being useful to other Asian states.” In terms of specific policy choices, the analysts recommended maintaining bilateral trade with North Korea (which had by then collapsed to practically nothing) by allowing Pyongyang to repay credits in kind. It was also proposed that Boris Yeltsin—whose visit to Seoul was then in the planning stage—should also stopover in Pyongyang on the way in order to rehabilitate the declining fortunes of Russian-North Korean relations.²⁰

In the end, Yeltsin skipped Pyongyang. “There was no political sense to it,” recalled Kunadze, and “it was practically impossible technically, because of the problem of a direct flight from Pyongyang to Seoul.”²¹ While the technical side of the matter was perhaps solvable, the absence of the political will was a more serious problem. “Somehow, intuitively, Yeltsin did not like the North Koreans,” Kunadze wrote, and this personal dimension should not be underestimated. More broadly though, at the time the Russian leadership simply did not see a place for North Korea in Moscow’s Asia policy. The emphasis was instead on profitable economic relationships, which in the case of Korea meant fostering ties with Seoul while simply ignoring Kim Il Sung with his insecurities and his fantasies. There was no real sense at the policy level that Russia could play a positive role in the region through mediation and engagement with both the South and the North, or indeed, that it should. Russia’s policy of open pressure on North Korea was in part a reflection of the pro-Western orientation of the Russian leadership, in part a consequence of Soviet-era propensity to overstate the degree of Moscow’s influence over Pyongyang, and in part an effort to earn the gratitude of South Korea in the hope of attracting investments and credits.

All three aspects of Russia’s approach were on display in November 1992, during Boris Yeltsin’s visit to Seoul. Shedding diplomatic language, Yeltsin threatened to renounce the 1961 treaty with North Korea: “For instance, Article 1 of the Treaty says that we must

²⁰ “On our policy in Korea, IDV report,” February 1992, GARF, fond 10026, opis 4, delo 2803, listy 96-98.

²¹ Electronic messages from Georgii Kunadze to the author, 1 November 2014 and 12 February 2015.

render immediate military aid to North Korea in the event of war. Today we are not going to render such assistance. Therefore we must simply delete Article 1 of this Treaty. That is, this Treaty is liable either to annulment or to very serious readjustment.” At the same time, Yeltsin promised to “apply political measures” so as to force North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions. There is no doubt that these views reflected Yeltsin’s sentiments at the time, though there was an element of staged drama there as well, because the Russian President came seeking Seoul’s credits. As T.R. Reid of *The Washington Post* noted at the time, with some justification, “South Korea, a Florida-sized country of 42 million, seemed to be the senior partner for this summit with the vast Russian federation... The Russians came seeking help, and thus they went out of their way to soothe old animosities.”²²

Yeltsin’s performance naturally caused an angry reaction in Pyongyang, further eroding Russia’s standing with the erstwhile ally. As one of the Russian journalists covering the summit in Seoul noted perceptively at the time, “If we so drastically sever with North Korea and cut all ties with it, what ‘political measures’ will remain at our disposal to influence Pyongyang policies?”²³ In January 1993 Georgii Kunadze travelled to Pyongyang in a bid to explain Russia’s new policy. “I was received with correctness but not at the highest level, though this was expected. We informed the North Koreans on our part that the 1961 Treaty obliges Russia, as the successor to the USSR, to provide the DPRK with military aid only in the case of aggression against it. We explained that in the hypothetical case of a DPRK conflict with third countries, Russia will retain the right to determine whether aggression had been committed. In other words, we told them that if the DPRK starts a military conflict, we won’t be able to resort to the ‘military’ article in the 1961 Treaty.” Bilateral relations continued to worsen in what probably became the most difficult year ever in Moscow’s relations with Pyongyang. State-to-state relations contacts ceased. Even tourist ties were brought to naught, especially after an incident, in the summer of 1993, when a group of Russians was beaten up by a North Korean crowd while vacationing in the city of Nampo.²⁴

What that meant in bigger picture was that just as the first North Korean nuclear crisis broke out, Russia found itself decidedly marginalized. Kapto argued in his memoirs that “all the niches—political, military-strategic, diplomatic—in the possible settlement of the conflict

²² T.R. Reid, “Moscow, Seoul Forge New Relationship; Yeltsin Ends Visit by Signing Aid Agreements, Cutting Postwar Links to North Korea,” *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1992, p. A16.

