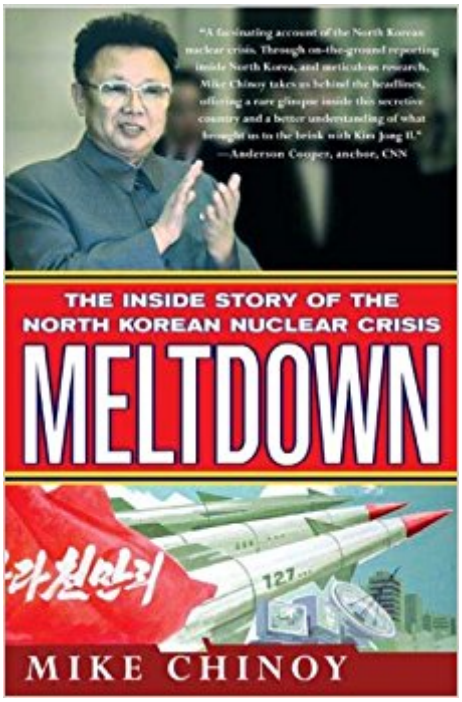
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Meltdown: The Inside Story Of The North Korean Nuclear Crisis



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Synopsis

Meltdown is the riveting inside account of an American diplomatic disasterWhen George W. Bush took office in 2001, North KoreaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s nuclear program was frozen.Ã Â Kim Jong-Il had signaled to the outgoing Clinton administration he was ready to negotiate an end to his missile program. Today, North Korea has become a full-fledged nuclear power, with enough fissile material to stage an underground test in 2006, manufacture as many as ten more warheads, andÃ¢â ¬â •in the worst-case scenarioÃ¢â ¬â •provide nuclear material to rogue states or terrorist groups.Ã Â How did the United StatesÃ Â fail to prevent a long-standing adversary like North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons?Drawing on more than two hundred interviews with key players in Washington, Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing, including Colin Powell, John Bolton, and ex-Korean president Kim Dae-jung, as well as insights gained during fourteen trips to Pyongyang, longtime CNN correspondent and North Korea expert Mike Chinoy provides a blow-by-blow account that takes readers behind the scenes of secret diplomatic meetings, disputed intelligence reports, and Washington turf battles as well as inside the mysterious world of North Korea. Meltdown shows how the U.S. refusal to engage in serious diplomacy spurred Kim Jong Il to stage his nuclear breakout, and provides a wealth of new material about the subsequent reversal of course that led the Bush administration to abandon confrontation in the hope of negotiating an end to the nuclear crisis.Chinoy has produced a gripping account of one of America’s longest-running, most volatile foreign policy crises that explains why North Korea remains a danger todayÃ¢â ¬â •and why it didn’t have to be this way.

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Customer Reviews

The Bush administration's bellicose but feckless attempts to quash North Korea's nuclear weapons program were the nadir of its famously maladroit diplomacy, to judge by this revealing blow-by-blow. Ex-CNN Pyongyang correspondent Chinoy details the rancorous infighting during which hardliners like John Bolton and Dick Cheney talked down State Department doves to impose an intransigent North Korea policy, replacing negotiations with Axis-of-Evil rhetoric and unilateral demands. Their approach backfired disastrously, he argues, as Pyongyang restarted and escalated its dormant nuclear initiative and finally tested an atom bomb while the U.S. fulminated helplesslyÃ¢â ¬â •a needless outcome, he suggests, given the North Koreans' oft-expressed readiness to abandon their nuclear program in exchange for aid and normalized relations. Chinoy presents a lucid exposition of the issues along with a colorful account of diplomatic wrangling in which U.S. officials rivaled their North Korean counterparts in dogmatism and prickly sensitivity to niceties. (One joint statement was almost derailed when the Americans insisted on changing the phrase peaceful coexistence to exist peacefully together.) His is a fine, insightful diplomatic history of a dire confrontationÃ¢â ¬â •and a hard-hitting critique of the Bush administration's foreign policy. Photos. (Aug. 7) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

