



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND  
COMPARISONS IN NORTHEAST ASIA



# CHINA AND NORTH KOREA

STRATEGIC AND POLICY PERSPECTIVES  
FROM A CHANGING CHINA



EDITED BY  
**CARLA P. FREEMAN**



# CHINA AND NORTH KOREA

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COMPARISONS IN NORTHEAST ASIA

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This series strives to show the big picture of regional transformation. It crosses disciplinary lines and points to linkages between comparisons of countries and their bilateral or multilateral relations. Above all, it seeks to fill gaps in understanding ongoing changes in Northeast Asia.

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# CHINA AND NORTH KOREA

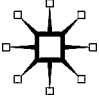
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Strategic and Policy Perspectives  
from a Changing China

*Edited by*

*Carla P. Freeman*

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*For my students*

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**Map 0.1** China and North Korea in Northeast Asia

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## FOREWORD

The US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) is pleased to support this important volume. North Korea poses a major threat to the stability and security of Northeast Asia, an area of vital interest to the United States. How to deal with North Korea, especially given Pyongyang's determined pursuit of nuclear weapons, has baffled American administrations for more than a quarter century. We have gone from expecting (hoping) that North Korea's imminent collapse will end the problem—an event that has obviously not occurred—to expecting that China will discover a self-interest in doing whatever might be required to moderate the North Korean threat to regional stability. That also has clearly not occurred, at least not yet.

But developing a nuanced, informed appraisal of how China sees its interests in North Korea is obviously critical to American policy. The formulation and implementation of North Korea policy have become much more complicated for China in recent years. This edited volume illuminates the discussion and debate about North Korea within an evolving Chinese foreign policy establishment. As such, it is an important contribution to policy coordination efforts between China and the United States.

AMBASSADOR STEPHEN W. BOSWORTH  
Chairman, US-Korea Institute at SAIS

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## Introduction: Continuity and Change in Chinese Expert Views of North Korea

*Carla P. Freeman*

Rising concerns about the threats North Korea poses to international security have made Beijing's relations with Pyongyang an increasingly important focal point for the international community, which has high hopes that Chinese influence will bring an end to Pyongyang's provocations and pursuit of nuclear weapons. As Pyongyang has continued to conduct international affairs in ways that, more often than not, defy Beijing's expectations and preferences, there is evidence that the Chinese leadership has been engaged in a "rethink" on its policy toward its intractable ally.<sup>1</sup> While it is not yet clear to what extent or how Chinese policy toward North Korea could be reoriented, the community of Chinese academics and other experts weighing in on North Korea's behavior and the China-North Korea relationship has been growing. Many of these experts and their perspectives are not well known outside China. While there are more non-Chinese analysts who regularly read Chinese writings on international affairs than ever before, this group is still too small to adequately circulate Chinese experts' views into the wider international dialogue on North Korean security. At a time when a better understanding of what China's North Korea watchers think could be especially helpful to insights into the thinking and the debates underlying Chinese policy, this book's 15 chapters present an introduction to an English language readership to some of their views. In addition to illustrating the plurality of perspectives advanced by Chinese experts on North Korea and an international relationship that is China's closest as well as its most difficult, the volume's contributions should also be seen as windows on the contours of China's particular political and intellectual environment.

Indeed, behind the familiar "lips and teeth" trope used to characterize Chinese ties to North Korea lies the reality of a relationship between two neighbors that has never been easy. In 1950, China found itself going to war across the Yalu—less than a year after its own communist government had established control over the Chinese mainland. Yet, even a shared history of fighting—first the Japanese and then American-led forces—side-by-side could not prevent violent

clashes from erupting between the two neighbors. In 1958, Mao Zedong withdrew the last Chinese troops from North Korea amid a disagreement with Kim Il-sung over Kim's violent purge of challengers to his political control (including leading figures from the "Yan'an faction" who had close ties to China), as well as his Juche ideological vision of self-reliance. Even after China and North Korea signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance in 1961, as tensions rose between Beijing and Moscow, Kim Il-sung's unwillingness to take Mao's side over Khrushchev's gave rise to new frictions between China and North Korea. By the late 1960s, these had erupted into military skirmishes over a border disputed by the two countries in the Mount Baektu (Changbaishan) region. After the rift between China and the Soviet Union became the Sino-Soviet split, Pyongyang preserved relationships with both Beijing and Moscow, successfully playing off its estranged patrons to extract material benefits from both.

Developments of the past two decades, including the end of the Cold War, China's recognition of the Republic of Korea, and the death of Kim Il-sung and subsequent succession of his son, Kim Jong-il, have continued to test China's relationship with North Korea. These developments have unfolded, moreover, amid a widening political and economic divide between China and North Korea. Beijing's reform and opening policies have integrated China into the world economy as an economic powerhouse, while Pyongyang has held fast to its military first policy and efforts at economic autarky. More recent actions by North Korea, including its succession of nuclear tests, the Cheonan incident, and a second father-to-son succession in 2012 by Kim Jong-un to the North Korean leadership, have only further complicated and challenged the resilience of Beijing's loyalty to Pyongyang. In addition, China's expanding international influence and the international community's attendant expectations that it will exercise greater global leadership means that its relationship to North Korea, and the role it plays in ending Pyongyang's nuclear program, have implications for its international prestige.

Yet, despite the historical challenges posed by Pyongyang, Chinese authorities have carefully managed discourse in China about North Korea, treating Beijing's North Korea policy as sacrosanct. Only in the last several years has the Chinese government permitted its citizens to express in the media and blogosphere something other than "sealed in blood" solidarity with North Korea. Netizens have vented frustration and anger toward many North Korean actions. Pyongyang's nuclear tests, seen as irresponsible and threatening to the health of Chinese citizens, and the abduction and mistreatment by the North Korean navy of Chinese fishermen have drawn particular ire from the Chinese public. Online criticism of North Korea by Chinese citizens has also extended to the Chinese government, with some netizens characterizing Beijing's response to Pyongyang's provocations as weak and ineffectual in the face of the defiant and risky behavior of a junior actor in the region.<sup>2</sup>

The rise in academic writing in China on North Korea and China's North Korea policy has paralleled the growing commentary from the general public. However, China's elite observers appear to have to tread more carefully

in expressing what authorities could consider politically tendentious views. In 2004, after the widely read journal *Strategy and Management* (*Zhanlue yu Guanli*) published an article arguing that China's national interests might not align with those of North Korea, it was shut down.<sup>3</sup> Nearly a decade later, the deputy editor of *Study Times* (*Xueshi Shibao*), Deng Yuwen, published an editorial in the *Financial Times* advocating that China "should consider abandoning North Korea." Deng argued that Beijing should focus its efforts on reunification on the peninsula, which "would help undermine the strategic alliance between Washington, Tokyo and Seoul; ease the geopolitical pressure on China from northeast Asia; and be helpful to the resolution of the Taiwan question."<sup>4</sup> The editorial cost Deng his job.<sup>5</sup> If these examples illustrate that North Korea remains a sensitive topic in China, however, a relative surge in new writing by Chinese scholars from a range of disciplines and perspectives also indicates that the door has opened wide enough to allow for the expression of far more varied elite opinions. From very few publications on North Korean topics in academic journals, in the past five years, articles on North Korea and on Beijing's bilateral and security relationship with Pyongyang have seen double-digit percentage increases across a broad spectrum of China-based academic publications.<sup>6</sup>

One likely factor in the rise in the quantity of published analysis by Chinese experts on North Korean issues relates to a point introduced above. The increased tolerance of Chinese authorities toward public commentary on North Korea's behavior parallels an evident shift in Beijing's approach to managing its relationship with Pyongyang following North Korea's 2009 nuclear test. For much of the China-North Korea relationship, Beijing conducted its bilateral interactions with Pyongyang largely through exchanges of senior military officials and party-to-party ties. The latter are managed on the Chinese side by the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or *Zhonglianbu*. In addition to Wang Jiarui, director of the *Zhonglianbu*, top Chinese officials involved in the Sino-North Korean relationship even on the state side of China's government structure, such as former state councilor Dai Bingguo,<sup>7</sup> and Chinese ambassador to Pyongyang Liu Hongcai, had considerable experience within the ranks of the *Zhonglianbu*.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning in 2009, however, Beijing's interactions with Pyongyang also began to involve a growing number of actors from the government or state side of China's political system, with China conducting its relations with North Korea through more "normal" diplomatic channels. Months after Pyongyang conducted its second nuclear test, for example, former premier Wen Jiabao traveled to Pyongyang, marking the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic ties between China and North Korea—the first visit by a Chinese premier to North Korea since Li Peng traveled there in 1991. (Among the objectives of Wen's visit was securing North Korea's promise to return to the Six-party talks.) Beijing's stepped-up efforts to get Pyongyang back to the Six-party talks following Pyongyang's third nuclear test in 2013 have made MOFA's special representative for Korean peninsula affairs Wu Dawei a key point of contact between Pyongyang and Beijing. Wu is a career diplomat and former ambassador to South Korea and Japan, as well as the former

chair of the Six-party talks.<sup>9</sup> China's MOFA has also been involved in arranging visits by North Korean officials to Beijing, such as the visit of senior North Korean officials to Beijing for a MOFA-organized public event.<sup>10</sup> The implementation of measures required by the passage of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2094 in response to North Korea's 2013 nuclear test, moreover, has necessitated the involvement of a broader swath of Chinese state ministries and bureaus, including the Ministries of Transportation and Public Security, Customs Administration, and People's Bank of China. Export controls require actions by China's Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, General Administration of Customs, and Atomic Energy Authority.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while party-to-party ties remain a key dimension of the China–North Korean relationship, as China's reputational as well as international security stakes have risen, especially in resolving the nuclear issue, the number of state actors involved in its engagement with North Korea has also grown.

Both the nuclear issue itself and the broadening of the number of policy actors within the Chinese political system involved in managing the North Korea relationship may be factors in the expansion of scholarship on North Korea-related policy topics in China in recent years. As China's global interests have enlarged, as scholar Ren Xiao has described, "There has been a rising demand from government for information, knowledge, and analysis."<sup>12</sup> Concomitantly, the academic community has been encouraged by China's government to contribute to this demand. While an adequate discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this essay, in the foreign policy arena, as Ren and others point out,<sup>13</sup> almost every university and relevant research institution has sought to contribute to the foreign policy process in various ways. They may provide policy briefs, targeting those policy makers within the Chinese policy apparatus with influence; participate in MOFA's foreign policy advisory committee and government-commissioned foreign policy studies; engage in "public diplomacy" efforts; consult on specific issues, such as responses to crises with government officials; and also take part in the Central Conference Relating to Work on Foreign Affairs, chaired over by China's president.

Determining which specific research institutes and scholars have more or less influence on particular issues within China's intransparent policy process is virtually impossible. The advisory role of experts in the think tanks directly affiliated with government agencies—such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the State Council, the China Institute for International Studies (CIIS), which provides research and analysis to MOFA, and the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), which serves the Ministry of State Security—is well known. However, weighing the impact of analysis from experts based in many other research institutions or universities is more difficult. What is clear is that Chinese authorities solicit advice from a broad array of experts. They may consult researchers based in major universities and think tanks, but they also seek the views of scholars in research institutes located in provinces with international borders, when the neighboring country is the policy focus. Researchers in border provinces often have a unique depth

of expertise on the countries with which their provinces routinely interact. In the case of North Korea, those based in universities and research institutes in provinces along the North Korea border, have a perspective on the bilateral relationship that generally takes into account local provincial interests and may even reflect a shared identity born of an interconnected history, common ethnic Korean identity, or views informed by frequent interactions with North Korean counterparts. This is an outlook on North Korea and the China-North Korean relationship that is a far cry from the high-level security concerns that preoccupy some scholars in Beijing. As will be described in greater detail below, the contributors to this volume represent not only academic institutions and think tanks in Beijing—including CASS and CIIS—but also universities and think tanks in provinces bordering on North Korea.<sup>14</sup>

After North Korea's third nuclear test in 2013, debate among Chinese scholars over China's relations with North Korea noticeably intensified. While the question of how the internal policy debate was framed is unclear, within the expert community, the two sides of the debate included advocates of a significant reassessment by China of its relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), on one side; on the other side were those who argued that Beijing should preserve, and even strengthen, its alliance relationship with Pyongyang.<sup>15</sup> Observers have labeled the former as "traditionalists" and the latter as "revisionists," or "strategists," as Zhu Feng with Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga describe them in their chapter in this volume.<sup>16</sup> Jin Canrong, a top international relations scholar in China, not among the contributors to this book, but who writes particularly insightfully on the debate, argues that the emergence of what he refers to as "two factions" reflects a shift in Chinese policy. According to Jin, after North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006, China made a concerted effort to encourage North Korea to "normalize" its international relations. The hope, Jin argues, was that if North Korea became a "normal country," engaging with the international community politically and economically, it would both have a greater sense of security and, now no longer isolated, would assess its security options rationally. Jin contends that in the Chinese government's assessment, as a normal country, Pyongyang would abandon its nuclear program. China could then "erect a pan-Northeast Asia multilateral security framework, fundamentally improving its surrounding environment."<sup>17</sup>

In Jin's assessment, North Korea's decision to opt for provocation rather than normalcy placed China in an "increasingly embarrassing position." Beijing's recognition that its previous strategy was "too idealistic" led it to rethink its North Korea policies, providing the platform for a renewed round of elite debate between the "traditionalist" and "revisionist" factions. Jin observes that there are also notable "sub-factions" within the traditionalist faction. These include a group that continues to ascribe geopolitical value to China's relationship with North Korea as a buffer in particular; a second sub-faction that Jin terms the "historical sub-faction," which argues for sustaining current ties on the basis of historical friendship; and a third group that Jin labels the "'Yanbian' sub-faction," which includes officials and scholars with ethnic Korean backgrounds, many of whom are based in Northeast China, which, as he puts it, sees North Korea as a "close

sibling.”<sup>18</sup> Also among the traditionalist grouping is an ideological sub-faction that advocates sustaining traditional ties with Pyongyang on the basis of morality and ideology. It should be noted that not all experts who write on North Korea with backgrounds in Northeast China have “traditionalist” views. One frequent commentator on North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue in China’s Central Party School’s International Military and Strategic Department, Zhang Liangui, studied in North Korea and later worked at the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences in its Korean Research Office. Zhang has been an outspoken critic of North Korea and the challenges it presents for China’s interests. One of Zhang’s editorials in a *People’s Daily* English-language paper, *The Global Times*, was titled, “China living in denial of NK’s status as an ally.”<sup>19</sup> Others, like Zhang, who can be categorized as “revisionists” see North Korea as a strategic burden rather than an asset for China today, with China’s close ties harming rather than benefitting China’s image and security.<sup>20</sup> As noted, Deng Yuwen went so far as to call on Beijing to “abandon” its traditional ties to Pyongyang.<sup>21</sup>

The principal focus of the writings gathered in this volume is on China’s relationship, both contemporary and historical, to North Korea. There are also a number of chapters by specialists on North Korean politics, ideology, and economy that refer only obliquely to the China-North Korea relationship, but which I have included for reasons I will comment upon further below. Contributors to the book are all recognized within China as important voices on North Korea and/or Beijing’s relationship to Pyongyang. Few are well known outside China, with a number of contributors writing principally, if not exclusively, for a Chinese or Chinese and Korean-speaking audience. A number are based in Korean studies centers, rather than international relations (IR) departments, while others focus on particular issues, involving North Korea, China, and international affairs, within think tank institutes. The work of these experts has been the backbone of Chinese writing and analysis on North Korea and Beijing’s role, vis-à-vis Pyongyang on the peninsula. Chapters by a number of other contributors, however, reflect the notable emergence in China, in recent years, of high-profile international relations (IR) scholars writing on North Korea as an international security issue and as a security challenge for China.

Collectively, the writings presented in this volume reflect aspects of the debate as Jin and others have characterized it, expressing perspectives that fall loosely along the revisionist-traditionalist spectrum. It is striking that, despite these differences in outlook, for the most part, the book’s contributions—directly or indirectly—reflect optimism about prospects for peace on the peninsula. Of course, book lengths are limited and the process of compiling any edited volume is fraught with unexpected circumstances so, to my regret, there are perspectives, including those less sanguine, as well as prominent commentators from among the increasingly crowded field of Chinese scholars writing on North Korea, not represented in this volume. At the same time, the contributors are conscious that the chapters they have contributed will have an international readership; a number of the contributions are clearly aimed at communicating ideas and arguments to the international security community, including views critical of international policy.

The book is organized into three parts. The first part presents examples of new assessments on China's relationship to North Korea, focused on its implications for Chinese security; the second addresses historical factors shaping contemporary China-North Korean ties; and the third examines some of the key issues shaping China's engagement with North Korea—the nuclear issue, the Six-party framework, food aid, economic engagement, and ideological empathy.

The two contributions that open the volume are by internationally recognized IR superstars in China, Professors Shi Yinhong of Renmin University (Renda) and Zhu Feng, until recently, of Beijing University (Beida). Shi, who did his bachelor's and doctoral degrees at Nanjing University (Nanda), serves as director of the Center on American Studies at Renda. He has served as a counselor of the State Council of China since February 2011. Zhu did both his undergraduate studies and doctoral work at Beida, where he has been a professor in the university's School of International Studies and deputy director of the Center for International & Strategic Studies (CISS) for much of his career. Zhu is now executive director of the Collaborative Innovation Center for South China Sea Studies at Nanda. Both Shi and Zhu engage as regularly with the international media as they do with the Chinese press and are part of the global community of IR scholars for which China and Northeast Asia are areas of inquiry. Shi and Zhu examine China's relations with North Korea in the context of regional geopolitics and broader strategic interests, framing their analyses using the theoretical paradigms and language of IR. They write easily in English, drawing readily on English language materials. Both publish in international books and journals, with Zhu in particular a frequent collaborator on academic projects and books with western scholars—his contribution to this volume is co-authored by a US-based expert who is also his former student, Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga.

Both Shi and Zhu routinely weigh in on policy discussions with top Chinese officials on a range of foreign policy issues, including China's national interests vis-à-vis North Korea. In his chapter, Shi observes that Beijing's strategic interests where North Korea is concerned are not principally "acquisitive" in the sense of providing China with positive gains. Rather, they are "preventive," to prevent potential negative outcomes, including regime collapse, reflecting what Shi describes as a prevailing "defeatist" view in China that includes "accepting the *de facto* possession of nuclear arms by the Pyongyang regime." While Shi argues that this, therefore, means that there will be no "revolution" in China's policy toward North Korea, he also expects that the less accommodating stance that, in his view, has been adopted by President Xi Jinping toward North Korea will persist as the "new normal" in Sino-North Korean relations until progress is made toward key Chinese objectives, including denuclearization.

Zhu and Beauchamp-Mustafaga describe what they see as the "rising costs" to China of its current approach to North Korea. While they argue that the strategic rationale of North Korea as a buffer zone continues to drive China's security calculus in its policy toward North Korea, they list the many risks to Chinese interests arising from North Korea's actions. As of the time of writing, they argue, the bureaucratic inertia of China's foreign policy apparatus has stymied significant policy change. The centralization of foreign policy under Xi

Jinping, however, represents an opportunity for China to rethink its policy in a way that will allow for a more cost-benefit analysis of its relations with North Korea policy. This could result in a policy reframing in which China “dumps the unnecessary burden of a Kim-controlled North Korea,” enabling it to “project greater regional influence and shoulder its global responsibilities.”

The third chapter, written by Piao Jianyi and his PhD student, Ma Yuanpeng, examines China’s policy toward North Korea through a very different lens. The authors also argue, however, that China needs to rethink its policy toward North Korea. Piao is senior fellow and director at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, as well as assistant director-general at the National Institute of International Strategy at CASS. He completed his undergraduate work at Yanbian University and his master’s and doctorate from Moscow State University. He writes and publishes extensively in Korean and Russian, as well as in Chinese (the original chapter for this book was in Chinese), and is frequently quoted in international media reports on North Korea; however, little of his academic writing has been published in English. His contribution with Ma analyzes Korean peninsula affairs by applying on Marxist class analysis to the dynamic between the two Koreas, which they contend includes a conflict born of the fundamental “incompatibility of the proletariat in the DPRK and the big bourgeoisie (*da zibenjia*)” in the ROK. As an actor in this dynamic, North Korea’s behavior, the authors argue, should be seen as choices made by a rational actor, with South Korean policy toward North Korea reflecting the “politics of class and interest groups,” as expressed in the outcomes of elections. To oversimplify a subtle argument, Piao and Ma argue that, if the endgame of China’s policy is indeed, as is stated, peaceful reunification on the Korean peninsula, its policies should be aimed not only toward promoting “sustainable economic development” in North Korea, but also toward greater cooperation by South Korea with the North—an approach to relations across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that, they note, is associated with democratic rather than conservative party leadership in South Korea. They conclude by suggesting that Chinese policy toward the Korean peninsula would be more effective were Beijing to reassess its analysis of barriers to reunification; clarify China’s role in the reunification process; and increase reporting by Chinese media on North Korea, countering what they see as the South Korean media’s current dominance of this discourse.

A chapter by Yu Shaohua follows. Yu is the director of the Department of Asia-Pacific Security and Cooperation in the China Institute of International Studies. Like Piao, she is a graduate of Yanbian University. However, Yu writes as a practitioner as well as an observer—as do a number of other contributors to the volume. She has diplomatic experience, having served in the Chinese Embassy in Pyongyang for a number of tours. Yu’s chapter reflects a point of view that is at once sympathetic to North Korea’s security concerns yet is also unequivocal in the assessment that North Korea bears responsibility for imposing negative costs on both China and regional stability for “not playing by the rules.” Her “traditionalist” bent is reflected in her prescription for improved regional security, however, which begins with a paradigm shift, not by China, but by the international community to seeing North Korea as a potentially constructive actor in regional security. Yu argues

that North Korea has in fact undertaken a number of policy steps conducive to improved cooperation with the region. From this perspective, she contends, dialogue and negotiation are possible means to effect “fundamental changes to the structure of the region and establish a new post-Cold War balance.”

The perspective in the final chapter of Part I by Cold War historians Shen Zhihua and Yafeng Xia falls on the far end of the revisionist spectrum. Shen is a professor of history and director of the Center for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University in Shanghai. Xia is an American-trained scholar who is a professor of history at Long Island University in New York and a guest professor at East China Normal University’s Center for Cold War International History Studies. The joint research of Shen and Xia, including for this chapter, draws heavily on archival materials and writings in Russian, Korean and English, as well as Chinese. In their contribution to this book, they challenge what they term the “historical myths” that underlie Beijing’s rationale for its commitment to North Korea and call boldly for Beijing to undertake a policy rethink. They contend that the “veil” obscuring the reality of China’s relationship with North Korea is due to “the scarcity of serious Chinese academic studies based on historical facts.” Absent a challenge to the traditional narrative that North Korea is a “fraternal state,” Beijing persists in policies that serve to “prop up” a regime that “endanger[s] China’s security interests and international prestige.” They propose an alternate narrative and, hearkening to those who, like Deng Yuwen, argue for a sweeping reassessment by Beijing of its policy toward Pyongyang, they contend that China should do nothing less than “cooperate with Washington, withdraw its material and political support to Kim Il-sung, and prepare for the eventual meltdown of the DPRK.”

Following this challenge by Shen and Xia to historical narratives, the book’s second part presents chapters by three scholars on the historical roots of China’s special relationship with North Korea that do not have an explicit policy focus. The part begins with a chapter by Jin Jingyi, a professor of international politics within the Department of Korean Studies and deputy director of the Korean Peninsula Research Center at Beijing University. Professor Jin also did his undergraduate work at Yanbian University and received his PhD in international relations from Beida. Jin’s chapter, which was originally written in Chinese, describes the closely intertwined relationship between the development of the Korean independence movement and the broader anti-Japanese struggle within China. Korean communists fought with the Northeast Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces in Northeast China, forging close relationships with members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the region. At the same time, the Korean Independence League and Korean Volunteer Army, based in Yan’an, also fought and engaged in political work alongside Chinese communists there, including studying Mao’s writings. Meanwhile, after a failed struggle against the Japanese colonial government on the Korean peninsula, Syngman Rhee and his supporters established a provisional government in exile in Shanghai, then part of Kuomintang (Nationalist) territory. Jin shows how these early political links shaped what became the political North-South divide on the Korean peninsula in the postwar period and underlie the enduring ties between China and North Korea.

Jin's contribution is followed by chapters by Cheng Xiaohe and Quan Hexiu. Cheng received his bachelor's degree from Fudan University in Shanghai and his doctorate from Boston University in the United States. He is currently an associate professor of international studies at Renda, but his professional background includes some time working for CIIS. Cheng analyzes the vicissitudes of the China-North Korean relationship in the 1960s. As he observes, although the chill in Sino-North Korean relations that worsened late in the decade was mild relative to the Sino-Soviet break, it was nonetheless dramatic given the "lips and teeth" relationship that had characterized the two countries' ties. He describes how Pyongyang navigated the difficult terrain of its position between the Soviet Union and China to its advantage, winning both countries' respect and support to what would be its material benefit. Notably, as do a number of other contributors, Cheng uses the term "Korean War" in his analysis, rather than the once official term, "War to Resist America and Aid Korea"—a semantic shift made by Vice President Li Yuanchao during his official visit to Pyongyang in 2013.<sup>22</sup>

Quan, a professor at Liaoning University writes extensively on Chinese diplomatic history; western readers may know his work on Qing diplomatic history.<sup>23</sup> Quan focuses in his chapter on the historical legacies shaping the interactions between China and the Korean peninsula today. Quan argues that these legacies, cemented by the Cold War, are best understood as an interaction among four regimes comprising Beijing, Taipei, Pyongyang and Seoul. With Cold War tensions in the past, however, he argues, "traditional ideological, social and political limitations" lie in the past. Quan suggest that it is time to pursue "the practical benefits of good bilateral relations" between China and both governments on the peninsula.

The book's third and final part consists of chapters by experts on various aspects of Beijing's current relationship with Pyongyang and North Korea, including its nuclear program, the Six-party talks, Chinese food aid to North Korea, the North Korean economy and China's role therein, North Korea's ideology, and the succession process from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un. Contributors to this part include Gu Guoliang, who, like number of other experts featured in this volume, worked as a diplomat before engaging in research (Gu served in the Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s). After leaving diplomatic service, Gu founded the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Studies in CASS' Institute of American Studies, which he continues to direct. He received his BA in English from Shanghai International Studies University and his MA from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Gu argues in his chapter for this book that the relatively advanced state of North Korea's development of nuclear capabilities has made persuading Pyongyang to relinquish its nuclear program more difficult than ever. In addition, he points to the Libyan experience of denuclearization to regime collapse as a cautionary tale for the North Korean regime. In Gu's view, the key to making progress on denuclearization with North Korea must begin with unilateral changes by the United States and North Korea. The United States must adjust its policy so that North Korea feels secure enough to give up its nuclear program, while North Korea needs to move toward an open-door economic policy and prepare to abide by international norms.

In contrast, Yang Xiyu, a senior fellow at CIIS, who participated in the Six-party talks and drafted the “9.19 Joint Statement,” sees a multilateral approach as critical to denuclearization on the peninsula, focused, not surprisingly, on the Six-party talks process. Yang also argues, however, that changes at the bilateral level remain vital. For Yang, what this means is that Washington must make its long-term objective the normalization of relations with Pyongyang. Beijing for its part must move beyond a “Cold War mentality” on peninsula issues—a perspective, Yang argues, that reduces North Korea to a “strategic protective screen” against the US-ROK military alliance. As Washington and Beijing begin to treat North Korea as a country with which they can engage on normal terms, the other parties in the Six-party process should work together to design an “opportunity cost” structure that will incentivize North Korea to abandon its nuclear programs in the interest of peace and prosperity.

Chapters by Li Nan and Lin Jinsu follow. Li, a researcher at CASS in Beijing who received his BA, MA and PhD from Renmin University, is a foreign policy specialist who focuses on China’s relations with both North and South Korea, regularly conducting research in both countries. Li focuses on the topic of food aid to North Korea. This is a sensitive topic, an aspect of the China-North Korea relationship that, as Li notes, remains difficult to accurately measure based on such official data as is released. Li emphasizes an aspect of China’s relations with North Korea that only Shi Yin hong, among other contributors, explicitly touches upon—the emotional ties China has to its neighbor. As Li puts it, the ability to invoke emotion with reference to the two countries’ shared history “serves to counter those voices within China that argue for a harder line approach by Beijing to Pyongyang, which would include ending or reducing aid.” His chapter implies that China’s continued policy of support is self-defeating, as it effectively inhibits the development by North Korea of a productive domestic agricultural system, which “endangers the regime in the long term.”

Lin Jinsu, a researcher who spent many years conducting detailed research on the North Korean economy while based in Yanbian, provides a detailed look at the development of the North Korean economy over the past few years. Lin paints a picture of a North Korea whose economic policies and goals have become ever more incompatible with its security policies, and argues that this has been a key impetus to the recent growth of China-North Korean economic ties and their relative importance to the North Korean economy. However, she also suggests that China’s economic engagement with North Korea is supportive of broader international trade and economic cooperation by that country, with North Korea already seeing an expanding role in its economy for market forces. The implication, Lin argues, is that the international community should facilitate further development of a market economy and economic opening by North Korea; however, Lin is silent on what it would take to do this.

The volume concludes with chapters that, if less explicitly focused on the Sino-North Korean bilateral relationship, offer striking illustrations of the close ties and the deep-seated empathy toward Pyongyang on the part of some of China’s specialists on North Korea. Li Yongchun, also a research fellow at CASS, received his MA and PhD in history from Beida. In his contribution

to this volume, he writes on North Korean ideology, providing details on the source, rationale, and conceptual components of both *Juche* (self-reliance) and the *Songun* (military first) policy. Li concludes his discussion by observing that ideological barriers are fundamental to the perceptual gap between the United States and North Korea, which in turn reinforces US containment policy toward the North and undergirds North Korea's military first thinking. However, he suggests that the country's new emphasis on economic development under Kim Jong-un could be conducive to economic opening by North Korea, presenting a potential opportunity for greater North Korean engagement in the international community—a key step toward improved regional security.

The book's final chapter is by Jin Zhe, secretary-general of the Korean Peninsula Research Center at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences. Jin, who completed his PhD at Yanbian University, demonstrates in his contribution the commitment to close Sino-North Korean ties favored by the Yanbian sub-faction identified by Jin Canrong. Making the case for North Korea's "uniqueness," Jin Zhe argues against the characterization of the North Korean succession process as hereditary, positing that the North Korean people's trust in Kim Jong-un's leadership was formed long before he was designated a successor. Moreover, Jin contends, this trust, transcending generations, is eternal. Other qualities unique to Kim Jong-un render him worthy of transcendent and eternal faith, which is the source of his legitimacy as a successor to Kim Jong-il. Notably, Jin concludes with a reflection on North Korea's political system set into international context. The regime, he writes, is a "product of history." He contends that it will require "time and process to adapt to democratic politics," needing "patience and help from international society." Thus, Jin asserts, "we should make rational choices between isolation and sanctions and guidance and cooperation."

At the time of writing, as 2014 nears its close, North Korea remains an unpredictable threat to peace and security in Northeast Asia. Relations between China and North Korea continue to be strained. Kim Jong-un has yet to travel to Beijing—although he has received an invitation to travel to Moscow, which it is unclear he will accept. The execution late last year of Jang Sung-taek—known as a champion of deeper China-North Korean ties and economic reform—has cast a pall on hopes in Beijing that Pyongyang would adopt Chinese-style economic opening. Criticism of China in the official North Korean media has been vociferous for some months. In addition to lambasting China for condemning Pyongyang's missile launches, Xi Jinping was ridiculed for his visit to Seoul—a notable snub to Pyongyang.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, as a number of contributors to this volume observe, Beijing's evident disaffection with Pyongyang has not resulted in changes to its 1961 security commitment to North Korea; China continues to account for the overwhelming bulk of North Korea's trade. Nor has it been matched by any diminution of its disagreement with the fundamentally confrontational US approach to the regime. In addition, while private disparagement of North Korea in Chinese foreign policy circles has not abated, written Chinese commentary on Korean affairs has reverted to relative constraint. In a period in China in which there has been a palpable tightening of limits to political expression across the board, writing from a unique perspective on and appreciation of

the regime across the border, China's North Korea watchers appear acutely conscious that what they articulate on North Korean issues risks drawing awkward, even provocative, reactions from Pyongyang.

## NOTES

1. See Andrew Scobell and Mark Cozad, "China's North Korea Policy: Rethink or Recharge?" *Parameters* 44 (2014), [http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/Parameters/issues/Spring\\_2014/5\\_ScobellCozad.pdf](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/Parameters/issues/Spring_2014/5_ScobellCozad.pdf).
2. See, for example, Keith B. Richburg, "Kidnapped Fishermen's Case Angers Chinese Public," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kidnapped-fishermens-case-raise-chinese-publics-ire/2012/05/23/gJQAJrDWkU\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kidnapped-fishermens-case-raise-chinese-publics-ire/2012/05/23/gJQAJrDWkU_story.html); Qiang Zhang, "Netizens Angered by North Korean Detention of Fishermen," May 22, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-18157460>.
3. Wang Zhongwen, "Yi Xinde Jiaodu Miqi Guanhu Chaoxian Wenti yu Dongbeiya Xingshu," *Zhanlue yu Guanli* 4 (2004), 92–94.
4. Deng Yuwen, "China Should Abandon North Korea," *Financial Times*, February 27, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9e2f68b2-7c5c-11e2-99f0-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3JG07ouuo>.
5. It should be noted, as do Zhu Feng and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga in their contribution to this volume, that Deng was not the only academic who aired this perspective—Shen Dingli at Fudan was among others who did so as well. Zhu and Mustafaga take the view, also shared by other observers, that Deng was punished for publishing about an area outside of his expertise, not for the views he expressed.
6. A search of the popular CNKI database shows an approximately 10 percent jump in publications on North Korea (2,089 articles) and a nearly 40 percent jump in journal articles on China-North Korea ("zhong-chao") from 2008 to 2009 (to 2,562 articles; only 127 of these are specifically on Sino-North Korean relations or "zhong-chao guanxi," but that represents a 45 percent jump in writings included in the CNKI database on that topic (from 2008). Double-digit growth in publications on both topics are sustained through 2010, but then the number of articles drops off sharply, then jumping an average 23 percent in 2012 from 2011. Events in 2011 included the death of Kim Jong-il and the succession of Kim Jong-un.
7. As State Councilor, Dai played a key role in China's relations with North Korea, traveling to Pyongyang in the wake of the Yeongpyong Island shelling in 2010. It should be noted that he also served as a special envoy to North Korea when he was deputy foreign minister.
8. See similar points in Bates Gill, "China's North Korea Policy: Assessing Interests and Influences," *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 83 (2011), [http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/China's\\_North\\_Korea\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/China's_North_Korea_Policy.pdf). Liu Hongcai was a deputy director in the *Zhonglianbu*.
9. Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," Center for Strategic and International Studies and US Institute of Peace, January 3, 2008, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Jan2008.pdf>.

10. Jane Perlez, "China Ban on Items for Nuclear Use to North Korea May Stall Arms Bid," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/30/world/asia/china-ban-on-items-for-nuclear-use-to-north-korea-may-stall-arms-bid.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.
11. Hochul Lee, "Rising China and the Evolution of China-North Korea Relations," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 12 (2014), 99–111.
12. See Ren Xiao, "Academic Input and China's Foreign Policy Making," University of Southern California US-China Institute, September 11, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEocxj5Brow>.
13. Along with Ren, "Academic Input and China's Foreign Policy Making," see Bonnie Glaser, "Chinese Foreign Policy Research Institutes and the Practice of Influence," in Gilbert Rozman (ed.), *China's Foreign Policy: Who Makes It, and How Is It Made?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).
14. In addition to Ren, "Academic Input and China's Foreign Policy Making," see discussion in Pascal Abb, "China's Foreign Policy Think Tanks: Changing Roles and Structural Conditions," *GIGA Working Papers* 2013, [http://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/wp213\\_abb.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/wp213_abb.pdf).
15. Discussion of this debate in an International Crisis Group report noted that the "strategists" became the dominant voices in the Chinese media after North Korea's withdrawal from the Six-party talks and again after the second nuclear test of May 2009. See "Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea," *Crisis Group Asia Report* 179 (2009), [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/files/asia/north-east-asia/179\\_shades\\_of\\_red\\_chinas\\_debate\\_over\\_north\\_korea.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/files/asia/north-east-asia/179_shades_of_red_chinas_debate_over_north_korea.pdf).
16. In their chapter in this volume, Zhu Feng and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga use the categories "Nationalists, Realists, Internationalists, and Liberalists."
17. Alain Guidetti (ed.), "World Views: Negotiating the North Korean Nuclear Issue," *GCSP Geneva Papers—Research Series* 12 (2013), 19.
18. Guidetti, "World Views," 21.
19. Zhang Liangui, "China Living in Denial of NK's Status as an Ally," *The Global Times*, February 24, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/763728.shtml>.
20. Guidetti, "World Views," 19–23.
21. Deng Yuwen wrote, "North Korea's third nuclear test is a good moment for China to re-evaluate its longstanding alliance with the Kim dynasty. For several reasons, Beijing should give up on Pyongyang and press for the reunification of the Korean peninsula."
22. On Li's visit, see Scobell and Cozad, "China's North Korea Policy," 52.
23. Quan Hexiu, "The Two Systems of Diplomacy of Late Qing China: External Relationship, Modernization and Transitional Phase," *Journal of Northeast Asian History* 5 (2008), 21–44.
24. Nicholas Eberstadt, "Dependencia, North Korea Style," *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies Issue Briefs*, November 6, 2014, <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/dependencia-north-korea-style/>; Scott Snyder, "China Snubs North Korea with Leader's visit to South Korea," *The Guardian*, July 3, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/03/china-snubs-north-korea-with-leaders-visit-to-south-korea>.