²³ Aleksei Pushkov, “Yeltsin brings some answers and new questions from trip to Seoul,” *Moscow News*, November 29, 1992. Interestingly, Pushkov is currently serving as the head of the Russian Duma’s International Affairs Committee.

²⁴ A. Panov, V. Al’tov, *Severnaia Koreia: Epokha Kim Chen Ira na Zakate*, pp. 163-164.

on the Korean Peninsula, and especially the ‘nuclear problem,’ were taken, and quite solidly, by the Americans.”²⁵ This, Kapto wrote, did not square well with Russia’s “national interests” in the region.

Quite apart from Russia’s “national interests”—a slippery (and frequently abused) term that has no simple definition—the real question is whether Russia was able to positively contribute to the resolution of the first North Korean nuclear crisis. One could argue, for instance, that Kim’s pursuit of nuclear weapons was quite independent of anything the Russians were or were not willing to do, and at least Moscow showed its political responsibility as a member of the international community by taking a principled stand. That may well be true but one wonders whether the political capital gained from such principled stand offset the gigantic liability of a nuclear-armed North Korea. Or one could argue that by adopting a decidedly hostile line on Pyongyang’s procrastination with the signing of the IAEA safeguards agreement, Russia contributed to pressure that ultimately forced Kim to make that commitment, or that by threatening to renounce the 1961 Treaty, Yeltsin constrained North Korea’s belligerency by dramatically increasing the costs of Kim’s aggressive behavior.

The evidence for the latter being the case is not particularly strong. Yes, Pyongyang did adopt a more conciliatory stance towards the end of 1991, and then again in 1994, but it may have done so in response to perceived US and South Korean flexibility—i.e. cancellation of Team Spirit, and US withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the peninsula, and of course the economic promise of the Agreed Framework—rather than in reaction to any form of outside pressure and sanctions, including Russia’s. Son Seong-pil’s comments to Kunadze—that North Korea would sign the safeguards agreements *if* the international pressure ceased, suggests that direct pressure may have actually had the opposite effect from the one intended: it increased Kim’s resolve not to comply with IAEA demands. More importantly, by imposing sanctions Russia may have lost important levers of influence in Pyongyang, which could be profitably used for diffusing the tense situation and reassuring Kim Il Sung.

If the above is true than how can one explain that despite Russia’s return to the DPRK in 2000 (when Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Pyongyang) and the subsequent development of bilateral ties, the North Koreans have nevertheless refused to give up their nuclear program? Different answers have been given, ranging from Pyongyang’s resentment

²⁵ Kapto, *Na Perekrestkakh Zhizni*, 457.

at being shortchanged in the Agreed Framework to George W. Bush's preemptive unilateralism and awe-inspiring rhetoric, which has increased Pyongyang's feeling of insecurity and highlighted the importance of the nuclear deterrent. Since 2002 North Korea's nuclear program progressed by leaps and bounds. Whereas in the early 1990s Kim Il Sung was promising to get rid of what he did not even have; now the North Koreans (with enormous sacrifice) have acquired nuclear weapons, and would certainly expect a much higher payment for dispensing with them. Unfortunately, however, the global political context has shifted decidedly from the relatively cooperative spirit of the early 1990s towards widening divisions, in particular in relations between the United States and Russia/China and China/Japan. These divisions have given North Korea greater breathing space, considerably diminishing the chances of a coordinated multilateral effort to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