North Korea exploded an atomic bomb in October 2006, representing the failure of American diplomacy to thwartÃ Â the countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢sÃ Â nuclear ambition. Chronicled here by former CNN reporter Chinoy, that diplomacy came in two flavors: negotiations favored by the Clinton administration, and a more confrontational approach preferred by theÃ Â successor Bush administration. That neither succeeded probably says more about the Democratic PeopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Republic of Korea, a despotic Stalinist relic, than it does about the merits of carrots versus sticks, but that debate dominates ChinoyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s narrative. Clearly critical of sticks, Chinoy plainly gained greater access to advocates of negotiation than to its skeptics, and none to relevant North Korean officials. But the latter appear at one remove in the impressions of Americans who bargained with them, rendering a picture of North KoreaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s truculent belligerence on the nuclear issue. Depicting, too, the politics within the D.C. foreign policy bureaucracy, Chinoy extensively quotes major playersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ viewpoints, pegging their strategies and tactics to milestones on the path to the present impasse. A lively journalistic review of the past decade in U.S.Ã¢â ¬â œNorth Korean relations. --Gilbert Taylor

Well not literallyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|but Mike Chinoy sets out to answer a basic question in Meltdown. How does North Korea end up with nuclear weapons despite not just one, but two presidential administrations declaring that such an outcome would have grave consequences for the world at large?Knowing that Mike Chinoy is/was a CNN reporter, I was prepared to see this potentially as a Clinton was great, Bush was horrible, type of work. But one cannot doubt Mike ChinoyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s credentials, I mean how many people can say they have interacted with North KoreaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s highly secretive leaders unless you are a high up government official in Northeast Asia (Japan, South Korea, and China)Rather than a hatchet job, in Meltdown, you get the picture of a very divided administration caught between moderates and hard liners and negotiations and sanctions. These divisions created an uncertain and inconsistent policy development that ultimately led to a nuclear North Korea. Think of it as a fly ball going directly between the two outfielders who were calling for it.Now the debate between whether Chinoy favors negotiations over stricter measures is still an open question. I would like to see a post 2008 update of this book, even though the hermit kingdom hasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t exactly been a recent focus.

Excellent book on what is going on inside North Korea; one of the better one’s out there.

Thank you

Good

While I agree with Mr, Chinoy’s assesment of the futility of the Bush Administration’s "Talk tough, carry a wet noodle" approach, I have to say that I think he fundamentally misses the mark in his approach to his analysis of DPRK negotiating tactics.The overall impression one gets of the DPRK after reading this book is that of small-threatened country desperatly seeking compromise with a overwhelmingly large foe. If you take Mr. Chinoy’s assessment at face-value, the North would have gladly made a deal by now if it were not for the dastardly neo-cons seeking their destruction. Subsequent events (as well as a more careful analysis of their previous behavior) proves this line of reasoning laughably incorrect.I would like to have seen a more carefully balanced analysis by such a well-known "expert" in this area.

If you want a firm understanding of just how terrible the Bush and Clinton foreign policies were, as

they relate to North Korea; this book will open your eyes. I was very impressed with the candid remarks from people who were very high in both administrations. Being able to hear the thoughts of people like Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice gives a perspective you may not often find in similar types of historical references.This is a good read, but it does tend to get a little dry and repetitive in the middle of the book.

Journalist Mike Chinoy provides a detailed, readable, and highly informative account of the long running nuclear dispute with North Korea, starting with the 1992-94 crisis that was averted by Jimmy Carter's visit, the progress and understanding of the Clinton years that led to the Agreed Framework, and the near establishment of Diplomatic relations, the confrontation, rhetoric, and ultimately proliferation of the Bush years, and ultimately the mess the Obama Administration has inherited. While the North's motivations cannot be accurately ascertained, it would appear that the ultimate driving force is the need for security. The DPRK began its nuclear program in the wake of the Western victory of the Cold War and the end of Soviet Support, a climate wherein many in the West viewed the collapse of the regime as inevitable. The understanding of security was almost sealed under Clinton, in the visit of Marshall Jo Myong Rok to the White House in October 2000, leading to the agreed declaration of no hostile intent, and Madeleine Albright's subsequent visit to Pyongyang. What followed was an Administration unwilling to disavow the use of force against the DPRK, and steadfast in its refusal to recognize the sovereignty of the country. It becomes clear from reading that while former president George Bush had almost no opinion on North Korea before taking office, members of the administration such as Donald Rumsfeld, who led a commission calling for the abandonment of the Agreed Framework in the late 90s, and John Bolton, another long term critic of the Clinton era diplomacy, had hawkish designs on the DPRK long before September 11th. The hawks in the Bush administration had designs on both the Agreed Framework, and the 1972 Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty. North Korea was used as a posterchild for Missile Defense, and therefore had become a target of confrontation for Administration Hardliners. We learn that the Agreed Framework was effectively frozen during Bush's initial month's in office, and gradually unraveled shortly after the "Axis of Evil" designation in the 2002 State of the Union, and effectively terminated following a dubious intelligence report that the North had a Uranium Enrichment program. Most alarming is the rigid, confrontational approach of the Bush administration, refusing DPRK requests of direct talks, participating in the six party talks by only itterating of the DPRKs capitulation, and the sidelining and disenfranchisement of all the advocates of diplomacy, all the veterans of the Clinton talks, and anyone with a moderate line. Veteran Korea hands such as Jack