PART I

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New Perspectives on China's Relations with  
North Korea and Regional Security

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## Painful Lessons, Reversing Practices, and Ongoing Limitations: China Facing North Korea since 2003

*Shi Yinhong*

Since 2002, the North Korean nuclear issue has remained extremely complex, preoccupying the major powers in Northeast Asia—the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, as well as China. Among the complicating factors are concerns about China's behavior, which has defied simple, stereotypical, and static explanations. Indeed, more than ten years after China's remarkable engagement in international efforts to try to denuclearize North Korea—efforts that played such a vital role in stabilizing the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia—almost no one within or outside China regards its protracted endeavor over the problem as something entirely positive or inspiring. This is remarkable, and even somewhat surprising, in the context of China's dramatic rise as a great power and in consideration of the relatively great length of time China has had to experiment, revise, and develop its policies based on practice and learning. If one focuses on the strategic perspective and the relationship between means and ends, as well as on the relationship between costs and effectiveness, one can hardly give the quality of China's related policy a high assessment.

Any sound strategy should: (1) define its ends in accordance with the available means, and (2) fully mobilize the available means to serve its ends; what is missing most in Beijing's policy is the latter. More people have come to understand Beijing's weighty considerations in terms of protecting its vital interest in its relationship with North Korea. Yet, at the same time, such factors as China's stake in denuclearization, the often highly questionable effectiveness of winning North Korea's reasonable good will and respect toward China through an appeasing attitude and forbearance, as well as the importance of the relationships with other major concerned parties, especially the United States, have often pushed China's policy behavior in a generally opposing direction. The need to balance opposing imperatives presents a perennial strategic paradox, reflected in China's use of less-than-efficient half measures to achieve its ends.<sup>1</sup>

These half-measure practices also reflect a tentativeness that is partly due to the division of elite opinion on the North Korean problem within China, indicative of the complexities of China's related interests and the fundamentally difficult circumstances under which the North Korean nuclear issue exists. As a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent wrote from Beijing two days after North Korea's second nuclear test, "When is it time to dump an old friend who insists on behaving badly? The debate is raging in China. North Korea's latest nuclear test raises the question of just how long the bonds forged between old communist allies will endure. . . . Within the Chinese intelligentsia there is a deep divide over how to handle North Korea."<sup>2</sup> Even if one limits the category of "Chinese intelligentsia" to mainstream foreign policy researchers and commentators, not taking into account those at either the "leftist" or the "rightist" ends of the spectrum of opinion, this observation is still considerably valid. For several months through late summer 2009, in the context of the further deterioration of North Korea's behavior, some experts urged a rethinking of policy on North Korea to reverse Beijing's waning influence over Pyongyang,<sup>3</sup> but they could hardly be regarded as anything like a majority. According to this author's knowledge based on years of close observation, a significant majority are "defeatists" in the sense of accepting the *de facto* possession of nuclear arms by the Pyongyang regime, without having made any effort to take measures stronger than those already tried. These are the very measures that they themselves have blamed to be responsible for the general deterioration of China-DPRK relations—a development that is quite dangerous, in their eyes, for China's strategic environment in Northeast Asia.

"Defeatist" views are easy to see as plausible because of the enormous difficulty of the North Korea nuclear problem. For China, the difficulty lies in the inherently contradictory nature of China's vital interests, *vis-à-vis* the problem. China's top leaders and government have proved firmer toward denuclearization of North Korea than the above "defeatists," but the restraint and even the disabling effect of this predicament imposed upon them has been acute, especially in consideration of their characteristically prudent and conservative strategy. They have been seeking, through years of partial success and frustration, an uneasy balance among the following vital interests: (1) ensuring peace and fundamental stability on the peninsula; (2) fostering North Korea's denuclearization; (3) seeking to preserve an influential relationship with North Korea; and (4) helping to prevent the potentially severe incapacity of the Pyongyang regime and resulting massive chaos in North Korea, which could drive tens of thousands of refugees to flood into China, to say the least, and give rise to unregulated power-politics among neighboring powers, which would be dangerous for everyone.<sup>4</sup>

After years of intense political and scholarly discussions in the United States, Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, and major European countries (among others) over the causes of China's behavior in dealing North Korea nuclear problem, little additional elaboration about China's vital interests is required, *except* the third interest, which has raised or aggravated so much strategic suspicion, especially in the ROK. As this author has pointed out elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> China has a vital interest in keeping, at least in a minimal form, its historically and geographically shaped

“strategic relationship” with North Korea (a most “entangling alliance” as those warned against by George Washington in his “Farewell Address”) in the complicated, dynamic, and not-so-benign regional security environment. One might say that as in the somewhat distant past China would like to preserve North Korea as a “strategic buffer zone” because of the American military presence in Northeast Asia and its military alliances with the ROK and Japan, *though* (a very important “though”), compared with the past, this has become less important, much less prominent, and not at all urgent. In unvarnished fact, North Korea, with a nuclear-armed program and a record of unfriendliness toward China, has become one of China’s greatest strategic troubles, rather than a “buffer zone.”

And yet, a hostile North Korea at the border is both not only what China would prefer not to have, it is also what it cannot afford to have. In other words, China’s leaders and many others in China, both in and outside the government, believe that China must prevent the denuclearization process and its own role within it from seriously and lastingly damaging China-North Korea relations by becoming too alienated from the Pyongyang regime. This would make China a loser in a major geopolitical game, even if North Korea, by virtue of some “magic strike,” were really denuclearized. A closely connected issue is China’s concern about the possible collapse or severe incapacitation of the Pyongyang regime and the ensuing chaos, which could result partly from some conceivable great pressure from China for denuclearization, especially cutting off the critical oil supply from China to North Korea on a somewhat permanent basis. This would force China not only to deal with a massive influx of refugees but also with a number of complex and dangerous strategic/diplomatic problems.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, Beijing’s strategic interests in North Korea are not principally “acquisitive” in terms of obtaining positive gains, as so many people in South Korea suspect, but rather “preventive”: to prevent the various dangers described above from transpiring, as every nation in a comparable situation would legitimately desire to do.

Of course, it cannot be said that China has no “acquisitive” long-term interests vis-à-vis North Korea. Geographically, North Korea is China’s close neighbor, bordering one of its core areas—the Northeast region. Furthermore, the Korean peninsula is critically important for China’s security and significant for China’s prosperity, as well as holding great weight in China’s historical memory. The ROK and Japan are military allies of the United States, the strategically not-so-benign superpower where China’s long-term military security and regional diplomatic influence is concerned; these two northeast East Asian countries, especially Japan, are the sources of some profound, long-term strategic concerns in China by virtue of an unfortunate history, as well as strategic and national psychological reality. In addition, North Korea has relatively rich mineral resources and represents a potentially substantial market, which is attractive as a longer-term prospect for various Chinese business enterprises in terms of investment and trade. All of these factors necessarily make China want to preserve and develop its influence in the northern part of the peninsula.

At the same time, however, it should be emphasized that there is at the present in China an absence of informed and systematic strategic analysis on the

future of the peninsula. In other words, there is a lack of critical thinking about potential grand strategic ends related to peninsula issues. The expectation China has now about the future of the peninsula is ambiguous, undefined, and even fragmentary. Other than that the peninsula depends upon China as its primary economic partner, China confines its expectations to negatives: the peninsula must not threaten China's security through internal disruption or chaos; it must not function as a strategic fortress for the US against China; and it must not damage China's territorial and national integration by any irredentist or "Pan-Korean" aspirations, driven by some extreme nationalistic elements on the peninsula. Though only ambiguously perceived, the long-term interests referred to present a factor that reinforces Beijing's unwillingness to seriously damage its relationship with Pyongyang over the issue of denuclearization.

It should be pointed out that China's endeavors have also had an indirect outcome: the Obama Administration has made the US-South Korean military alliance virtually the best alliance the US now has in the world. In this, it has been helped by North Korea's flagrant nuclear tests, adamant longer-range missile development, acute hostility toward the South, and occasionally military provocations, thus discrediting Seoul's previous "sunshine policy" toward Pyongyang among the South Korean public and driving the South Korean government to depend almost wholly upon its alliance with the United States for its national security. China's policy toward North Korea in one way or another indirectly contributed to that. What happened to China-North Korea relations after the fall of 2009 is nothing less than a virtual renewal of the alliance, albeit an entangling one. This is a sea change from the previous six or seven years, during which China had confronted a stream of policy dilemmas produced by its competing interests of denuclearization of North Korea through diplomatic pressure on one hand, and helping to prevent its internal instability by maintaining China-North Korean relations on the other. This new game was brought about, first of all, by the deterioration of Kim Jong-il's health, and then, by all the resulting aggravation of his regime's challenges, particularly the leadership succession process, for which there was inadequate preparation. The effects of the virtual renewal of the China-North Korean alliance upon Pyongyang's behavior can be roughly summarized as follows: Beijing's diplomatic pressure for denuclearization virtually disappeared for a while; what had been a determined drive forward by Pyongyang on the nuclear program was only emboldened by its confidence that Beijing had to tolerate almost whatever it would do; and, finally, South Korean suspicion of and discontent with China, on the part of both its government and its public, was assured.<sup>7</sup>

### DRASTIC VOLATILITY: CHINA AND NORTH KOREA IN THE INITIAL MONTHS OF KIM JONG-UN'S REGIME

What was most impressive in the initial days and weeks of the new untested Kim Jong-un regime installed toward the end of 2011 were Chinese efforts on the foreign policy front to do all it could to contribute to the maintenance of the internal stability of North Korea during this delicate period, as well as

to promote consensus among all the relating powers, including antagonistic US, ROK, and Japan, on the premium of stability.<sup>8</sup> All of these countries—and China above all, were deeply anxious and preoccupied with the potential for instability in North Korea beginning in the fall of 2008, as Kim Jong-il's health problems became increasingly apparent to the world.<sup>9</sup> Two days after Kim Jong-il's death, the *New York Times* reported that China was taking steps to ensure stability in North Korea, observing that "China is moving quickly to deepen its influence over senior officials in North Korea and particularly with those in the military to try to ensure stability in the isolated nation, according to Chinese and foreign former government officials and analysts."<sup>10</sup> The next day, upon then-President Hu Jintao's early morning trip to the Embassy of North Korea in Beijing to offer his condolences on the death of Kim Jong-il and reconfirm his support of Kim Jong-un as the successor, the Associated Press commented, "China moved swiftly to assure its communist ally of its strong support amid an uncertain leadership transition. . . . [This] highlights the government's growing emphasis on North Korea ties despite their annoyance at the North's refusal to reform its listless economy and its recurring provocative acts against South Korea that whip up tensions in the region."<sup>11</sup> Though it has not been confirmed that, as the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported, right after Kim Jong-un assumed power China gave North Korea 500,000 tons of food and 250,000 tons of crude oil, it is clear that by the end of February China had agreed (or perhaps even offered) to grant more than 240,000 tons of food aid to North Korea. This was the case although just nine months before—during Kim Jong-il's last visit to China—Chinese leaders politely refused to extend a generous economic grant to Pyongyang.<sup>12</sup>

However, just as in prior episodes in China-North Korean relations, Pyongyang's attitude toward Beijing at this critical juncture was almost completely incompatible with what Beijing adopted toward it and surely expected from it. This ushered in a period of bilateral relations largely opposite to that which had characterized the relationship since autumn 2009 when, as noted, there was what might be called a "renaissance" or virtually a "renewal of the alliance."<sup>13</sup> China's disillusionment in fact had begun with Kim's death itself: the new regime in Pyongyang did not inform the Chinese leaders of this paramount event in a timely way; it appears that Beijing probably did not learn about it until the rest of the world did. This unfriendliness or even potential hostility would continue. Over the ensuing seven months, China would be neither consulted nor even informed in a timely way about any major action taken by Kim Jong-un's regime, in which China clearly has direct or indirect stakes. This included the surprising (and short-lived) trade-off agreement between the United States and North Korea announced on February 29, 2012, North Korea's declaration on March 16 that it would launch a satellite in mid-April (which surely violated the UN Security Council's sanction resolution against its nuclear arms program, widely believed to be a cover for testing intercontinental ballistic missile technology), and the launch itself conducted on April 13, despite China's opposition. China had certainly not anticipated that the new dynastic ruler in Pyongyang, whose succession China had supported without any major reservations, would

not abide at all by the “commitments” his father had made in a face-to-face meeting with Hu Jintao in early May 2010 that both sides, according to Hu’s solemn suggestion, would intimately and at all times inform each other of their respective major policies, both domestic and international.<sup>14</sup>

This time China’s temper was shorter than it had been toward Kim Jong-un’s father, who in any case had had a much longer acquaintance with China and enjoyed far higher Chinese respect compared to the green and reputedly arrogant youngster. Although, as usual, the Chinese government appealed to the international community for moderation and calm after North Korea’s rocket launch, it finally gave vent to its displeasure through its support for a UN Security Council Chairperson Statement on April 16, which not only strongly condemned North Korea’s rocket launch but also tightened UN sanctions against North Korea. This Statement was largely developed in a series of closed-door meetings between then US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice and her Chinese counterpart, Li Baodong. The move caught international observers by surprise. As David Albright, the president of the US-based Institute for Science and International Security, commented, for example, it was more than had been expected, “It shows there is some desire to seriously start to pressure North Korea within the confines established by China.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Chinese government’s anger was not vented through collective action, it also took bilateral and unilateral measures. It is widely said that Hu Jintao in late April sternly warned a visiting North Korean high official against any possibility of North Korea’s third nuclear test, even supposedly threatening to reconsider the general relationship with Pyongyang if the new regime dared to do it.<sup>16</sup> One month later, surely with almost unprecedentedly obtained instruction (or at least permission) of the sort from the senior leadership, the Chinese media widely publicized the plight of 28 Chinese fishermen who had been kidnapped, robbed, stripped and held for 13 days by North Korean soldiers. This immediately inflamed a large part of the Chinese public opinion, turning it decidedly against North Korea. Almost as never before, “the testy state of China-North Korea affairs became public,” thanks to actions by the Chinese government.<sup>17</sup>

It was well known that Kim Jong-il desired engagement with the United States, engagement on his own terms, and for some unfathomable *realpolitik*. His son, the new ruler, quickly seemed to prove the same, as exhibited by his early bilateral demarche with the Obama Administration to craft a trade-off agreement, announced on February 29, 2012. According to the agreement, North Korea would suspend nuclear weapons tests and uranium enrichment and allow international inspectors to monitor activities at its main nuclear complex, together with a moratorium on launchings of long-range missiles. The United States, for its part, agreed to send 240,000 metric tons of food aid in the form of high-protein biscuits, infant formula, and other nutritional supplements. Given its so frequently demonstrated, iron-clad determination to have nuclear weapons and longer-range missiles, proved before and after the agreement, as well as its notoriously poor record of upholding its commitments of this sort, both the agreement itself and widespread hope that it might “end . . . a diplomatic impasse

that has allowed the country's nuclear program to continue with no international oversight for years"<sup>18</sup> smacked of the surreal. For China's part, Beijing was once again marginalized, without consultation or even advance information from its "ally" North Korea, as well, most probably, as by "the cooperative partner," the United States. This raised strategic suspicion, at least from the *New York Times* along with the *JoongAng Daily* (one of the biggest media outlets in South Korea). The *Times* commented that Kim Jong-un was following the course set by his father to prevent North Korea's excessive dependence on China and regain some leverage by re-engaging Washington, while the latter regarded the agreement as resulting from "Kim Jong-un's version of the tactic 'engaging the US and excluding China,'" just like the oft-used and successful tactic of "engaging the US while excluding South Korea."<sup>19</sup>

If volatility and resulting puzzles have never been rare in North Korea's policy, this has been even more the case under the Kim Jong-un regime. Less than three weeks after the birth of the seemingly desired DPRK-US agreement, the regime did an about face by declaring the rocket launch planned for the following month, knowing full well what the US reaction would be, and despite poor technological preparation for the never-tested bigger rocket Unha-3, the predictable international punitive consequences, and the obvious ways at its disposal of celebrating the 100-year birthday of the country's founder, Kim Il-sung.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the reason, one thing is certain: Kim Jong-un's father would have never made such an abrupt reversal of direction of his own demarche, or of an initiative toward the United States.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after the dismissal of General Ri Yong-ho, Chief of the General Staff North Korea's armed forces and, at the time, among the most powerful figures in North Korea, a new significant and even stranger development took place, that is, the sudden warming of the regime's attitude toward China. After the regime's pointed lack of lip-service to China-North Korea friendship, suddenly the newly powerful Vice Marshal Choe Ryong-hae declared at a mass rally held in Pyongyang on July 27, 2012 celebrating the 59th anniversary of "the victory of the Korean Liberation War" (the Korean Armistice) that North Korea would never forget one thing: that China had sent its troops to fight shoulder by shoulder with North Korea during the war and thereby "[set the noble model of internationalism]."<sup>22</sup>

Only a week later, Kim Jong-un himself, in his very first reception of a foreign delegation since taking power, met with visiting senior Chinese official Wang Jiarui. Wang heads the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and often serves as China's lead envoy to North Korea. At the meeting, Kim stated that it was the unswerving will of North Korea to deepen the bilateral friendship. This meeting raised speculation that Kim might visit China somewhat soon. Then, at what was an historically extraordinarily quick pace, Jang Sung-taek himself, the mastermind behind Kim's attempts to tame the military, arrived in Beijing on August 13 with a big delegation to discuss North Korea-China joint development and management of the Rason and Hwanggumpyong economic zones, followed by Pyongyang's

concession to China on some major policies related to the project. It seems that the entangling alliance, the sort of thing George Washington warned against for the American republic two centuries ago, would be re-renewed.

## DRASTIC POLICY TRANSFORMATION: CHINA CONFRONTS NORTH KOREA

However, renewal of the alliance has not occurred. On Kim Jong-un's side, there would always be no lack of drama; China would also be the source of dramatic developments. Three months after Jang Sung-taek's visit to Beijing, the Chinese Communist Party held its 18th National Congress and produced a new leadership headed (soon all-powerfully) by Xi Jinping. Xi is a top leader who is remarkably different from his two predecessors because of his Communist revolutionary *noblesse* rooted in his family background, his more muscular sense of mission toward the Party accompanied by stronger self-confidence and a sharper strategic style reinforced by a greater inclination to take risks, and more intensive aspirations for China's national greatness.

In the foreign policy arena, an objectively welcomed major testing-ground for almost all of these characteristics presented itself soon after Xi Jinping's assumption of power, from the new, still green North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un. The significance of the political events that had unfolded in North Korea during the year that had followed Kim Jong-il's death was becoming clear. Among the various fundamental orientations or policies of North Korea, whether dynastic dictatorship, "military first" (Songun), nuclear armament and longer-range missile development, or intensive hostility against ROK, and the unique posture toward China featuring dependence, hostility, and manipulation in tandem, it was increasingly apparent that the "military first" policy had begun to be substantially degraded under Kim Jong-un, related to both internal political machinations and the regime's financial requirements, which had been threatened by the ramping up of military development under Kim Jong-il.<sup>23</sup>

However, the principles and practices of dynastic dictatorship (including brutal purges, court conspiracies, and highly suppressive politics) have not only been kept intact by Kim Jong-un, but can even be said to have intensified. This was most strongly and dramatically demonstrated by the sudden and extremely brutal execution of Kim's uncle, Jang Sung-taek, an event regarded very plausibly by an American expert as a sign that "'Chinese-style reform' has become increasingly unlikely for North Korea. Jang had long been seen as its number one advocate,"<sup>24</sup> as well as an event with a clear anti-Chinese implication. The result was to plunge the China-North Korean relationship to perhaps its lowest point in history.<sup>25</sup>

In Kim Jong-un the world has a more volatile, violent, and provocative dictator over North Korea than Kim Jong-il, with the exception of the "military first" policy. In April 2012, Kim Jong-un's regime formally incorporated its self-identification as a "nuclear state" into the foreword of the revised North Korean Constitution.<sup>26</sup> In the same month, as mentioned above, Pyongyang

launched a satellite that was clearly a test of intercontinental ballistic missile technology in clear violation of UN resolutions against North Korea, in defiance of the efforts at persuasion and warnings of both China and the United States.<sup>27</sup> This was followed by a six-month round of wild sabre-rattling that began with a successful launching of a long-range rocket on December 12, 2012, portrayed by the regime as “a giant step forward in its quest to develop the technology to deliver a nuclear warhead,” all reflecting Kim Jong-un’s self-confidence that he could ignore the “hollow warnings” of the international community. As a South Korean professor on international relations commented, Kim “couldn’t care less . . . what the Chinese position is.”<sup>28</sup> On February 12, 2013, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, a major action both as a substantial technological step forward toward nuclear armament and an act of diplomatic sabre-rattling to retaliate for the new UN Security Council’s resolution passed in response to its long-range missile test. According to the *Chosun Ilbo*, one of South Korea’s biggest newspapers, this nuclear test was made despite the summoning of North Korea diplomats by China’s Foreign Affairs Ministry on three occasions—the North Korean Ambassador twice and a minister from the North Korean Embassy in Beijing once—to express its request that North Korea not conduct the threatened test.<sup>29</sup>

Kim Jong-un can be said to have gone into the wilderness. On the one hand, his regime through its supreme organ the National Defense Commission publicly condemned China (although without naming it) as having “[submitted to the peremptoriness and might of the United States, confounded to the degree of abandoning the minimum principle],”<sup>30</sup> and, according to Reuters, formally informed China that it would within the year conduct one or two nuclear tests and launch again a long-range missile over Japan.<sup>31</sup> Along with this, the Supreme Command of North Korea’s armed forces declared on March 5, 2013 that the Korean Armistice would become “completely null and void” within a week; one month later its General Staff formally declared to the White House that preparation for revolutionary warfare had been completed, including “reckless operations’ involving cutting-edge nuclear weapons.”<sup>32</sup> North Korea’s Foreign Affairs Ministry also “suggested” that foreign embassies and international institutions in Pyongyang consider their withdrawal from North Korea because “[at the present the issue is not whether there will be a war outbreak in the peninsula, but when this war will erupt.]”<sup>33</sup> About the same time, Kim Jong-un signed an operational plan for “[attacking Continental US and the bases of American aggressive forces as Hawaii and Guam, etc.],” while North Korea’s longer-range missiles were reportedly moved to a launching position targeting Guam.<sup>34</sup>

As this author observed in the international media at the time, this was “one of the most dangerous moments since 1953.”<sup>35</sup> Peace—China’s primary vital interest in the peninsula—had been severely threatened, a situation the new Chinese top leader Xi Jinping could not tolerate. Compatible with political personality, and strategic style, Xi launched a policy that responded to North Korea’s dangerous and hostile behavior, recalling Deng Xiaoping for its guts, resolution, and directness.

A dramatic policy transformation was on the horizon. On January 23, 2013, with China's final agreement negotiated over the course of about one month, the UN Security Council passed its extraordinary third resolution imposing sanctions on North Korea. This revolution in China's pattern of behavior in the Security Council over North Korea can be seen in the context of Xi's hope for a closer relationship with the United States in general, as well as the immediate exigencies in the face of the extraordinary intensive confrontation with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands.<sup>36</sup> Shortly after North Korea's third nuclear test and a series of further acts of sabre-rattling, the South Korean media were reporting on something never previously seen: China's unilateral sanctions against North Korea, along with China's participation since 2006 in collective sanctions imposed through the UN. As the media observed, China "has not only (severely) restricted ordinary shipping to North Korea, but also suspended some projects of infrastructure building relating to North Korea," along with the suspension of some imports of North Korean fishing products, none of which were required under the terms of the Security Council sanction resolutions.<sup>37</sup> This should be recognized as a revolution in China policy toward North Korea, one that had not happened since 2003, reversing the feebleness of Beijing's dealings with Pyongyang over the previous decade.

Even more significantly, and having more "lethality," is that in one strike China strictly prohibited all the illegal banking activities in China of all North Korean banks, most of which had not been listed in the UN Security Council's sanction resolutions. Soon after this, it was also reported that all major Chinese state banks had also possibly suspended banking transactions with North Korea's Foreign Trade Bank.<sup>38</sup> On April 6, unquestionably under President Xi's personal instructions and probably in his very words, China's Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi declared that on the situation on the peninsula that China did not permit anyone to "[make a disturbance on China's doorstep.]"<sup>39</sup> This of course should be understood principally as a blunt warning to Kim Jong-un. This is the first time in memory that China has given North Korea such a public warning.

This revolution in China's Korean policy was stunning to the arrogant youngster Kim Jong-un. Along with firm deterrence from the United States and the ROK, China's harsh words and extraordinarily hard "physical pressure" made him bow his head in submission, although reluctantly and partially. On May 22, 2013, shortly after an announcement by Beijing and Washington that President Xi and President Obama would meet each other in California, Vice Marshall Choe Ryong-hae, then second to none under Kim Jong-un in the North Korean military, was sent to Beijing as Kim's envoy. He paid now restored lip service to the China-DPRK friendship, showing apparent respect to China that had been unseen for the previous six months, while refusing to commit in any measure to the denuclearization of his country. After a few days of uncertainty and rampant speculation by observers, President Xi personally received Choe. That Xi gave a personal audience to Kim's envoy was, in this author's view, something of a surprise given the months of North Korean snubs of China.<sup>40</sup>

In any case, Kim has bowed his head in response to China's harsh warning and hard sanctions. Moreover, China's triumph, which was almost consistently lacking in the previous decade with its appeasing-style policy, had substantive results: as of the time of writing there has been no North Korean nuclear long-range missile test, and no major military sabre-rattling on the part of Pyongyang. North Korea under Kim Jong-un is still nuclear armed, refusing to discuss its own denuclearization, keeping its strong hostility toward the ROK, and unreformed in both its domestic and foreign policy. However, at least temporarily, it has been tamed in the above aspects, tamed largely due to Xi Jinping's new policy posture, a posture that Xi will see as having provided a valuable reset in terms of future Chinese policy toward its neighbor.

### ONGOING LIMITATIONS ALONG WITH NEW PREMISES: CHINA FACES NORTH KOREA IN THE PREDICTABLE FUTURE

Despite these changes in China's policy toward North Korea, even in the face of a North Korea under Kim Jong-un, whose hostility toward China and violent political features has proved to be much worse even than his father, some "traditional" major elements are still embedded in China's North Korea policy. As in the past, China's Korean policy is primarily conditioned by Pyongyang's behavior. Kim Jong-un's tactical improvement in his apparent attitude toward China and his suspending of his wild threats to peace, which coincided roughly with Choe Ryong-hae's visit to Beijing, were sufficient to shift China's posture again. Though North Korea has remained intransigent on its commitment to its nuclear and longer-range missile program and has refused any negotiations as a precondition of denuclearization, Xi Jinping nevertheless dispatched Vice President Li Yuanchao to Pyongyang in late July, 2013 to urge Kim Jong-un to rejoin the Six-party talks, denuclearize, and commit to peace. This message was one North Korea's state-run media chose not to share with the North Korean people. Li's visit was replete with rhetoric about the China-DPRK friendship, and even included giving Kim Jong-un a hug "in a sign of just how repaired the relations are."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the inertia of traditional policy or discourse is still strong in China's unchangeable repeat of its appeal over so many years to reopening (unconditionally) the Six-party talks, despite the overwhelming evidence that "the Six-Party Talks have already run their course... North Korea will not take part in Six-Party Talks that presuppose denuclearization [as their primary and original purpose]."<sup>42</sup>

More profoundly, China still has a vital interest, perceived by so many, in keeping—at least in a minimum form—its historically and geographically shaped "strategic relationship" with North Korea in the complicated and far from benign regional security environment in which China exists. This includes a growing China-US strategic rivalry, an intensifying confrontation with Japan, and still-complicated political relationships with South Korea and Taiwan. China prefers not to have a hostile DPRK on its border. Although seemingly less than previously, Beijing still would like to prevent the denuclearization process

from seriously damaging relations with Pyongyang. Moreover, China remains concerned about a possible collapse or severe incapacitation of the Pyongyang regime and the chaos that would ensue, particularly as the perceived result of pressure from China. Developments such as these would force China to deal with a number of dangerous and complex strategic and diplomatic problems, as well as a refugee crisis. In summary, what Beijing would like is peaceful denuclearization in such a way as to avoid losing its relationship with the DPRK or creating a chaotic neighbor across the Yalu, although how to realize this remains a different question.<sup>43</sup>

In short, there will be no revolution in China's policy toward North Korea in the predictable future. However, after the above-mentioned dramatic policy shift under the leadership of Xi Jinping, especially in the first half of 2013, the possibility that Beijing might return to the "old track" in its Korean policy is surely quite small. Rather, the Chinese government will most likely continue its newly established hard measures against North Korea until such time as the Pyongyang regime substantially reforms its foreign policy in a positive direction—a prospect no one in the world at the present realistically expects. Moreover, as noted before, the brutal execution of Jang Sung-taek with its strong anti-Chinese implications has significantly damaged China-DPRK relations, plunging them into a very chilly state. In this context, aside from the quite positive feedback (and therefore the potential reinforcing effect) that Xi Jinping's blunt pressure on Pyongyang has brought to China's Korean policy,<sup>44</sup> Beijing's tougher stance can be expected to be sustained fundamentally for the conceivable long-term.

This assessment is primarily based on the fact that China's Korean policy now rests on new premises that have emerged from policy practices under the leadership of Xi Jinping, with the benefit of learning from the painful lessons of China's past dealings with North Korea. These new principles still need further consolidation, in consideration of their still newborn status and the residual influence of bureaucrats, academicians, and the public, along with the continuing dynamism of the regional situation.

The first among these new premises is that, along with prohibiting such threats by North Korea to the fundamental peace on the peninsula and beyond, such as the actions taken by Kim Jong-un in the first half of 2013 and those carried out by Kim Jong-il, like the attack on Yeonpyeong island on November 23, 2010,<sup>45</sup> North Korea's general attitude toward China should be the foremost determinant in deciding China's posture and policies toward it. One can demonstrate convincingly that China's general posture toward North Korea under Xi Jinping's leadership has been determined on the basis of this new premise.<sup>46</sup> In fact, this is the essence of what "the China-North Korean relationship is a normal one between states" means, and it is going to be realized under Xi Jinping's leadership.

The second new premise, also developing under Xi Jinping, is still to be consolidated but has become more firmly established since President Park Geun-hye's election in late December 2012. This new premise is that China's efforts at "parallel friendship" with both Koreas since the establishment of diplomatic

relations with South Korea under Deng Xiaoping in 1992 should become one of tilting toward Seoul rather than toward Pyongyang. In fact, this long overdue premise has been imposed upon China by North Korea itself, through more than a decade of oft-rampant hostility, humiliation, and actions damaging China's major interests and honor. With South Korea, China has not only actively developed economic relations (it has already become its biggest trade partner), but it has also tried to manage political tensions as they arise and endeavored to mitigate controversies over history and minor territorial disputes. Moreover, in recent years, China has actively promoted political relations with South Korea, including the May 2008 elevation of bilateral relations to "[a partnership of strategic cooperation]."<sup>47</sup> All of these efforts have received a generally positive response from Seoul.

Now under the Administrations of Xi Jinping and Park Geun-hye, who have held some rather successful summits between them, China-South Korea relations have undoubtedly entered into the best period in their history. The ROK-US military alliance has been regarded by many in both China and South Korea as a major obstacle to the development of a better long-term relationship, but without much evidence for this view. Generally speaking, that the military alliance no longer damages (at least directly) the fundamental relationship between Beijing and Seoul, and it seems unlikely that the ROK government will permit it to become targeted against China.<sup>48</sup> In short, both the basic difficulties in China-North Korean relations and the essential advantages of the China-ROK relationship can be regarded as permanent, and Beijing's tilting toward Seoul and alienation from Pyongyang can continue without its "abandonment of North Korea."

The third new premise of China's policy toward North Korea under Xi Jinping is more firmness and emphasis on the issue of the denuclearization of that country. Pyongyang's step-by-step progress toward possessing nuclear capability and round after round of strategic tensions, with the diplomatic headaches brought about by its nuclear and longer-missile tests, has directly or indirectly damaged China's strategic security and international prestige. Beijing's sense of the involvement of China's vital interests in the denuclearization of North Korea has become keener to a degree that the repeatedly declared commitment to this goal by the Xi-headed Chinese leadership has rung more convincing and serious than ever before.<sup>49</sup> Though as previously stated, "China will not break ties with North Korea just because of the nuclear issue,"<sup>50</sup> its commitment to the denuclearization of that country has become unreserved in words and deeds—deeds in the extraordinary sanctions taken both in and outside the framework of the United Nations mentioned above.<sup>51</sup> The pursuit of a "new type of great power relationship" with the US has further boosted this posture, as the limited fruits of the Xi-Obama summit held at Sunnylands, California demonstrated.<sup>52</sup>

The fourth new premise hardly needs to be pointed out again, after having been noted and emphasized so much in this chapter. That is, when necessary, China must employ its substantial economic leverage against North Korea's provocative and dangerous behavior; a leverage that so often is the only effective

means to deal with it. In fact, this is the primary painful lesson learned by Beijing after so many frustrations over a decade—a learning process that was far too long, until Xi Jinping took over the bridle of policy-making. What is still required here is to underscore its novelty even more prominently by quoting a related faulty prediction made by a first-rate expert on China’s policy toward North Korea as late as in mid-February 2013: “North Korea’s leaders are betting that China needs them more than they need the Chinese.... They hold their nose and continue to support North Korea from a strategic position despite eroding public and elite support for that approach.”<sup>53</sup> Experts accustomed to the “appeasing” and “eating humble pie” approach by Beijing toward Pyongyang needed Xi to remind them that everything can change in the world, sometimes dramatically.

This phrase, capturing a common sense truth based on human experience, can be taken as an appropriate concluding note for the present exploration of China’s relations with North Korea over the past decade—a guiding ray of light for the future, however ambiguous and abstract it may seem.

#### NOTES

1. For a more detailed and broader analysis of this issue, see Shi Yinhong, “China and the North Korea Issue: Competing Interests and Persistent Policy Dilemmas,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (2009), 33–47.
2. Barbara Demick, “China Debates Its Bond with North Korea,” *The Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/may/27/world/fg-china-korea27>.
3. See Ng Tze-wei, “China Urged to Rethink Policy on North Korea,” *South China Morning Post*, June 20, 2009. For example, two major aspects of the policy practice were sharply criticized and corresponding changes emphatically demanded, “This is not a problem between North Korea and the United States. This is happening in your own backyard. China must take the centre (*sic*) stage of the six-party negotiations, instead of just being a moderator”; “China should have power of influence over North Korea, because North Korea relies very heavily on China economically. However, China has lost this power because it never had the political will to use this economic leverage to influence North Korea.” (Shi, “China and the North Korea Issue”).
4. “From China’s perspective, a North Korean collapse would be almost as bad. South Korea might inherit the North’s nuclear arsenal, and US forces based in a reunified Korea could have direct access to China’s border. China would have little ability to influence future security arrangements on the Korean peninsula, and would have to deal with the economic burden of refugees fleeing a collapsing North Korean regime.” (Phillip C. Saunders and Jing-Dong Yuan, “China’s Chance to Sharpen Its Diplomacy,” *Japan Times*, January 12, 2003, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/geted.pl5?eo20030112a1.htm>; Esther Pan, “Q&A: China-North Korea Relationship,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2006, [http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/slot2\\_071306.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/slot2_071306.html?_r=0).)
5. See Shi.