Therefore, the early 1990s can be seen a historically important squandered opportunity. In particular Russia, which, one could argue, bears a degree of moral responsibility for the North Korean nuclear program, failed to play a positive role in bringing about peaceful denuclearization of the DPRK. Moscow's get-tough policies led to a situation where even though the Russians were very willing to cooperate with the West in finding a solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis, they ended up with very little actual influence on the situation. Perhaps, a better policy would have entailed careful mediation aimed at alleviating North Korea's security concerns while encouraging Seoul and Washington to ease pressure on Pyongyang. Kim Il Sung's procrastination with the signing of the Agreed Framework was after all directly related to his fear of having been abandoned to his fate by an ally. Instead of worsening his fears by presenting Kim with ultimatums, the Russian government would have done well to maintain a close dialogue with Pyongyang. Of course, rapid decline of economic ties between the two countries was probably unavoidable—Russia was in no position to subsidize the DPRK when it itself faced a deep economic crisis. But the failure to maintain political dialogue was entirely a matter of choice. Today, the situation is very different. Moscow may have acquired a degree of influence in Pyongyang but—for all of Putin's calls for peace and stability in Korea—it has no real willingness to cooperate with the West. The consequences of this mismatch between intentions and capabilities is a nuclear-armed North Korea determined in the face of all sanctions to hold on to the Bomb even if the whole world turned against it. After all, in the early 1990s the world—with few exceptions—did, and it still managed to survive.

Document Appendix

Available online in the Wilson Center Digital Archive:
digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/theme/nuclear-history

DOCUMENT NO. 1

Record of Conversation between F.G. Kunadze and Son Seong-Pil, 2 October 1991

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 4, delo 2803, listy 1-3. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE R[ussian] S[oviet] F[ederation] S[ocialist] R[epublic]

1921

02.10.91

From the diary of G.F. Kunadze

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

with the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the DPRK in the USSR
Son Seong-pil [Son Song Pil]

20 September 1991

Invited DPRK Ambassador in the USSR Son Seong-pil for a conversation.

Related [to him] that, in accordance with the agreement of the President of the USSR and the President of the RSFSR, the sphere of bilateral relations will from now on be the prerogative of the sovereign republics—subjects of the former Union of SSR. In this connection, one can confidently say that in the next few years Russia will become the DPRK's main partner.

Congratulated the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its acceptance to the UN and expressed a sincere hope that this event will open up new opportunities for the stabilization of the situation on the Korean peninsula, for the entry of both states into the world community.

Then drew the interlocutor's attention to the state of trade-economic relations between the USSR and the DPRK, which do not always develop in ways one would expect. There are instances of non-implementation by the Korean side of the agreed supplies; the DPRK's indebtedness is growing, approaching 3 billion rubles.

In recent times, one has witnessed growing appeals by the public [in Russia] to substantially decrease and even fold up economically unprofitable ties with a series of countries, and first and foremost, military aid. The main military industry is located, as one knows, on Russia's territory. In connection with the transfer of this industry, as well as the entire national economy,

under the jurisdiction of the RSFSR, the continuation of economically unprofitable external relations and, especially, of military aid, would be an uneasy burden for us. Stressed that the aforesaid applies to all countries and that the announcement about a substantial decrease in the military aid to Cuba was not made because the USA insisted on it, but in light of the situation which has developed in the USSR, and first and foremost the demands of the Russian public. Speculated that in relations with the DPRK in the near future we cannot avoid the reassessment of economic and military ties. The position of the M[inistry] F[oreign] A[ffairs] and of the government of Russia is nevertheless such that we should not immediately tear up all previous ties. Noted that our efforts at rationalization could encounter a lack of understanding on the part of the public because of the actions of the DPRK itself. In this connection pointed to the fact of the DPRK's refusal to sign the safeguard agreement with the I[nternational] A[tomic] E[nergy] A[gency].

Reminded about the obligation of each state, signatory to the treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, to conclude an agreement on safeguards with the IAEA within 18 months (the DPRK joined the treaty in December 1985). This obligation has a universal character and cannot be linked to the satisfaction of any kinds of preliminary demands.

Expressed disappointment with the events of the recent past when the government of the DPRK once again refused to sign the agreement with the IAEA in spite of the fact that the Korean side has long declared its readiness to carry out its obligations under the Treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Expressed doubt in the legality of linking this agreement with the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from the south of Korea or with the conduct of DPRK inspections on American nuclear sites in the ROK.

Noted that in case of further procrastination with the resolution of this very important question we could run into serious problems in economic and military cooperation with the DPRK. The decrease, or termination of assistance may affect the construction of the N[uclear] P[ower] P[lant], the supply of MiG-29 fighter planes, and, subsequently, the supply of fuel resources.

Related that a section of the people's deputies of the RSFSR have an intention to raise the question of reassessing [our] approach to economic and military ties with the DPRK on the account of non-implementation on its part of its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We sincerely want to avoid such a turn of events.

