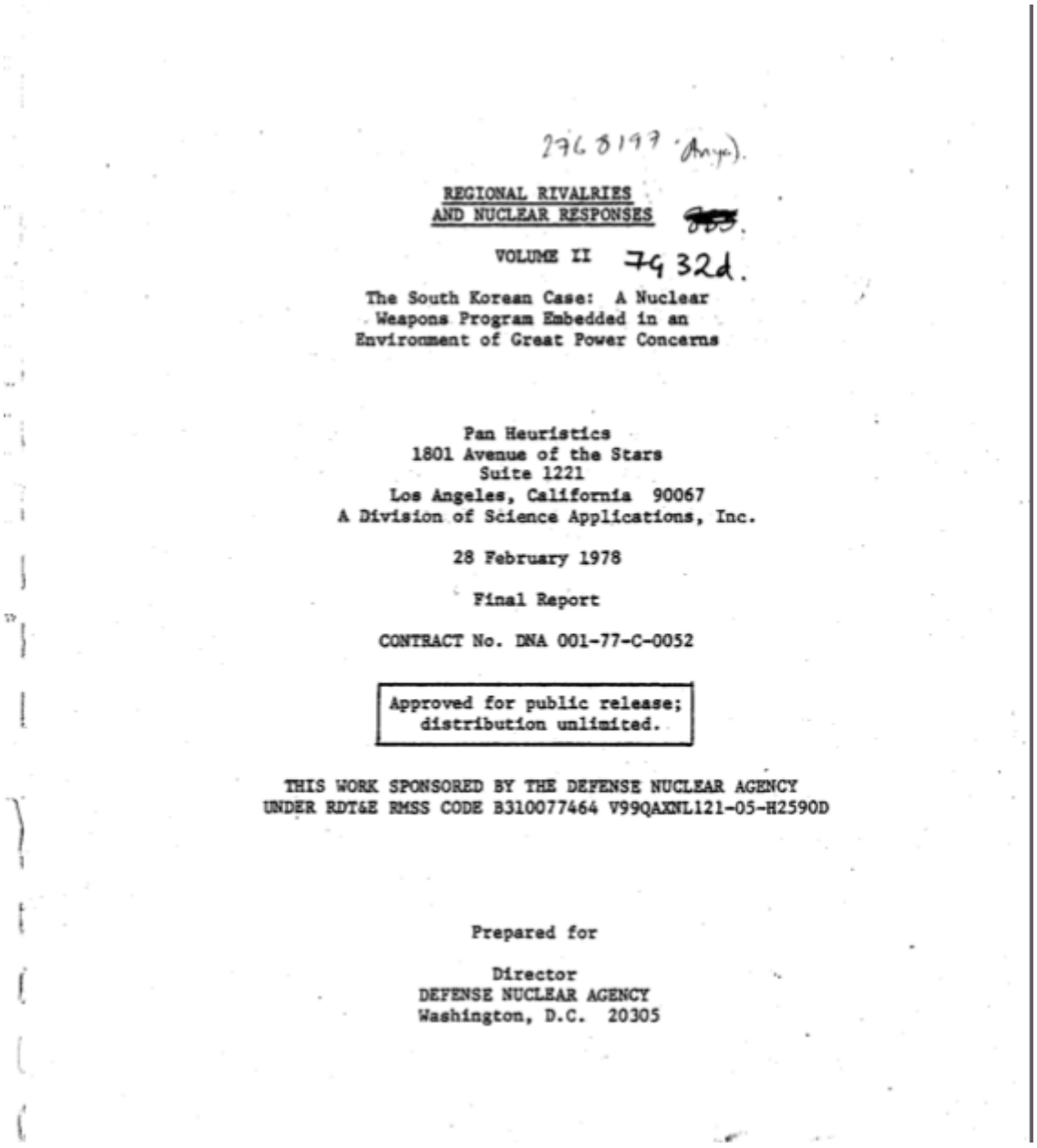
Regional Rivalries and Nuclear Responses: The South Korean Case (Vol. II)



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REGIONAL RIVALRIES
AND NUCLEAR RESPONSES

VOLUME II 79 32d.

The South Korean Case: A Nuclear
Weapons Program Embedded in an
Environment of Great Power Concerns

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28 February 1978

Final Report

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Nuclear weapons have long played an important role in the regional stability of Northeast Asia, influencing the security policies of states in the area. During the Cold War, South Korea gave various indications entertaining the acquisition of nuclear weapons in response to security challeneges posed by North Korea, Communist China, and the Soviet Union. Despite the aegis of U.S. military protection under the 1953 Mutual Defence Treaty, ROK security concerns were compounded in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter's proposed plan to withdraw all American troops from South Korea. More recently, in the face of a nuclear-armed North Korea, an expansionist Chinese military presence in the Pacific, as well as Iran's supected nuclear weapons program, the issue of further nuclear proliferation by non-nuclear states in response to local domestic-security concerns remains a salient topic of discussion for U.S. policymakers on how to address regional tensions which could incetivize states to possess nuclear arms.

The second volume of Bryan Jack's 1978 report explores the possible impact and role of nuclear weapons being acquired by new nuclear powers; specifically within the regional context of Northeast Asia, i.e., Korea-Japan-PRC. Jack identifies possible incentives for states acquiring and, possibly, using nuclear weapons, their potential political and security implications within the region and beyond, as well as examines the particular circumstances confronting each country in their calculus for possessing such arms.

Jack writes:

"Probably the most important factor in causing countries within the region to move toward and possibly to acquire nuclear weapons is the lowered confidence in outside guarantees and the weakening of their alliance ties. This is most obviously true of the ROK. The announced withdrawal of U.S. troops and the consequent perceived weakening of the U.S.-ROK defense agreement have been viewed as a destabilizing by the Koreans." [page II-5]

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