6. See “The Worst Scenario at the Korean Peninsula: China’s Army Advances into a Collapsed North Korea. Prediction on the Next 10 Year Trend in North Korea,” *Chosun Ilbo*, January 2, 2007; (Chinese version at “Han Bandao Zuihuai de Juben: Zhongguo Jundui Tingjin Bengkui hou Beihan. Beihan Weilai 10 Nian Zoushi Da Yuze,” <http://tieba.baidu.com/p/160828920>); Francesco Scisi, “China ‘Fails’ Test over North Korea,” *Asia Times*, June 30, 2005.
7. See Shi Yinhong, “New Games in the Tightly Fixed Structures: North Korea’s Volatile Desperation and China’s Cornered Strategy,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (2011), 353–368.
8. The first reaction of the United States to Kim Jong-il’s death was a White House statement that said, “We remain committed to stability on the Korean Peninsula and to the freedom and security of our allies.” Meanwhile, the Japanese cabinet stated that it hoped Kim Jong-il’s death “does not have an adverse effect on the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula.” (Alan Cowell, “Kim’s Death Inspires Worries and Anxiety,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/world/asia/kim-jong-ils-death-inspires-anxiety.html?pagewanted=all>.)
9. For further elaboration see the discussion on “body, body politic, and international relations,” also in Shi, “New Games in the Tightly Fixed Structures.”
10. Edward Wong, “China Moves to Ensure Stability in North Korea,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/world/asia/china-moves-to-ensure-stability-in-north-korea.html?pagewanted=all>.
11. Christopher Bodeen, “China’s Hu Offers Condolences Over Kim’s Death,” *Associate Press*, December 20, 2012, <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/world/chinas-hu-offers-condolences-over-kims-death-119269.html>.
12. For this refusal, quite displeasing to Kim Jong-Il, see Shi, “New Games in the Tightly Fixed Structures,” 362. As to the referred International Crisis Group report, see Jane Perlez, “North Korea Tests the Patience of Its Closest Ally, China,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/asia/north-korea-tests-the-patience-of-its-ally-china.html?pagewanted=all>.
13. Shi, “New Games in the Tightly Fixed Structures,” 354.
14. “Chaoxian Laodongdang Zhongshuji Jin Zhengri dui Woguo Jinxing Feizhengshi Fangwen” *Xinhua.net*, May 7, 2010, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-05/07/c\\_1278775.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-05/07/c_1278775.htm). See also, “Zhongfang Cheng Han Fashe Weixing Wei Yuxian Tongbao,” *Sina.com*, April 14, 2012, <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/2012-04-14/084524271650.shtml>.
15. Colum Lynch, “U.N. Security Council Condemns North Korea Rocket Launch,” *Washington Post*, April 17, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-security-council-condemns-n-korea-rocket-launch/2012/04/16/gIQAhPRnLT\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-security-council-condemns-n-korea-rocket-launch/2012/04/16/gIQAhPRnLT_story.html).
16. Cui Tiankai, a Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, seemed to partly confirm this. “We have made this absolutely clear to them; we are against any provocation,” he said in a recent interview when asked about a possible third nuclear test by North Korea. “We have told them in a very direct way, time and again, we are against it.” See Jane Perlez, “North Korea Tests the Patience of Its Closest Ally, China,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2012,

- [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/asia/north-korea-tests-the-patience-of-its-ally-china.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/asia/north-korea-tests-the-patience-of-its-ally-china.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).
17. “China, North Korea Ties Hit Rough Weather,” *Associated Press*, May 24, 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/china-north-korea-ties-hit-rough-weather>. See also Keith B. Richburg, “Kidnapped Fishermen’s Case Angers Chinese Public,” *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kidnapped-fishermens-case-raise-chinese-publics-ire/2012/05/23/gJQAJrDWkU\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kidnapped-fishermens-case-raise-chinese-publics-ire/2012/05/23/gJQAJrDWkU_story.html).
  18. Steven Lee Myers and Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Agrees to Curb Nuclear Works; US Offers Aid,” *The New York Times*, February 29, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/world/asia/us-says-north-korea-agrees-to-curb-nuclear-work.html?pagewanted=all>. In contrast, this author was quoted by a media outlet at the time, arguing that Kim Jong-un would act in ways very similar to his father, cautioning that similar agreements had been reached and then broken when Kim Jong-il was alive. See Stephanie Ho, “China Welcomes US-N Korea Deal,” *The China Times*, March 1, 2012, <http://www.thechina-times.com/online/2012/03/2485.html>. <original as above>
  19. Choe Sang-hun, “In North Korea Deal, Son Inherits Father’s Framework,” *The New York Times*, March 1, 2012; “Zhongguo Gandao Jingya, Chaoxian Jin Zhengeng de ‘Tongmei Fenghua’ Zhanshu Baoguang,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, March 3, 2012, reproduced in Chinese at <http://ido.3mt.com.cn/Article/201203/show2465406c30p1.html>.
  20. The following interpretation is plausible but not so convincing: “Kim Jong-un doesn’t have much to show to his people, except launching a satellite,” said Koh Yu-hwan, a North Korea specialist at Dongguk University in Seoul. . . . He must now pull off the national celebrations with appropriate pomp while using them to help consolidate his grip on power.” (Choe Sang-hun and Steven Lee Myers, “North Korea Says It Will Launch Satellite into Orbit,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/17/world/asia/north-korea-satellite-launch-missile-test.html?pagewanted=all>.)
  21. Quoted in a piece for the *Los Angeles Times*, John Delury commented, “‘Why did they make a deal if two weeks later they’re going to scuttle it, without even getting anything out of it? This doesn’t make sense in the standard North Korean playbook.’” From *News from Around the World*, *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 2012, [http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world\\_now/2012/03/despite-food-aid-pact-north-korea-plans-april-satellite-launch.html](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/03/despite-food-aid-pact-north-korea-plans-april-satellite-launch.html).
  22. Li Ji, “Chaoxian Qingzhu Jiefang Zhanzhēng Shengli 59 Zhounian bu Wang Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuan,” *Xinwenwang*, July 28, 2012, <http://www.chinanews.com/gj/2012/07-28/4065080.shtml>.
  23. See Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Removes Its Army Chief from All His Posts,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2012. “‘It is likely that Ri Yong-ho was sacked while resisting the party’s attempt to control the military,’ said Cheong Seong-chang, an analyst at the Sejong Institute. . . . ‘Although Mr. Kim officially stuck to his father’s ‘military-first’ policy, the party’s growing control of the army and the fall of Vice Marshal Ri, a hard-liner, may soften North Korea’s external policy,’ said Mr. Lee, the analyst.” Of course, that softening has not happened. (Sang-hun, “North Korea Removes Its Army Chief from All His Post”) “‘The military has developed a taste for money,’ the website (‘the North Korea Strategic Information Service Center,’ one

- of a group of Internet sites that rely on defectors and their sources within North Korea) quoted Mr. Kim (Jong-un) as saying. ‘From now on, the party and the state will provide bullets and guns for the military, and the military should just focus on how best it can fight.’” (Sang-hun, “North Korea Removes Its Army Chief from All His Posts”) See also “N. Korea Shuts Down Military-controlled Investment Firm,” *Chosun Ilbo*, August 6, 2012. “The *Asahi Shimbun* reported last Thursday that Kim ordered the military not to meddle in efforts to attract foreign capital, and also shut down an organization known as Room 39, which managed former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il’s slush funds and directed businesses earning foreign currency through 17 overseas offices and 100 trade firms under its roof.” (Li, “Chaoxian Qingzhu Jiefang Zhanzhēng Shengli 59 Zhounian bu Wang Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuan”)
24. Ralph A. Cossa, “North Korea Regime Change,” *PacNet* 90, December 16, 2013.
  25. “North Korea Officially Declared Charges against Jang Sung-taek” (in Chinese), *New China Network*, September 9, 2013. Included among the charges is that he is guilty of “betraying the country through selling off cheaply its valuable natural resources.” This, the entire world knows, refers viciously to China. Since then up to now, the Chinese party and government has never in any official occasion publicly used Kim Jong-un’s name, an extraordinary practice unquestionably indicating China’s (and of course Xi Jinping’s) anger and disdain toward him.
  26. “Demanding denuclearization of North Korea is now demanding it change its constitution. . . . It means that they don’t want you to talk about it anymore.” “Observers said the move was an outright rejection of several agreements to denuclearize the North has made with the international community, including the Sept. 19, 2005 agreement during the six-party talks, the Joint Declaration with South Korea in 1991, and an agreement with the US in Geneva in 2000.” Quoted from “North Charter Proclaims Nuke Status,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, May 31, 2012. <http://koreajoongangdaily.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2953705>.
  27. In early April, a few days before North Korea launched the long-range rocket with satellite and a little more than a month after the aborted US-DPRK February 29 agreement, a US team headed by Joseph DeTrani, then in charge of the National Counter Proliferation Center in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, made a secret visit to Pyongyang to try to persuade the regime there not to implement the launching and “encouraging the new leadership to moderate its foreign policy.” “‘I was initially guardedly optimistic that [Kim Jong Un] was moving in the right direction,’ DeTrani said later. ‘With the launches and the test, he’s reversed that.’” (Ken Dilanian and Barbara Demick, “Secret US North Korea Diplomatic Trips Reported,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 2013.)
  28. Calum MacLeod, “North Korea Experts See Repercussions in Rocket’s Success,” *USA Today*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2012/12/11/south-korea-north-korea-rocket/1762567/>. The article quotes this author as saying in a telephone interview, “This time, just like previous times, all international pressure on North Korea, including Chinese, is ineffective. They are themselves, and they love their rocket, missile and nuclear programs[.]”

29. “Han Mei Cheng Zhongguo 3 Ci Zhaojian Chaoxian Shijia Wei Neng Quanzu He Shiyan,” *Xinwen Zhongxin* (Sina.com.cn), February 8, 2013, <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/sd/2013-02-08/121826240284.shtml>. Author’s translation: “[The DPRK ambassador was said to retort during the summoning, “Conducting a nuclear test is North Korea’s independent right, against which China has no right to interfere.]”
30. “Chaoxian Fashi yao Gaohe Shiyan: Mou Daguo Xiang Muou Hutu Paoqi Yuanze,” *ifeng.com*, January 25, 2013, [http://news.ifeng.com/world/detail\\_2013\\_01/25/21599250\\_0.shtml](http://news.ifeng.com/world/detail_2013_01/25/21599250_0.shtml).
31. “Wai Mei: Chaoxian Yi Zhihui Zhongguo Jinnian Zai Heshi 1 zhi 2 Ci bing Fashe Daodan,” *ifeng.com*, February 16, 2013, [http://news.ifeng.com/world/special/chaoxiansanheshi/content-3/detail\\_2013\\_02/16/22159257\\_0.shtml](http://news.ifeng.com/world/special/chaoxiansanheshi/content-3/detail_2013_02/16/22159257_0.shtml).
32. “North Korea Approves Nuclear Strike on US,” *Yonhap News Agency*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/yonhap-news-agency/130403/nk-military-actions-0>.
33. “Chaoxian Waiwu Sheng Jianyi Waiguo Zhu Chao Shiguan Cheli,” *Xinhua.net*, April 5, 2013. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/video/2013-04/07/c\\_124546516.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/video/2013-04/07/c_124546516.htm).
34. Li Yongzhong and Cai Bingjian [Lee, Young-jong, Chae, Byung-gun], “Chaoxian xiang Donghai Yidong Daodan Miaozhun Guandao,” *Zhongyang Ribao Xinwen Zhongxin* [*JoongAng Ilbo*], April 5, 2013, [http://chinese.join.com/gb/article.do?art\\_id=102091&method=detail](http://chinese.join.com/gb/article.do?art_id=102091&method=detail).
35. Choi Jung-yoon, “North Korea Analyst: ‘One of the Most Dangerous Moments,’” *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/02/world/la-fg-wn-north-korea-danger-20130402.<YES>>
36. As to the latter cause, Agence France-Presse quoted this author as follows: “Mr. Shi said China’s backing for the resolution—it has a veto at the Security Council—was a signal it wants closer ties to Washington as it seeks a rapprochement amid a simmering territorial row with Japan. Last week the US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, issued a veiled warning to Beijing not to challenge Japan’s control of the East China Sea islands that Tokyo calls Senkaku, but which are known as Diaoyu in China. ‘China wants to show a major concession to the US over North Korea, to influence US actions with regards to Sino-Japanese confrontation,’ Mr. Shi said. ‘Otherwise you cannot explain why China suddenly changed its previous behavior. It wants to influence the American position over Diaoyu.’” (“China Urges Patience as North Korea Threatens US with Third Nuclear Test,” *Agence France-Presse*, January 25, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/featured-content/channel-page/news/world/middle-article-list/china-urges-patience-as-north-korea-threatens-us-with-third-nuclear-test>.)
37. “North Korea Began to Meet China’s Unilateral Sanctions,” *DWnews*, March 12, 2013, <http://global.dwnews.com/big5/news/2013-03-12/59154947.html>.
38. “Zhongguo Sida Yinhang Huo yi Zhongduan yu Chaoxian Waimao Yinhang de Jiaoyi,” *Chaoxian Wang* [*Yonhap News*], May 10, 2013, [http://chinese.yonhapnews.co.kr/n\\_international/2013/05/10/8000000000ACK20130510002300881.HTML](http://chinese.yonhapnews.co.kr/n_international/2013/05/10/8000000000ACK20130510002300881.HTML).
39. “Wang Yi Tan Chaoshi Bandao Jushi: Bu Yunxu Zai Zhongguojia Menkou Shenshi,” *China News*, April 6, 2013, <http://www.chinanews.com/gj/2013/04-06/4705490.shtml>.

40. The author was quoted as follows in a piece by Barbara Demick: “It seemed too soon to meet with the North Koreans. . . . They pay nothing for their cheap, friendly words.” See Barbara Demick, “North Korea’s Kim Signals He’s Willing to Talk in Letter to China’s Xi,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/may/24/world/la-fg-wn-china-north-korea-20130524>.
41. “Chinese VP Meets with, Hugs Kim Jong-un,” *Shanghaiist*, July 27, 2013, [http://shanghaiist.com/2013/07/27/chinese\\_vp\\_meets\\_with\\_kim\\_jong\\_un.php](http://shanghaiist.com/2013/07/27/chinese_vp_meets_with_kim_jong_un.php). For the sentence within parentheses, see “China: North Korea’s Kim Jong-un Must Commit to Peace,” *Asia-Pacific Defense Forum*, August 13, 2013, [http://apdforum.com/en\\_GB/article/rmiap/articles/online/features/2013/08/13/china-korea-nukes](http://apdforum.com/en_GB/article/rmiap/articles/online/features/2013/08/13/china-korea-nukes).
42. Seong Yeon-cheol, “Chinese Professor Says Six Party Talks on NK Denuclearization Have Run Their Course,” *The Hankyoreh*, February 20, 2013, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/574744.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/574744.html).
43. See Shi, “China and the North Korea Issue,” 34–35.
44. See the last paragraph of the last section of this essay, “Drastic Policy Transformation: China Facing North Korea with Xi Jinping Addressing Kim Jong-un.”
45. That attack by firing dozens of shells killed two South Korean soldiers and set off an exchange of fire “in one of the most serious clashes between the two sides in decades.” Quoted from Mark McDonald, “‘Crisis Status’ in South Korea after North Shells Island,” *New York Times*, November 23, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/world/asia/24korea.html?pagewanted=all>. As to China’s response to the event and the related complications in China-US and China-DPRK relations, see also Shi Yinong, “New Games in Tightly Fixed Structures: North Korea’s Volatile Desperation and China’s Cornered Strategy,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, 23 (2011), 361–362.
46. This is consistent with what this author advocated emphatically in mid-2009: Author’s translation: [“Some previous (Chinese) practices in dealing with North Korea’s actions damaging East Asian stability should be changed. . . . China’s assistance and leniency alone are unable to bring about in exchange North Korea’s amicability to China. . . . Generally speaking, in deciding China’s attitude and policy toward any country, the primary element or at least one of the major considerations should be latter’s attitude toward China, while China’s policy toward it should aim at, among other purposes, its adopting a sort of attitude compatible with China’s fundamental interest and dignity. To this common sense rule in international relations, North Korea should not be an exception.”] (Shi Yinong, “Zhongguo Ruhe Miandui Chaoxian,” *Xinwen Zhongxin*, June 24, 2009, [http://news.sina.com.cn/c/sd/2009-06-24/105118084301\\_4.shtml](http://news.sina.com.cn/c/sd/2009-06-24/105118084301_4.shtml).)
47. Shi, “Zhongguo Ruhe Miandui Chaoxian,” 44.
48. It should be noted in this connection that no one in the world has referred to the ROK-US military alliance seriously when the US strategic “rebalance” with its China theme is discussed.
49. See Shi Yinong, “Lun Ruhe Renshi he Duidai Chaoxian Heweiji,” *Shibai Zixunwang, Takungpao* (Hong Kong), January 15, 2003. This is the first publicized voice from a Chinese observer to point out and emphasize China’s vital interests in the denuclearization of North Korea, and even more

- importantly, to advocate employing China's economic leverage when necessary to oppose against Pyongyang's nuclear program.
50. Quote from this author in Bill Smith, "Consequences of a Nuclear Test," *Oman Daily Observer*, February 13, 2013.
  51. For example, Xi Jinping himself told Kim's envoy Choe Ryong-hae in late May 2013 that "China's position is very clear: however the situation changes, all concerned parties must insist on the objective of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." ("Xi Jinping Received Kim Jong-un's Envoy," *Xinhuanet*, May 24, 2013, [http://www.hb.xinhuanet.com/2013-05/25/c\\_115907289.htm](http://www.hb.xinhuanet.com/2013-05/25/c_115907289.htm).)
  52. "American officials came away from the Obama-Xi summit believing that China is ready to work more closely with the United States on North Korea than it has in the past. . . . White House national security adviser Tom Donilon told reporters that Obama and Xi 'agreed that North Korea has to denuclearize, that neither country will accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed state and that we would work together to deepen cooperation and dialogue to achieve denuclearization.' Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi told a separate news conference that Xi had told Obama that China and the United States were 'the same in their positions and objectives' on the North Korean nuclear issue." ("Obama and Xi Agree on North Korea, Discuss Cybersecurity at Summit," *Reuters*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.trust.org/item/20130609001139-v3ge9>.)
  53. David Pierson and Ken Dilanian, "North Korea Nuclear Test Irks Ally China," *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 2013, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/north-korea-irks-allies-russia-and-china-with-3rd-nuclear-test/>. This sort of prediction then was definitely not exceptional: "China is frustrated by its lack of influence with North Korea, but . . . he (another quite experienced observer) doesn't expect the new leadership to fundamentally change its support for Pyongyang. However, Beijing might agree to more stringent sanctions to show North Korea it can get tough, he said." The same sort of the faulty prediction also came from the US Government: "Behind the sudden decision to strengthen mainland American defenses against North Korean missiles is a fear that Pyongyang's biggest benefactor, China, may no longer be able to act as a guarantor of baseline stability on the Korean Peninsula." (Ernesto Londoño and Karen DeYoung, "Aggressive Talk from North Korea Concerns US Leaders," *Washington Post*, March 30, 2013, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/aggressive-talk-from-north-korea-concerns-us-leaders/2013/03/29/85dec134-989c-11e2-814b-063623d80a60\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/aggressive-talk-from-north-korea-concerns-us-leaders/2013/03/29/85dec134-989c-11e2-814b-063623d80a60_story.html).)

## North Korea's Security Implications for China

*Zhu Feng and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga*

As the linchpin of future stability in Northeast Asia and dictator of the security posture of the peninsula, the actions of North Korea (DPRK) have immense implications for China's national security and the broader security environment in the region. Beyond the two states on either side of the 38th parallel, China is the most important stakeholder in the final outcome of issues on the Korean peninsula, and thus will continue to be an indispensable actor in any future solution to denuclearization and unification. China's willingness to play a positive role in finding a solution amenable to all parties will, in large part, depend on Beijing's cost-benefit analysis of North Korea's value to China, which, in turn, ultimately rests on the Chinese leadership's assessment of the security implications of North Korea's behavior for China. These implications can be divided into direct and indirect, as well as both positive and negative aspects, for China's leaders to factor into their decision-making process. This chapter will address the security side of the Sino-North Korean relationship by focusing on the rationale behind China's policy; the growing domestic debate over that policy; the evolving security implications of the policy; and how these changes may affect China's policy going forward.

### CHINA'S STRATEGIC CALCULUS

China's North Korea policy is driven primarily by long-standing security concerns over the integral role North Korea plays in China's national security strategy. China's policy is traditionally framed as a combination of historical ties, ideological solidarity, and economic motives, along with a fear of collapse. This is linked to the loss of North Korea as a strategic buffer, a possible influx of refugees and subsequent criminal activity, as well as potential irredentism along the border. However, it is important to consider these concerns in context and reexamine their actual impact on policy debates. Although Chinese and North

Korean leaders routinely couch their pronouncements on the nature of their bilateral relationship in terms of their long-standing friendship, such rhetoric betrays the reality that China-North Korea relations have neither always been very strong nor even friendly.<sup>1</sup> Despite the ostensible similarities between the two communist governments that may foster closer ties, their actual ideology is sharply different, as neither pursues purely socialist economic policies and both have moved away from a traditional Marxist form of government. North Korea's existence as a surviving communist state, despite its status as an international pariah, does serve to partially legitimate the existence of another communist state, China, but this is a secondary benefit beyond China's national security. China's central government certainly has visions of a strengthened North Korean economy, based on a course of reform similar to China's path under Deng Xiaoping, but these economic interests do not drive China's policy at the highest levels of government and certainly do not override security considerations.

Several non-traditional security issues are typically folded into the overall security agenda and are secondary concerns. Although some scenarios of North Korea's collapse estimate the potential influx of North Korean refugees at several hundred thousand, evidence from the Korean War suggests that the Chinese government will take strong measures to limit the population flows across the border.<sup>2</sup> While the Chinese government has not released specific plans for a possible refugee crisis, concerns over refugees seem exaggerated and are unlikely to sway China's decision-makers toward one policy response or another.<sup>3</sup> Discussions of possible irredentism on the part of the Korean ethnic minority along the border following reunification likely overstate the South Korean (ROK) government's willingness to challenge China on border issues. Thus, China's policy is driven primarily by security considerations and must be evaluated on that basis.

These security considerations are integrated into the policy-making process through a select but influential group of actors within the Chinese government. China's North Korea policy is ultimately decided by the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), the Chinese Communist Party's highest decision-making body, currently led by Secretary General Xi Jinping. The PSC's decisions and deliberations are based on recommendations from the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG), currently headed by State Councilor Yang Jiechi.<sup>4</sup> The FALSG serves to coordinate interests among different actors within the Chinese government and has historically included senior members of the military, although its current makeup after the 18th Party Congress in November 2012 is unknown. The main actor with responsibility for China's security is naturally the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Generally regarded as the second most influential actor behind the International Liaison Department (ILD) but ahead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the PLA has direct access to the highest levels of government to voice its stance on the role of North Korea in China's security environment. The other actors responsible for security concerns are the Ministry of State Security, China's intelligence service, and the Ministry of Public Security, China's domestic law enforcement agency, although these organizations have less influence on policy than does the PLA. Another actor that plays an important role in the relationship is China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), which has a high degree of independence to manage Beijing's

trade and investment relations with North Korea. Despite a bilateral trade volume that represents only a small fraction of China's overall foreign trade, Beijing has deliberately used its commercial leverage to exert influence over Pyongyang, giving MOFCOM a role in decision-making on North Korea. The military's privileged access to its North Korean counterparts, coupled with the PLA's increasingly prominent role in the Chinese government's foreign policy decision-making process, positions the PLA as the main actor responsible for interpreting North Korea's geostrategic significance and actions in terms of China's national security interests. Thus, the attitude of the PLA vis-à-vis North Korea issues is a very important barometer of China's policy deliberations. Yet, Xi's position as Secretary General means that he must approve any final policy shift, meaning that his perception of North Korea's value to Chinese security is the single biggest factor in Chinese policy.

This discussion of China's policy formulation and implementation process raises questions about China's recent policy direction and how it relates to security considerations. The Chinese government's continued belief in North Korea's utility as a strategic buffer best explains the absence of a fundamental shift in China's policy, despite a dramatic rise in the costs of this policy choice. Following the Chinese government's decision to continue supporting North Korea after the second nuclear test in 2009, the North has appeared to provide no tangible benefit to China while costing it immensely in the realms of security, international reputation, and even the mounting cost of foreign assistance to the country.<sup>5</sup> China's security environment has been negatively impacted by the United States' increased military presence in Asia tied to its "rebalancing," which has been legitimized by North Korea's continued belligerence in the form of nuclear and missile tests.<sup>6</sup> Yet China's protection of North Korea after the deadly attacks on South Korea in 2010 and steadfast support for the succession to Kim Jong-un suggests the Chinese government, specifically the top leadership, still perceives North Korea as a net security asset. This security balance will be discussed in the core of this chapter.

While many prominent American officials, notably Kurt Campbell, Jon Huntsman, and Christopher Hill, have asserted that the Chinese government began a shift in its approach to North Korea following the third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, there has so far yet to be a discernable fundamental change in China's policy.<sup>7</sup> This is to be expected since China's security environment was not fundamentally transformed as a result of the third nuclear test, despite the US government's attempts to raise the security costs for China's policy through the increased deployment of ballistic missile defense (BMD) assets to Asia.<sup>8</sup>

One possible alternative explanation for the lack of policy change is the substantial bureaucratic inertia created by the increasingly bifurcated policy management system that developed under former president Hu Jintao. The centralized decision-making process and diffuse policy implementation system often renders lower-level officials unable or unwilling to make routine decisions concerning China's relationship with North Korea. This means that China's top leaders have to directly intervene in simple policy matters, such as former President Hu having to personally revise the MOFA statement in response to North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006.<sup>9</sup> However, China's policy appears most responsive toward

North Korean nuclear issues, whether in direct reaction to North Korea's provocations or toward the western response to North Korean actions. This policy responsiveness to nuclear issues demonstrates that the Chinese government is able to overcome bureaucratic inertia in times when security stakes are deemed adequately high. Thus, the role of security considerations as the main issue driving policy and overcoming bureaucratic inertia to spur a policy response, including a possible rethinking of policy, means these security issues must be fully examined to understand China's past, present and future North Korea policy.

The Xi administration has already made some remarkable policy changes and created a "new normal" for the relationship. Since May 2013, Beijing has cut off nearly all high level political contacts with Pyongyang, temporarily suspended and otherwise reduced its oil supply across the border, and even tightened export control restrictions and worked hard to prevent sensitive industrial parts from being exported to the North. President Xi's changes in policy are in response to Kim Jong-un's decision to adopt the "Byungjin Line," which touts pursuing nuclear weapons and economic development at the same time. The younger Kim's new policy is a clear rejection of the decision forced upon Pyongyang by Washington, Seoul, and Beijing—that the Kim family must choose either nuclear weapons or economic development, but not both. Kim's decision to pursue both simultaneously signaled an even greater determination to acquire nuclear weapons, and this security threat drove Beijing and the new Xi administration to partially recalibrate its policy of regular political engagement and generous economic support.

### CHINESE DOMESTIC DEBATE

The policy responsiveness where nuclear issues are concerned suggests that a rethink on policy is possible. Here the Chinese academic community has dominated the public debate on potential new policy directions. Although the public debate has not directly affected the direction of policy, it is a useful barometer for internal debates within decision-making circles. While the Chinese government still sets the limits of this debate through its control of the state-run media, the limits of acceptable discourse have been expanding with each round of North Korean provocation. Furthermore, more Chinese scholars are now taking the debate outside of China to the Chinese-language press in Singapore and English-language press in the West. Of note, the only prominent Chinese government officials to take part in this debate are senior military officials who serve as public faces for the PLA. Some of the more prominent PLA commenters on North Korea include Major General Luo Yuan and Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo, both of whom have made comments highlighting the security considerations dominant in China's debate.<sup>10</sup> One result has been that security issues have featured prominently in the government-sanctioned domestic Chinese media debate, since neither the ILD nor MOFA injects their own top leaders into the public arena.

The growing bounds of debate are best exemplified by two distinct responses to critical articles about North Korea from within the Chinese academic community. As mentioned in the introduction to this volume, in 2004, the Chinese academic journal *Strategy and Management (Zhanlue yu Guanli)* was shut

down after running an article by Wang Zhongwen that criticized China's policy and North Korea's actions.<sup>11</sup> However, in 2013, numerous Chinese academics penned articles calling for China to abandon North Korea, most notably, Fudan University professor Shen Dingli, without repercussion.<sup>12</sup> The one notable exception was the suspension of Deng Yuwen, deputy editor of the *Study Times* journal under the Central Party School, for publishing a similar critique to that of Shen in the *Financial Times*.<sup>13</sup> Yet it is understood Deng was likely punished for publishing on an area outside of his expertise, not specifically for the views actually aired. Furthermore, the Chinese state-run media has increasingly printed more direct and critical articles about North Korea, ranging from coverage of North Korea's drug smuggling into China to harsh criticism over the kidnappings of Chinese fisherman in May 2012 and again in May 2013.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the increasingly open environment within China for an objective discussion of China's North Korea policy, the Chinese government does not appear to have been influenced by growing calls by Chinese academics for a change in policy. This is despite the fact that academics and policy makers within China are increasingly questioning the value of North Korea as a strategic buffer, with some asking if North Korea has become a strategic burden for China.<sup>15</sup>

Participants in this debate are usually categorized as "traditionalists," who believe North Korea retains its value as a strategic buffer, versus "strategists," who believe North Korea's value is diminishing and is quickly becoming a strategic burden.<sup>16</sup> However, the diversity of the domestic debate is better captured as representing four separate schools: Nationalists, Realists, Internationalists, and Liberalists.<sup>17</sup> While this discussion is mainly addressed publicly by academics and the media, this general delineation provides insight into divergent opinions within the Chinese government. The Nationalists still believe in the traditional expression of China-North Korea relations as one of "lips and teeth," denoting the two countries' interdependence and North Korea's role as China's buffer against US troops in South Korea.<sup>18</sup> They value the historical link between the two countries, dating from China's sacrifices during the Korean War, and want to continue the relationship as before. The Realists maintain that Pyongyang is still a strategic asset to China, so Beijing must protect the DPRK and ensure that China does not lose this asset to the United States. They regard the regime's nuclear program as a failure of Chinese policy linked to excessively close ties to the United States—not as an irresponsible initiative by Kim Jong-il. The Internationalists focus on the negative effects of North Korea's behavior on China's national interests and the damage done to China's international reputation from supporting Kim Jong-un throughout his provocations. They advocate utilizing Chinese leverage over North Korea while China still has the opportunity before reunification under the South inevitably occurs. The Liberalists for their part draw upon humanitarian arguments to reject North Korea's value to China, either as a strategic buffer or for any other strategic purpose. They advocate an immediate shift away from the Kim regime and toward a policy focused on improving the lives of average North Korean people.

In light of these schools, the ILD generally reflects the Nationalist view of North Korea and the PLA often reflects both the Nationalist and Realist views,

while MOFA leans toward the Internationalist view. However, it is impossible to categorize a whole bureaucracy neatly under one school, since senior officials in each bureaucracy may hold different views. As this diversity of views reveals there is no single coherent view of North Korea; this also complicates China's policy, since there is frequent disagreement over policy direction.

One noteworthy trend is that more Chinese scholars and retired military officers are openly criticizing China's inability to denuclearize North Korea and voicing their disapproval of Kim Jong-un's "cult of personality" and the Kim family's desperate attempts to maintain their control over the North's political system. For the first time, the majority of the Chinese public and Chinese analysts believe North Korea is more "troublesome" and a "burden" than an "asset," politically or strategically. General Wang Hongguang, a former Deputy Commander of the Nanjing Military Region, openly articulated his belief that China should not fight a "second Korean War" if the United States and South Korea attack the North.<sup>19</sup> Mr. Ding Dong, a well-known Chinese internet commentator, has explicitly called for Beijing to stop supporting North Korea unless the Kim Jong-un regime gives up its nuclear weapons and reforms the country as China did under Deng Xiaoping.<sup>20</sup>

This change in Chinese public and elite opinion places serious pressure on Chinese policy makers for North Korea issues. Chinese President Xi Jinping has stated that his foreign policies should conform to the will of the Chinese people, and he certainly understands the changing tone of Chinese commentary towards China's reclusive and isolated neighbor. Yet, China's domestic debate over North Korea policy is not solely one of growing criticism, but it also includes some analysts staunchly in favor of continued support of the North. These commentators desire to "embrace" the young Kim Jong-un and have China walk "hand-in-hand" with North Korea and contend that Beijing and Pyongyang's traditional friendship of fighting the United States means China cannot abandon its ally.<sup>21</sup>

## CHINA'S SECURITY STAKE IN NORTH KOREA

China's involvement in Korean peninsula affairs derives from its historical ties, alliance with the DPRK, growing influence in the region, and security concerns about the peninsula. During China's dynastic era, the Korean peninsula was within China's sphere of influence and many Korean kingdoms were considered tributary states of Chinese dynasties.<sup>22</sup> Although China lost influence over the peninsula with its defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the subsequent Treaty of Shimonoseki, China forcefully sought to reassert its historical influence and protect the fledgling state of New China in the Korean War of 1950–1953, known in China as the "War to Resist America, Assist Korea."<sup>23</sup> China's involvement in and security considerations during the Korean War largely set the tone for contemporary Chinese views of the Korean peninsula today.<sup>24</sup> China is also one of three signatories to the 1953 armistice agreement that brought an end to the war, along with the United States and North Korea, meaning that Beijing must be an integral part of any discussions to change the armistice to a peace treaty, which would likely come with the

normalization of relations between the DPRK and the United States. China's treaty alliance with North Korea, dating back to 1961, enhances China's role on the Korean peninsula because China is legally bound to defend North Korea in the event of an attack on the North, and could even possibly be drawn into a war on North Korea's behalf, in a repeat of the Korean War.<sup>25</sup> This threat of unintended war due to an irresponsible ally requires China to be party to any discussions concerning the future of North Korea, as China is the ultimate guarantor of North Korea's security and existence. Thus, China's own security is closely intertwined with that of North Korea.

China's rising influence in Asia is the newest factor in its security stake on the peninsula, highlighted by its leading role in both the creation, and the failure, of the Six-party talks. The Six-party talks were born out of North Korea's second withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003 and marked steps toward testing a nuclear weapon. While China had played a limited and passive role in the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1994, beginning in 2003 the Hu Jintao administration actively promoted the Six-party talks and acted as host and lead mediator between the United States and North Korea.<sup>26</sup> However, China was unable to get the Talks resumed following the North's second nuclear tests in 2009 and has so far been unable to revive them—even after the 2010 attacks and the third nuclear test in 2013. China's rising influence, combined with an unwillingness to actively respond to the North's provocations, has resulted in a seemingly unconquerable inertia for a resumption of the talks, since the United States and its allies can no longer act on North Korean issues without China's involvement.<sup>27</sup> China's historical ties, alliance relationship, and rising influence means China is a natural participant in the events on the peninsula and, furthermore, China's security is impacted by the actions of the North Korean government.

The security implications for China of its relationship with North Korea can be divided into both direct and indirect, as well as positive and negative impacts. Western officials and academia often focus on the negative impacts, both direct and indirect, to advocate for changes in Chinese policy, since they believe the policy does not serve China's national interests.<sup>28</sup> Chinese scholars acknowledge these negative impacts and Chinese officials understand these drawbacks to their current policy.<sup>29</sup> Yet, China's policymakers have evidently decided to concentrate on the positive effects, both direct and indirect, with the purpose of continuing to support their ally (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1** Matrix of security implications

	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<i>Direct</i>	Security buffer	Unintended war, endangers Chinese citizens, refugee issues, crime, nuclear blackmail, illicit nuclear proliferation
<i>Indirect</i>	Bargaining leverage	Ballistic missile defense, regional nuclear proliferation, regional arms race, damaged credibility, legitimizes US "rebalancing"

## POSITIVE DIRECT SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

The most important security concern driving China's policy remains China's view of North Korea as a comprehensive strategic buffer. This perception stems from the Korean peninsula's role as the traditional battleground, both literally and figuratively, for influence in Northeast Asia and the historical memory of the era of Japanese domination of Asia, including China, following the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and Japan's subsequent annexation of Korea. More recently, China's experience during the Korean War left an indelible and enduring association between North Korea's continued existence and utility as a military buffer state with China's own security.<sup>30</sup> Now, North Korea represents a political and security buffer between the United States and China, and the Kim regime acts as a bulwark against unification with a South Korea allied with the United States, which would possibly lead to US troops returning to the Chinese border.<sup>31</sup>

This concept of North Korea as a buffer state is increasingly questioned by Chinese academics and officials, however. While some fervent supporters of North Korea remain convinced of its value, many of the calls for a rethink in policy are focused on challenging the underlying assumption of North Korea as a military buffer. Following, North Korea's third nuclear test in 2013, Peking University professor and Dean of its School of International Studies Jia Qingguo commented:

[North Korea is not China's property, so it is not a question of abandonment. In an era without fighter jets and missiles, foreign powers thinking of invading China used to come through North Korea, so North Korea had a high value as a strategic buffer. But the current era has witnessed change and North Korea's value to China as a strategic buffer is not at all what it used to be].<sup>32</sup>

This echoes one senior Chinese official who revealed that the 2013 meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) discussed "whether to 'keep or dump' North Korea and debated whether China, as a major power, should 'fight or talk' with the North."<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the Chinese military has a decreasing institutional incentive to support a country whose actions are directly leading to a security environment that is detrimental to China's national security and interests in the region. In the Chinese military, the PLA Army is the likeliest branch to support the DPRK's status as a strategic buffer in an attempt to maintain its share of the military's budget by emphasizing the risk of a land war over the Korean peninsula, the most likely land-fighting scenario for China in the foreseeable future. However, the PLA Navy and Air Force's war fighting capabilities and operational style mean they see little value in North Korea as a strategic buffer in the event of another conflict over the Korean peninsula. Their focus on protecting China's maritime territorial claims and projecting China's military force abroad leaves them little reason to focus on North Korea. The Second Artillery, China's nuclear forces, suffer the most from North Korea's provocations because the DPRK's nuclear and missile tests justify

the increased deployment of US military assets in the region. Most notably this includes US ballistic missile defense, which potentially weakens China's second-strike capability and thus gives the Second Artillery an institutional incentive to advocate for China to reign in the North or even move away from the DPRK as a strategic buffer, since it no longer serves that purpose for China's nuclear forces. While US ballistic missile defense capabilities may also serve the Second Artillery's interests by justifying its modernization efforts, the authors' interviews with PLA officers suggest the Second Artillery is generally the most critical and least supportive of North Korea.

Nevertheless, the overall continuity in China's policy of support suggests the view of North Korea as a strategic buffer continues to factor heavily into the strategic calculus of China's foreign policy decision makers.<sup>34</sup> This buffer is now strategic in a political sense, as it provides China leverage over the United States on other issues in the US-China relationship. Furthermore, the United States' "rebalancing" has likely raised North Korea's strategic value to China, since China-North Korea ties improve when China-US ties wither. This has likely strengthened the hand of the Nationalists and Realists, and it is unlikely that China will actively or lightly allow North Korea to drift into the US sphere of influence unless US and Chinese leaders make significant headway toward allaying their mutual strategic mistrust.<sup>35</sup>

## NEGATIVE DIRECT SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Due to North Korea's recurrent belligerence, the western press gives the greatest amount of attention to the direct negative security implications of China's relationship with North Korea, including an unintended war and the North's endangering the safety of Chinese citizens. The most devastating direct implication for China's security of its ties to North Korea is that the North could drag China into a war. The most likely scenario for an outbreak of war on the peninsula would start with a North Korean provocation destabilizing the peninsula and subsequent missteps, miscommunication, and miscalculation that would end with South Korean retaliation and quickly devolve into conflict. Such a scenario could closely resemble the events of 2010, when the initial North Korean attack on the *Cheonan*, a South Korean naval frigate, went unanswered and put pressure on the South Korean government to act when the North attacked again in November.<sup>36</sup> While South Korea showed incredible restraint in resisting retaliation, the South, then under former President Lee Myung-bak's leadership, reportedly decided to retaliate against Pyongyang if a third attack were to have occurred.<sup>37</sup> Lee's successor, President Park Geun-hye, appears likely to pursue a similarly active response policy, with vows for a "strong response" if North Korea attacked, following Pyongyang's March 2013 statement that the North had entered a "state of war."<sup>38</sup> Action by Seoul across the 38th parallel would force both Washington and Beijing to decide whether to support their respective allies and intervene in another war on the Korean peninsula, or disregard their legally binding security obligations by not intervening.

