

8-6-1999

# Trends. North Korea and the Taepodong 2: When Good Intentions Have Bad Consequences

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## Recommended Citation

Editor (1999) "Trends. North Korea and the Taepodong 2: When Good Intentions Have Bad Consequences," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 5 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol7/iss5/5>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Trends. North Korea and the Taepodong 2: When Good Intentions Have Bad Consequences

Author: Editor

Volume: 7

Issue: 5

Date: 1999-08-06

Keywords: Conditioning, International Relations, North Korea

The United States (US) and some of its allies continue to assert that their foreign policy towards North Korea (NK) is one of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment and omission training. Or more simply the carrot and the stick. This policy can best be described through two options.

Option 1. If the NK government minimizes or stops nuclear weapons development, proliferation of the technology and/or components of weapons of mass destruction, various weapons testing activities, and other behaviors perceived as undesirable by the US and its allies, then the NK government will experience consequences that it will perceive as positive and that will increase the probability that further minimization and stopping of undesired behavior (from the perspective of the US and its allies) will occur. These positive consequences will either be given or applied to NK (positive reinforcement) or be constituted by the taking away of conditions that are perceived by NK to be negative (negative reinforcement.)

Option 2. If the NK government continues with behavior undesired by the US and its allies, then NK will experience consequences that it will perceive as negative and that will also increase the probability that minimization and stopping of undesired behavior (from the perspective of the US and its allies) will occur. These negative consequences will either be given or applied to NK (punishment) or be constituted by the taking away of conditions that are perceived by NK to be positive (omission training.)

Unfortunately, these options do not seem to be effective--a failure best attributed not to misunderstanding but to application. A behavior analyst can strongly argue from the NK perspective that positive and negative reinforcement occur after and are elicited by NK behavior that is undesired--not desired--by the US and the latter's allies. For example the reinforcements are perceived by the NK to occur after a crisis has been engendered not resolved. Again from the NK perspective, punishment and omission training occur after and is elicited by behavior that concurrently (or nearly so) is followed by positive and negative reinforcement greater in consequence than the punishment and omission training in question. For example, it often is more reinforcing to the NK for it to continue with behavior undesired by the US and its allies--regardless of what the US and its allies can offer.

A behavior analyst can strongly argue that the conditioning reality from the perspective of the US and its allies is quite different from that of the NK. This should come as no surprise to philosophers of science. The biggest problem confronting a behaviorist conditioning approach has long been the contention that a so-called mind--e.g., intrapsychic phenomena--is either nonexistent or irrelevant to effective conditioning (the occasional theoretical synthesis of mind and behavior to the contrary.) Meanwhile the testing of the Taepodong 2 and other NK behaviors undesired by the US and its allies--and some of their adversaries and neutrals as well--grow ever closer. Is not a meeting of the minds in order? (See Bandura, A. (1996). Ontological and epistemological terrains revisited. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 27, 323-345; Foxall, G.R. (1998). Radical behaviorist interpretation: Generating and evaluating an account of consumer behavior. *Behavior Analyst*, 21, 321-354; Garcia, J. (1996). The Darwinian status of mind. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 27, 347-350; North Korea's dangerous missiles. (August 5, 1999). *the New York Times*, p. A22; Place, U.T. (1997). Linguistic

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