In conclusion repeated that Russia, as the closest neighbor of the DPRK and ROK is interested in the stability on the Korean peninsula, in the existence of the DPRK as an authoritative member of the civilized world community.

Son Seong-Pil thanked for the frank conversation and declared that the problem of concluding agreement on safeguards is a problem of the DPRK and the IAEA, and the problem of the conduct of nuclear inspections is that of the DPRK and the USA, and this should not, in his opinion, reflect on our relations. The DPRK would like to sign an agreement on safeguards in case if the USA undertake the obligation of non-use of nuclear weapons against the DPRK (to

this, the interlocutor was told that the best guarantee of this is the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the USSR and the DPRK). “The USA are making demands upon the non-nuclear DPRK about conducting inspections, ignoring Pyongyang’s appeal about the conduct of inspections at nuclear sites in the South,” noted the Ambassador. He also reminded that the recent statement by a representative of the MFA DPRK assessed the resolution of the IAEA Board of Governors as intrusion in the DPRK’s internal affairs.

The Ambassador stressed that the DPRK intends to move things in the direction of signing the agreement with the IAEA if the international pressure ceases.

In conclusion Son Seong-pil officially invited a delegation of the MFA RSFSR to visit the DPRK.

On my part, thanked for the invitation. Expressed a hope that the conversation which has taken place will be reported to Pyongyang and that there follows a constructive reaction to our appeal on the part of the government of the DPRK.

The First Secretary of the A[sia] P[acific] Department E. Iu. Tomikhin was present at the conversation.

Deputy Minister [signature] G. Kunadze

DOCUMENT NO. 2

Record of Conversation between G.F. Kunadze and Yu Hongliang, 8 October 1991

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 1, delo 2290, listy 36-38. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

[36]

Ministry of foreign affairs
of the RSFSR

2045 11 October 1991

From the diary of Kunadze G.F.

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

With the Ambassador of the PRC in the USSR Yu Hongliang

October 8, 1991

Received the Ambassador of the PRC in the USSR Yu Hongliang on his request in connection with his forthcoming final departure for the homeland.

[...]

[37]

Assuming the common interest of our countries in the quickest attainment of stability on the Korean peninsula and in the peaceful unification of Korea, [I] called upon the Chinese side to exert influence on the government of the DPRK with the aim of changing its approach to the question of concluding the safeguards agreement with the I[n]ternational A[tomic] E[nergy] A[gency], without linking this question to the problem of the American nuclear presence in the South of the country.

[...]

The Ambassador noted that, on the question about the DPRK position on the agreement with the IAEA, the approaches of our countries coincide. China also stands for stability on the peninsula and for the unification of the country by means of a peaceful dialogue [and] for the prohibition and elimination of all nuclear weapons.

[...]

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the RSFSR [signature] G. Kunadze

DOCUMENT NO. 3

Record of Conversation between Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR A. S. Dzasokhov with the DPRK Ambassador Son Seong-pil, 9 October 1991

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond P9654, opis 10, delo 339, list 225. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

Record of Conversation between Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR A. S. Dzasokhov with the DPRK Ambassador Son Seong-pil
[Son Seong-pil]

October 9, 1991

Son Seong-pil: [...] After this year's August events [attempted coup d'état in the USSR] the Soviet Union witnessed great changes. They can be appraised in different ways but, as the leadership of the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] stressed repeatedly, these changes are an internal affair of the Soviet Union. And although relations between our countries recently experienced certain problems, the leadership of the DPRK and its entire

people wish the Soviet people to overcome crisis as soon as possible and [to achieve] new successes. [...] It will of great significance for the solution of many problems that the DPRK together with the ROK will be admitted to the UN. However, in this question, the main goal remains as before – one place in the UN for both Korean states.

The Ambassador stressed that admittance to the UN will allow Pyongyang to use additional levers for counteracting US efforts aimed at establishing its dominance in the region. Washington is trying to apply direct pressure on the DPRK with the aim of forcing North Korea to unconditionally sign the safeguards agreement with the IAEA. However, our position is that this question should be decided in close connection with the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from the territory of the ROK. Pyongyang will closely watch how the American side will implement the initiatives advanced by US President G[eorge] Bush. Inspection of nuclear sites of the North is only possible on the condition of analogous inspection of the territory of the Republic of Korea. In the final count the DPRK stands for the declaration of the Korean peninsula a nuclear-free zone. [...]