The looming question for China as it considers going to war on behalf of North Korea again is its 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Assistance with North Korea. Originally signed during the Cold War as evidence of communist solidarity, China and North Korea most recently renewed the alliance treaty in 2001, extending its validity to 2021.<sup>39</sup> Despite this superficial continuity of support, China has waxed ambiguous in response to questions of China's legal responsibility and willingness to fulfill the terms of the treaty. One scholar asserted that "since the mid-1990s Beijing has made clear to Pyongyang that China will not come to North Korea's aid if Kim Jong-il gets himself in hot water."<sup>40</sup> Other scholars have noted that, "PRC lawyers are reportedly taking a 'careful look' at the treaty to find ways of eliminating the automaticity of the security and military commitments in a way that would not severely anger the DPRK."<sup>41</sup> Drawing on his personal knowledge, one scholar claimed further that, "it is probably a foregone conclusion for the North that the Chinese would not do much to help in the case of war."<sup>42</sup> Reportedly, former President Hu conveyed to the North that "if Pyongyang went nuclear, the 1961 Sino-North Korean treaty would be declared null and void and that economic aid and critical fuel supplies would be at risk."<sup>43</sup> While Hu reportedly cut off oil supplies in 2003 for three days with similar reports after the 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests, he did not follow-up on his alleged promise to void the treaty, leaving the Chinese government's view of the treaty a very important factor for war planning on all sides.<sup>44</sup>

North Korea's two deadly attacks against the South in 2010 brought the two Koreas, and by extension their treaty-bound allies, China and the United States, to the precipice of war. After North Korea shelled Yeonpyong Island on November 24, 2010 and killed two South Korean soldiers and two civilians, the first such civilian deaths since the end of the Korean War, the South Korean government launched fighter jets in preparation for an attack on the DPRK. Yet, while the South Koreans spoke with their US counterparts and were eventually talked down, Chinese officials were in no such contact with the North Koreans, their ostensible treaty ally. When Chinese officials were informed of the close ROK-US crisis dialogue, they were stunned and relayed to their US interlocutors that no such conversations happened with their counterparts.<sup>45</sup> This continued a disturbing trend of little proactive communication from Pyongyang to Beijing on critical national security matters.

North Korea's lack of communication with Beijing could have serious consequences for Beijing's ability to avert a future conflict on the Korean peninsula. North Korea only advised China of its plans 20 minutes before it conducted its first nuclear test in 2006.<sup>46</sup> For the North's second nuclear test in 2009, China was warned just 30 minutes beforehand.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the United States knew of the North's intention to conduct the April 2012 missile test before China.<sup>48</sup> In the event of a war, North Korea's past track record suggests China will receive little warning and thus its decision-making process will be rushed, increasing the possibility that Beijing could make its own mistaken judgments and calculations. Indeed, even for the Korean War, the crucible that forged the bond between China and North Korea, Chairman Mao Zedong was not informed of

the specific outbreak of the war ahead of time, though Kim Il-sung briefed him personally on the general war plan a month earlier during his visit to Beijing in May 1950.<sup>49</sup> Limited decision-making time also means less time for direct dialogue between Washington and Beijing to avert a larger war and to coordinate how to reel in their respective allies on the peninsula.

The security implications of an all-out war with the United States would be devastating. The United States is treaty-bound to support Seoul and likely to uphold its obligations to the South, due to the 28,500 US troops stationed on the southern half of the peninsula. This would threaten China's security regardless of China's opinion of its treaty with the North, requiring China to make a major decision about whether to fulfill its treaty obligation and potentially face off against the United States on the Korean peninsula once again. While all sides wish to avoid this worst-case scenario, China's hesitancy heretofore to engage the United States and South Korea officials in Track 1 or even Track 1.5 dialogue on sensitive issues regarding the Korean peninsula, such as collapse scenario planning, presents a worrying image of a China too insecure to engage on necessary discussions of what is to most observers an inevitable event—unification. This is regrettable as this dialogue could reduce mistrust and work to potentially avoid worst-case scenarios.

One of the biggest recent threats from North Korea to China's security was the rushed succession from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un. Brought on by Kim Jong-il's stroke in 2008, Kim Jong-un only had a little more than a year of public grooming before his father's passing. This is in contrast to Kim Jong-il's 14 years of tutelage under his own father, Kim Il-sung. Many scholars trace China's support for the succession to the second half of 2009, often specifically highlighting Wen Jiabao's visit to Pyongyang in October 2009, as the defining moment when Chinese leaders realized Kim Jong-il was very ill and decided to support the transition to Kim Jong-un. China's support for the recent succession represented a changed policy from the first succession, as Mao refused to acknowledge Kim Jong-il as heir and Deng Xiaoping merely gave his tepid endorsement only after Kim Il-sung's repeated requests.<sup>50</sup> The unprecedented extent of China's high-level public and active support for the North Korean succession suggests the Chinese government identified it as a key security issue for China, namely a threat to the continuity of the Kim regime, and thereby a threat to a pro-China North Korea and stability on the peninsula and in the region. This association of a successful transition with peace and stability in the region led Beijing to support the succession in part to ensure China's own security, especially given its timing ahead of a sensitive period of domestic political transition at home from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping at the 18th Party Congress, held in November 2012. The security-focused nature of China's support for the transition is further evident in the prominent role played by Zhou Yongkang, the PSC member in charge of China's domestic security, to convey China's favor of Kim Jong-un.<sup>51</sup>

While some scholars predicted that Kim Jong-un's ascent to the throne in Pyongyang would herald a relaxing of tensions due to his greater exposure to the West, pointing in particular to his schooling in Switzerland, North Korea's actions following Kim Jong-il's death suggest the succession has had a limited

impact on North Korea's foreign policy and national security decision-making. Despite Kim Jong-un's purges, most notably of his uncle Jang Sung-taek, which were viewed as steps to consolidate power in the ruling system, the same general trend of policy has emerged.<sup>52</sup> Thus, China has so far avoided another short-term threat to its security by supporting Kim Jong-un, but the new Kim's continued belligerence may jeopardize China's security in the long-term.

One increasingly important issue for China is the nuclear fallout from North Korea's nuclear tests. North Korea's nuclear test site, Punggye-ri, is only 50 miles away from the Chinese border. Nuclear tests therefore pose a threat to Chinese citizens, with radioactive fallout depending on North Korea's containment precautions and the wind direction following a test.<sup>53</sup> Previous nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 caused severe environmental damage to Changbaishan (or Baekdu Mountain), the shared mountain along the border.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, North Korea's development of its purported satellite program, assumed by the United States and others to be a covert attempt to develop ballistic missile technology ultimately intended to target the continental United States, threatens Chinese citizens.<sup>55</sup> North Korea has conducted some of its satellite launches from the West coast site of Sohae, only 30 miles from the Chinese port city of Dandong, and most recently aimed its December 2012 missile south toward the Philippines, traveling within Chinese territory and close to the Diaoyu Islands and Taiwan.<sup>56</sup> The utter failure of the April 2012 missile that reportedly exploded 81 seconds into flight revealed North Korea had yet to perfect its rocket science and one missile could, unintentionally, land in or disintegrate over Chinese territory.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the Chinese government, spearheaded by the PLA Navy, is increasing operations in the South China Sea and near Japan, as well as eventually in the far seas with China's new aircraft carrier, the Liaoning. This further exposes Chinese government personnel to the potential dangers of North Korean missile launches. This threat extends to Chinese civilians involved in China's growing fishing and other maritime industries, including oil and gas exploration and survey teams operating in the South China Sea. This threat is accentuated by the North Korean government's decision not to inform the Chinese government of its plans, illustrated by both the April and December 2012 missile tests, purposely providing no warning time to potentially affected Chinese government personnel and civilians.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, the DPRK informed Evans Revere, a former US Department of State official, of its intention to launch three months before it did so in April 2012.<sup>59</sup>

These two offensive capabilities, *de facto* nuclear weapons and a demonstrated ability to launch a missile with payload into space, afford North Korea a strong deterrent capability against perceived US aggression. This formidable deterrent also creates an asymmetrical ability to use conventional forces in provocative attacks without fear of South Korean retribution, highlighted by the 2010 attacks on the *Cheonan*, and Yeonpyong Island. However, these capabilities are not limited to being directed at North Korea's current adversaries, namely the United States, Japan and South Korea.

North Korea, under duress, could direct these capabilities toward China. However unlikely this scenario, the reality of China-North Korea distrust and

occasional animosity suggests there may be certain conditions under which Pyongyang may consider using these weapons against China. The issue of nuclear blackmail has been raised by Central Party School professor Zhang Liangui, among other Chinese scholars, in response to the North's first nuclear test.<sup>60</sup> North Korea could threaten China if Beijing moves away from its support of the North, or if, during regime-threatening unrest in North Korea, China decided to support a South-led unification on Chinese terms.<sup>61</sup> While North Korea's response to these two theoretical changes in Chinese policy remains unknown, the possibility exists that North Korea would likely consider any significant withdrawal of Chinese support as betrayal and may seek revenge against China. Another possibility is North Korea simply attacking China as the regime collapses, when the Kim family has nothing to lose.

Another danger posed by North Korea is the threat of nuclear proliferation, whether purposeful or unintentional, especially in the event of regime collapse or significant instability. In the case of regime collapse, the nuclear material would likely be smuggled out through China, with the possibility of the Kim family or rogue North Korean military generals on the run with nuclear weapons, or the weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.<sup>62</sup> Worse yet, North Korea's nuclear material could be sold to the highest bidder by the Kim family to raise money to fund their government. North Korea has already demonstrated complete disregard for the international norm of non-proliferation, first by twice pulling out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and then by selling nuclear technology to Libya, Syria and Iran, as well as possibly Burma.<sup>63</sup> While China has not faced the same level of terrorist threat as the West, the Chinese government is concerned about potential threats from certain domestic groups and would be fundamentally opposed to any of these groups, including separatists and terrorists, acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the possible nuclear proliferation by North Korea presents a looming problem for China's security.

Recent brazen direct attacks on Chinese security interests and civilians reveal the increasingly less risk-averse nature of the Kim Jong-un regime and rising potential for increasingly costly non-traditional security threats emanating from North Korea. While an errant missile hitting Chinese fishermen in the South China Sea is very unlikely, North Korea did directly put Chinese fishermen in harm's way in 2012 and again in 2013. The May 2012 kidnapping of 29 Chinese fishermen aboard three fishing boats in an area of the Yellow Sea between China and North Korea threw into stark relief, for the average Chinese citizen, the direct costs of China's support for North Korea.<sup>65</sup> This scene repeated itself almost exactly a year later when another Chinese fishing boat was hijacked for ransom in May 2013.<sup>66</sup> The North Korean government was never directly implicated by official Chinese government statements as the orchestrator or perpetrator of the attack and the ordeal was handled delicately by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, in 2013 the state-run *Global Times* newspaper suggested the perpetrators were from the North Korean military.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, the fishermen were freed but it is unclear if the Chinese government or others paid the initial ransom demand of over USD 150,000 in 2012 or nearly USD 100,000 in

2013.<sup>68</sup> This episode serves as a reminder that, while North Korea is beholden to China economically and diplomatically, the North is still fervently independent, as expressed in its *Juche* ideology, and it does not mind biting the hand that feeds it to make money or drive home political messages to Beijing. The 2012 kidnapping transpired shortly after North Korea's first failed missile test in April and the 2013 incident followed China's support for a new round of United Nations (UN) sanctions, leading some to believe this was North Korea's retaliation for China's criticism.<sup>69</sup>

This issue of state-sanctioned crime raises the larger question of criminal activity originating in the North. The increasing influx of refugees, referred to as economic migrants by China, fleeing North Korea into Northeast China has led to social stability issues, which Chinese leaders fear and treat as a security issue.<sup>70</sup> The massive refugee community in Northeast China, mostly concentrated in Jilin province's Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture due to shared linguistic, cultural, and even familial ties, has been tied to illegal criminal activity.<sup>71</sup> Most detrimental to China's social stability is the criminal gang activity and associated drug smuggling, which may have North Korean state backing.<sup>72</sup> Drug use in China along the border has increased dramatically in recent years, largely thanks to an increase in North Korea-produced crystal meth.<sup>73</sup> Beyond drug smuggling, illegal border trade is significant and, at one point in the mid-2000s, was estimated to surpass official trade; however, this illegal market activity is a greater concern for North Korea than it is for China.<sup>74</sup> There is also the issue of human trafficking, mainly of North Korean female refugees sold as brides to poor Chinese men in the Northeast.<sup>75</sup> Beyond this, North Korean spies have reportedly been caught by South Korea after laundering fake US dollars for Chinese currency in Northeast China.<sup>76</sup> These issues of North Korean criminal activity extending into China, especially state-sponsored crime, affect China's overall domestic security situation.

The issue of refugees, especially a worst-case scenario involving a massive influx following a collapse of the North Korean state, factors into China's security decision-making to a limited degree.<sup>77</sup> The PLA has reportedly conducted drills in Northeast China along the border that appear to be preparations for collapse scenario planning.<sup>78</sup> The Chinese government also reportedly plans to invest USD 10 billion in infrastructure, including roads, in areas close to the border.<sup>79</sup> This infrastructure investment could facilitate PLA troop movements, similar to development projects in Tibet as directed against India.<sup>80</sup> While Chinese media reports do not decisively indicate the Chinese government, or the PLA, has begun earnest preparations for North Korea's collapse, the Chinese military will be eager to ensure stability, prevent a refugee influx, and secure loose nuclear material.<sup>81</sup> A massive refugee influx would challenge the Northeast provinces' capabilities to ensure adequate food, shelter, and services and maintain social stability. This issue is thus intimately linked to Chinese efforts to encourage North Korean economic reform and provide food aid, since, as one North Korean official defiantly told his Chinese counterpart, "You can either feed them in our country or yours."<sup>82</sup> China is unlikely to internationalize the human security issues for a refugee crisis response, so China's response will likely

be focused first on addressing China's strategic and security concerns, and only then secondarily aimed at solving issues for the refugees.

The direct security implications of China's relationship with the North are mostly tolerable costs incurred while China ensures North Korea's existence as a strategic buffer—its most valuable direct security benefit to China.

### POSITIVE INDIRECT SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Beyond the direct impact on China's security, North Korea's own actions and China's relationship with its ally also carry indirect implications for China in the context of the broader regional security environment in Northeast Asia. These indirect implications include benefits involving leverage over other regional players on issues concerning the Korean peninsula but also carry such negative consequences as missile defense development and possible nuclear proliferation to South Korea and Japan, isolating China from its neighbors in Seoul and Tokyo by damaging China's credibility as a responsible power and legitimizing the United States' return to Asia. While these issues present less direct costs for China's security, they nevertheless still pose a pressing challenge to China's diplomacy in the region.

One indirect benefit of China's relationship with the North is that China can utilize the relationship to gain leverage over other regional players, including the United States. Under skillful diplomacy, China could agree to exert more pressure on North Korea in return for US cooperation on other issues of concern for China. This was the outline for a deal reportedly struck in 2004 during the Six-party talks, when the Bush administration agreed to reign in former Taiwanese President Chen Shuibian's talk of independence in return for China pushing North Korea in negotiations, through officials on both sides deny such a deal.<sup>83</sup> The United States' heavy emphasis on the North Korean security threat and frequently pronounced expectations of China's positive role in the conflict without repercussions for China's lack of assistance on the issue, coupled with apparent US inability to successfully deal directly with North Korea, means the United States has allowed China to seize the initiative on the issue of North Korea. This is embodied in President Barack Obama's statement that China's lack of response to the *Cheonan* sinking was "willful blindness"; yet China faced no public consequences for its lack of action.<sup>84</sup> The United States' tentative "Leap Day" agreement with the North on February 29, 2012—negotiated in Beijing—that stipulated US food aid in exchange for North Korea's cessation of nuclear and missile testing, failed when the North conducted its April 2012 missile test, which the United States believed was expressly forbidden in the agreement.<sup>85</sup> The United States appears content to resigning itself to the notion that any deal with Pyongyang goes through Beijing, allowing Beijing to set the tone for discussions. China's support for North Korea remains an important but dangerously complicated trump card that China holds yet will be unlikely to play, unless a regional crisis alters China's strategic calculus as to the value of North Korea. While China has been very reluctant to exercise the full extent of its true influence over the North thus far, this presents China with an opportunity

to use the United States' dependence on China's cooperation on North Korea toward China's broader negotiations with the United States.<sup>86</sup>

China could exert this influence on a number of possible issues. One area for China to exercise its leverage is over the increasing desire by both Japan and South Korea for greater US support of an Asian missile defense system. China can also dangle greater cooperation with the United States over North Korea crisis planning, which the United States highly values. Although very unlikely, China could also cede its support of North Korea conditioned on an agreement with the United States. While this would, from a Chinese perspective, undermine China's position on the Korean peninsula and limit China's influence over Northeast Asian security issues, it would surely bolster China's international image and improve relations with both South Korea and Japan. China could be interested if it involved the right deal on Taiwan with the United States.

China has implicitly linked Taiwan and North Korea, enabling a double-edged sword of positive and negative outcomes. As Fudan University professor Shen Dingli asserts, "From China's strategic perspective, Taiwan and North Korea are intrinsically linked."<sup>87</sup> The biggest advantage the linkage affords China is the threat of Chinese action on Taiwan if the United States or its allies ever initiated action against North Korea contrary to China's interests. This also means that if a US-China conflict began over Taiwan, the Chinese government could use North Korea as a distraction for US troops in the region. Despite the possible leverage afforded by its relationship with the North, China has been unable, to date, to exploit this for any substantial positive gains in its relations with other regional players.

### NEGATIVE INDIRECT SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

In light of the DPRK's two missile tests in 2012, plans for increased cooperation between South Korea and Japan on a US-supported missile defense system in Asia have highlighted the indirect negative costs of China's support.<sup>88</sup> North Korea's increasingly successful development of its missile program is viewed as a pressing national security threat in both Seoul and Tokyo, as well as in Washington.<sup>89</sup> South Korea and Japan look to the United States for protection against this threat, ideally in the form of a missile defense system, although South Korea has reportedly also started developing its own system and has backed out of the US-led effort.<sup>90</sup> The US-based system has obvious implications for China's Second Artillery, as a working missile defense system would limit the value of China's nuclear weapons and possibly force China to alter its nuclear strategy. Dr. Jeffrey Bader, former senior director for East Asian affairs on the National Security Council during President Obama's first term, writes in his book documenting his time under Obama that "while this missile defense capability would not be aimed at degrading China's modest nuclear deterrent force, it would inevitably have some effect in that regard."<sup>91</sup> China, and especially the Second Artillery, is strongly opposed to the development of a missile defense system in China's backyard.<sup>92</sup> Yet, North Korea's actions legitimate the US program. Furthermore, South Korea has reportedly also requested

surveillance drones from the United States with the intention of using them over North Korea.<sup>93</sup> However, these drones could obviously also be used across the border in China, and thus affect China's security as well. Japan has also cited North Korea's actions as a reason for its increasingly robust military posture under new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, US military exercises in the region directed against North Korea are often treated as a threat to China's security. As noted by PLA commentators Luo Yuan and Yin Zhuo in their discussion of joint exercises with South Korea in June 2010, the George Washington carrier's deployment in the Yellow Sea posed a threat to Beijing and Tianjin.<sup>95</sup> The US government's intention of making this security cost obvious to China is evident in the statement by former Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg that "China is suffering the indignity of exercises close to its shores, and though they are not directed at China, the exercises are a direct result of China's support for North Korea and unwillingness to denounce their aggression."<sup>96</sup> Thus, North Korea's search for its own security is hurting the security situation of its one remaining ally, China.

Another worrisome effect on China's security situation is the possible development of nuclear weapons capability by South Korea or Japan in response to the DPRK's successful tests.<sup>97</sup> Despite China's inability to dissuade North Korea from acquiring a nuclear weapon, China remains firmly against the North's nuclear program and nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia. The lingering sentiment of Japan's WWII atrocities combined with China's surging nationalism, often directed at Japan during increasingly common flare-ups over the Diaoyu Islands, also known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan, means that China is unlikely to tolerate any efforts by Japan to acquire a weaponized nuclear capability. The Chinese government was reportedly very concerned with this possibility after the first North Korean nuclear test in 2006.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, part of China's opposition to a unified Korean peninsula under the South, beyond its alliance with the United States, is the possible outcome of South Korea inheriting North Korea's nuclear weapons program.<sup>99</sup> South Korea's development of a nuclear program would expedite this problem for China, and South Korea's checkered history of covertly pursuing a nuclear program does not ease concerns. However, Beijing believes that Seoul and Tokyo trust the US nuclear umbrella and thus have so far decided against nuclear proliferation.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, nuclear proliferation by other countries in Northeast Asia is an unlikely problem in the foreseeable future.

North Korea's nuclear program does, however, impact upon China indirectly through its proliferation of nuclear technology to rogue regimes, especially Pyongyang's long-running support for Tehran's nuclear program. North Korea's direct support for Iran's efforts to develop a nuclear weapon has directly led to regional instability in the Middle East that damages Chinese interests. These indirect costs include strained US-China relations over Iranian sanctions in the UN and higher oil prices for Chinese consumers, among others.

China's diplomatic support for North Korea in the aftermath of the 2010 provocations has had an impact on its overall relationship with South Korea,

Japan, and the United States.<sup>101</sup> Seoul and Tokyo appeared to be slowly drifting toward Beijing's corner following the United States' slide into deep recession during the 2008 global financial crisis. However, the perception of China's growing assertiveness destroyed more than a decade of improved relations under Deng Xiaoping's "Good Neighbor Policy." China's active diplomatic support and defense of the North in the UN, despite evidence of the North's culpability in the sinking of the *Cheonan*, and its undeniable responsibility for the murder of two South Korean civilians in the shelling of Yeonpyong Island, damaged the security relationship and the mutual trust China had previously enjoyed with South Korea and Japan. Senior South Korean officials have told Chinese counterparts that China-South Korean relations suffer directly because of China's support for North Korea.<sup>102</sup> In fact, driven by increasing worries over North Korea, and by extension China's inability to control its ally, South Korea and Japan came closer than ever before to signing an intelligence sharing agreement in 2012.<sup>103</sup>

This mistrust of China stemming from its relationship with North Korea damaged China's security environment by legitimizing the United States' return to Asia. China's assertiveness and lack of action on the North led South Korea and Japan to improve relations with the United States and hurt China's credibility as a responsible power. While the United States never truly left Asia, nor did it lose its long-term focus on China, the decade of war in the Middle East under Presidents Bush and Obama did cause its Asian allies to question the United States' commitment to the region. Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's bold pronouncement of the US "Pivot to Asia"—again, quickly rebranded as "rebalancing"—worried China and increased North Korea's strategic value to Beijing.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, however, China's continuous support for an international pariah raised fears in Asian countries about the future role of China in the region.

China's missteps on North Korea have increased the indirect negative implications for China's security environment by increasing incentives for South Korea and Japan to pursue their own security assurances against North Korean aggression, in part by improving security cooperation with the United States and in part by strengthening their own military capabilities. These steps, while intended as self-defense measures, damage China's regional security environment and increase the potential for a destabilizing regional arms race.

### IMPACT OF THE SECURITY IMPLICATIONS ON CHINA'S POLICY

The security implications of North Korea's geostrategic significance for China and the security costs of North Korea's actions factor heavily into Beijing's decision-making for its North Korea policy. The Chinese government has apparently decided to accept the real security costs of its ties to North Korea in order to maintain the perceived benefit of North Korea as a strategic buffer. There is little evidence to suggest that China's calculus on these security issues will

change in the near future and lead to an adjustment of policy. Yet China's policy could change in the long-term due to a number of factors. China may revise its cost-benefit assessment of North Korea's value to its security, most likely relating to its role as a strategic buffer versus the increased presence of US military forces in the region associated with its current posture. China may also reevaluate the extent to which a nuclear-armed North Korea poses a direct security threat, if bilateral relations worsen under Kim Jong-un. China's perceptions of North Korea's role in its Asia strategy may also change if US-China relations improve and China no longer needs leverage and security guarantees against a possible conflict with the United States over Taiwan.

Perceptions of North Korea's value by senior leaders remain an important variable in Chinese policy. One important component of China's security-driven policy that may gradually change and lead to greater pressure on its top leaders for a rethinking of policy on North Korea involves shifting power dynamics within the PLA. The slow rise to prominence of the PLA Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery, coupled with the relative decline of the PLA Army, may translate into a different view of North Korea's security value to China. The new leadership under President Xi may also see North Korea differently from its predecessors. Authority over North Korea policy is concentrated in the seven top leaders in the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), and occasionally, only within the purview of the Secretary General himself. This means that the change in leadership in China presents a significant opportunity for a different calculus by China about North Korea and their relationship.

While this has yet to be evident in China's policy, this different calculus may become apparent after President Xi consolidates power and possibly only after current younger cadres join the top ranks of the leadership in 2017.<sup>105</sup> The next generation of leaders, concentrated in the Central Committee, are one step further removed from the historical ties of the Korean War and ideological comradeship of China's socialist era under Mao Zedong. These possible future leaders also include reform-minded cadres such as Wang Yang and Li Yuanchao, who may be more inclined to distance China from North Korea as part of China's own reform path. This suggests they may be more likely to view North Korea through a more straightforward cost-benefit analysis of security and economic issues rather than intangible sentiment. Thus, any significant policy change is unlikely to be on the near horizon.

## CONCLUSION

China's security calculus vis-à-vis North Korea rests largely on a belief in the continued value of the North as a comprehensive strategic buffer. While China sustains considerable indirect costs to its security as the result of its relationship with the North, it also receives intangible benefits that evidently continue to outweigh these costs in the eyes of Beijing's leaders. For such reasons as the top leadership's unchanged favorable cost-benefit analysis toward the North, continued mutual distrust with the United States, bureaucratic inertia, and the rising

influence over the PLA in decision-making elaborated above, China's security calculus is unlikely to change in the near future, even with a fourth nuclear test, and thus China's policy toward North Korea is unlikely to change as well.

Since the DPRK's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003, China's close ties to North Korea have been a negative factor in perceptions of China's rise. The heightened tensions following the North's third nuclear test in 2013, after the two deadly provocations against South Korea in 2010, accentuated the security costs to China while also revealing important underlying Chinese perceptions of the security benefits accrued through Beijing's sustained support of its ally. The new Xi Jinping administration now has the opportunity to rethink Beijing's policy toward Pyongyang to better align it with China's national interests and changing international environment. The question is whether President Xi has the interest, time, and power necessary to reframe Beijing's North Korea policy for the twenty-first century. A positive change will depend largely on whether President Xi and his team can proactively resolve to dump the unnecessary burden of a Kim-controlled North Korea and instead project China's regional influence while shouldering its global responsibilities.

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## Identifying a New, More Effective Role for China vis-à-vis Korean Peninsula Issues through an Integrated Class Analysis Approach with Chinese Characteristics

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In constructing a theoretical approach to analyzing issues on the Korean peninsula with Chinese characteristics, this chapter argues, first, that North Korea should be seen as a rational actor in international affairs; and, second, that the security structure on the Korean peninsula should be recognized as asymmetric. In terms of methodology, this analysis employs an integrated class analysis method, utilizing both a national analysis method and an international relationship analysis method. In addition, it insists on an approach to studying Korean peninsula issues that is objective and independent.

On the basis above, this chapter begins by defining with precision the set of premises and perspectives that inform so-called “Korean peninsula issues,” dividing these into six distinct types. It then discusses the evolution of issues involving the Korean peninsula, showing that this has proceeded with some regularity, both in terms of periodicity and as a set of chain reactions. The chapter then relates these discussion points to regional security as it affects and is affected by the situation on the Korean peninsula, as well as what it identifies as the two key impetuses for reunification of the Korean peninsula: the sustainable development of North Korea’s economy and South Korea’s political democratization. It argues that for China to accurately formulate its own policy and play a greater and more active role in Korean peninsula affairs it must focus on both of these impetuses.

## PREMISES AND ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH ON ISSUES INVOLVING THE KOREAN PENINSULA

### *First Premise: North Korea Is a Rational Actor*

It is logical that if the premises associated with research questions are false or contain significant errors, even the most rigorous research methods will lead to conclusions that are inaccurate, at best, or outright false, at worst. Where issues involving the Korean peninsula are concerned, an objective approach to analyzing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is therefore vital to an accurate assessment of the issues involved.

The government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) institutes policies toward the DPRK according to the assessment and judgment of its top policymakers; therefore, ROK policy toward North Korea varies according to how these policymakers understand their neighbor to the North. The Lee Myung-bak government concluded that the DPRK was on the verge of collapse, given its weak domestic economic situation with its per capita income standing at less than USD 500. Our analysis shows that this conclusion was far from the mark. The Lee Myung-bak policy of “non-nuclear, openness, 3000” rested on this inaccurate reading of the situation in the North and concomitantly inaccurate predictions. In studying issues on the Korean peninsula, it is critical to assess the DPRK's domestic and international situations objectively.

In this chapter, we abandon subjective conjecture about the DPRK that does not rest on accurate data, such as that the people are living in misery, the Kim regime is about to crumble, the DPRK is a rogue state, and that the North Korean nuclear program is a direct threat to China's security, and so on. On the basis of years of direct study of the DPRK, we conclude, rather, that the DPRK is a rational actor that behaves according to some basic rules and logic, and that, like most other state actors, the DPRK's behavior reflects an effort to achieve its national interests.

### *Second Premise: There Is an Asymmetric Security Structure on the Korean Peninsula*

In addition to the premise that the DPRK is a rational actor, this chapter also illustrates that there is an asymmetric security structure on the Korean peninsula in which two antithetical governments from one nation with very different states struggle over the issue of reunification on the peninsula. This serves as the key point of departure and driver of the inter-Korean relationship.

The security structure in which the interests of the Korean peninsula and the surrounding big powers are intertwined is relatively clear: on one level, there is the US-ROK alliance versus the DPRK; on another level, there is the US-ROK-Japan versus the DPRK; and on a third level, there is the US-ROK-Japan relationship versus the Sino-Russia- DPRK relationship. The latter relationship is much looser than the former one; in some specific matters, there are even some significant conflicts among the actors on the same side. Among the

three relationships, the asymmetrical relation of the US-ROK alliance versus the DPRK acts as the core relationship in the Korean peninsula security structure, and it greatly affects the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

This chapter argues that the central dispute on the Korean peninsula lies within the North-South relationship.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the core contradiction between North and South is their competition for dominance. A precondition for reunification is therefore a substantive change to the asymmetric security structure on the peninsula, which pits an allied US and ROK against the DPRK.

## PERSPECTIVES ON ANALYSIS OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA

### *The Class Analysis Perspective*

The study of contemporary international relations today employs only limited class analysis. However, class analysis remains not only necessary, but also indispensable to exploring the nature of relations between a politically heterogeneous people with a shared nationality.

Karl Marx pointed out that to conduct political analysis it is necessary to “[attribute political conflict to the struggle between all existing social classes and the interests of these classes caused by economic development.]”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the struggle among different social classes leads to political conflict; class divisions have a profound impact on political life as they are reflected in the relative inequality in terms of their political status. This leads inevitably to conflict between antagonistic classes.<sup>3</sup>

When class analysis is applied to the study of Korean peninsula issues, since the opposing sides are two distinct and independent regimes, however, the dominant interest in the immediate term is that of national reunification, rather than economic interests.

Since August of 1945 when Japanese rule on the Korean peninsula was brought to an end and the North-South divide was enforced, class antagonism has become the normal state of affairs. Take the event of Korean independence for instance: the DPRK called it “liberation” (*haebang*) while the ROK called it “retrocession” or “recovery” (*gwangbok*). The North thoroughly cleared away down to its foundation the legacy of Japanese rule in establishing the DPRK. The South, however, retained almost all of the old order and established the Republic of Korea (ROK).<sup>4</sup> The conflict between the DPRK and ROK is not only an opposition of political regimes, but it is also an opposition of class.

### *The National Perspective*

A particularity of the inter-Korean relationship also lies in the fact that the North-South confrontation is a confrontation between two politically distinct regimes from one nation that have never granted official legal recognition to the other, yet mutually treat each other as a part of a single, non-unified country.

Therefore, Korean peninsula issues should be treated primarily as national issues, with analysis that examines these issues as relations between different countries only afterward, and a nation-centric analytical focus should be given precedence in studying Korean peninsula issues. This may be followed by analytical frameworks associated with international relations.

### *The International Perspective*

While inter-Korean relations are at the core of issues on the Korean peninsula, these issues involve interactions at multiple levels. Understanding issues on the peninsula, therefore, requires a clear understanding about the interactions between the neighboring big powers, the other international actors, and the inter-Korean relationship using the lens of international relations methodology.

### *The Comprehensive Analysis Perspective*

The study of Korean peninsula issues by Chinese scholars has passed through different stages, reflecting changes in standpoints and related perspectives. The first stage began in 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, and it came to a close with the end of the Cold War. During this period, the study of South Korea and Korean peninsula issues by Chinese scholars was conducted from the perspective of the DPRK. The second stage began with the end of the Cold War and ended in the late 1990s. During this period, the study of Korean peninsula issues by Chinese scholars was transformed to include new concepts, reflecting directly acquired independent knowledge and understanding about both North and South Korea. The third stage, starting from the later 1990s to today, reflects an increasing diversity in Chinese scholars' position and views. Chinese scholars have formed their own independent and objective research perspectives through synthesizing class analysis, national analysis and international relations analysis, reflecting a relatively more mature research approach to Korean peninsula issues.

## CLASSIFICATION, EVOLVING MECHANISMS, AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN PENINSULA ISSUES

Based on data and materials collected over the course of a career focused on this topic, which include all the reports of *Xinhua Daily* since 1947, when the *Xinhua Daily* started publication; several major media sources from North Korea, and reports from South Korea and China since 1992 on the Korean peninsula (more than 500,000 reports in total),<sup>5</sup> we classify Korean peninsula issues into six categories:<sup>6</sup>

The first category is the North-South relationship on the Korean peninsula, including the core issue of the reunification problem, which also constitutes the core contradiction on the Korean peninsula. The inter-Korean relationship revolves around the issues of state and national reunification. In the context of law, as discussed in previous publications, there is a great difference between

state unity and national unity, but on the Korean peninsula issue, national reunification is the same as state reunification.<sup>7</sup>

The second category encompasses the policies of North and South Korea, as well as overall diplomatic trends. As argued previously, “[the judgment of North and South Korea toward each other’s internal affairs and diplomatic trends determines their policy orientation toward each other, as well as the relationship structure between the two sides . . . Both the policy orientation and relationship structure rest on the subjective judgment of each side.]”<sup>8</sup>

The third category is the relationship between large neighboring countries and the Korean peninsula. Geopolitically, countries neighboring the Korean peninsula include China, Japan, Russia, and the United States—through its structural impact on Northeast Asia. Among these countries, the US and Japan have not established a formal diplomatic relationship with North Korea. Thus, the relationship between neighboring countries and the Korean peninsula is an asymmetric one.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth category involves the competitive and cooperative relationships among the various major powers engaged with the Korean peninsula. After the Cold War, these relationships have become more and more complicated due to the intertwining interests of the major powers on the nuclear issue, epitomized by the challenges of the unresolved Six-party talks.

The fifth category involves the interactions of intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations with the Korean peninsula. The United Nations (UN), for example, acted as North Korea’s armed opponent and eventually became among the actors to sign the Korean Military Armistice Agreement as early as the Korean War. Even after the Cold War, the UN has remained one of the main actors in the evolution of the situation on the Korean peninsula. Meanwhile, over time, more and more non-governmental organizations have started to become involved in the Korean peninsula issue, particularly involving illegal immigrants from the DPRK to China, making an issue that was once just between the two countries increasingly complicated. Since the 1990s, Korean NGOs have intervened in the issue. They have hidden immigrants in their houses or churches, asking them to return to the DPRK as missionaries. They also manipulated public opinion, claiming the deportation is against human rights. In April 2001, one Korean NGO planned an intrusion into the UNHCR’s Chinese Representative Office by seven immigrants, asking for refugee status to be sent to South Korea. In March 2003, 25 North Korean immigrants intruded on the Spanish Embassy in China, requesting refugee status to go to South Korea. Japanese and American NGOs have also joined in these “rescue movements” and carried out many large protests. This has drawn increasing international attention to the issue, exerting considerable pressure on China. The fact that growing numbers of non-governmental organizations have become involved in Korean peninsula issues has made Korean peninsula issues more complicated and confused.

The sixth category is the relationship between the media from different countries and the Korean peninsula, which is embodied in the problems of all the preceding five categories. After the Cold War, the media has been largely reduced to a tool of propaganda warfare and psychological warfare, making it more difficult

for people to understand and grasp the real evolution of the Korean peninsula situation correctly.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

### *Characteristic Number 1: The Periodic Nature of the Evolution of the Situation on the Korean Peninsula*

Since the Cold War, the situation on the Korean peninsula has been in constant flux, sometimes in a state of tension, and at other times in a state of relative relaxation. This is evidence of a highly cyclical evolution resulting principally from the different political cycles within different countries:

Where the DPRK is concerned, in this respect, the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK is elected every five years and forms a new cabinet. However, the foreign policy line is held relatively stable, particularly in the areas of reunification, reconciliation, and cooperation between North and South. In the case of South Korea, the president is elected every five years to a five-year, non-renewable term. Reflecting the politics of class and interest groups, after the Cold War, Seoul's policy toward the DPRK has varied with each new president, with the result that policies have even been contradictory. In one example, the policy of "non-nuclear, openness, 3000" of the Lee Myung-bak government toward the DPRK contradicted the "reconciliation and cooperation policies" of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments. The latter policy was determined on the basis of a completely different logic and a deliberate rejection of previous ROK policies toward the DPRK.

As for other countries, the US President is elected to a four-year term every four years; the US president may be re-elected once. The US has had significant impact on the direction of American policy toward the DPRK. After the Cold War, China has generally followed a leadership cycle of two five-year terms for 10 years. However, despite China's leadership change, its basic policy toward the Korean peninsula has remained generally stable, with some temporary changes on specific matters. The Russian president is elected to a six-year term and is eligible to be reelected for a second term. Overall, the policy of Russia on the Korean peninsula has been largely stable as well. Japan's parliamentary system has been characterized by frequent leadership changes in the past few decades, making leadership alone difficult to measure as a factor. A basic rule is that Japan's policy on the Korean peninsula is strongly influenced by the North-South relationship and policy changes by the United States toward the Korean peninsula.

If these countries' political cycles are superimposed on each other, they form several discernible cycles: a short period of 2.5 years, one cycle of five years, a longer period of ten years, and an extended cycle of 20 years.

What is worth noting is that, in general, there are observable changes in the Korean peninsula situation at an inflection point of each cycle, with a disturbance every one or two years before entering the inflection point. What is more,

having passed the inflection point, stability is difficult for one to two years. When these inflection points meet in the same year, there are greater fluctuations. In 2012, it is likely that North Korea will “open the road to a strong and prosperous nation.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, South Korea, the US, China and Russia will elect its new leadership. There is a great chance that Japan will have new leadership as well. We argue that the significant change in the Korean peninsula situation that has taken place since 2010 will continue for another three to four years. This suggests less stability and a growing prospect that the situation will swing toward either reconciliation or tensions, raising the prospects for an extreme event to occur, with ramifications not only on the peninsula but for neighboring countries as well.<sup>11</sup>

***Characteristic 2: The “Chain Reaction” as a Feature of the Situation on the Korean Peninsula***

There is a chain reaction in the relations among countries on the peninsula resulting from changes in the North-South relations.

At the time of writing, it is South Korea’s policy toward the DPRK of “non-nuclear, openness, 3000” which lacks factual justification and policy feasibility and is the root cause of the current crisis on the Korean peninsula. As previously stated, “[the . . . security crisis on the Korean peninsula is a corollary of the reversal in the previous policies aimed at reconciliation and cooperation toward a more confrontational approach, which has also been accompanied by the deterioration of the US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK relations since the Lee Myung-bak administration took office in 2008.]”<sup>12</sup> Lee Myung-bak holds that the “reconciliation and cooperation” policies of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun government toward the DPRK made the nuclear problem of North Korea more complicated; he therefore insisted that, unless the DPRK were to completely abandon its nuclear research and development program and improve its human rights environment, the ROK would refuse to provide economic assistance and cooperate with the DPRK. President Lee’s pressure on the North to give up the policy goal to maintain “system security” through nuclear weapons as expressed in his “non-nuclear, openness, 3000” policy touched the DPRK’s bottom line national interests, triggering a deterioration in the relationship and an ultimate stand-off between the ROK and the DPRK.

The chain reaction in the international relations between the major powers and North-South Korea revolves around changes in inter-Korean relations, such that were South Korea to seek to ease tensions between two sides through peaceful dialogue, the DPRK would react by seeking to increase the two sides’ direct contacts in order to improve relations with the ROK. As the two Koreas promote the process of the independent and peaceful reunification through reconciliation and cooperation, relations between not only the ROK and DPRK but between the DPRK, ROK, Russia and China would also be enhanced; Tokyo would also proactively seek contact with the DPRK to improve its relations with Pyongyang. At the same time, historical and territorial disputes would become more prominent in Japan’s relations with both sides on the Korean peninsula; contradictions

between the US and the ROK would also rise during expanding direct dialogue between the US and the DPRK. This would eventually push such significant issues as the nuclear issue and the missile issue that are influential to Northeast Asia, and indeed the whole world, to the fore, promoting increased contact and dialogue on the Korean peninsula among these big countries (China, the US, Japan, and Russia), while direct contact and dialogue between the US and the DPRK would expand.

In the second case, if the South Korean government were to carry out a hard-line policy toward the DPRK, the DPRK would likely engage in a game with the US through the most commonly used tactical measures of engaging the US while marginalizing the ROK (*tongmei fengnan*) and engaging with NGOs while excluding South Korea (*tongmin fengguan*). The former policy is conducive to improving the DPRK-US relationship in that it not only produces a wider policy activity space for the DPRK toward China, but it also lays a material foundation for its hardline policy implementation.<sup>13</sup> The policy of engaging the US while isolating the ROK isolates and marginalizes the ROK from Korean peninsula affairs; the policy of engaging with NGOs while excluding the ROK government may be used to erode the political foundation of hardline policies on the part of the ROK toward the DPRK. The “engaging with the NGO” strategy means that the DPRK weakens political foundation of tough policies by the ROK by strengthening exchanges with civil society in the ROK. The first approach is conducive to improving DPRK-US relations, expanding room for policymaking toward China for DPRK, and laying solid material foundation for a hardline policy toward the ROK. The approach of engaging with NGOs while excluding the ROK government can help weaken the political foundation of the ROK government’s hardline policy toward the DPRK. However, if the ROK and US coordinate to jointly implement hardline policies toward the DPRK, the situation on the Korean peninsula is bound to deteriorate rapidly. When the two Koreas fall out and become enemies with daggers drawn, the China-Russia-DPRK relation tends to be close, while the Chinese and Russian relationship with the ROK becomes complex and subtle; when common interests between the ROK and Japan increase, DPRK-Japan hostility is exacerbated; when communication and coordination between the US and ROK increases, this worsens US-DPRK tensions, while suspicions and competition among China, America, Japan, and Russia are also increased. The net result is a serious crisis on the Korean peninsula prompted by a deterioration of the inter-Korean relationship, which shifts the neighboring countries’ relations from that of suspicion and competition toward coordination and cooperation. This serves as an external environment favorable for reconciliation and cooperation between the ROK and DPRK.

## NORTHEAST ASIA’S REGIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURE

Vis-à-vis the North Korean nuclear issue, the various regional players all have their own interests at stake. Take the interests of the DPRK, the ROK, and the US, which act as the core in the first layer of the Northeast Asian security

structure for instance—there are fundamental conflicts in their core national interests. Moreover, the contradictions are not only in the structural level, but also in the implementation of specific policies. In order to illustrate the question more easily, in this chapter, we analyze the asymmetric security structure on the Korean peninsula using the concept and logical method of “nuclear deterrence.”

“Asymmetric nuclear deterrence” (*bu cuicheng beweishi*) emphasizes the gap of strategic nuclear forces between two sides while the asymmetric nuclear deterrence structure emphasizes the overall gap in military strength. As long as the opposing sides are imbalanced in terms of overall military strength, nuclear deterrence between them is the “nuclear deterrence in the absence of a power equilibrium.”<sup>14</sup> In the context of the security structure on the Korean peninsula, the ROK-US alliance is aligned against the DPRK not only with overwhelming overall military strength, but also with the asymmetric presence of strategic nuclear forces. Before the DPRK gained nuclear weapons, the Korean peninsula was in a unidirectional “nuclear deterrence” structure, with the ROK-US alliance against North Korea. Since the DPRK developed nuclear weapons in 2005, it is now more accurate to describe the asymmetric security structure of the Korean peninsula as one of a “nuclear deterrence in the absence of a power equilibrium.” Fundamentally, the emergence of the North Korean nuclear issue relates to the asymmetric security structure on the Korean peninsula, rather than, as is generally believed, as a result of an effort by North Korea to blackmail the international community for aid.

For the ROK, achieving reunification on the peninsula is a core interest—not only is it the starting point for making policy toward the DPRK, it is enshrined in the ROK constitution. The fundamental contradiction in the inter-Korean relationship is competing for dominance in and after reunification. The competition is over who will lead the reunification process, how it will be achieved, and what type of reunification will be achieved. Henry Kissinger has argued that the tension on the Korean peninsula reflects any number of complex issues, including which countries should take what responsibilities in the prospective reunification of Korea.<sup>15</sup>

In a security structure involving “one-way” nuclear deterrence, the ROK-US alliance has an absolute advantage over the DPRK and the ROK, therefore, is poised to dominate the reunification process. In this context, the South Korean government has the freedom to choose its policy toward the DPRK. So long as the Korean peninsula retains a unidirectional nuclear deterrence structure, the ROK can be assured of a diplomatic advantage vis-à-vis the DPRK. The real reason that the ROK strongly opposes the DPRK’s nuclear weapons development has to do with its impact on its dominance of the reunification agenda, rather than any fear of a nuclear attack on the ROK by Pyongyang. What really worries the ROK is that, if the DPRK and the ROK-US alliance were in the situation of “nuclear deterrence in the absence of a power equilibrium,” the absolute advantage in foreign relations of the ROK to DPRK would be offset. This would weaken the effectiveness of pursuing a policy aimed at reunification for the ROK. The DPRK nuclear issue in fact increases security uncertainty in

the future and the costs associated with reunification for the ROK. The ROK's real concern is how the DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons affects the ROK's safety and the potential costs to Seoul of reunification.<sup>16</sup>

Under conditions of unidirectional nuclear deterrence, as the disadvantaged side, the DPRK takes safeguarding "system security" as the bottom line of its policy. Its secondary goal is to fight with the United States to lift its economic sanctions against the DPRK, and to compete with the ROK for dominance in the reunification process, or at least for "peer dominance." A key reason why the ROK and the DPRK were able to continuously improve their bilateral relationship during the ten years when the ROK's democratic reformers were in office was that the two sides held to a bottom line of never engaging in confrontation at the system level and never threatening the survival of the other system.<sup>17</sup>

One fundamental way for the DPRK to achieve its security objectives is to change the absolute superiority of the ROK-US alliance through acquiring nuclear weapons. If the DPRK has nuclear weapons,<sup>18</sup> it has a nuclear deterrence against the ROK-US alliance. North Korea is still only concerned about survival due to its inability to compete with the ROK-US alliance either in the areas of peer security or absolute security. However, the structural equilibrium of "nuclear deterrence *in the absence of power equilibrium*" provided by nuclear weapons is more stable than the balance of "one-way" nuclear deterrence ensured by the conventional forces and South Korea's "peaceful reunification policy" for North Korean security. Therefore, from the outset the two sides have pursued completely contrary policy directions. The ROK has a strong desire to maintain its advantages toward the DPRK in the asymmetric structure of unidirectional nuclear deterrence, while the DPRK is committed to changing its subordinate position on the issue of reunification caused by the asymmetric security structure.

The security demands of the United States on the Korean peninsula are much more than just to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and the attendant terror threats and nuclear proliferation. The US seems to be more concerned about the broader "Asian balance of power," as well as construction of a missile defense system in Asia. Again, to refer to Henry Kissinger, Kissinger has underscored how significant it is for United States to maintain its presence in Asia: "Its geopolitical objective must remain to prevent Asia's coalescence into an unfriendly bloc (which is most likely to happen under the tutelage of one of its major powers)."<sup>19</sup> As Kissinger points out, "the United States must turn implacable when the balance of power or America's national interests are, in fact, threatened."<sup>20</sup>

The American government seems to think that a missile defense system in Asia is the only way to maintain an "Asian balance of power" and safeguard the interests of the United States. The US and Japan cooperated to build a theater missile defense (TMD) system very early; cooperation with the ROK to build the last part of a Northeast Asian missile defense system on the Korean peninsula remains something that the United States yearns for. However, the reality is that, since the US withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea in September 1991,<sup>21</sup> Seoul has been resisting US efforts to deploy a missile defense

system in South Korea. Again, as Kissinger has commented, Seoul should understand Washington's global responsibilities and should not criticize US military plans, such as the missile defense system. A missile defense system could enhance the national security coefficient through increasing the cost of an attack from other countries. Kissinger observes that, "Without an American missile defense, the calculations of a country seeking to blackmail the United States are limited only by the reliability of its weapons. With a missile defense, the calculations become more complicated."<sup>22</sup>

On the surface, there are no common interests between the ROK and the US on the issue of deploying tactical nuclear missiles in South Korea for an Asian missile defense system. However, if some conditions are satisfied, then common interests may emerge, opening the door to cooperation on TMD. Common interests in support of TMD could emerge under two conditions. First, if North Korea possesses both nuclear weapons and develops delivery tools (including long-range bombers and long-range rockets).<sup>23</sup> Second, if inter-Korean relations deteriorate to the point of a brink-of-war situation. In 2005, North Korea's successful production of nuclear weapons was widely used to characterize the South's reconciliation and cooperation policy toward the DPRK as a failure. However, the "non-nuclear, openness, 3000" policy toward the DPRK of the Lee Myung-bak government carried out since 2008 has been an impetus for the first condition to become closer to reality, and has made the second one a reality. In our view, when the ROK is completely powerless in influencing the North Korean nuclear issue it would be possible for South Korea to join in a US-led missile defense system. Under these circumstances, deploying tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea to build a missile defense system would become a shared US-ROK interest, albeit with different fundamental objectives between the two parties. For the ROK it would be nominally to prevent a nuclear attack from the DPRK; however, it will also be a key step toward completion by the US of an Asian missile defense system to hedge against Sino-Russia strategic nuclear forces. The United States expects to keep the "Asian balance of power" to guard against any attack from Asia (including an "unexpected attack"). In this way, Kissinger has acknowledged that,

the purpose of missile defense has been defined exclusively as resisting attacks from rogue states, sparking a debate about what a rogue state is or whether the threat is real. But it is important to avow that the missile defense is needed as well against established nonrogue nuclear powers. Given the cataclysmic consequences of even a single explosion, the United States must protect itself to the extent possible against *accidental launches*, *unauthorized* attacks, or limited attacks for whatever purpose. Or, to put it another way, the United States needs to raise the admission price of any nuclear attack as high as possible.<sup>24</sup>

As the next step in the chain reaction in the Northeast Asian security structure, the completion of a US-led missile defense system in South Korea would signify the failure of Sino-Russian strategic nuclear forces in deterring the United States in Northeast Asia. China and Russia would then play the role

of the DPRK in the “ROK-US versus DPRK” structure, as the result the relatively stable balance of “nuclear deterrence in the absence of a power equilibrium” turns into the unstable balance of “one-way” nuclear deterrence. China and Russia may develop more powerful and penetrating strategic nuclear weapons to hedge against a US-led missile defense system in Asia. As early as 2005, Professor Yan Xuetong pointed out, “[Before 2007, China needs to effectively enhance nuclear deterrent forces to ensure that the penetrating ability of the strategic nuclear weapons is more powerful than the intercept ability of the anti-missile system in order to consolidate nuclear deterrence *in the absence of a power equilibrium* in East Asia.]”<sup>25</sup> The end of the chain reaction should evince greatest concern—as it may involve a new round of a nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia. This supports the view that the principal reason that China opposes North Korea’s nuclear program is the potential disastrous consequence of this outcome on the situation on the Korean peninsula, rather than being directed against nuclear weapons being acquired by North Korea per se.

## FORCES DRIVING REUNIFICATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

There is no doubt that the Korean peninsula will see reunification someday. How unification may unfold is among the objectives of studying Korean peninsula issues. For Chinese scholars, the study of Korean peninsula issues should also relate to how China may play a greater and more active role in the Korean unification process, as well as how to safeguard its own national interests. On the road to reunification, North and South Korea will undertake different efforts along different pathways: for the DPRK, it will be to maintain sustained economic development and gradually return to the international community. For the ROK, its political process and democratization will certainly play a central role in the reunification process.

### *Economic Development in the DPRK*

On the basis of long-term research on the DPRK’s economic development, we conclude that the DPRK’s economy is recovering and steadily developing. This serves as evidence for the premise that North Korea is a rational state actor when studying Korean peninsula issues.

The large gap between the DPRK and ROK in terms of economic development serves as a major practical difficulty in reunification on the peninsula. Even were an approach pursued of unification by absorption—in other words the ROK would absorb the DPRK and reunify the peninsula under its own control, as is the ROK’s desire—the ROK’s current economic strength is not sufficient to support the stability and sustainable development of a reunified Korean peninsula. The sustained and stable development of the DPRK economy is among the principal driving forces narrowing the gap between the two sides and promoting common interests on the part of the DPRK and ROK on the issue of reunification.

### *Political Democratization in the ROK*

According to the class analysis perspective, the issues of who leads reunification, how to achieve reunification, and what type of reunification will be achieved are principally issues of class antagonism; in other words, they are fundamentally about the incompatibility of the proletariat in the DPRK and the big bourgeoisie (*da zibenjia*) in the ROK. Historical facts have proved largely that if a democratic reformer (*minzbugaige pai*) is in power,<sup>26</sup> the ROK government tends to promote a policy of reconciliation and cooperation toward the DPRK. When the ROK is under conservative rule,<sup>27</sup> (such as the government under Lee Myung-bak; the 18th presidential candidate Park Geun-hye is also conservative), it adopts a hardline policy toward the DPRK. In our view, democratic reform politics in the ROK are strongly positively correlated with the reunification of the Korean peninsula. The political democratization process in the ROK will reduce class differences and confrontation between the North and the South substantially. In other words, democratization in the ROK is the fundamental impetus for political harmony between the North and the South and one of the most important drivers to promote reunification, both in terms of facts and theoretical reasoning.

### THE PROBLEM OF DELIMITATION

Boundary disputes between the two sides include, for instance, the large territorial overlap between South Korea's "Northern Limit Line" and territorial waters claimed by the DPRK. Because of this, the two Koreas have engaged in many conflicts, even involving arms. At the current stage, the demarcation problem may serve as an important incentive driving North-South conflict, but in the long run, the contradiction on the delimitation problem is more likely to promote reconciliation and cooperation between the DPRK and the ROK. This could occur were two preconditions fulfilled: first, if there were sustainable economic growth in the DPRK; and second, if there were sustained democratization in the ROK. Under these conditions, the policy of "putting aside disputes and seeking common development" would become the optimal choice for both sides, and ultimately would solve the boundary issue by promoting the reunification process.

### CHOICES FOR CHINA VIS-À-VIS KOREAN PENINSULA ISSUES

For China, there are three key issues that need to be addressed vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula:

First, how to accurately examine Korean peninsula issues, including problems related to reunification, discussed at length above?

A second question is how to accurately define the role that China should play in Korean peninsula issues? When talking about the North Korea nuclear problem, many scholars who subconsciously think that China's assistance to the DPRK should lead to the DPRK's subservience to China are indignant because

North Korea frequently ignores China's opinions. For example, researcher Zhu Liaoye from the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences holds that, "[China is unable to control the DPRK completely... China has an important influence on the North Korea, but this influence is limited and insufficient to control over the DPRK... China and the DPRK are two equal sovereign states with different core national interests.]"<sup>28</sup> We think that China cannot and should not try to control the DPRK. This view is not only based on international legal norms, but also based on a consideration of national strategic interests. China is unprepared to provide the DPRK national security protection at a structural level—a nuclear protection umbrella—because it means direct confrontation with the ROK-US alliance. If China cannot provide such a security guarantee, why should China exercise control over the DPRK?

If the "independent and peaceful reunification" of the Korean peninsula is in line with China's national interests, as China's government claims, what efforts should it undertake to promote the DPRK's economic development and the ROK's political democratization? So far, China has taken substantial steps to promote economic development in the DPRK.<sup>29</sup> However, there is still no effective way for China to affect the ROK's political democratization. One possible way is to indirectly promote political democratization in the ROK through supporting reconciliation and cooperation between North and South Korea.

Third, one of the important negative factors restricting China from playing a greater role in Korean peninsula affairs is the serious differences in understanding the DPRK between Chinese officials and the broader public. In the post-Cold War era, the South Korean media has captured the discourse on Korean peninsula issues. The South Korean media is filled with a variety of inaccurate reports about the North. Translation of these reports and or the Chinese media's quotes of these sources without commentary have seriously negatively shaped the Chinese public's understanding of the situation on the Korean peninsula. In contrast to the general public, therefore, Chinese officials grasp relatively accurate information about North Korea. The majority of ordinary people have become the "slaves" of the ROK media. This leads to a serious divide between official Chinese understanding and popular views on the DPRK. Therefore, the basis on which public opinion might play a greater role in Korean peninsula issues has been seriously weakened. How should this be addressed? As we have argued previously, the "[Chinese government needs to further improve the environment of domestic media and public opinion... In order to create more favorable conditions for the domestic media to report on Korean peninsula problems objectively and impartially, it is necessary for the Chinese government to consider taking some practical measures.]"<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

A systematic, theoretical approach to studying Korean peninsula issues with Chinese characteristics is essential to both understanding China's position and accurately grasping the evolutionary trend of the situation on the Korean

peninsula, as well as for China to play a bigger and more active role in Korean peninsula affairs.

#### NOTES

1. Piao Jianyi emphasizes this viewpoint, while experts from the North Korean Academy of Social Sciences regard the contradictions in between the DPRK and the United States as the core contradictions in Korean peninsula issues.
2. Kaer Makesi [Karl Marx], *Makesi Engesi QuANJI*, 22 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1965), 592.
3. Chen Zhenming and Chen Binghui (eds.), *Zhengzhixue: Gainian, Lilun, Fangfa* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2004), 174–176.
4. The Republic of Korea retained a considerable part of the old bureaucratic system in the Japan ruled era; for example, there was no land and redrawing of state property.
5. Including the KCNA, Workers' Party of Korea News, South Korea's Yonhap News Agency, People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency and so on.
6. Piao Jianyi, "Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing," in Zhang Jie and Yang Danshi (eds.), *Zhongguo Zhubian Anquan Xingshi Pinggu* (Xianggang: Xianggang Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2011), 32–34.
7. Piao, "Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing," 34.
8. Piao, "Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing," 32.
9. Piao, "Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing," 33.
10. This chapter was submitted just as the new leaders of China and Russia came to power, Obama had not yet started his second term, the presidential election in the ROK had just concluded with a female President, and the president of the Liberal Democratic Party Shinzo Abe had been elected to be the Japanese Prime Minister.
11. Piao, "Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing," 35.
12. Piao, "Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing," 38–39.
13. Cho Sung-ryul, "Buk-han-ui Gwol-lyeok-gu-jo Byeon-hwa-wa Nam-buk-Gwan-gye Jeon-mang," *Tongil Hanguk*, November 11, 2008.
14. Yang Xuetong and Yan Liang (eds.), *Guojiguanxi Fenxi* (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2008), 180.
15. Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?: Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 126–132.
16. Ma Yunpeng, *Li Mingbo [Lee Myung-bak] Zhengfu dui Chao Zhengce de Zhuanbian Jiqi Yingxiang* (LLM. Dissertation, Shanghai Jiatong Daxue, 2011), 27.
17. Wang Sheng, "Li Mingbo (Lee Myung-bak) Zhizheng Yilai de Chaohan Guanxi Pouxu ji Qianjing Yuce," *Dangdai Shijie*, October 2009, <http://www.ddsfcn.com/09-10/09-10-10.htm>.

18. In April, 2012, North Korea amended its Constitution, declaring itself a nuclear weapon state.
19. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, 112.
20. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, 118.
21. Chen Fengjun and Wang Chuanjian, *Yatai Daguo Yu Chaoxian Bandao* (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2002), 105.
22. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, 66.
23. In December 2012, the DPRK succeeded in launching the “Unha or Shining Star 3” application satellite into space; experts assessed the technology of the DPRK for launching a long-range rocket as relatively mature.
24. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, 69.
25. Yan Xuetong, “Dongya Heping de Jichu,” *Xinhua Yuebao*, October 26, 2011, <http://www.xhyb.net.cn/detail.asp?id=33780>.
26. Such as the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments.
27. Such as the Lee Myung-bak government; the 18th presidential candidate Park Geun-hye is a member of the conservative faction, too.
28. Zhu Liaoye, “‘Hou Chao he Shiqi de Zhongchao Guanxi Zoushi,’” *Liaodong Xueyuan Xuebao* (December 2010) 12, 126.
29. China and the DPRK are promoting the program of “co-development and co-management” in the Changchun-Jilin-Tumen regions.
30. Piao, “Dangqian Chaoxian Bandao Anquan Weiji de Genyuan yu Qianjing,” 46.

## Chinese Views of North Korea's Regional Role

*Yu Shaohua*

North Korea is widely criticized because of its nuclear policy and extreme behavior. However, the country is also the victim of strategic games played by major powers. Understanding the potentially positive role North Korea can play in maintaining regional peace and prosperity; addressing the security concerns of all parties for mutual safety; conducting economic cooperation for mutual development; and encouraging North Korea to transform its regional role, are necessary conditions for a new Asia Pacific regional order.

### NORTH KOREA REPRESENTS AN ELEMENT OF REGIONAL INSTABILITY

After the Cold War, western countries have come to identify North Korea as the root of instability in Northeast Asia and the Asia Pacific region, or even as a threat to Northeast Asia and its surroundings. Not only does North Korea intimidate the United States with nuclear weapons, it also threatens the safety of South Korea and Japan with long-range missiles. Many western scholars believe that the reason why North Korea dares challenge these powers is that China is indulging North Korea.

In fact, after the normalization of the Sino-South Korean relationship, China has long hoped to develop a friendly and cooperative relationship with both sides of the Korean Peninsula, simultaneously and evenly, in order to create a stable surrounding environment to focus on developing its economy through opening up. Against this background, North Korea's regional policy and behavior in recent years indeed make it difficult for China to achieve its goal and for the region to maintain stability.

First, North Korea's pursuit of nuclearization is destabilizing to regional security, and a negative factor in China's desire for a stable neighboring environment.

No matter what its source, since the first nuclear crisis, North Korea's nuclear issue poses the threat of nuclear proliferation. It is a significant threat to China's security.<sup>1</sup> Having a nuclear neighbor creates a direct or potential military threat to China. In addition, proliferation of nuclear technology will create a chain reaction, leading to a regional arms race. More importantly, nuclear proliferation will contribute to distrust and conflict between nuclear countries and non-nuclear countries, making it hard to promote regional security cooperation. In addition, China and North Korea are neighboring countries, and pollution from North Korea's nuclear tests has affected some parts of China. China expressed its concerns and objections as early as the beginning of the first breakout of North Korea's nuclear issue, hoping relevant countries would be able to resolve this issue through dialogue.

At first, China pinned its hopes on negotiations between North Korea and the United States. As the situation developed, China proactively participated in multilateral negotiations. In particular, China held both Three-party talks and Six-party talks after the second North Korean nuclear crisis.<sup>2</sup> When North Korea carried out nuclear tests first on October 9, 2006 and then on May 25, 2009, China strongly condemned North Korea and, with other members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), passed UN Resolutions 1718 and 1874 respectively to impose economic and commercial sanctions on North Korea.

In addition to its nuclear program, North Korea's missile research and development plan has always posed a threat to regional security, which has been elevated after the nuclear tests. North Korea's missile research and development plan has been associated with the weaponization of its nuclear capability and its satellite plan has also been criticized for this reason. As rocket technology and missile technology are interconnected, the launch of satellites by North Korea evinces strong reactions from neighboring countries. The biggest negative impacts on China of North Korea's satellite launches is that countries such as the United States and Japan could carry out tests targeting China's missile defense and interception systems, using North Korea's missile threats as an excuse, thereby enhancing the missile monitoring and intercepting capabilities of Japan and South Korea, as well as increasing the chances for the expansion of American deployments of anti-ballistic missile system in Asia Pacific. From the perspectives of both regional security and its own security interests, China does not want to see North Korean missile and satellite launches, which risk regional turbulence and conflict in its surrounding region.

Second, North Korea's diplomatic attitude of "tough for tough" has negative impacts on the region.

Toughness is the most distinctive feature of North Korea's diplomacy, which describes international society's basic impression of North Korea. Whenever North Korea adopts an uncompromising posture, it uses such words as "[start the holy war]," "[take revenge a thousand times over]," and "[turn the imperialist base camp (or Seoul) into a sea of fire.]"<sup>3</sup> When on November 23, 2010, North Korea fired scores of artillery shells at a South Korean island to protest South Korea's firing in a disputed maritime border during military drills, two

soldiers and two civilians were killed and 20 were wounded. In response, the international community condemned North Korea strongly, particularly for its attack and the killing of civilians. North Korea believes that a tough attitude and behavior is beneficial to its own safety. However, neither contributes to either domestic or regional stability. On the one hand, a tough attitude often intensifies conflicts and worsens situations. On the other, taking tough action poses an obstacle to dialogue, reducing the possibility of negotiations. Moreover, a tough attitude is bad for building North Korea's image in the world. North Korea has often been accused of being "bellicose" or "threatening."<sup>4</sup> Though such claims by certain countries may have their own motivations, it is undeniable that North Korea's extreme words and drastic measures have had negative impacts.

Third, when dealing with foreign relations, North Korea usually does not play by the rules and tends to go to extremes. As a result, it has become an unpredictable factor in regional development.

North Korea launched satellites twice in 2012, an example of its behavior of not playing by the rules. Prior to the initial launch, North Korea and the United States had just reached the "2.29 Agreement." Under the terms of this agreement, North Korea announced that it would suspend its nuclear weapons tests and uranium enrichment, which made the international community optimistic about future progress on North Korea's nuclear issue. However, in less than a month, North Korea announced plans to launch its satellite, leading to the breakdown of its negotiations with the United States. Some analyses identified this as evidence of North Korea breaking its word. When North Korea launched a satellite for the second time, it was just before the presidential elections in both the United States and South Korea. It appears it was believed then that the new leadership in South Korea and the United States would take only mild action toward North Korea toward overcoming the deadlock on the Korean Peninsula. However, North Korea's unexpected actions immediately complicated the situation. Although experts have different interpretations of North Korea's unexpected and incomprehensible behavior, one thing is obvious: no matter what North Korea's intentions are, its impact on the regional environment is negative.

As it lacks much leeway in its policy, it is likely that North Korea wants to win by surprise tactics. However, results often go against the hoped for outcomes. When North Korea makes the regional situation uncertain, it also undermines such limited mutual trust as exists, making it even harder to promote negotiations. In recent years, China has played a mediating role to promote peaceful talks between North Korea and the United States, as well as between North Korea and South Korea. North Korea's not playing by the rules is one of the reasons Chinese efforts have been stymied.

## NORTH KOREA IS ALSO THE VICTIM OF STRATEGIC GAMES BY THE MAJOR POWERS

North Korea's current image in the world is that of a warrior fighting by himself. Although it used to seek to improve relationships with the United States, South

Korea, and Japan, hostility remains between it and these three countries. At the same time, although North Korea and China have had friendly cooperation in many fields and are even identified as “allies” by some scholars, they have had significant disagreements in the course of negotiations on the nuclear issue. These tensions are indicative of the strategic games played by the major powers with each other since the end of the Cold War that have also been injected into the regional dynamic, strengthening North Korea’s self-image as a lone warrior in a hostile world.

First, an unbalanced regional structure after the Cold War is the fundamental reason for a relatively isolated North Korea.

The evolution of international structure after 1989 has had an impact on all aspects of North Korea’s politics, diplomacy, and economy. With the upheaval in Eastern Europe, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and China’s domestic turbulence, North Korea felt the world’s pressure on its political regime. Meanwhile, the disorganization of the “socialist camp” made the long stable and reliable socialist economic networks inaccessible to North Korea overnight. Moreover, the Soviet Union and China, North Korea’s two most important allies during the Cold War, established diplomatic relations with South Korea successively, thus adding to North Korean isolation. This affected the relative national power of North and South Korea, undermining North Korea’s ultimate goal of reunifying the peninsula. The impact at that time was unprecedented and far-reaching for North Korea, with only two previous historical events having a similarly traumatic impact—the unsuccessful reunification through war of the 1950s and the devastating economic slowdown of the 1970s.

To alter these unfavorable conditions, North Korea turned to South Korea and the United States and signs of improving bilateral relationships between Pyongyang with Seoul and Washington respectively emerged in the early 1990s.<sup>5</sup> During this time, North Korea and Japan held eight talks on normalizing their bilateral relationship. These together represented efforts on the part of North Korea to end its isolation and seek a new balance in the region. However, with the first nuclear crisis, conditions became unfavorable for North Korea. There are different analyses of the reasons for this. Some believe that it was the nuclear project itself that undermined progress toward improved bilateral relationships in the region. Others believe the United States used the nuclear issue as an excuse to disrupt progress in this direction to maintain its dominance in the Asia Pacific.<sup>6</sup> Despite such speculation, one thing is certain: so long as North Korea has not normalized its relationship with the United States and Japan, it cannot change its unbalanced relationship with South Korea, especially when Russia and China have both normalized their bilateral relationships with South Korea.

Because North Korea cannot change this situation, it is taking unusual measures to achieve balance. This includes emphasizing “Juche” to belittle South Korea’s “Sadaejuui” (serving-the-great-ism); diplomatically, “going to extremes” to attract attention and recognition; militarily, investing tremendously in the military and seeking nuclear defense; and economically, emphasizing self-reliance while seeking foreign aid in exchange for negotiations. In a word, recognizing how North Korea was marginalized is helpful to understanding the reasons behind North Korea’s distinct behavior.

Second, American efforts to dominate the region and contain China led to an exaggeration of the North Korea threat.

After the Cold War, the United States adjusted its strategy in the Asia Pacific—actively participating in Asia Pacific regional affairs, promoting the integration of an American-led Asia Pacific economy, maintaining military bases in the region and strengthening bilateral military arrangements with its allies, as well as promoting “democratization” based on western values in the region. In order to achieve these goals, the US needs, on the one hand, to improve cooperation with allies such as Japan and South Korea. On the other, it also seeks to change the development trajectory of “[undemocratic countries],” such as China and North Korea, through such methods as suppressing and inducing changes. With such strategic intentions, maintaining useful regional tension in the aftermath of the Cold War and emphasizing threats posed by China and North Korea to regional security helps legitimize America’s power maintenance in the Asia Pacific and reinforce its alliances with Japan and South Korea. It is against this background that North Korea became an “axis of evil”<sup>7</sup> and “[the largest threat to Northeast Asia security],”<sup>8</sup> recognizing, as mentioned above, that North Korea’s own behavior helps augment its threatening image. However, after comparing the national power of North Korea and its counterparts and analyzing North Korea’s political intentions, it is not hard to conclude that the country is vilified because of the needs and interests of major powers.

Third, North Korea’s security concerns have never been paid the attention they deserve.

In recent years’ discussion of security issues in Northeast Asia and the Asia Pacific, while the threat from North Korea is exaggerated, not enough attention has been given to North Korea’s own security concerns. As the regional structure became unbalanced, North Korea’s sense of insecurity has intensified. On the one hand, both the deployments and technical equipment of South Korea and the United States targeting North Korea have been significantly improved. For instance, in 2012, South Korea released its largest arms purchase plan since the country was established. The plan included an allocation of 8,300 billion won to purchase 120 new fighters, including the Boeing F-15K. In addition, the United States is assisting South Korea in missile research and development, expanding its missile launching range capabilities to 800 km, which will enable full coverage of North Korea. The United States is also integrating South Korea’s missile defense system into that of its South Korea-based military to enhance the missile defense system on the Korean Peninsula.

On the other hand, the undisguised hostility of the United States and South Korea toward North Korea’s political authority also makes North Korea worry about its security. After South Korea labeled the year 2011 as the year of unification, it set up a fund in 2012 to pay for its eventual reunification with North Korea. President Lee Myung-bak led this by donating his salary to the fund and claimed that “[judging by all conditions, we can foresee that unification is not far away.]”<sup>9</sup> In response to this, North Korea has continuously proposed to the United States that the two countries sign a peace agreement to “[replace the cease fire agreement during the Korean War.]”<sup>10</sup> However, the United States has

turned down this request each time. Apparently, American assurances that it has “[no intention of invading North Korea, nor will it change its political authority by force]” have not only failed to address North Korea’s security concerns, they have only deepened Pyongyang’s uneasiness.<sup>11</sup> In the weaker position both militarily and diplomatically, North Korea is not only accused of “setting barriers for negotiations,” but also finds its security concerns ignored. This is a strong disincentive for building mutual trust.

### NORTH KOREA’S PROMISING POSITIVE IMPACT ON REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

With a bad reputation and in a difficult position, can North Korea have a promising future and play a positive role in regional peace and prosperity? The answer to this question rests conditionally on two factors: one is North Korea’s own development, and the other is the policy of neighboring countries.

First, North Korea has been changing with trends in the international environment, and the current trend is positive.

The biggest change in North Korea’s domestic politics during recent years is an acknowledgment of the importance of developing its economy and improving people’s livelihoods by taking proactive actions in these areas. This change began in the later years of Kim Jong-il’s leadership. In 2012, North Korea launched a strategic transformation of its economy; instead of prioritizing the national defense industry, it began focusing on sectors related to people’s lives, such as light industry and agriculture.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, North Korea slightly adjusted both its domestic and international economic policies, including expanding the role of the market in the distribution of agricultural products; loosening restrictions on enterprises’ production plans; releasing economic management and regulatory legislation, such as the “real estate management law” and the “law on consumption;” upgrading Rason City to a special economic city to attract foreign investment; and announcing the establishment of the Taepung International Investment Group and the National Development Bank to conduct overseas financing and foreign economic cooperation. It is worth mentioning that in 2010 and 2011, Kim Jong-il, the General Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korea, visited China four times. During his visits, Kim Jong-il spoke highly of the achievements made by China since its opening up. In Kim’s meeting with Hu Jintao in 2010, the two leaders set economic cooperation guidelines as “[government-led, enterprise-based, market-operated, mutually beneficial and win-win.]”<sup>13</sup> Under conditions of economic and diplomatic difficulty, North Korean leaders have gradually realized that maintaining the stability of their system is inseparable from economic recovery and development, and improving people’s livelihood is directly related to political and social stability.<sup>14</sup>

After Kim Jong-un took office, he continued and expanded such policies. Kim Jong-un has emphasized following Kim Jong-il’s will, making “improving people’s living standards” a top policy priority, setting solving the food problem as the most urgent task, boosting key sectors of the domestic economy, and

prioritizing the electric power, coal, mining and rail transportation industries. Kim Jong-un also issued special instructions to establish a “leading group on economic reform,” appointing the deputy prime minister of his Cabinet as the team leader. North Korea further announced that “it is constantly improving and strengthening its economic structure and development mode in accordance with national conditions to meet the global trend of sustainable development.”<sup>15</sup> On New Year’s Eve, Kim Jong-un delivered a speech marking the 2013 New Year, which highlighted such plans as “[creating a turning point in economic development],” “[making great efforts to revitalize sectors and departments that directly relate to people’s lives, and increasing production so people get more benefits.]” In order to achieve these goals, North Korea will “[constantly improve and perfect its economic management.]”<sup>16</sup> Currently, although there are many difficulties facing North Korea’s economy, an increasing body of analyses and reports are confirming evidence of these changes as greater economic vitality is displayed.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to changes in its economy, North Korea’s social life is changing as well—the rare appearance of the First Lady; the popularity of international elements, such as American cartoon figures appearing on the national stage; an increase in domestic mobile users, from 300,000 to 1.5 million in the past two years; and Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il’s distinctive close-to-people and down-to-earth personality are all the object of diverse interpretations by international society.

North Korea has also changed its foreign policies in recent years. On February 29, 2012, North Korea and the United States reached an agreement through dialogue. North Korea promised to stop its nuclear tests, long-range missile tests, and uranium enrichment activities near Nyongbyon (Yongbyon) County during the US-North Korea talks. It also allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to supervise its suspension of uranium enrichment. The United States in turn promised to provide 240,000 tons of food aid, reiterated its non-hostile attitude toward North Korea, and agreed to improve bilateral relations with Pyongyang based on mutual respect for sovereignty and equality. After two unsuccessful talks between the two countries in 2011, the timing of this negotiation—not long after Kim Jong-il’s passing away and Kim Jong-un’s taking office—attracted widespread international attention, most of which was positive. Although the agreement was not implemented due to American opposition to North Korea’s satellite launch, the flexible position of North Korea during the negotiations left a deep impression on the international community. In terms of following international rules, in April 2012, North Korea changed its behavior to eliminate international suspicion over its satellite launching. In particular, Pyongyang submitted more detailed reports on the satellite’s trajectory to international organizations, invited international media to report on the base of launching, and quickly admitted its failure when the satellite did not enter its orbit for the first time, all of which was quite unprecedented. Although the international community still holds that North Korea violated United Nations Resolution 1874, it has also noted North Korea’s more transparent attitude. North Korea has also sent people overseas to participate in training programs

on economic management, increased the number of its international flights, and actively pursued economic cooperation via foreign investment, including inviting the CEO of Google to North Korea. All of these actions are evidence of greater openness and flexibility.<sup>18</sup> In short, many changes are taking place in North Korea and they are apparent when one approaches them with an objective perspective and mindset.

Second, policies by neighboring countries are having a greater impact on North Korea's future.

Although ultimately dependent on North Korea's own decisions, due to North Korea's relatively weak position and limited leeway, neighboring countries are playing a decisive role in shaping the direction North Korean policy takes and the role the country can play in regional affairs. For a long time, the core of interactions between North Korea and neighboring countries has been about how to address each other's security concerns. The reason for the deterioration of these interactions is that countries have not paid enough attention to others' security concerns, and in particular the way in which the United States and South Korea address their own security concerns are in conflict with those of North Korea. After all, the actions of the United States and South Korea aimed at forcing North Korea to abandon its nuclear program through pressure, sanctions, and strengthening military preparedness is the same as North Korea's use of "nuclear deterrence" to make the United States and South Korea accept its security requests—both reflect a Cold War-style, zero-sum game mentality. In the current international environment and regional structure, such a mindset and behavior will not work.

The only solution is to seek a win-win approach, which addresses each side's security concerns in the interest of promoting mutual security and carrying out economic cooperation for mutual prosperity. If all sides can interact with each other on this basis, North Korea's role in regional affairs will change substantially, benefiting overall regional security and economic prosperity.

If North Korea indeed wants to return to the Six-party talks, this will enable other countries to take into account all sides' security concerns and adopt an approach in accordance with the September 19 Agreement, which was not only concerned with nuclear weapons but was also about promoting the normalization of relations among the participating countries, as well as having the goal of exploring ways to achieve enduring stability in Northeast Asia. Furthermore, the Six-party talks hold the potential to become a long-term mechanism for regional security cooperation—including traditional and non-traditional security.

If all stakeholders' security concerns were addressed through dialogue and negotiation, we could expect the relationship between North Korea and the United States, Japan, and South Korea to improve substantially, or even realize normalization. This would bring fundamental changes to the structure of the region and establish a new post-Cold War balance. Only by realizing a positive balance can long-term peace and stability be secured in the region and a foundation be built for a new regional order.

Finally, an improvement in relations with North Korea by all sides will bring breakthroughs in regional economic cooperation. East Asia is the most dynamic

region in the global economy. The Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of China, Japan, and South Korea and the economic interactions among these three countries are already very impressive. However, economic collaboration among the three countries remains somewhat constrained over disagreements on the North Korea nuclear issue. In addition, Japan and South Korea are implementing economic sanctions on North Korea. These sanctions also stymie regional cooperation. In particular, the proposed rail connection from the Korean Peninsula to the Eurasian continent, the transmission via pipeline of oil and natural gas from Russia to the Korean Peninsula, and the effective promotion of economic cooperation in the Tumen River area are all restricted for this reason. At the same time, China's proactive economic engagement with North Korea has many merits; however, it is a source of suspicion and dissatisfaction on the part of South Korea, which remains worried about China's capture of natural resources in the North. It also believes that North Korea's dependence on China is not beneficial to the ultimate unification of the peninsula. Although Japan and South Korea restrict their economic interactions with North Korea, they both acknowledge and look forward to the possible positive role North Korea can play in regional economic cooperation. If North Korea could improve its relations with other regional players this would open a new chapter in regional economic cooperation. All countries, including China, Japan, and South Korea, would benefit significantly and enjoy a win-win situation.

By way of conclusion, North Korea has the potential to play a promising and positive role in regional affairs. However, while policy change by North Korea is necessary, it is not sufficient for change in the region. All sides should contribute to creating conditions for regional peace and prosperity.

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## Refuting Two Historical Myths: A New Interpretation of China-North Korean Relations

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Two myths about Sino-North Korean relations, both supported, frequently reiterated, and almost never challenged in Chinese official media or academic publications, have spread far and wide in China. First, that North Korea's<sup>1</sup> political system embodies rationality and progressiveness because it is a socialist country; second, that North Korea is China's fraternal state and has traditional ties of friendship with China that were forged in blood. According to these Chinese myths, China's first generation of leaders determined that China should provide unconditional support to North Korea, and that "friendship diplomacy" should be the bedrock of Chinese statecraft toward North Korea. For the outside world, the Korean issue is a China problem and China is assumed to have considerable leverage over North Korea. Despite China's domestic historical myths and this commonly held outside view, China has long been in a great quandary over the Korean issue. One of the main reasons for this dilemma is that North Korea is so sensitive an issue for China that no one dares to tear off the veil. No Chinese dares wander into this troublesome area in Chinese statements or publications: neither political figures, diplomats, nor academics.<sup>2</sup> Amid the scarcity of serious Chinese academic studies based on historical facts, random comments on North Korea and Sino-North Korean relations have permeated the Internet in the past several years, contradicting the official Chinese narrative as well as historical facts.

Under the current complicated and changeable international situation, Pyongyang's actions and possible changes in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) are among the most challenging issues that the Chinese government has to confront in its periphery. For China to extricate itself from its Korean plight, it is imperative to understand both the political characteristics

of the North Korean regime and the evolution of Sino-North Korean relations. First of all, it is necessary to refute the two historical myths.

## HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY AND POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DPRK

The alliance formed among the Communist countries during the Cold War was aimed at countering the Western bloc, as well as socialist intra-bloc contradictions. The vicissitudes of the international Communist movement between 1950 and 1960 were also reflected in changes in Sino-North Korean relations. Meanwhile, the Sino-North Korean political alliance, which was established by the leaders of the two countries in a particular historical period, has been freighted with enduring historical significance that clouds and obscures current political realities. In line with alleged tradition and revolutionary friendship, the Sino-North Korean relationship, both historical and present-day, has been defined and codified by special “set phrases.” This creates a paradox whereby, despite changing realities, the Sino-North Korean relationship is unable to escape official history. Thus, while reflecting on the historical experience of Sino-North Korean relations, we should first review the historical trajectory of the current North Korean regime in order to gain a better understanding of actual North Korean behavior patterns and political characteristics.

After Korea was reduced to a Japanese colony in 1910, patriotic Koreans formed various political groups and launched anti-Japanese resistance movements in different locations. The Korean revolutionaries, who fled to China and accepted the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), belonged to two groups: those in the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army in the former Manchuria and those in the Korean Independence League in what was formerly known as China proper. Although the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army was part of the anti-Japanese armed forces of the CCP, it was primarily supported and guided by the Comintern and the Soviet Far Eastern Command in Khabarovsk. The Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army did not establish close contact with the CCP in Yan’an. In contrast, the Korean Independence League and the Korean Volunteer Army, from their inception, received support from the CCP, including the CCP-led Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army. Their anti-Japanese activities came under the CCP’s unified management of the base areas behind the Japanese enemy’s lines. These Korean revolutionaries and many Korean nationals who joined the CCP and Eighth Route Army were later branded as the “Yan’an faction” after they returned to North Korea.<sup>3</sup>

Many other Korean revolutionaries who migrated to China at different times joined the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army. After the Mukden Incident on September 18, 1931, when the Japanese controlled all of Manchuria, the CCP organized an anti-Japanese resistance movement in Northeast China. In 1933, these anti-Japanese guerrilla forces were recomposed as the “Northeast People’s Revolutionary Army.” In 1936, the Northeast People’s Revolutionary Army and other Anti-Japanese guerrilla forces were reorganized into “the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army.” Many Korean revolutionaries joined these

CCP-led anti-Japanese forces, and several of them emerged as commanders, including Kim Il-sung, Choe Yong-gon, and Kim Chaek. They would become the leaders of the “Guerrilla Faction,” which would dominate North Korean politics during most of the Cold War.<sup>4</sup>

Struggling against the Japanese Kwantung Army’s repeated encirclement operations, many of Kim Il-sung’s guerrilla comrades lost their lives. Eventually, a small number of survivors retreated to the Soviet Far East, where they received military training as well as arms and equipment. In July 1942, the Soviet Far Eastern Command organized the No. 88 Independent Infantry Brigade in the area east of Khabarovsk. The Brigade commander was Zhou Baozhong, a member of the CCP. That same year, Kim Il-sung and his guerrillas joined the brigade’s First Battalion, which consisted mainly of ethnic Koreans. According to Russian records, Kim Il-sung excelled in military performance, as well as in learning Russian; he received much praise and was quickly promoted to lead the battalion. After the Japanese surrender, the Soviets sent Kim Il-sung, then a captain in the Soviet army, and his comrades—including Kang Kon, and Choe Yong-gon—back to Korea by sea via Wonsan harbor on September 19, 1945, a full month after the Japanese forces in North Korea had surrendered. Kim Il-sung became an assistant to the representative of the Soviet Occupation authorities in Pyongyang.<sup>5</sup> Pressured by the Soviet Occupation authorities, other Koreans repatriated from China proper—members of the so-called Yan’an faction—had to give up their previous organizational connections with the CCP. They returned to North Korea and joined the new government in their individual capacities.<sup>6</sup>

Soon, as American-Soviet relations deteriorated, so too did the political situation on the Korean peninsula, which had been divided by the American and Soviet Occupation forces along the 38th Parallel. After the Moscow Conference in December 1945, the Soviets ousted the local non-Communist nationalists led by Cho Man-sik and put Kim Il-sung into a dominant position in North Korean politics. With Soviet endorsement, between July and September 1946, Kim established a pro-Soviet regime in alliance with ethnic Koreans from the Soviet Union, known as the “Soviet Faction,” including Ho Ka-yi and Pak Chang-ok, and representatives of the Korean Communist Party from the South, known as the “Domestic Faction,” such as Pak Hon-yong and Pak Chong-ae.<sup>7</sup>

During the Korean War, Kim Il-sung blamed others for his battlefield failures and was able to push out or purge leaders of other factions who posed potential threats to his power and dominance, such as Mu Chong and Pak Il-u of the Yan’an faction, Ho Ka-yi of the Soviet Faction, and Pak Hon-yong and Yi Sung-yop of the Domestic Faction.<sup>8</sup> In the second half of 1956, through the process of intra-party struggle, Kim Il-sung purged all opposition leaders from the Yan’an and Soviet factions and established a personal dictatorship by relying mainly on his Guerrilla partisans.<sup>9</sup> In the 1960s, through propaganda and education in “Juche” (self-reliance) ideology (*zhuti sixiang*)” and a “revolutionary history tradition,” Kim Il-sung was able to establish absolute power centered on his family. In the late 1960s, after purging some Guerrilla Faction generals, Kim successfully cleared out residual opposition to his hereditary succession plan.

The new Constitution of 1972 established a formal ruling structure centered on Kim Il-sung and his family. A year later, Kim Il-sung was ensconced in effective control of day-to-day operation of the party.<sup>10</sup> From this point forward, North Korean politics were based on a hereditary “unitary leadership system” shared between the father Kim Il-sung and his son, Kim Jong-il.

### THE EVOLUTION OF NORTH KOREA’S POLITICAL HISTORY REVEALS THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGIME

First, the DPRK is a mutation of the “Soviet model.” The present North Korean regime was born during the Soviet Occupation, and its core leadership was chosen and appointed by the Soviet Occupation authorities. As Mao Zedong, the chairman of the CCP pointed out to Anastas Mikoyan, Politburo member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and vice premier, “[The Soviet Union liberated North Korea in 1945, and you put Kim Il-sung on the top.]”<sup>11</sup> North Korea transplanted the Soviet system and became a member of the socialist bloc. Thus, the DPRK has some of the common traits of the “Soviet model” countries: highly centralized planned economy, nationalization, highly centralized political control, and highly unified ideology. However, North Korea has its own special national and historical conditions. Due to its relatively low socioeconomic developmental level, the DPRK was and still is devoid of the “modernity” that the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries possessed. The conservatism and closeness of North Korea’s traditional society were conducive to the formation of personal dictatorship and family rule. Although Soviet leader Joseph Stalin also established absolute dictatorship, there was no social foundation for hereditary succession in the Soviet Union. After Stalin’s death, the Soviet Union and East European countries established oligarchic rule. The DPRK is the only one among the socialist countries to have established hereditary succession. In essential ways, it is a traditional monarchy. North Korea has nevertheless also adopted the effective control devices of the Soviet system (including a closely knit social organizational system and a Marxist-Leninist ideological discourse).

Second, a unitary ruling system was established after repeated purging of all kinds of opposition. Factionalism was pervasive among Korean revolutionaries before Korea’s liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. Even during the Soviet Occupation, due to different experiences, there were several Communist factions well matched in strength. After the founding of the DPRK in 1948, blessed by Soviet support and his own political skill, Kim Il-sung prevailed over all opposition factions and dissenters and established the “sole leadership system” of the Kim family and hereditary succession.<sup>12</sup> Kim’s victory in power struggles had much to do with his sophisticated political skills and favorable circumstances; but it was Korea’s unique national conditions (a small country, a mono-ethnic state, a closed society, a low-level of social stratification, and a historical tradition of obedience to authority) that offered him favorable conditions. After each victorious power struggle, the monolithic nature of the ruling circle was further

tightened and strengthened. By the end of the 1960s, the rule of the Kim family was firmly in place. The closed structure of a ruling group based on familial kinship had strengthened the stakeholders, and reduced the possibility of splits among the ruling group. This explains why there was no clear schism among the ruling circle even in the period immediately after Kim Il-sung's death during the great famine, which stretched from 1994 to 1998. Up to today, there is no sign of an opposition group within North Korea's ruling circle.

Third, the legitimacy of the DPRK was established on the basis of nationalism and the regime implements the despotic rule of the leader via its "Juche ideology" and "military" policies. An important reason why Kim Il-sung was victorious over other factions in every power struggle was that he premised his legitimacy on the basis of nationalistic Juche ideology. The proposition of Juche ideology was itself premised on Marxist-Leninist discourse, but "[has little relevance to the tenets of Marxism and Leninism.]"<sup>13</sup> "Juche" directed against "flunkeyism"—serving the big and taking orders from the powerful without applying one's own judgment. Juche thus was an extension of the Korean national independence movement in ideological realms. Legitimacy was confirmed on those who endorsed Juche. With this as the basis of legitimacy, Kim Il-sung's faction was able to construct a revolutionary historical tradition, mythologizing the regime's own historical past and excluding other factions from the orthodox historical narrative.

Meanwhile, since Kim's faction originated in the Anti-Japanese guerrilla forces, North Korea's armed forces had always been the basis of Kim's power and authority. The army is also the core of political power. Although the "military first" policies were first officially introduced in 1995 after Kim Il-sung's death, these policies, were in reality an extension of those long implemented during Kim Il-sung's tenure, whereby the military and control of it was central to political power. One of the most important factors for the failure of other factions was that they were never able to gain control over the armed forces.

Fourth, the DPRK is a regime that depends on acquiring resources for survival in the international political game. North Korea is a backward country with a low level of development and meager resources. Its planned economy and closed political system are two constraints on economic development. Although Kim Il-sung had proposed a slogan of "self-reliance" on the basis of Juche ideology, the DPRK has never achieved economic independence. North Korea has even failed to feed its own people, and large and small "famines" have occurred with some frequency. Nonetheless, none of these economic predicaments has been able to undermine the regime's capacity for survival.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the aforementioned internal reasons, the DPRK had always been able to secure foreign aid during the Cold War, thereby reinforcing its political power. When the DPRK was first founded, the Soviet Union was its chief foreign aid supplier. Soon, China and relatively advanced East European countries (such as East Germany) also provided large amounts of aid to North Korea. Since the 1989 Eastern European Revolution and the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, however, China has been the DPRK's sole alliance and aid donor. Since Kim Jong-il came to power in the mid-1990s, the DPRK has also acquired a substantial

amount of “crisis dividends” from South Korea and the United States through its nuclear brinkmanship. A historical investigation of the DPRK reveals that Kim Il-sung was able to find opportunities and secure benefits by using Sino-Soviet controversies, while Kim Jong-il gained from Sino-American contradictions. By successfully adopting a strategy of acquiring the maximum benefits in the international geopolitical game, North Korea has formed a unique “political autonomy and economic dependency” model. Pyongyang has been able to take the initiative in securing benefits in the face of an adverse exterior environment. Although foreign aid has not been able to fundamentally rid the DPRK of its economic predicaments, it provides the necessary conditions for regime survival. This explains why the DPRK has been able to maintain internal stability without adopting the Chinese policy of reform and opening to the outside world.

### THE HISTORICAL PROCESS AND DIPLOMATIC FEATURES OF SINO-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS

Although the Sino-North Korean relationship was part of intra-bloc relations during the Cold War, it had two unique features. First, historically, Korea had long been China’s tributary state, in a sense, a protectorate of the Chinese empire. This tributary relationship between “celestial dynasty” and “vassal state” has remained in the minds of the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) leaders, and has become an important factor in Sino-North Korean relations. Second, the PRC-DPRK relationship evolved from the CCP-KWP (Korean Worker’s Party) relationship. Thus, for a long time, the Sino-DPRK relationship was a fraternal relationship between socialist bloc countries, not a normal state-to-state relationship.

Since 1949, the Chinese and North Korean media have frequently carried lengthy articles, lauding Sino-North Korean relations with expressions such as “as close as lips to teeth,” “brotherly affection,” and “sharing weal and woe”; “the Sino-Korean friendship was forged with fresh blood and tested in war”; “the traditional friendship between the two people will be handed down from generation to generation,” and on and on; but in actuality, the Sino-North Korean relationship has always been in a state of flux—sometimes hot and sometimes cold. For a long time, North Korea calibrated and exploited its relations between China and the Soviet Union. From the founding of the PRC in 1949 to the collapse of former Soviet Union and the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) in 1992, the Sino-North Korean relationship has gone through the following major phases:

From 1945 to 1949: With support from Moscow, Kim Il-sung strengthened his control over North Korea, while the CCP seized political power in mainland China. Both had close relations with Moscow and became members of the socialist bloc. During the Chinese Civil War, North Korea provided the CCP Northeast Bureau with humanitarian and material aid, which the CCP remembered and the DPRK hoped to use to its benefit in a later period. Revolutionary and “fraternal factors” were added to the traditional “lips-to-teeth” relationship premised on geopolitical proximity.<sup>15</sup> Both Kim Il-sung and Mao Zedong

understood how important their mutual help was to their respective struggles to establish political regimes. This revolutionary internationalism explained the readiness of Mao and Kim to lend a hand to each other when it was needed.

From 1950 to 1956: Although discontented with the decision by Kim Il-sung and Stalin to launch the Korean War, Mao Zedong prevailed over all dissenting views of his colleagues and decided to send Chinese troops to Korea after the US and South Korean landing at Inchon set North Korean forces reeling northward. Mao's decision was based on two deep considerations: first, to save and consolidate the Sino-Soviet alliance; and second, to help and protect Kim Il-sung and to bear the responsibility as a leader of the Asian revolution. Nonetheless, the PRC-DPRK tension existed at the highest level during the Korean War. For instance, after the Chinese entered the war, the two sides had difficulty creating a unified command. Once the Chinese army pushed the front line toward the 38th parallel, the Chinese and North Koreans clashed over the timing of an advance across the 38th parallel and into the South. There was also conflict over how best to manage the railroad system in order to guarantee the army's supply line. Kim had relied on Soviet aid and support prior to the war, but Stalin stood by Mao during the war over major disputes between the Chinese and North Koreans. Kim suffered the humiliation of becoming completely reliant on China and the Soviet Union for the survival of both his political power and the DPRK itself. This experience left a deep psychological shadow on Kim. Although the Chinese shed much blood, this fact failed to generate a true friendship between the leaders of the two countries.

In view of China's conflict with North Korea during the war and in order to maintain China's initiative over the Korean issue, Mao decided to offer North Korea massive economic aid. To maintain Korea's independence, Kim forwarded Juche ideology and opposed flunkeyism. While Kim acknowledged Chinese aid privately, he emphasized Korea's "self-reliance" in public. After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Kim was unwilling to follow the new policy line of de-Stalinization, which opposed the development of cults of personality. At the August Conference of the KWP in August 1956, Kim successfully purged a good number of the "Moscow faction" and the "Yan'an faction" cadres from his government and the Party, two groups that had criticized him at the conference. Several Yan'an faction cadres fled to China. New documents show that Mao was shocked and angered by Kim's purge and a joint Chinese-Soviet delegation was dispatched to Pyongyang to intervene. Under pressure, Kim was forced to "admit his mistakes," but was extremely resentful of Chinese-Soviet interference in DPRK internal affairs. Sino-North Korean relations fell into a serious crisis.<sup>16</sup>

From 1957 to 1965: During this period, frequent changes in governments and internal disturbances in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) made it impossible for it to attack the DPRK. Meanwhile, the US was focusing on economic reconstruction in South Korea. This provided an ideal social and security environment for North Korea's economic development. In the socialist bloc, after the Polish-Hungarian crises in October 1956, the Soviet Union and China turned their attention to Eastern European affairs. Kim continued with his purge of

potential rivals and established a personal dictatorship in North Korea. Mao also changed his policy toward North Korea. Mao apologized to Kim at the Moscow Conference in November 1957. In order to avoid further alienating Kim, Mao consented to Kim's domestic policies and decided to withdraw all Chinese troops from Korea in 1958.<sup>17</sup>

New documents show that Kim was adept at maintaining a balancing act between Beijing and Moscow when his two giant Communist neighbors began to quarrel in the late 1950s, extracting considerable economic assistance from both. The most salient example of this was Kim's ability to secure alliance treaties with both the Soviet Union and China almost simultaneously in July 1961.<sup>18</sup> By 1962, Kim had decided to side with Beijing in its struggle against "Soviet revisionism"—after Khrushchev suspended all Soviet aid to North Korea. China did indeed need the DPRK's political support as Mao competed against Khrushchev for the leadership position in the international Communist movement. In this period, Beijing intensified its economic aid to Pyongyang and made major concessions on several issues, including on the fate of over 70,000 Korean nationals (*chaoxianzu*) who had illegally crossed the Sino-North Korean border and fled to North Korea in 1961 and 1962, and on the PRC-DPRK boundary treaty of 1962, which gave North Korea a large portion of Tianchi (Heaven Lake) at the peak of Changbai Mountain (Baekdu Mountain in Korean), territory that previously belonged to China.<sup>19</sup> During these years, the Sino-North Korea relationship reached its highest point. On numerous occasions, Mao told Kim Il-sung that Northeast China was DPRK's great hinterland and that once war broke out, he would transfer the Northeast Chinese provinces to Kim's command.<sup>20</sup>

From 1966 to 1970: After Khrushchev was forced to step down and Leonid Brezhnev came to power in the Soviet Union in October 1964, Moscow adjusted its policies toward Pyongyang. When Moscow increased economic and military aid to the DPRK, Kim Il-sung moderated his attitude toward the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, China was falling into a radical and self-imposed isolationist foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution, which started in mid-1966. The Chinese "radicals" accused the KWP of revisionism and Kim Il-sung of betraying Marxism-Leninism by following revisionist policies and being "Khrushchev's disciple."<sup>21</sup> The "Red Guards" engineered a series of incidents along the Sino-North Korean border. Kim Il-sung was extremely unhappy with China, telling the Soviets that he would never submit to "the Chinese line." The Sino-North Korea relationship was at its lowest ebb, leading to armed border clashes in 1969. Meanwhile, between 1967 and 1969, Kim launched a series of surprise attacks against the United States and South Korea.<sup>22</sup> North Korea was obviously closer to Moscow than to Beijing from 1965 to 1968, but it tried very hard not to openly offend Beijing. After the Zhenbao Island Incident in March 1969 when China and the Soviet Union clashed along their Ussuri River border, both the DPRK and China felt it necessary to improve their relationship. There were signs of strain in Soviet-North Korea relations because Moscow did not support Kim's seizure of the US intelligence vessel *Pueblo* in January 1968 and his shooting down of an American reconnaissance plane EC-121 in April 1969.<sup>23</sup> China was more supportive of Kim's military adventurism. North

Korea gradually abandoned its closer relations with the Soviet Union and made efforts to improve relations with China. China and North Korea's shared hostility toward Japan and fear of a revival of Japanese militarism also contributed to this rapprochement.

From 1971 to 1979: During the period from 1970 to 1975, the overall foreign policy direction of the PRC was to achieve rapprochement and maintain detente with the United States. However, China also attempted to retain its revolutionary credentials and took into consideration the interests and sentiments of its smaller allies, such as North Korea, Vietnam, and Albania. It was an impossible job. Vietnam and Albania openly opposed the Sino-American rapprochement and their relations with China deteriorated as a consequence. Thus, North Korea became even more important to China. Kim Il-sung, who was dismayed and even shocked when he first learned of the Sino-US rapprochement, decided to exploit this profound change in US-China relations by pursuing a radically different reunification strategy: to embrace South Korea from a nationalist vantage point while hoping to drive the Americans off the peninsula. To draw the DPRK closer to China, China made a point to defend North Korea's security interests during Sino-US rapprochement negotiations and at the subsequent UN deliberations. China also enhanced its economic and military aid to North Korea and became Pyongyang's largest donor. North Korea was China's last ally in Mao's later years.

By 1974, North Korea had become suspicious of Beijing, believing that the government did not pressure Washington forcefully enough to withdraw US troops from South Korea during Nixon's 1972 trip to China. Pyongyang started to act alone without prior consultation with Beijing over major issues and proposals on the Korean peninsula, such as the dissolution of the UN Command, a peace agreement between the DPRK and the US, and the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. Pyongyang made numerous futile attempts to start direct negotiations with the United States. China also stated explicitly that it would not support the DPRK's attempt to unify the Korean peninsula by force. At their meeting in Beijing in April 1975, when Kim made an overture to attack South Korea in the wake of the sudden collapse of South Vietnam to the Communist North, Mao was noncommittal. Kim believed that the revolutionary nature of China and the Soviet Union was failing, and that Juche ideology and Kimilsungism should begin to guide world revolution. Kim aspired to become the world's revolutionary leader after Mao.<sup>24</sup>

From 1980 to 1992: The DPRK was concerned about China's post-1978 policy of reform and opening to the outside world. Beijing decided to endorse Kim's hereditary succession plan in the early 1980s after initial hesitation, even as the Soviet Union evinced serious reservations.<sup>25</sup> During this period, China's relations with the Soviet Union gradually improved. Kim continued to play a balanced diplomatic game between Beijing and Moscow, acquiring aid from both allies, but felt under siege when in the late 1980s Beijing and Moscow gradually improved relations with South Korea. Beijing and Moscow were obviously impressed with South Korea's economic success.<sup>26</sup> In the wake of the Tiananmen Square Incident and the fall of Communist regimes in both Eastern Europe in 1989 and the Soviet Union in 1991, Beijing and Pyongyang were like

fellow sufferers commiserating with each other. When North Korea firmly supported an internationally isolated China after the Tiananmen Square Incident, Beijing resumed military aid to Pyongyang.

Since 1992: When informed of Beijing's decision to recognize and establish formal diplomatic relations with South Korea, Kim Il-sung felt mightily betrayed. Sino-North Korean relations entered a cold period. Although Beijing and Pyongyang attempted to project a semblance of political unity, they were strange bedfellows. Since then, North Korea no longer gives much consideration to China's interests and attitudes in international politics, instead attempting to make utmost use of the contradictions among global and regional powers for its own regime's survival and security. The DPRK's most blatant action is the creation of the "nuclear crisis." During Kim Jong-il's tenure, North Korea gave no consideration to China's interests and position in handling major issues, including on the nuclear breakout and weaponization issues. It has incessantly undermined the Six-party talks, and has flagrantly conducted three nuclear tests.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, highly dependent on China economically, Pyongyang has managed to acquire necessary aid from China for its regime's survival.

### THE DIPLOMATIC EVOLUTION OF SINO-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS IN THE LAST SIXTY-PLUS YEARS IS SUMMARIZED BELOW

First, the Sino-North Korean relationship, which has long been hailed by both sides as "forged in blood" and "as close as lips to teeth" exists in name only. The relationship was very tense during and after the Korean War and during China's Cultural Revolution. Even when the relationship was at its best from 1962 to 1965 and from 1989 to 1992, the DPRK was not truthful to China. It has always put its regime's survival interests first. Because the CCP played no role in the founding of the DPRK and Sino-North Korean relations have gone through many tenuous periods, China has little leverage over the DPRK. After the end of the Korean War, China attempted to interfere in North Korea's internal development only in the first few years. China has long since adopted a policy of appeasement toward the DPRK and has no effective control over North Korea's actions.

Second, for a long time, the Sino-North Korean relationship played out in the shadow of poor Sino-Soviet relations. Kim Il-sung was always balancing and maneuvering between China and the Soviet Union, taking advantages of the conflict between his two giant neighbors to further benefit his regime. Generally speaking, in an alliance relationship, the smaller country submits to the bigger one, and the weaker country depends on the more powerful country. Historically, North Korea has generally gained the initiative in its relationship with China. Even when tensions and contradictions arose, in the end, China has always compromised to satisfy North Korea's needs. How can this be? Aside from Kim Il-sung's diplomatic skills, which allowed him to gain advantages from both China and the Soviet Union, and his indomitable will, China's concessions were largely a result of the international background of the Cold War

and its geopolitical factors. Korea, which was at the nexus of the Chinese, US and Soviet security interests in Northeast Asia, is strategically very important. Ancient Korean leaders advocated flunkeyism, relying on the suzerain-vassal relationship with China to defend Korea's national security and political status in Asia. Although Kim Il-sung proposed "Juche ideology," advocating self-reliance in foreign policy and development strategy, he only used this slogan as a cover to maintain the legitimacy of his rule. In reality, he made efforts to please both China and the Soviet Union in order to acquire aid.

Third, in handling modern Sino-Korean relations, Mao played two roles: the ruler of the traditional Middle Kingdom—tolerating and protecting smaller neighboring countries, and the leader of the socialist camp—assisting and supporting Asian socialist countries. From Mao's perspective, the underpinning of the Sino-North Korean alliance was in the interest of Asian revolution and his own leadership position in the international Communist movement. Because of his ideological aspirations, as a state leader, Mao often neglected China's national interests, in particular, in resolving China's border and migration issues with North Korea. In fact, in handling state-to-state relations, ideologically centered approaches do not sustain long-term stability of state relations. The serious deterioration of Sino-North Korean relations after the August Incident of the KWP in 1956 and during the Cultural Revolution are important cases that illustrate this point.

Fourth, perhaps out of pride as leaders of a big country and as important members of the socialist bloc, Chinese leaders, especially Mao, frequently uttered thoughtless views in talking with foreigners—Mao's statement that Northeast China was the DPRK's great hinterland is perhaps the most famous example of this. For a second example, in 1963 during a meeting with a delegation from a North Korean Academy of Sciences, Zhou Enlai reviewed China's big-power chauvinism and observed that China had invaded Korea by saying: "Unearthed artifacts have proven that the Korean people lived in the Liao River and the Songhua River valley for a very long period of time. We can still find historical sites of Bohai State near the Jingpo Lake area."<sup>28</sup> These remarks have left a historic precedent for the Kim family to covet Northeast China. These episodes further demonstrate that the Sino-North Korean relationship is not a normal state-to-state one, but instead has many traits of a dysfunctional familial one.

## RECONSIDERING CORE ISSUES IN SINO-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS

The further study of Sino-North Korean relations (including triangular relations between China, the Soviet Union, and North Korea) is of crucial importance for us to analyze the structure of international politics in East Asia, including regional trends during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era. It would provide useful clues to the origins of the Korean peninsula crisis and also to how a resolution might be achieved. Based on the historical narrative of the previous two sections, we can safely conclude that the essence of the Sino-Soviet alliance during the Cold War was more a "political marriage" than a "lips to teeth" friendly alliance.

During the Korean War and the years after, for propaganda purposes, both China and the DPRK dramatized the Sino-North Korea friendship as “forged in blood” and “as lips to teeth.” The Sino-North Korean alliance was formed out of concrete consideration of interests on both sides. In essence, China needs the DPRK mainly out of political concerns, while North Korea needs China’s aid for its economic development. This is the congruity and foundation of the alliance. While there have always been many contradictions of interests and major differences between the two countries, these contradictions and divergences cannot be exposed to the general public of the two countries, nor can they be displayed to either countries’ enemies. To do so would cause the Chinese-North Korean alliance to lose its legitimacy within and its deterrence without. In their bilateral relationship, China has traditionally valued “ism” while the DPRK has cared about “interests.” In order to win Kim Il-sung’s ideological and political support, Mao ignored the DPRK’s vacillation and opportunistic policies. While Mao and China could tolerate Pyongyang’s growing request for material aid, however, it could not stomach its political betrayal. Nonetheless, China has continuously failed to win over the DPRK as its strategic and political alliance partner. The Sino-North Korean relationship during the Cold War demonstrates this while also serving to illustrate the not uncommon phenomenon of the “tail wagging the dog,” or, some might say, the “mouse that roars.”

Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung maintained an asymmetrical alliance relationship between a big power and a small power during the Cold War. When the PRC was founded in 1949, Mao started to ponder how to restore China’s domination and leadership along its periphery. He was very familiar with the Chinese classics and learned by heart the ruling techniques of the emperors of the heavenly kingdom. In handling issues concerning North Korea, the traditional tributary system was foremost in Mao’s mind. Post-WWII Sino-North Korean relations were in the process of transformation from a suzerain/vassal relationship to a modern state-to-state relationship. In the era of the international Communist movement and confrontation between the two blocs, these ideas and concepts would become manifest in the name of revolution. Mao’s lifetime ambition was to turn China into the center of Asian revolution or even world revolution. In trying to achieve this aim, China paid a heavy price. Mao demanded recognition of his leadership. When North Korea submitted to and kept in step with China’s political line, China was willing to suffer losses in territory, population, and economic interests.

It may seem that the Sino-North Korean economic relationship is not complicated, but under this simple sender-receiver relationship is a complex set of political and diplomatic issues, including Sino-North Korean political relations; Sino-Soviet relations; Soviet-North Korean relations; the status of China’s economic development; and North Korea’s economic policies. A review of the history of North Korean economic reconstruction between 1953 and 1960 shows that the Sino-North Korean economic relationship remained relatively stable while the Sino-North Korean political relationship was volatile at times. China never suspended its aid to the DPRK, even when the Sino-North Korean relationship became strained or China was experiencing very difficult economic

circumstances. The reason for this decision was that the PRC has always treated the DPRK as a junior partner to be protected. Although the Sino-Soviet split put an extra economic burden on Beijing, China could still tolerate North Korea's growing economic needs, but not its political betrayal. As the "younger brother," North Korea could be capricious and act shamelessly while its "big brother" (China) had to endure humiliation in order to maintain the semblance of the Sino-North Korean alliance. This occurred in Soviet-Chinese relations as well as in Sino-North Korean relations. But China's role switched from "the younger brother" in Soviet-Chinese relations to "the big brother" in Sino-North Korean relations.

From a geopolitical perspective, the existence of the socialist bloc and Sino-Soviet relations made it possible for North Korea to acquire foreign aid. In the confrontation between the two camps from 1950 to 1959, China and the Soviet Union had to take into consideration the interests and demands of the DPRK—the gateway to socialism in the Far East. In the Sino-Soviet competition for the leadership role in the socialist bloc from 1960 to 1965, both sides extended flattery and favors to North Korea in order to win its support. After China was excluded from the socialist bloc in 1966, North Korea was one of China's few remaining allies and had yet more leverage to squeeze concessions from China. Although Soviet aid to North Korea was superior to that of China in quality and quantity, China committed a far greater percentage of its resources to aiding North Korea. During North Korea's reconstruction, China provided the DPRK with three massive economic infusions of aid when it needed help the most. But in a complicated political situation, China's generosity put it in a tight corner by provoking an aid competition between itself and the Soviet government. Meanwhile, Pyongyang developed a psychology of long-term dependence on foreign aid, and continually made exorbitant demands. Most of the time, North Korea took Chinese and Soviet aid for granted and was ungrateful.

Under the cover of the "lips to teeth" analogy, the Sino-North Korean alliance demonstrated the structural drawbacks of relations among socialist states. Both China and North Korea were socialist countries under the leadership of Communist parties. Similar to Sino-Soviet relations, China's diplomatic interactions with North Korea during the Cold War were a typical case of immature modern state-to-state relations, which were common among socialist bloc countries. The current Sino-North Korean relationship has not cast off the influence of party-to-party relations within the international Communist movement. To a great extent, it continues the political principles of party-to-party relations. In modern state-to-state relations, the common principle is the acceptance of sovereignty and equality among nations. From these two perspectives, there exist inherent structural drawbacks in socialist alliance relationships. First, in Communist political theory, there are no concepts such as state and sovereignty. The communists have long claimed that "the proletariat has no motherland" and "workers of the world unite." Even after coming to power, historically they have still accepted internationalism as the highest principle of their policies. Furthermore, in Communist ideology, the concept of equality doesn't exist. The Constitutions of Communist parties stipulate that the junior

party is always subordinate to its superior one and that all parties must obey the central committee. This leader-subordinate relationship in party-to-party relations was transplanted to state-to-state relations. It was commonly accepted that “the head of this Communist big family” could interfere at will in the internal affairs of “other members of the socialist big family.” Although leaders of Communist countries gradually came to understand that every country should have equal rights and that each country’s own national interests should be the core principle guiding state-to-state relations, no party could deny proletarian internationalism and the importance of unity in the international Communist movement—as to do so would amount to forsaking Marxist-Leninist principles, thus negating the legitimacy of Communist political power. Perhaps, this is the paradox at the heart of Sino-North Korean relations.

If Beijing cannot get rid of this paradox and form a correctly defined strategy toward North Korea, it will not be able extricate itself from its self-inflicted plight in making policies regarding the Korean peninsula. To compare history with the present situation, the current Sino-North Korean relationship is comparable to that of Sino-Soviet relations in the 1950s before the split in the summer of 1960. What North Korea has currently been doing to China is similar to what China once did to the Soviet Union in the 1950s.

At present, the Sino-North Korean relationship is at a crucial period. It has inherited a fraught history, but has an opportunity to establish a new direction for the new millennium. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the collapse of Communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and China’s reform and opening to the outside world all failed to transform the Sino-North Korean relationship from a Cold War era fraternal one to a modern state-to-state one. This was partly due to the Kim family’s successful hereditary succession and also due to the historical baggage willingly shouldered by Chinese leaders. In the twenty-first century, with the rise of China and China’s growing importance as a responsible stakeholder in international society, it is imperative that Chinese leaders adopt a forward-looking strategy toward the Korean peninsula. North Korea’s three nuclear tests have seriously endangered China’s security interests and international prestige. Why then does China continue to provide food and energy to prop up the Pyongyang regime? It is time that Beijing casts aside its historical and ideological constraints and treats the new, third-generation, spoiled, and ungrateful ruler in Pyongyang as he deserves. In this regard, Beijing should cooperate with Washington, withdraw its material and political support to Kim Jong-un, and prepare for the eventual meltdown of the DPRK.

#### NOTES

1. North Korea’s official name is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).
2. At least, this is the case in Chinese publications. See, for example, Jilinsheng Shekeyuan (ed.), *Zhongchao Guanxi Tongshi* [A General History of Sino-Korean Relations] (Changchun: Jilin Renmin Chubanshe, 1996). A search of key words, “Korea” and “China and Korea” in the popular Chinese academic electronic database ([www.cnki.net](http://www.cnki.net)) generated 21,649

publications for a period from 1990 to August 2011. However, most of these publications are on the current situation on Korean peninsula and the Korean War. Those on Sino-Korean relations cover the period from late Ming and Qing to 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded. Very few studies cover the period from the Korean Armistice in 1953 to the end of the Cold War in 1991. A major Chinese journal on the Korean peninsula, *Dongbeiyu Luntan* [Forum on Northeast Asia], carried 81 articles on the Korean peninsula from 2001 to 2002, of which none is on Sino-North Korean relations. From 2003 to 2005, it published 158 articles on the Korean peninsula, of which only five are on Sino-North Korea relations. Their arguments are very similar to *Renmin Ribao*. This thus reflects the sensitivity of the topic for Chinese scholars. See also, Piao Jianyi, and Ma Junwei (eds.), *Zhongguo dui Chaoxian Bandao de Yanjiu* [The Study of the Korean peninsula in China] (Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe, 2006).

3. Shi Yuanhua, *Zhongguo Gongchandang Yuanzhu Chaoxian Duli Yundong Jishi, 1921–1945* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2000), 269–273, 299; Liu Jinzhi, (ed.), *Zhongchao Zhonghan Guanxi Wenjian Huibian* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2000), 727, 801.
4. Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, f. 3, op. 65, d. 840, l. 16, cited from A. N. Pochtar, “Iz Istorii Sovetsko-koreiskikh Otnashenii V 1920–1950-e gody,” *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriiia* [Modern History] 5 (1990), 140.
5. TsAMOPF (Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense, Russian Federation), f. 1896, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1; 4, l. 29, cited from Pochtarev, “Iz istorii sovetsko-koreiskikh otnashenii v 1920–1950-e gody,” 135–160.
6. Yu Weimin, “Yan'an Pai zai Chaoxian Geming Zhong de Chenfu: Jiedu Zhongchao Guanxi de Yitiao Lishi Xiansuo,” *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Neibu Wengao* [Social Sciences China—Internal Manuscripts] 1 (2009), 176.
7. For the details, see Andrei N. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il-sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945–1960* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 1–48; Gang In-deok (ed.), *Bukhan Jeonseo* (Seoul: Geukdong Munje Yeongseo, The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1974), 254–255; Dae-sook, *Kim Il-sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 95–101; and Zhihua Shen, trans. by Neil Silver, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 38–43.
8. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il-sung*, 92; Suh, *Kim Il-sung*, 123–136.
9. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Learning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 205–211; Suh, *Kim Il-sung*, 149–157.
10. Suh, *Kim Il-sung*, 276–281.
11. Memcon, Mao Zedong and Mikoyan, September 18, 1956, author's personal collection.
12. For a discussion on the origins of North Korea's hereditary rule, see Avram Agov, “North Korea the Politics of Leadership Change,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 15 (2013), 15–27.
13. Suh, *Kim Il-sung*, 305.
14. For an analysis of North Korea's sustainability in the socialist world, including economic cooperation, see Avram Agov, “North Korea's Alliances and

- the Unfinished Korean War,” *The Journal of Korean Studies* 18 (2013), 225–262.
15. Shen and Li, *After Leaning to One Side*, 52–57.
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PART II

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China-North Korea Relations in  
Historical Perspective

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## China's Anti-Japanese War and the Independence Movement on the Korean Peninsula

*Jin Jingyi*

Korea was under Japanese colonial rule for 36 years, from 1910 when it was occupied by Japan, through to the Japanese surrender in 1945. During this period, Korea's anti-Japanese independence movement grew as an underground movement on the Korean peninsula, while expanding overseas to China, as well as to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan.

After first invading and occupying Northeast China, the Japanese military moved to launch its aggressive war against the entire Chinese mainland. Thus, China became a central battlefield for Korean and Chinese people against the Japanese. The resistance against Japan began amid the Chinese revolutionary struggle, making it virtually impossible for the Korean independence movement not to be affected by what was happening in China. As the result of several factors—geographic influences, domestic political factors in China, and conditions on the Korean peninsula—the Korean independence movement became divided into two camps,<sup>1</sup> the Communist Camp and the Nationalist Camp. The former established close relationships with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); the latter built close relationships with the Kuomintang (KMT) government. These political forces would play a defining role in shaping what became the political North-South divide on the Korean peninsula in the post-war period.

### THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE KOREAN COMMUNISTS IN THE NORTHEAST ANTI-JAPANESE COALITION FORCES

After the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, hundreds of thousands of Koreans settled in Northeast China. Later, Japan forcibly moved Korean immigrants into Northeast China, as it made the region into a base from which to

invade China. By the 1930s, the total number of Koreans in Northeast China had already reached two million.<sup>2</sup> Under the brutally oppressive rule of the Japanese imperialists, anti-Japanese sentiment ran high among Koreans in Northeast China and anti-Japanese armed groups and famous generals emerged in large numbers. In 1920, General Hong Fantu led a joint force of several independence armies to fight fierce battles with the Japanese army at Fengwudong of Wangqing County and Qingshanli of Long County in today's Jilin Province, achieving brilliant military successes.

Established in 1925, the Korean Communist Party (KCP) established a Manchurian headquarters in Ning'an, Heilongjiang. It also established many grassroots party organizations in Eastern, Northern, and Southern Manchuria. In 1928, after the Communist International (Comintern) confirmed the principle of "one country, one party," the China-based KCP was dissolved. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) then accepted a large number of Korean communists into its movement, expanding its own forces into Northeast China. By November 1931, CCP membership in Northeast China had grown to more than 2,000, of which 85 percent were ethnic Koreans. The CCP Manchuria Provincial Committee established county-level Party organizations in Eastern, Northern, and Southern Manchuria, with many Koreans serving as the country-level Party Secretaries.<sup>3</sup>

After the Mukden Incident of September 18, 1931, various armed organizations were established under CCP leadership. In early 1933, the 32nd Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of East Manchuria was formed from local anti-Japanese guerrilla organizations under the leadership of the CCP East Manchuria Special Committee in the region of today's Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture.<sup>4</sup> In addition, soviets were established at all administrative levels in the anti-Japanese base of East Manchuria. At that time, famous anti-Japanese guerrilla forces included the so-called "Rock Guerrillas," East Manchuria Guerrillas, Pearl River Guerrillas, Ning'an Guerrillas, Tangyuan Guerrillas, Raohe Guerrillas, and so forth. After the Northeast Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces was established in 1935, these guerrilla groups would become the First, Second, Third, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Armies of the Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces, with more than 200,000 troops and a variety of light and heavy weapons. There were large numbers of Koreans in these armies, many of whom played important leadership roles.

In 1937, the Japanese deployed more than four divisions to implement what was termed the "three river province mopping-up operation." This referred to the launch of a fierce push against anti-Japanese coalition forces militarily, politically ("summons somebody to surrender"), and economically ("cut off supply resources of food and clothes"). Coalition forces suffered huge losses in the counter-raids of 1939, with their forces reduced by half. Around 30 cadres above the division commander level died heroically in battle.

In order to preserve their strength to eliminate the Japanese, in the summer of 1942, Zhou Baozhong and Li Zhaolin developed a rotational military training plan for the Northeast Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces in the Soviet Union. At this time, three of the principal anti-Japanese coalition forces were stranded

along the Sino-Soviet border. In the autumn of the same year, approved by the Comintern, the Northeast Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces were reorganized into a Brigade (also known as the “International Brigade”) headed by Zhou Baozhong as its brigade commander; Zhang Shoujian (also known as Li Zhaolin) as vice brigade commander and political commissar; and the Korean Communist Choi Yong-geon (Cui Shiquan or Cui Yongjian) as its Chief of Staff. At the same time, the CCP Northeast Party Committee was set up within the training brigade, with Choi Yong-geon serving as the Party Secretary with Zhou Baozhong, Feng Zhongyun, and Zhang Shoujian as committee members.<sup>5</sup>

The “International Brigade,” established in the Soviet Far East, brought together the backbone of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces. It also gathered the backbone of the Korean communist leadership. The communists of the two nations thus fought side by side in Northeast China against the Japanese. In addition, they organized small units within the “International Brigade” for the purpose of reconnaissance activities. These small forces were directly under the command of Zhou Baozhong, Shoujian, and also Kim Il-sung.<sup>6</sup>

In July 1945, the Northeast Party Committee was restructured. A newly established CCP Northeast Temporary Committee was headed by Zhou Baozhong as Party Secretary. The Committee’s 13 members included Zhang Shoujian, Choi Yong-geon, Kim Chack (Jin Ce), Kim Kwang-hyup (Jin Guangxia), Wang Minggui, Feng Zhongyun, Peng Shilu, Lu Dongsheng, Kang Kon (Jiang Xintai or Jiang Jian), and Wang Yizhi.<sup>7</sup> Among them, Choi Yong-geon, Kim Chack, Kim Kwang-hyup, and Kang Kon were all Korean communists.

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the Chinese and Korean comrades of the “International Brigade” were dispatched with Soviet troops to both Northeast China and North Korea. Some Korean comrades, Kang Kon, Park Rakkwon (Piao Luoquan), and Choe Kwang (Cui Guang) were sent to China’s Northeast region. Kim Il-sung called a military and political cadres meeting at this base, proposing new strategic tasks of building the Party and the military and laying the groundwork for a national government.<sup>8</sup>

The relationship between the Northeast Anti-Japanese Coalition Forces and the Korean communists carrying out anti-Japanese armed struggles in Northeast China undoubtedly laid a solid foundation for the later relationship between the CCP and North Korea.

## THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE NORTH KOREAN INDEPENDENCE ALLIANCE

During the first KMT-CCP cooperation period from 1925 to 1926, some Koreans involved in the Korean independence movement participated directly in China’s Northern Expedition. With the split between the KMT and CCP and the Guangzhou Uprising of 1927, some Korean revolutionaries moved into areas liberated by the CCP, while others stayed in Shanghai, Beijing and other Chinese regions to continue to support the anti-imperialist movement. During the Anti-Japanese War, one of the CCP’s foreign policy goals was to unify all

people in the Far East and establish an Anti-fascist United Front in Asia. The hope on the part of the Korean independence movement was to overcome the tendency of splitting revolutionary struggles among different parties and preserve a consistent and unified anti-Japanese front.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of the Second KMT-CCP Cooperation, the Korean National Revolution Party, the Korean Youth Alliance, the Korean National Liberation Alliance, and the Korean Anarchist Alliance convened in Wuhan, organizing the Korean Volunteer Army under the Korean National United Front. After the fall of Wuhan, the National Revolutionary Party retreated to Guilin in Guangxi. The Korean Youth Alliance was dispersed, moving to Northern Shaanxi, including Yan'an and Luoyang in Western Henan. Those who came to Yan'an joined the CCP's anti-Japanese ranks. In 1940, 40 Korean youths graduated from the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University, which had been established by the CCP in Yan'an, along with other schools and academies. They joined older Korean soldiers who, during the CCP Red Army period had fought together with the CCP guerillas to carry out anti-Japanese armed struggles at the frontlines with the Chinese Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army. In January 1941, young Koreans in Southeast Shanxi formed the North China Korean Youth Federation (NCKYF).<sup>10</sup>

In less than six months, the NCKYF absorbed many Korean revolutionary groups and young people who came from Chongqing and Luoyang. They organized the Korean Volunteer Army in July 1941. The Korean Volunteer Army maintained a close relationship with the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army. In a letter addressed to all members of the New Fourth Army, the Korean Volunteer Corps Central China Branch stated that it would take up arms and fight together with the New Fourth Army to defend the anti-Japanese democratic base areas, declaring that the anti-Japanese democratic base was not only a "motherland" for the New Fourth Army, it was also a "second home" for Korean revolutionaries.<sup>11</sup>

By July 1942, the NCKYF had been transformed into the Korean Independence League. With enthusiastic support from and in close contact with the CCP, the League organized and led the anti-Japanese struggle, fighting against Japanese imperialists troops.<sup>12</sup>

The Korean Independence League and Korean Volunteer Army actively participated in providing support to Korean revolutionaries in Yan'an, where they were based. In November 1941, Mu Chong (Wu Ting; also Kim Mu Chong) and Cho Il-bong (Zhao Yifeng), generals in the Korean Volunteer Army, were elected as senators to the Second Session of the Council of Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region General Assembly for the first time. In September 1942, the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Temporary Council (comprising Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, and Henan provinces) passed a proposal initiated by Li Dazhang and Deng Xiaoping to engage Japanese and Korean members of the council.<sup>13</sup> The Korean Independence League Secretary Park Hyo-sam (Piao Xiaosan) became a senator in the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Temporary Council.<sup>14</sup> In early 1943, the Northwest Shanxi Civil Administration formulated four ways to aid the Korean revolution, including confirming the legitimate status of the Korean Independence League and

the Korean Volunteer Army in North China, welcoming Korean immigrants into the base, and providing free education for young Korean men and women willing to study in the base areas. In addition, it authorized all levels of local government to welcome young Koreans who wished to participate in the Korean Volunteer Army, the Eighth Route Army, or the New Fourth Army. Along with this, it granted a range of different types of aid in support of the revolutionary activities of Korean comrades.<sup>15</sup> On April 15 of the same year, the Executive Committee of the Jin-Cha-Ji (comprising Shanxi, Charha, and Hebei provinces) Border Region announced a policy of “Preferential Treatment for the Korean People” to protect those “[who are willing to join with the Chinese people to fight against Japanese imperialism, or have come to the border region to escape the war.]”<sup>16</sup>

On February 5, 1945, the North Korean Revolution Military and Political School was established in Yan’an. Kim Tu-bong (Jin Doufeng) became the principal and Park Il-woo (Piao Yiyu) served as deputy principal. The aim of the school was to train cadres for the liberation of the Korean nation. American intelligence reported that the purpose of establishing the school by the CCP was to cultivate administrative cadres for post-war North Korea.<sup>17</sup>

On January 1, 1945, the North China Korean Independence Alliance sent a New Year greeting to Mao Zedong (General Secretary of the CCP), Zhu De (Commander-in-Chief), Peng Dehuai (Deputy Commander-in-Chief), the Eighth Route Army, and the New Fourth Army, stating that it had “[grown for four years at your established great anti-Japanese democratic base areas, receiving your guidance and support, and learning your unparalleled heroic revolutionary spirit and style.]”<sup>18</sup>

The Korean Independence Alliance regarded the CCP as a good friend of the Korean people. It supported the various political ideas of the CCP Central Committee and looked forward to the early establishment of a coalition government in China, as not only as a step toward liberating the Chinese people, but also the Korean people. Members of the Korean Independent Alliance translated Mao Zedong’s “On Coalition Government” into Korean, studied it carefully, and disseminated it to Koreans in the occupied areas.<sup>19</sup>

With the victory against the Japanese in sight, the Korean Independent Alliance began developing ideas for the future of post-war Korea. At that time, Mao Zedong’s “New Democracy” theory had the deepest impact on the League. At the Seventh CCP Central Assembly, Park Il-woo (Piao Yiyu), the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Korean Volunteer Army, said that the theory of “New Democracy” not only guided the Chinese revolution, but also resolved significant problems for the Korean People’s Revolution, offering it a political route, organizational route, and military route to victory.<sup>20</sup> (When the Korean Independence League returned to the Korean peninsula after the war, it became the New Democracy Party of Korea. Ideologically, it described the Korean Revolution at the early post-war period as at a “bourgeois democratic development stage,” with a key task establishing a democratic regime.<sup>21</sup>)

Also, at the Seventh CCP General Assembly, Park Il-woo stated that the task of the Korean Independence League was to intensively train cadres and organize

the Korean people's anti-Japanese forces, namely to organize the Korean Eighth Route Army.<sup>22</sup> Based on this understanding, the Korean Independence League supported the CCP over the KMT. The League believed that the KMT had other intentions toward post-war Korea, including that factions controlled and supported by the KMT would attempt to carry out the reactionary "Three People's Principles" (Nationalism, Democracy, and People's Livelihood) in post-war Korea. What is more, the League believed that the KMT conspired to make Korea into a KMT-led colony. The KMT intended to occupy Korea and turn it to an anti-Communist and anti-Soviet base.<sup>23</sup>

There is no doubt that the relationship between the CCP and the Korean Independence League, like the relationship between the CCP and Korean Communists in Northeast China, became a key source of the strong ties between the CCP and North Korea in the post-war period.

### THE CHINESE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF KOREA

On March 1, 1919, an unprecedented anti-Japanese movement swept across the Korean Peninsula. It failed miserably under the Japanese army's bloody crackdown. After the failure, exiled independence leaders gathered in Shanghai in April, establishing a Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea or Korean Provisional Government (KPG) with Syngman Rhee as its Prime Minister.

Shortly after the establishment of the KPG, Sun Yat-sen was elected the president of the Interim Government of China in Guangzhou. The KPG sent Yuh Woon-hyung (also Yo Un-hyong and Lu Yunheng or Lyuh Woon-hyung) to Guangzhou to congratulate Sun in December 1920.<sup>24</sup> The following year, Yuh carried Rhee's confidential letter to Guangzhou, asking for Sun's help in the Korean independence movement.<sup>25</sup> In September, the KPG formally approached the Chinese Government by sending Shin Kyu-sik, the Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister, as the discretionary envoy to Guangzhou, seeking official diplomatic recognition. During the November 3 meeting held between Sun Yat-sen and Shin, Sun stated that China and Korea were interdependent and could not be separated from each other, just like the Anglo-American relationship. At this meeting, Sun made it clear that, in his view, China was obligated to assist the Korean nationalist movement, and expressed deep sympathy for the Korean Provisional Government; however, he did not extend it formal recognition.<sup>26</sup>

On November 18, 1921, Sun Yat-sen officially met with the representatives of the Korean Provisional Government at a Northern Expeditionary oath-taking ceremony, at which the two governments granted each other formal recognition.<sup>27</sup> Given the political divisions within China, at that time, Sun's recognition of the Korean Provisional Government was without substantive significance, but was an act of moral support.

After the death of Sun Yat-sen, the KMT government under Chiang Kai-shek maintained contact with the Korean Provisional Government. However, throughout the 1920s, due to internal strife within the Korean Provisional

Government, as well as Chiang's efforts to suppress the Communist Party after the Shanghai Massacre on April 12 of 1927, there was little progress in relations between Chiang and the Korean Provisional Government. After the Mukden Incident and the assassination of Japanese General Shirakawa by Yin Fengji in Shanghai Hongkou Park, the relationship between the two governments became closer. In May 1933, Chiang Kai-shek met with Kim Gu (Jin Jiu) in Nanjing, agreeing to set up a special classes Army in the Luoyang Division of the Central Military Academy to train the Korean Independence Army.<sup>28</sup>

After the outbreak of the July 7th Incident in 1937, the various factions of the Korean independence movement in China became active once again. Chiang Kai-shek's government also began to publicly support the Korean independence movement, and gradually strengthen its influence on the KPG. KMT government officials began to seek to moderate fractional struggle within the provisional government by assuming the role of advisors and playing a larger role in governance, including by selecting senior positions within the provisional government and setting committee assignments. Chiang Kai-shek also met separately with the leaders of rival factions, Kim Gu and Kim Won-bong (Jin Nuoshan), urging them to cooperate with each other in the interest of Korean independence.<sup>29</sup>

With the start of the Pacific War, Chiang Kai-shek sent special instructions to the Organization Department of the KMT's Central Committee to develop a "guidance on assisting Korean national restoration" and approved it for implementation.<sup>30</sup> In September 1944, Chiang Kai-shek met Kim Gu. Kim made six requests, including requesting legal recognition of the Korean Provisional Government and for additional aid. Chiang responded by affirming that supporting the Korean Provisional Government was an existing KMT policy and that the KMT would recognize the Korean Government once the time was ripe. He allocated 5 million yuan to the Korean Provisional Government, along with 1 million yuan per month in funding for activities, government affairs, and living expenses.<sup>31</sup>

The KMT government also provided military aid to the Korean Provisional Government. The Korean Restoration Army was established in Chongqing in 1940. When the factional rivalries within the provisional government spread to infect the army, Chiang Kai-shek ordered He Yingqin to reorganize the Korean Restoration Army and put it under the control of a Military Committee, under the command of the Chief of the General Staff, so that, through August 1944, the Korean Restoration Army command was vested in the Chinese Military Commission. Later, the KMT government enacted "Measures to Aid the Korean Restoration Army."<sup>32</sup>

On September 14, 1944, the KMT government officially transferred command of the Korean Restoration Army to the Korean Provisional Government, acknowledging the *de facto* provisional government as the government of the Republic of Korea in support of the restoration of the Korean nation.<sup>33</sup>

In December 1944, the KMT sent Shao Yulin to the United States to participate in the Ninth Session of the Pacific Society and the inaugural meeting

of the United Nations. Kim Gu wrote to Wu Tiecheng, a senior KMT official, hoping Wu and the KMT would lend support on behalf of Koreans after Shao left for America. Kim Gu also commissioned Shao Yulin as advisor to the Korean Provisional Government to coordinate work with Koreans living in the United States.

Chiang attended the farewell party of Kim Gu before Kim's departure for Korea. Chiang expressed his full support for Korean independence, observing that if Korea could not achieve independence, freedom, and equality, it would be as if China had proved unable to achieve its own aspirations. Chiang identified Korean interests as China's vital interests. Kim Gu immediately asked Chiang to send Cheng Lifu or Shao Yulin as the KMT Representative to Korea. Kim hoped Chiang would remain supportive of Korean independence efforts, assisting Korea from the beginning of its struggle to the end, until the whole country was successfully unified and had achieved genuine independence.<sup>34</sup>

It had taken 26 years for the Korean Provisional Government to return to Korea from China. During this period, the Chiang Kai-shek government had become its most important supporter. This relationship built between the two sides undoubtedly emerged as the cornerstone of Chiang's Korean policy in the post-war period.

## CONCLUSION

As stated above, the Korean independence movement was divided into the Communist Camp and the Nationalist Camp. Both sides separately established deep relationships with the CCP and the KMT respectively and participated in the anti-Japanese armed struggle led by the CCP and KMT. As the Korean Communists in Northeast China fought a bloody war in the forests and mountains of northeastern China and in the Russian Far East, far from the rear of the Korean Provisional Government in Chongqing, the two sides had limited contact and communication. Therefore, as they struggled against Japan and also for Korean independence within China, their philosophical gap widened and their experiences became distinct. Although the Korean Provisional Government in Chongqing and the Korean Independence League established in Yan'an had fought together to establish a united front during the anti-Japanese war without showing obvious conflict on the surface, the two groups had "[neither cooperated nor had they had political contact]," as the Commander-in-Chief of the Korean Volunteers Army, Mu Chong observed.<sup>35</sup>

The Communist Party in Yan'an and the Nationalist Party in Chongqing represented two different ideologies. The Korean Independence League in Yan'an and the Korean Provisional Government in Chongqing also represented two distinct sets of beliefs, though they shared the same goals to fight against the Japanese and achieve independence. These ideological differences would prove pivotal in determining the direction of the two camps on the Korean peninsula in the wake of the war.

## NOTES

1. There are two perspectives on the two camps from the Korean Independent Movement period: the first sees two camps within the internal Korean Temporary Government, the second takes the view that there are two different ideological camps within the Korean Independence movement as a whole. This chapter adopts this second perspective.
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5. Yang Su and Yang Meiqing, *Zhou Baozhong Jiangjun* (Kunming: Yunnan Minzu Chubanshe, 1998), 406.
6. *Zhoubao Zhongwenxuan* (Yanji: Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985), 127.
7. *Zhou Baozhong, Jiefangjun Jiangling Zhuan* (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1985), 242, 245.
8. *Kim-Il-sung-dong-ji Hoe-go-rok: Se-gi-wa Deo-bu-reo* (Gye-seung-bon) (Pyeong-Yang: Chosun Rodongdang Chul-pan-sa, 1998), 472.
9. Zhu De, *Jianli Dongfang Geminzu de Fanfa Xisi Tongyi Zhanxian* (Chongqing: Xinhua Ribao, January 1, 1942).
10. Also known as the North China Korean Youth Association. See *Joseon-min-jok-hae-bang-tou-jaeng-sa* (Shanxi: Joseon-lyeok-sa-pyeon-chan-wi, 1949), 133–135.
11. “Chaoxian Yiyongjun Huazhong Zhidui Zhi Xinsijun Quanti Zhizhan Yuanshu,” *Jiefang Ribao* (Yan’an), February 2, 1942.
12. *Joseon-min-jok-hae-bang-tou-jaeng-sa*, 133–135.
13. *Jiefang Daily* (Yan’an), September 24, 1942.
14. *Jiefang Daily* (Yan’an), September 28, 1942.
15. *Jiefang Daily* (Yan’an), March 29, 1943.
16. “Jinchaji Bianqu Youdai Chaoxian Renmin Banfa,” *Jinchaji Ribao*, April 30, 1943.
17. James Irving Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 30 (end-note 9).
18. *Jiefang Daily* (Yan’an), January 4, 1945.
19. *Jiefang Daily* (Yan’an), July 10, 1945.
20. Wang Wei, “Wang Wei Tongzhi zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan,” in Yang Shaoquan (ed.), *Guan Nei Diqu Chaoxianren Fanri Duli Yundong Ziliao Huibian* (Shenyang: Liaoning Minzu Chubanshe, 1987), 1439. NB: Wang Wei and Piao Yiyu are the same person.
21. *Jiefang Daily* (North Korea), March 12–13, 1946.
22. Wang, “Wang Wei Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan,” 1443.
23. Wang, “Wang Wei Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan,” 1443.
24. See Number 1917 Document, dated 25th day of the first month of the 10th year of *Taisho* [reign name 1912–1926] (1921) in Kim Jung-myung (ed.), *Joseon-dong-ni-bun-dong*, Vol. 24 (Won-seo-bang, 1967), 424–425.
25. Wang, “Wang Wei Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan,” 651.

26. Wang, "Wang Wei Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan," 658–659.
27. Wang, "Wang Wei Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan," 656.
28. Wang, "Wang Wei Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Qida Dahuishang de Fayan," 666.
29. *Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi Lun Ji* (Taiwan: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1985), 847.
30. *Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi Lun Ji*, 847.
31. *Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi Lun Ji*, 847.
32. *Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi Lun Ji*, 850.
33. Zhang Qun and Huang Shaogu (eds.), *Jiang Zongtong dui Shijie Ziyou Heping zhi Gongxian* (Taipei: China Cultural Service, 1968), 287–288.
34. *Zhonghua Minguo Shishi Jiyao (Chugao)—Zhonghua Minguo Sanshisinian Shiyiyue* (Taipei: Zhongyang Wenwu Gongyingshe, 1945), 599–601.
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## The Evolution of the Lips and Teeth Relationship: China-North Korea Relations in the 1960s\*

*Cheng Xiaohu*

After fighting a war shoulder to shoulder against the United States-led United Nations (UN) forces in the Korean War, China and North Korea forged a comrade-plus-brother relationship. This relationship was soon tested as China and the Soviet Union, the two leading actors in the communist camp, turned against each other and engaged in a prolonged ideological polemic. The Sino-Soviet split not only reshaped the global geopolitical landscape, but also had a profound impact on the international communist movement. The socialist camp crumbled and member states, including North Korea, were forced to take sides.

The 1960s witnessed dramatic changes in Sino-North Korean relations. Despite initially taking China's side, that decade saw North Korea change its course and pursue good relations with both China and the Soviet Union. Sino-North Korean relations thus plunged to a freezing point. In the late 1960s, as China tried to break through its diplomatic isolation, Beijing and Pyongyang renewed their friendship. In contrast to the dramatic break in Sino-Soviet relations, the vicissitudes of Sino-North Korean relations were moderate. Nonetheless, given the "lips-to-teeth" relations between Beijing and Pyongyang, the change was dramatic and astonishing. Examining the changes in Sino-North Korean relations, this chapter traces their trajectory and explores the driving forces behind them.

### NORTH KOREA'S SILENCE DURING THE SINO-SOVIET POLEMIC

The secret report made by Chairman Nikita Khrushchev before the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) set the stage for the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>1</sup> Under Mao Zedong's direct guidance, the *People's*

*Daily*, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) published two heavyweight articles, “On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” and “More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”<sup>2</sup> The articles were a clear challenge to Khrushchev’s authority, publicly revealing the discrepancy between the two largest communist parties’ assessment of Stalin and other ideological issues. From then on, the rift between the CCP and the CPSU deepened. In 1958, China turned down the Soviet proposal to form a joint naval fleet on the grounds that the Soviets did not trust China to develop its own nuclear-powered submarine.<sup>3</sup> Also in 1958, Mao Zedong did not tell Khrushchev about the pending military action of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) against the Jinmen and Mazu islands, occupied by Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalist forces, although Mao and Khrushchev had met in Beijing less than one month before the plan was put into effect.<sup>4</sup> In a closed-door meeting on October 2, 1959, Mao Zedong and Khrushchev found themselves at odds over a variety of issues, from the Dalai Lama’s flight to India, to the military conflicts in the Sino-Indian border area, to the issue of American prisoners.<sup>5</sup> The top leaders’ conversation became so awkward that they began to exchange accusations. Mao Zedong labeled Khrushchev an “[opportunistic rightist],” while Khrushchev returned the insult in kind, calling Mao an “[adventurist]” and “[ultranationalist.]”<sup>6</sup>

This exchange of harsh words between Mao and Khrushchev clearly indicated that the Sino-Soviet alliance, formalized in 1950 and having stood the real test of the Korean War, was unraveling. Nonetheless, the tensions between China and the Soviet Union were confined to bilateral exchanges and remained unknown to the outside world. The internal disputes erupted into grand polemics only in the early 1960s, forcing other communist parties to take a position.

At the Bucharest Conference in 1960, when the CCP and the CPSU for the first time openly clashed over a wide range of ideological issues in front of other socialist parties, the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) was caught off guard and had to choose to stay on the sidelines.

The KWP’s initial silence was not a surprise to the CCP. According to Wu Xiuquan, a member of the CCP delegation, “[As the dispute erupted all of a sudden, the KWP could not clarify its position immediately.]”<sup>7</sup> North Korea was quiet for other fundamental reasons. The negative Sino-Soviet polemics had only begun to surface during the conference. Without knowing the real cause of the ideological tension, it was not unexpected that the KWP would follow the common political wisdom of waiting and seeing for a while, rather than jumping into the controversy. Moreover, even if the KWP had had inside information about the causes of the polemics, it would not have been willing to alienate either of its two principal allies by siding with one against the other, since North Korea relied heavily on both China and the Soviet Union for its domestic construction.

In 1961, following completion of its first Five Year Plan in 1960, two and a half years ahead of schedule, North Korea was ready to implement its first Seven Year Plan. The reasons for the early accomplishment of the Five Year Plan were partly attributable to the North Korean people’s hard work, and due in part to

assistance from China and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union provided North Korea with 1.3 billion rubles in aid, and cancelled its debt of 51.3 billion rubles.<sup>8</sup> One million two hundred thousand Chinese People's Volunteers (CPVs) had been extensively involved in North Korea's reconstruction when they stayed following the war to protect that country.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese government not only cancelled the entirety of North Korea's wartime debt, but also agreed to give North Korea a new loan of 8 billion yuan from 1954 to 1957.<sup>10</sup> Kim Il-sung admitted, "[It is our shortcoming in the past that we always and habitually relied on China and the Soviet Union's assistance.]"<sup>11</sup>

North Korea's new Seven Year Plan was more ambitious than its Five Year Plan. It set a target of increasing GDP by two and a half times over the seven year period and increasing grain production by one and a half times in seven years, further requiring that industrial output in 1967 be equivalent to that of the previous six years (1954–1959) combined.<sup>12</sup> Obviously, to achieve these grand objectives, North Korea had to continue to rely on Chinese and Soviet aid. Although China's own economy was in a bad shape thanks to the disastrous Great Leap Forward, Beijing still agreed to provide a loan of 420 million rubles to Pyongyang for the period from 1961 to 1964.<sup>13</sup>

### FROM A DE FACTO TO DE JURE ALLIANCE

In addition to the economic assistance from China and the Soviet Union, North Korea also needed both nations' continued security protection.

Coupled with Soviet military aid, China's military intervention during the Korean War saved the North Korean regime from total collapse. The continued presence of CPVs in the wake of the Korean War helped North Korea stave off any threat from the South. Following the purge of the so-called Yan'an and Moscow factions within the KWP, which had close connections to the CCP and CPSU respectively, the CPVs themselves became an irritant in Beijing-Pyongyang relations. In 1956, China and the Soviet Union jointly intervened in the power struggle within the KWP. This forced Kim Il-sung to reverse his previous decisions and reinstall some of the purged officials; however, Kim Il-sung took this opportunity to request that China withdraw its CPVs.<sup>14</sup> Mao once told Pavel F. Yudin, the Soviet Ambassador to China, that Kim wanted to drive the CPVs out and embark on the Titoist path, if not the Imre Nagy's.<sup>15</sup> As an attempt to mend fences with North Korea, Mao proposed to Kim Il-sung at the 1957 Moscow Conference that China withdraw its military forces from North Korea. In December of 1957, Kim formally accepted Mao's proposal. According to Kim's calculation, the withdrawal of the CPVs would serve a number of objectives: it would give the North political initiative and compel the United States to also withdraw from South Korea; it would also generate positive influence on the North and South Korean people; and, finally, it would further consolidate the friendship between the KWP and the CCP.<sup>16</sup> For Kim, the returned CPVs could be recalled at any moment if the situation necessitated it. In addition to these considerations, the withdrawal of the CPVs could give Kim and his party true autonomy.

The CPVs' departure exposed North Korea's security vulnerability, since North Korea alone needed to take care of its own security. The political division on the Korean Peninsula remained unchanged and the potential for military confrontation between North and South Korea remained. From North Korea's perspective, there existed a struggle of two opposite lines, between North Korea and South Korea, the progressive and the reactionary, prosperity and decadence. However, in the early 1960s, the political situation on the Korean Peninsula shifted toward North Korea's advantage. The years 1960 and 1961 were full of trouble for South Korea. President Rhee Syngman's heavy-handed policy in the 1960 general election backfired, triggering large-scale riots that forced him to step down. From January 1961 to the end of March of that year, over 130,000 Koreans directly participated in 156 demonstrations in South Korea.<sup>17</sup> In May, Park Chung-hee launched a military coup that overthrew John M. Chang's government. The volatile and chaotic political situation in South Korea worsened.

South Korea's turbulent political situation offered North Korea a new opportunity to restart its reunification campaign. Pyongyang stepped up its offensive on two diplomatic fronts. After the Chinese People's Volunteers returned to China, the North Korean government redoubled its diplomatic efforts to compel the United States to withdraw its troops from South Korea. Kim Il-sung pointed out, "[the only way to cope with the present situation in South Korea and solve the Korean issue once and for all is to force the American Army to leave South Korea and achieve the peaceful reunification of our motherland.]"<sup>18</sup> At the same time, North Korea formulated a new proposal for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang called for a free general election to be held simultaneously in the North and the South. Receiving no response from South Korea, in 1960, Kim Il-sung once again proposed a federal formula as a provisional measure for the peaceful reunification. To enhance the proposal's persuasiveness, Kim suggested that, if South Korea would not accept the federal formula, the North and South could set up an economic committee composed of Korean business representatives to discuss economic issues.<sup>19</sup>

While North Korea was carrying out its peace offensive, it also strengthened its military preparedness. In North Korea, war preparation was routine. Kim Il-sung once said, "[North Korea has been preparing for war since the armistice [in 1953]. As of today, we see no end in sight.]"<sup>20</sup> In the early 1960s, although the political situation on the peninsula became favorable to North Korea, its security environment became increasingly challenging. The US-South Korean alliance established in 1953 was further consolidated. In February 1961, the John M. Chang government and the US government signed the "South Korea-U.S. Economic and Technical Agreement." According to the agreement, the South Korean government pledged to make more contributions to the alliance in the form of personnel, resources, and equipment. Moreover, North Korea worried more about the rapprochement between South Korea and Japan. On October 25, 1960, the two countries resumed official talks in Tokyo that had been shelved for many years. The two countries discussed the possibility of normalizing their diplomatic relations, which would occur in 1965. Facing a

perilous external security environment, North Korea sought to formalize its *de facto* alliances with China and the Soviet Union.

As noted, as the Sino-Soviet polemics broke out, North Korea maintained a neutral stance. In December 1960, the Central Committee of the KWP passed a resolution, claiming that the KWP “[will consistently promote unity and solidarity within the socialist camp and the communist movement”; “will further strengthen unity with the CPSU and friendship with the Soviet people”; “will develop Korean-Chinese friendship forged in the long joint struggle against imperialism, and make further effort to enhance unity with the CCP.]”<sup>21</sup> In the same resolution, the KWP lashed out evenly against revisionism, dogmatism, and factionalism.<sup>22</sup>

Pyongyang’s neutrality enabled it to sign security agreements with both Moscow and Beijing in July 1961. North Korean leaders and official media walked a tightrope and carefully struck a delicate balance whenever they mentioned China and the Soviet Union at the same time. After Kim Il-sung visited China and the Soviet Union in 1961, the Chinese embassy in Pyongyang found that North Korean newspapers “[gave almost the same coverage to Kim’s trips to China and the Soviet Union, and published roughly the same number of editorials and articles on mass rallies held in two countries.]”<sup>23</sup> Chinese diplomats also noted that Kim Il-sung’s speeches and media reports praised the Soviets more for their economic construction and scientific achievements, whereas the official North Korean newspapers focused on China’s economic construction projects.<sup>24</sup> Although North Korea emphasized friendship and solidarity with the Soviet Union and China, apparently it showed stronger affection for China. North Korea repeatedly emphasized that the North Korean and Chinese people were “[comrades-in-arms sharing weal and woe],” “[the two countries’ friendship is cemented by blood],” and “[nobody can break it].”<sup>25</sup>

However, North Korea’s policy of neutrality did not last long. With the escalation of Sino-Soviet polemics and the isolation of the CCP in the international communist movement, the KWP finally leaned toward the CCP and formed an ideological alliance against the CPSU.

### LEANING TOWARD THE CCP

The KWP had many reasons to lean toward the CCP; the CCP’s effort to pull Kim Il-sung and his party to its side certainly played a decisive role. Mao Zedong and his associates were well aware of their isolated position in the polemics with the Soviet Union, and they tirelessly worked to court fraternal parties to their side. In addition to Albania, which had already become China’s reliable supporter, Vietnam and North Korea, which had heavily relied on China’s assistance for their survival, were the best potential ideological allies that China could court.

On his way from Moscow to Beijing, the Chinese government mobilized half a million people to line up on the Beijing’s streets to welcome Kim Il-sung and his delegation. Although for distinguished foreign guests to be greeted with a red carpet and massive crowds cheering on the street was not unusual, the size of

the turnout for Kim was exceptionally large and impressive. As another symbolic goodwill gesture, the Chinese government suggested that since the friendship between China and North Korea would last forever, the proposed China-DPRK Treaty of Friendly Cooperation and Mutual Assistance should not be bound by a time limit. Under that spirit of friendship, the Sino-DPRK security treaty was to remain in force until the Contracting Parties agreed on its amendment or termination, whereas the Soviet-DPRK security treaty had to be renewed before the ten-year pact expired.

Chinese diplomacy certainly helped bring North Korea to its side, but under the surface, there were some fundamental reasons for North Korea to do so voluntarily. First of all, as the CCP and CPSU exchanged accusations, it was very natural that North Korean sympathy went to the former simply because North Korea had been saved mainly by China during the Korean War. Second, North Korea's leanings toward China during the polemics had its roots in North Korea's dire security situation. As long as North Korea felt a threat from the United States, whose military forces were still stationed in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, it would be less receptive to Khrushchev's preaching about peaceful coexistence with the United States. North Korean leaders shared a world outlook that was very similar to that of Chinese leaders. Third, Kim Il-sung had also promoted domestic programs, such as the Chollima Movement,<sup>26</sup> which bore a strong resemblance to Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward. As Khrushchev and his party demonstrated disapproval of Mao's domestic programs, Kim certainly came under the same pressure from Moscow.

With Sino-Soviet polemics heating up, North Korea became increasingly bold in its support of the CCP. At the 12th Congress of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party held in December 1962, Lee Jooyon, the representative of the KWP, stood up to protect the CCP's authority when the CCP came under a barrage of finger-pointing from more than twenty speakers. Lee maintained, "If one party's attitude toward the Soviet communist party is a criterion to gauge this party's internationalism, so is its attitude toward the Chinese communist";<sup>27</sup> "[some comrades unilaterally criticize the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese brothers, [their criticism] should not be perceived as a comradely discussion. The criticism must undermine our unity and greatly damage the common course of international working class.]"<sup>28</sup> At the Sixth Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, held in January 1963, Lee Hyo-soon, the head of the KWP delegation, delivered a written speech, which claimed "[public criticism of the Chinese Communist Party's position is what our enemies want and welcome, all the fraternal parties should not do anything that hinder our unity, should not tolerate any actions that might undermine our unity.]"<sup>29</sup> A few days later, *Rodong Sinmun*, the mouthpiece of the KWP, carried an editorial sharply warning that any unilateral criticism of the Chinese Communist Party could endanger unity in the socialist camp and cause losses to peace, the socialist common cause, and amounted to joining the anti-China chorus.<sup>30</sup>

The KWP's vocal support of the CCP certainly could not go unnoticed. In his diary, Yang Shangkun, then secretary of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CCP, confirmed, "[Kim Il-sung's Korean government has

become increasingly active in the anti-revisionism movement.]”<sup>31</sup> In fact, in addition to throwing its weight behind China, North Korea also came to China’s side on two other prominent issues: Albania and the Sino-Indian border conflict.

As the CCP came under fire by the CPSU at the Budapest Conference, the Albanian Party of Labor (APL) was the first to weigh in on the dispute by taking China’s side; Albania’s relations with Russia then went into a nosedive. Albania was cut off from fraternal party conferences. The Chinese leaders then made a decision that the CCP would not participate in any fraternal party conferences if the APL was not invited.<sup>32</sup> As Albania became a sticking point in Sino-Soviet relations, the KWP sent a delegation, led by Vice Prime Minister Park Chul-ho, to attend the Fourth Congress of the Albanian Party of Labor in February 1961. Park publically praised the KWP’s achievements; in April, North Korea and Albania signed a treaty of economic cooperation; in November, in order to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the APL, Kim Il-sung cabled Hoxha a congratulatory message. In March 1962, Pyongyang inked a cultural cooperation deal with Tirana.

Defying the Soviet Union’s displeasure, North Korea maintained friendly relations with Albania. At the same time, North Korea also distanced itself from the Soviet Union on the issue of the Sino-Indian border war. As the Soviet Union demonstrated its disapproval of China’s conflict with India over the disputed territory, North Korea’s support of China was vocal and potent. An editorial published by *Rodong Sinmun* on December 7, 1962 pointed out, “the Indian reactionary class is pursuing a dirty political objective; to further intensify and prolong the Sino-Indian border dispute in order to realize its expansionist ambition for China’s territory.”<sup>33</sup> On December 8, Kim Il-sung sent a letter to Premier Zhou Enlai, reconfirming North Korea’s support for China’s position in the Sino-Indian dispute and demanding the Indian government’s response without delay to the Chinese government’s proposal, which called for withdrawing both the Chinese and Indian forces from the line of actual control by 20 kilometers, simultaneously, and renewing their negotiations over the territorial disputes.<sup>34</sup>

In sum, after signing security treaties with China and the Soviet Union, North Korea adopted policy leaning toward China during the Sino-Soviet polemics. Beijing and Pyongyang entered their honeymoon period. North Korea was once labeled as the “Albania of the Orient.”<sup>35</sup> In a working conference of the Central Committee of the CCP held in February 1963, Deng Xiaoping, then secretary of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of CCP, ranked the leftist parties according to their attitude toward the CCP. According to Deng, the communist parties of North Korea, Indonesia, and New Zealand, which dared to speak out on the CCP’s behalf, belonged to first echelon; the communist parties in Venezuela, Malaysia, Thailand, and Burma, whose member parties’ ideological outlook was relatively identical to the CCP’s, formed the second echelon group; and the Vietnamese and Japanese communist parties which aligned with the CCP on most occasions were the third echelon.<sup>36</sup> As a critical token of appreciation for North Korea’s support, in May 1963, Mao Zedong invited Kim Il-sung, Le Duan and V. G. Wilcox<sup>37</sup> to Beijing, consulting with them on

the article titled, "A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement." In a meeting with Mao, Kim confirmed, "I have read the proposal several times, it is very good. The proposal is very conducive to winning over the middle-of-the roaders."<sup>38</sup> As a dedicated consultant, Kim brought eight writers with him who discussed the proposal with eight Chinese counterparts, sentence by sentence. The final draft of the proposal incorporated many North Korean suggestions.<sup>39</sup> In June, in his meeting with Choe Yong-gon, then Chairman of the Presidium of the North Korean Supreme People's Assembly, Mao Zedong said, "Comrade Kim Il-sung made very good suggestions for the proposal last time,<sup>40</sup> Comrade Choe Yong-gon has come to China, other comrades have come, our bilateral relations have become further closer. Today, we could say that there exists no misunderstanding between our two parties, the relationship is very good and mutually assisted."<sup>41</sup>

Sino-North Korean relations reached their symbolic pinnacle when Liu Shaoqi visited Pyongyang in September 1963. In addition to all the public statements in his meeting with Liu, Kim Il-sung further hardened the KWP's determination to side with the CCP, promising: (1) "[the KWP is not afraid of a split in the international communist movement, the KWP has already split with Khrushchev on the ideological front a long time ago; if China splits with Khrushchev, the KWP will firmly side with China"; (2) "the KWP is not willing to stand on the second line, has organized a team of writers in preparation for taking part in the polemics and criticizing the CPSU through name-calling and finger pointing"; (3) "The KWP supports the idea to convene a conference attended by Asian leftist parties, and likes to persuade other parties to attend."<sup>42</sup>

In February 1964, Mao Zedong extended an emergency invitation to Kim Il-sung, soliciting Kim's opinion over the CCP's reply to the CPSU letter dated November 29, 1963.<sup>43</sup> In comparison with May 1963, Vietnam and New Zealand's communist parties were conspicuously absent from the consultation; only Kim and his associates came to Beijing and conducted three rounds of talks with Mao Zedong. Mao trusted Kim so much that he even discussed a possibility that China might degenerate into a revisionist country itself.<sup>44</sup>

North Korea's policy of leaning to China inevitably alienated its relations with the Soviet Union. As a sign of its disapproval of the Pyongyang-Beijing relationship, Moscow decided to suspend its military and economic assistance to Pyongyang in 1962. In 1963, except for normal trade between North Korea and the Soviet Union, the two nations had no other contacts.<sup>45</sup> The Soviet Union also refused to export gasoline to North Korea.<sup>46</sup> North Korea had to pay for Soviet equipment with gold, and the equipment was "[expensive, backward and [came] with many preconditions."<sup>47</sup>

To conclude, from 1962 to late 1964, North Korea took China's side in ideological polemics. Although the policy of leaning to China helped to generate enormous appreciation from China's side, it damaged North Korea's relations with the Soviet Union, which had been a major source of military and economic assistance. As North Korea still faced a precarious reality on the Korean Peninsula of political division and military confrontation, continuing to engage in the unnecessary polemics on China's side did not serve North Korea's interest.

In early 1965, North Korea changed its course and tried to build good relations with both Beijing and Moscow.

### THE NORTH REACHES OUT TO MOSCOW

The leaders of the CCP tried to mend fences with the CPSU after Khrushchev stepped down. On October 29, 1964, Zhou Enlai summoned to his office some diplomatic representatives of the socialist countries, including North Korea, Vietnam, and Albania. He persuaded them to have their countries send congratulatory delegations to Moscow to celebrate the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution.<sup>48</sup> North Korea and Vietnam followed Zhou's advice but Albania refused to do so. Beijing's efforts to normalize its relations with Moscow went nowhere, but North Korea and Vietnam seized the chance to put their relations with the Soviet Union back on track and improve dramatically.

The improvement in North Korean-Soviet relations had its own logic. First of all, during the Sino-Soviet polemics, the KWP publicly spoke out on behalf of the CCP, but it was not extreme in its attacks against the CPSU. As Sino-North Korean relations remained cordial in July 1963, North Korea continued to trumpet its solidarity with the Soviet Union. The objectives of North Korea's foreign policy were still to oppose the US-South Korean alliance by maintaining its allied relations with both China and the Soviet Union.<sup>49</sup> Although Kim Il-sung was willing to join the CCP to challenge the CPSU publically, he never did so in practice. Although the CPSU put pressure on the KWP, it showed some restraint. The Soviet Union still maintained economic and trade relations with North Korea, allowing North Korea to import machine parts and ammunition. The Soviet experts were allowed to help North Korea to build large projects. The two countries' restraint toward each other paved the way for future improvement in their bilateral relations.

Second, the North Korea-China-Soviet Union triangular relationship was subject to the reality of the political division of the Korean Peninsula. South Korea, the United States, and Japan, which were North Korea's deadly enemies, took measures to consolidate their relations. In June 1965, the "Japan-South Korea Talks" that had lasted fourteen years made a breakthrough—the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was signed, and Japan-South Korea relations, which used to be a weak link in the US military's island-chain strategy, were strengthened. Kim Il-sung believed that the Japan-South Korean Treaty actually was a tool that the United States used to drag Japan into Korean affairs. As a mastermind of the treaty, the United States encouraged Asians to fight Asians and wanted to try this plan on the Korean Peninsula first.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, inspired by the ongoing armed struggle of the Vietcong in South Vietnam, the North Korean leadership became increasingly discontented with the political division of the Korean Peninsula and wanted to pick a fight with South Korea. In a meeting with Yang Yong, the former commander-in-chief of the CPVs, Kim Il-sung admitted frankly, "[We have sent people to Vietnam to learn their experiences, the South Vietnamese fought very well. Before we

get older, it is not a bad idea for us to fight again. If we pass such responsibilities on to the next generation, they might not be able to fight better than us. We have war experiences; we should bear the burden and fight a war along with you. Is it ok? Let's do it again before we get older.]”<sup>51</sup> When Hao Deqing, the Chinese ambassador to North Korea, made his farewell to Kim Il-sung upon his retirement, Kim Il-sung reiterated that “[North Korea will fight a war sooner or later; war is inevitable. The political division on the Korean Peninsula will not be solved without a war. The North Korean people must take it. . . . When the struggle in South Korea runs high and the contradictions are sharpened, a war will break out. We have taken this situation into our consideration and braced ourselves for it, and we are also willing to do it. We are old comrades-in-arms, it is very good to meet each other, and we will invite your army to fight with us when a war breaks out in the future!]”<sup>52</sup>

These quotes indicate that Kim and his associates desperately wanted to reunify the Korean Peninsula, even at the cost of waging a war again. For this reason, North Korea felt compelled to seek an improvement in its relations with the Soviet Union, which could render necessary and meaningful assistance.

A third reason for North Korea to repair the damage to its relations with Moscow was that its economy was in trouble. In December 1965, Kim Il-sung told Li Xiannian, who was then Kim's guest, “[At present, the living conditions of the North Koreans are not good, food and clothing are barely enough. Cotton-padded jackets and quilts are in short supply. We still need about two years to solve these problems. Non-staple foods are barely sufficient. Foreign currency is the most difficult economic problem.]” Because of the economic difficulties, the Korean People's Air Force had to shorten its flight training time in order to cut gasoline consumption. North Korea also had to cancel a plan to participate in a soccer game held in Cuba in order to save foreign currency.<sup>53</sup> Faced with massive needs in the area of basic construction, a sharp rise in military spending, as well as intensified Soviet pressure, North Korea had to postpone the completion of a number of major infrastructure projects and the first Seven Year Plan could not be accomplished on time.

Moreover, the tension between North Korea and Japan caused by the normalization of Japan-South Korea relations sharply reduced their trade volume. The decline in trade hurt North Korea badly, since Japan was Pyongyang's most important trading partner in the western world. The difficulties in foreign trade undoubtedly rubbed salt into the wounds of North Korea's shaky economy. As North Korea's most important ally, China did its best to assist North Korea. However, due to its limited power as well as increasing demands for assistance from other friendly countries such as Vietnam, China was unable to keep up with the growing needs of North Korea. As some scholars observed, “China has no such capability to provide North Korea advanced military hardware and strategic nuclear weapons, which could be used to deter American aggression.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, normalizing its relations with an old ally, the Soviet Union, would not only enable North Korea to acquire much needed weapons and equipment, but also help to alleviate its economic difficulties.

Last but not least, the new leaders of the CPSU paid more attention to East Asia. Traditionally, Asia in general and East Asia in particular, did not occupy an important position in Soviet foreign policy. As early as June 1949, when Liu Shaoqi secretly visited the Soviet Union, he reached an understanding with Stalin about the division of responsibility between the CCP and the CPSU in the international communist movement. According to this understanding, China would help the national democratic revolutionary movement in the East as well as in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, while the Soviet Union would assume more responsibilities in the western world.<sup>55</sup> Guided by this understanding, China undertook the primary responsibility to assist North Korea and Vietnam in the Korean War and the Vietnam War, respectively.

In August 1958, when Khrushchev paid a secret visit to Beijing, he reiterated this understanding, “[You know more about Asia and Southeast Asia than us. We know more about Europe. If we divide the work in the international communist movement, we could give more consideration to affairs in Europe and you could pay more attention to Asia.]”<sup>56</sup> Mao Zedong categorically rejected this notion, saying that “[this division of work is wrong... the people in each country should take care of their own business... it is inappropriate for other countries to interfere.]”<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, Khrushchev adopted a “hands-free” policy toward Asia. The North Korean leadership was displeased with Khrushchev’s Asian policy. Kim Il-sung complained, “[He (Khrushchev) isn’t interested in the Far East and war. Whether North Korea is destroyed or not has nothing to do with him. He is only concerned with Europe. He treats us like a toe, and Europe like a heart.]”<sup>58</sup>

After Leonid Brezhnev came to power, the Soviet Union changed its course and took an activist approach toward East Asia. The CPSU called on the socialist countries to take joint action to aid Vietnam and resist the United States. The Soviet Union’s return to East Asia was partially aimed at competing with China to control, speak for, and represent this area.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, to restore its friendly relations with North Korea and Vietnam was key for the Soviet Union to secure an advantageous position in its competition with China.

After the North Korean delegation’s visit to Moscow in November 1964, Aleksei Kosygin, chairman of the Council of Ministers, immediately reciprocated with an official visit to North Korea. Kosygin and Kim Il-sung signed a joint declaration that effusively praised Soviet achievements. This included that the CPSU had established “[a new path that nobody had ever taken, and [had] built a great and powerful socialist nation... these kinds of achievements greatly enhance the international status of the socialist camp and world peace.]”<sup>60</sup> As a direct result of Kosygin’s visit to North Korea, the Soviet Union quickly resumed its military assistance to North Korea.<sup>61</sup>

## NORTH KOREA AND CHINA FALL OUT

As North Korean-Soviet relations warmed, the KWP and the CCP found themselves at odds on two key issues: how to judge Brezhnev, and how to evaluate Soviet assistance to Vietnam. The CCP believed that the new leader of the

Soviet Union carried out Khrushchev's line without Khrushchev—that is, its assistance to Vietnam was insignificant, and its real objective was to betray Vietnamese interests. However, the KWP claimed, “[The new leaders of USSR are revisionists, but are they enemies? We feel that we still need [more time] to observe. . . . Whether the Soviet assistance to Vietnam is genuine or not should be decided by the Vietnamese comrades.]”<sup>62</sup>

Obviously, the KWP's fence-sitting attitude disappointed the CCP, as China's foreign policy became increasingly radical. In May 1966, Deng Xiaoping pointed out publicly:

[After the new leaders of the CPSU came to power, somebody said that they have changed. We say they haven't. The nature of the leaders hasn't changed; their political line has not changed. If there are any changes, the changes are that they have gone further on the revisionist road, their position has become weaker and their tricks have become increasingly cunning. . . . The group of CPSU leaders has degenerated into enemies irreconcilable with Marxism-Leninism.]<sup>63</sup>

Because of clear differences on these two basic issues, Chinese and North Korean policies toward the Soviet Union began to diverge. While China declined an invitation from the CPSU to attend its Twenty-Third Congress, the KWP sent Choe Yong-gon to Moscow. When China opposed “united action” in Vietnam proposed by the Soviet Union, North Korea supported it publicly. When Zhou Enlai declared in 1966 that “the center of the world revolution” had moved from the Soviet Union to China, the KWP responded that no political party could become the center of world revolution or a worldwide political party.<sup>64</sup> And when China denounced the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the North Koreans defended the Soviet action.

From the second half of 1966 to the end of 1968, North Korean newspapers and magazines published a series of editorials criticizing leftist opportunism, dogmatism, and chauvinism. The criticisms were widely read as pointed allusions to China.<sup>65</sup> The Chinese mass media returned the insult by brushing North Korea aside and ignoring the country for a period of time. According to Chinese statistics, from 1967 to 1969 Chinese press coverage of North Korea dropped to only 20 pieces, a mere fraction of normal reports in the previous years.<sup>66</sup> During the same period, some big-character posters of the Chinese Red Guards directly attacked Kim Il-sung, calling him a revisionist and a “disciple of Khrushchev,” and some posters even crossed the line and spread rumors that a national anti-Kim movement had taken place in North Korea.<sup>67</sup> China and North Korea did not sign any new cultural or economic agreements, high-level visits and contacts came to a halt, and their respective ambassadors were recalled from each other's capital as a gesture of disenchantment.

The deterioration of Sino-North Korean relations was by no means an isolated phenomenon. As Chin O. Chung has observed:

the uncompromising Chinese attitude toward “United Action” and the CPC's growing inflexibility on ideological issues might be important fac-

tors contributing to the deterioration of the relationship between Peking and Pyongyang.

In 1969, Mao Zedong admitted that the unpleasant encounters between China and North Korea were China's fault, and that some Chinese within the CPC were chauvinists and ultra-leftists.<sup>68</sup>

### RAPPROCHEMENT AGAIN

North Korea had many reasons to repair its relations with the Soviet Union, but it had no reason to alienate China. Although Kim Il-sung had the courage to voice his dissenting opinions on issues relating to Brezhnev and the Soviets' aid to Vietnam, he still tried to avoid alienating his Chinese counterparts. Kim assured China that "[we stand together]" and resist "[any attempts to isolate China.]" "The differences between us," said Kim, "[merely emanate from our different understanding. Our basic anti-revisionist position remains unchanged, and we will also fight with China in the same trenches.]"<sup>69</sup> Although Sino-North Korean relations went astray as a result of China's leftist foreign policies, Kim Il-sung was quite aware of China's irreplaceable role in his great reunification cause. North Korea demonstrated a more cautious attitude on issues with regard to China. For example, coupled with Yugoslavia, North Korea was the only socialist country that did not condemn China at the Seventh Congress of the East German Socialist Unity Party in April 1967. Pyongyang also did not attend the Budapest meeting of world communist parties in February 1968 in order to avoid offending the Chinese.

In 1968, China's diplomacy came to a dead end. China's ultra-leftist diplomatic line engendered diplomatic disputes with three quarters of the countries that had diplomatic or semi-diplomatic relations with China. These occurred within little more than a year after the start of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>70</sup> All Chinese ambassadors except Huang Hua (then in Egypt) were called back to participate in the Cultural Revolution.<sup>71</sup> Former friendly nations such as Indonesia and Myanmar turned against China. The relations between China and Vietnam began to experience tension as the Soviet Union intervened in the Vietnam War. Thus, in the late 1960s, improving its relations with friendly nations such as North Korea became one of China's top priorities, as China sought to break out of its international isolation. An opportunity for China and North Korea to improve their relations came with the "Pueblo Incident."<sup>72</sup> The Chinese media, which had turned its back on North Korea for some time, immediately became enthusiastic about this event, which involved the seizure by North Korea of an American intelligence-gathering ship and its crew. On January 28, 1968, the People's Daily claimed: "[The Chinese people and the world's people are closely watching the development of the situation.]"<sup>73</sup> On January 31, the Chinese government indicated that China "[firmly supports the legitimate position of the North Korean government and the Korean people to counterattack the U.S. imperialists' reckless provocation. If the U.S. imperialists dare to undertake a new military adventure, it is begging for trouble and will suffer more severe punishment!]"<sup>74</sup> The strong Chinese statement was a prelude to the thaw in Sino-North Korean relations.

In September 1969, Choe had a brief stopover in Beijing after attending Ho Chi Minh's funeral. Choe assured the Chinese leaders that North Korea did not support the "Asian Collective Security System" proposed by the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> The Chinese leadership quickly reciprocated by extending an invitation to the KWP on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The KWP's special treatment was decided in a rush and overruled the original decision that no fraternal party would be invited for the national day celebration. The KWP responded swiftly. Choe, who had just left Beijing, immediately returned. During the celebration, Mao Zedong told Choe, "[our relationship is different, and we should build good relations,]" and "[we share the same goal.]"<sup>76</sup>

Choe's visit helped to push Sino-North Korean relations to a new stage. Six months later, Zhou Enlai made an official visit to North Korea. Zhou and Kim Il-sung signed a joint communiqué that claimed, "[At present, the aggression and war provocation of the American-Japanese reactionaries are becoming increasingly imminent. The situation requires that the Chinese and Korean peoples unite against the common enemy. This is of great significance to stop and smash the conspiracy of the U.S. imperialist aggression, to maintain the peace in Asia and the world, and to strongly promote the revolution and construction of the two countries' people.]"<sup>77</sup> From this statement, we can conclude that Sino-North Korean relations had returned to normalcy after experiencing a rise and fall.

## CONCLUSION

North Korean-Chinese relations experienced dramatic fluctuations in the 1960s. The relationship evolved from one of military alliance to one of ideological partnership, fighting the United States and the Soviet Union at the same time; and from comrades-in-arms to strangers who had no normal diplomatic contact at all. Then the two countries buried their grievances and renewed their friendship again. North Korea's relations with the Soviet Union and China were closely interconnected in opposite directions.

What were the driving forces that had pushed North Korean policies toward the two big countries in the 1960s? From the analysis above, the need for security and ideological considerations were the two fundamental factors that jointly determined all of the changes. For North Korea, the primary objective of its foreign policy was to compete with South Korea and the United States and to unify the peninsula on its terms. The Sino-Soviet polemics created a dilemma for North Korea's foreign policies: on one hand, North Korea expected to acquire security benefits by signing alliance treaties with China and the Soviet Union in order to boost its power position vis-à-vis South Korea; on the other hand, North Korea found it hard to remain neutral as the Sino-Soviet polemics escalated and the CCP became isolated in the international communist movement. After a short period of hesitation, the KWP jumped on China's side at the cost of estranging itself from another important ally, the Soviet Union.

Although the "choose the lesser evil" approach helped North Korea pay off its debt of gratitude owed to the CCP from the Korean War, it suffered enormous losses in its economy and security as a result. Alienating the Soviet Union

resulted in a significant reduction in North Korea's international assistance, and in turn weakened its position versus South Korea and the United States. Therefore, when China encouraged the leftist fraternal parties to attend the forty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution, North Korea seized the chance to mend its fences with the CPSU.

The rapprochement between North Korea and the Soviet Union inevitably upset Chinese leaders, who became increasingly paranoid about Soviet revisionism. While North Korea shifted its diplomatic focus from ideological polemics to unification and considered that ideological differences were no longer an obstacle to improving its relations with the Soviet Union, the CCP remained stuck in the old ideological dichotomy of defining friends and enemies. Chinese leaders sharpened their rhetoric and continued to label the Soviet Union as the accomplice of the United States and the enemy of the international communist movement. North Korean and Chinese policies toward the Soviet Union increasingly diverged. China's disappointment with North Korea's betrayal made the two countries' relations chilly.

The alienation between North Korea and China served the interests of neither country. As China's leftist diplomacy became increasingly problematic, Beijing took the initiative and extended an olive branch to Pyongyang. North Korea reciprocated, Sino-North Korean relations were normalized, and North Korea finally realized its long-pursued objective of having friendly relations with both the Soviet Union and China at the same time. As B. C. Koh observed, "Over these years, North Korea steadily pursued its objective of economic self-reliance and political autonomy" such that "for the first time since its creation it is now in a position to enjoy a measure of political autonomy in the fragmented Communist world."<sup>78</sup>

In the 1960s, North Korea paid a high price for the wild swings in its relations with China and the Soviet Union, but in the end, it won the two nations' respect. By 1970, when China and the Soviet Union were still locked in vicious confrontation, North Korea skillfully navigated its way between these two competing giants and maintained a friendly relationship with both countries simultaneously.

#### NOTES

\*Some materials in this chapter are closely drawn from my article titled "The Evolution of Sino-North Korean Relations in the 1960s," *Asian Perspective* 34.2 (2010), 173–199.

1. Mao Zedong himself confirmed that the Sino-Soviet schism started from the 20th Congress of the CPSU, see Pang Xianzhi and Feng Hui, *Mao Zedong Nianpu (1949–1976)*, Vol. IV (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2013), 429.
2. "Zailun Renmin Minzhu Zhuangzheng," *Renmin Ribao*, December 29, 1956.
3. The Chinese government once asked the Soviet Union to help China to build its own nuclear-powered submarine.

4. Scholars have conflicting ideas about whether or not China had informed the Soviet Union of its war plan against Jinmen and Mazu. My conclusion is in agreement with Shen Zhihua's recent findings, see Shen Zhihua, "Paoji Jinmen: Mao Zedong Weihe Rang Meiguo Wujie Yi Tongzhi Sulian," *Dangshi Bolan*, January 2010.
5. According to Khrushchev, the Chinese government should not have allowed the Dalai Lama to flee into India; the Sino-Indian border military conflicts alienated Nehru, whom China should have united with; and the Chinese government should have let its American prisoners go. Khrushchev's criticism met immediate rebuke from Mao and his associates, see Pang and Feng, *Mao Zedong Nianpu (1949–1976)*, 196–198.
6. Wu Lengxi, *Shinian Lunzhan: 1956—1966 Zhongsu Guanxi Huiyilu* (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian, 1999), 224–226.
7. Wu Xiuquan, *Wu Xiuquan Huiyilu* (Beijing, *Zhongguo Qingnian Chubanshe*, 2009), 160.
8. "Guanyu Sulian Chaoxian Guanxi he Heluxiaofu Fangchao Wenti," *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan*, [Declassified Document No.: 109–02090–01].
9. The specific figures can be found in *Kang Mei Yuan Chao Zhanzhengshi*, 3 (Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe, 2000), 512–513.
10. *Kang Mei Yuan Chao Zhanzhengshi*, 510.
11. Zhongguo zhu Chaoxian Dashiguan, "Chaoxian Shouxiang Huijian Li Xiannian Fuzongli Tanhua Jilu," *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [File No. 106–01477–04].
12. "Zai Pingrang Qingzhu Chaoxian Jiefang Shiwu Zhounian Jinian Dahuishang, Jin Richeng Shouxiang Baogao Guoneiwai Xingshi," *Renmin Ribao*, August 16, 1960.
13. "Jinyibu Gonggu Fazhan Zhong-Chao Youyi, Zengqiang Shehui Zhuyizhenying Weida Tuanjia He Liliang," *Renmin Ribao*, October 14, 1960.
14. Shen Zhihua, "Jiemi Zhiyuanjun Quanmian Cheli Chaoxian Yuanyou," *Laoren Bao*, July 17, 2013.
15. Shen, "Jiemi Zhiyuanjun Quanmian Cheli Chaoxian Yuanyou."
16. Pang Xianzhi and Feng Hui, *Mao Zedong Nianpu (1949–1976)*, Vol. III (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2008), 268.
17. Shi Licheng and Han Yuchen, "Nanchaoxian Renmin Fanmei Aiguo Douzheng de Xinfazhan," *Renmin Ribao*, April 21, 1961.
18. "Jin Richeng Shouxiang Baogao Guonei Guoji Xingshi," *Renmin Ribao*, August 16, 1960.
19. The proposal, made on August 15, 1960, had these main points: to implement a federal formula as a provisional measure; to retain the existing political systems in North and South Korea, with the two governments having freedom of action; and to form a supreme national committee composed of the two governments' representatives.
20. Zhongguo zhu Chaoxian Dashiguan, "Chaoxian Jinricheng Shouxiang Huijian Li Xiannian Fuzongli Tanhua Jilu," *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.: 106–01477–04].
21. "Chaoxian Laodongdang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui Quanti Huiyi," *Renmin Ribao*, December 27, 1960.
22. In the communist movement, it was widely believed that revisionism stood for the CPSU whereas dogmatism was associated with the CCP.

23. Zhongguo zhu Chaoxian Dashiguan, “Chaofang dui Jin Richeng Shouxiang Fangwen Sulian, Zhongguo de Xuanchuan he Fanying,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.: 204-00761-04].
24. Zhongguo zhu Chaoxian Dashiguan [Declassified Document No.: 204-00761-04].
25. Zhongguo zhu Chaoxian Dashiguan [Declassified Document No.: 204-00761-04].
26. Kim Il-sung first introduced the term Chollima in December 1956, shortly before the start of the 1957–1961 five-year plan. Kim promoted the Chollima movement to mobilize popular support in order to accomplish the first Five-Year Plan ahead of schedule.
27. Wu *Shinian Lunzhan: 1956—1966 Zhongsu Guanxi Huiyilu*, 551.
28. “Chaoxian Daibiao Tuanzhang Li Zhouyuan [Lee Jooyon] de Fayan,” *Renmin Ribao*, December 15, 1962.
29. “Chaoxian Laodongdang Daibiaotuan Tuanzhang Zhichu Gongkai Pianmian Pinping Zhongguo Gongchandang Wuzhuyu Tuanjie,” *Renmin Ribao*, January 23, 1963.
30. “Chaoxian Laodong Xinwen Yiyue Sanshiri Fabiao Shehun Weihu Shehuizhuyi Zhengying, Guoji Gongchanzhuyi de Tuanjie,” *Renmin Ribao*, January 31, 1963.
31. Yang Shangkun, *Yang Shangkun Riji* (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2001), 613.
32. Wu *Shinian Lunzhan: 1956—1966 Zhongsu Guanxi Huiyilu*, 375–376.
33. “Chao, Yue, Ji, Ni, Sha Yulun Yaoqiu Yindu Zhengfu Jieshou Tanpan,” *Renmin Ribao*, December 8, 1962.
34. “Chao, Yue, Ji, Ni, