

## Summary of the Doctoral Thesis

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**Title: Diplomacy or Thumbscrews?**

**U.S. Strategies Against a Nuclear North Korea**

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### **Summary**

For three decades North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons has posed a serious challenge for the international community. From the very beginning, the United States have played a key role in this crisis. Between diplomatic engagement, coercive containment, and regime change U.S. presidents have made considerable efforts to provide North Korean leaders substantial incentives for nuclear disarmament. None of these efforts have yielded the expected result: ending the threat of a nuclear North Korea once and for all.

This thesis deals with the nonproliferation strategies of the United States towards North Korea from the end of the Cold War to the beginning of Barack Obama’s presidency in early 2009. It examines in detail the policies U.S. administrations have pursued along various strategic concepts and their underlying schools of thought. What were the respective means-ends calculations, especially with regard to the two conflicting policy goals of

denuclearization on the one hand and regime transformation on the other? Furthermore: Why did every president at some point seem to be compelled to engage with the North Korean regime in nuclear diplomacy which often included the provision of substantial political and economic inducements for disarmament? Specifically, what were the motives and conditions for President William Clinton's and President George W. Bush's fundamental strategic moves toward engagement?

By exploring U.S. North Korea policy in multiple contexts, this study defines itself as a foreign policy analysis. It thereby follows the assumption of Richard Snyder and other scholars that the decision-maker must be analytically regarded as an interface between material and ideational determinants of a state's foreign policy. Accordingly, the role of individual foreign policy actors will be taken into focused consideration as well as the international, domestic, and administrative contexts in which they define the situation and make foreign policy decisions.

In the concluding chapter the findings of this study will be discussed with regard to their respective fields of research. For example: Foreign policy change can be explained by externally opened „windows of opportunity“ that leading government officials need to exploit in order to bring about strategic turnabouts. Often times, as in the case of U.S. North Korea policy, those political turns are closely intertwined with structural changes in the decision-making process. This again is determined by shifts in the leadership style of the U.S. president, i.e. the advisory and decision-making system within the administration. In this regard, U.S. North Korea policy serves as a prime case study in which foreign policy shifts were not only dependent on the external environment (i.e. North Korea's behavior) or domestic policy calculations but also in significant ways conditioned by procedural changes in foreign policy decision-making.