DOCUMENT NO. 4

Letter from G.F. Kunadze to R.I. Khazbulatov, 15 November 1991

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 5, delo 157, listy 17-19. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

[17]

MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION

15.11.91 2559

TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
SUPREME SOVIET OF THE RSFSR
R.I. KHAZBULATOV

Esteemed Ruslan Imranovich!

In accordance with your instructions, M[inistry] F[oreign] A[ffairs] R[ussian] S[oviet] F[ederative] S[ocialist] R[epublic] discussed with the South Korean side a range of questions connection with your forthcoming visit to the Republic of Korea.

The Korean side attaches great importance to your visit, because in its understanding it must initiate the process of the political dialogue at the high level between Russian and Korea, which will lead to the visit of President B.N. Yeltsin in May-June 1992 (a preliminary agreement—in principle—is contained in the message of reply of B.N. Yeltsin to President Roh Tae-woo).

The dates of your visit have been set to December 4 (Wednesday) to December 6 (Friday) (departure from Moscow—December 3, departure from Seoul—7 December).

[...]

[18]

2. We suppose that in the course of your visit the Korean side will give attention to the following questions:

[...]

The approach of the Russian side to the problem of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which has become extremely acute in recent time on the Korean Peninsula in connection with the DPRK's refusal to place its nuclear program under the effective control of the I[nternational] A[tomic] E[nergy] A[gency].

On November 8 President Roh Tae-woo declared that the Republic of Korea rejects the production, the possession, and the deployment of nuclear weapons and is prepared to place its territory under the control of the IAEA. In this connection we, probably, will need to give a positive assessment of the aforementioned declaration.

Besides, it would be desirable to declare that Russia is prepared to terminate cooperation with the D[emocratic] P[eople's] R[epublic] K[orea] in the military and nuclear spheres, review and downsize programs of other aid to Pyongyang, in case if the North Koreans refuse to immediately join the IAEA system (a draft of the relevant resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR has been passed by us to the Committee for International Affairs and External Economic Relations, to Lukin V.P.).

[...]

[19]

Deputy minister G. Kunadze

DOCUMENT NO. 5

Letter from G.F. Kunadze to E.A. Ambartsumov, 27 May 1993

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 4, delo 2704, listy 51-52. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

of the Russian Federation

27.05.93 632/1uatr

TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LIAISON
COMMITTEE OF THE SUPREME
SOVIET
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
E.A. AMBARTSUMOV

COPY TO THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN
OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC
RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE
SUPREME SOVIET OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION I.I. ANDRONOV

In response to 7-3-1530 dated 12.05.93

Esteemed Evgenii Arshakovich,

Sharing the concern of the Committee of which you are the head in connection with the decision of the D[emocratic] P[eople's] R[epublic] K[orea] to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we would like to relate the following:

Russia, as an NPT depository state, cannot regard with indifference such actions on the part of the DPRK, or of any state, which lead to the undermining of the international regime of nuclear non-proliferation. Our principled position on this account was explained in the Statement of the MFA of Russia dated 12 March 1993. We called upon the DPRK to review its decision and return to the treaty; we are encouraging it to do so even now, using different diplomatic means.

As an initial reaction to the actions of North Korea in relation to the NPT we, in accordance with the decree (249-rp dated 19 April 1993) of the President of the R[ussian] F[ederation], announced the suspension, until the DPRK reviews its decision, of cooperation with this country in the sphere of nuclear energy (preparation of cadres, exchange of specialists, assistance in the construction of a N[uclear] P[ower] P[lant], supply of nuclear fuel).

M[inistry] F[oreign] A[ffairs] RF continues to closely work on this problem, it is analyzing the probable development of the situation, the consequences for Russia and for Russian-North Korean relations, of possible actions on the part of the international [52] community in case of the DPRK's refusal to return to the NPT and resume its cooperation with the IAEA. Our final position on this question has not yet been determined. MFA RF is interested in joint work with

the International Affairs Committee in connection with the aforesaid actions of the DPRK. We are prepared to exchange opinions on this question.

DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

G. KUNADZE

DOCUMENT NO. 6

Letter from G.F. Kunadze to S.A. Mikhailov, 16 June 1993

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 4, delo 2704, listy 64-65. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

Ministry of
Foreign Affairs
of the Russian Federation

16.06.93 695/1uatr-ns

TO THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF
THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC
RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE
SUPREME SOVIET OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION S.A. MIKHAILOV

Esteemed Sergei Andreevich,

Responding to a series of concrete questions, raised in your letter 73-1631 dated 3.06.93 we would like to relate the following:

1. Reaction of the D[emocratic] P[eople's] R[epublic] K[orea] to our decision to suspend cooperation in the sphere of nuclear energy was reserved. The Korean side expressed regret on this account in general terms.
2. As one knows, the North Korean side has for a long time evaded the repayment of its debt before Russia. Our decision about the suspension of cooperation in the nuclear sphere did not introduce new aspects into the Korean position.
3. In connection with the suspension of cooperation with the DPRK in sphere of nuclear energy, one could speak about "lost profit" for Russia, but not about direct economic loss. In particular, our possible losses would amount to: 185 thousand dollars as a result of the refusal to supply nuclear fuel to Pyongyang for the experimental reactor and 15 thousand dollars—for the post-warranty service of the North Korean cyclotron. One can also expect that the Korean side will continue to refuse to repay the debt of 1.75

million dollars for the exploratory work we have done in selecting the site for the N[uclear] P[ower] P[lant].

[65]

4. In accordance with the Decree No. 312 of the President R[ussian] F[ederation] dated 27 March 1992 “About the control of export from the Russian Federation of nuclear materials, equipment and technologies,” Russia conducts cooperation in the sphere of the peaceful use of nuclear energy only with those countries, whose nuclear activities have been placed under the I[nternational] A[tomic] E[nergy] A[gency]’s guarantees.

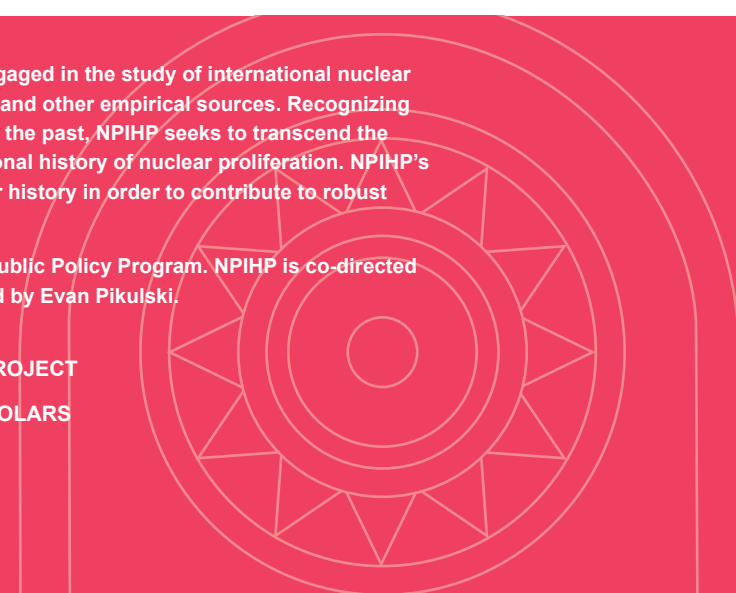
5. M[inistry] F[oreign] A[ffairs] RF has no information to the effect that the D[emocratic] P[eople’s] R[epublic] K[orea] possesses nuclear weapons. At the same time, the findings of report by the External Intelligence Service of the RF “New Challenges after the ‘Cold War’: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction” confirm that, in the course of a relatively long period, North Korea has been developing a military application program in the nuclear sphere, which is currently in an advanced state.

We have no information about alternative options of the USA’s reaction to the DPRK’s actions.

At the present time MFA RF together with other interested Russian agencies is working through a complex of possible actions of political and economic character, directed at the return of North Korea into the N[uclear] N[on] P[roliferation] T[reaty] and the prevention of the nuclear militarization of the North Korean regime. Concrete content of such measures will depend on the further development of the situation around the North Korean nuclear problem.

DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

G. KUNADZE



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