Pritchard were effectively muzzled by Administration hardliners and effectively disenfranchised from the process. Hardliners hoping to torpedo the process did so through the appointment of people such as John Bolton, and later Jay Lefkowitz to key positions in the negotiation framework. Indeed, Bolton is recurrent throughout the book, presented as one of the most truly determined individuals in his opposition to negotiations with the North, ranging from his workings at state, his 2003 denunciation of Kim Jong Il whilst in the South Korean capital, to his push for a tough line at the UN. NSC member and Bolton's successor at State, Bob Joseph is equally zealous, although his role in the process is not as significant as Bolton. While his achievements may be in jeopardy, one cannot help but develop a sense of admiration for Christopher Hill. He is shown to be a man who was effectively fighting a two front war, dealing with the bellicosity and rigidity of the North Koreans on one front, and constantly fighting against the hardliners in the Bush administration who constantly sought to unravel the entire process. Hill took courageous steps, bypassing most of the diplomatic process, reporting only to his bosses Rice and Bush, and doing whatever he could to limit the machinations of hardliners, invariably found at the NSC, the Pentagon, the office of the Vice President, and to a lesser extent at State. The ultimate sticking point is the Banco Delta Asia holdings of DPRK funds, which became a target of State Department hardliner David Asher who sought to extend the confrontation with the North to its perceived illicit activities. The assets which were subsequently frozen played a key part in unraveling the September 19th 2005 declaration, and created an impasse which led to the North's first Nuclear test in October 2006. The current situation with North Korea is a state of limbo. The North has now tested a second nuclear device, restarted missile tests, and has threatened to weaponize its remaining plutonium. North and South tensions between the Koreas are also tense. Chinoy also explores the complex dynamics of North Korean politics, which although unequivocally autocratic, nonetheless has certain constituencies that need to be appeased. The most important, and also the most troublesome, is the military. The military may view rapproachement with the United States as an existential threat, as it would erode the viability of the costly Songun "Military First" policy. Kim Jong Il requires the military's support for the anointment of his youngest son, Kim Jong Un, as heir apparent, and the 2009 nuclear test may have had more to do with the appeasement of this faction than anything else. However, no one, not even a veteran Korea hand like Chinoy, can be certain of the workings of the Hermit Kingdom. Meltdown is not only an absolute must read for those interested in North Korea, it is valuable reading for anyone with an interest or stake in the workings of diplomacy. The very process of diplomacy is laid out from top to bottom, and as a Post Graduate who did his Masters on Diplomacy, one can confirm that this book contains the academic relevance of anything that could be found as

course material on a post graduate degree. Meltdown is an intricate, intriguing, informative, and utterly explosive examination of the workings of international relations. Essential reading for Korea enthusiasts, diplomacy enthusiasts, or anyone with a passing interest in world politics.

If you've ever wanted to know how the Bush administration managed to miss the biggest foreign policy threat of our times (North Korea going nuclear) by incompetent infighting and preoccupation with an unnecessary crisis (invading the wrong country), Mike Chinoy lays it out in great detail for you. Profoundly researched and well presented material, very readable prose. Given the severity of the subject matter I wouldn't call this book "a joy to read", but Mike does grab and keep your attention.Very well painted pictures of the main characters, most of whom are still in very responsible positions today. Highly recommend.

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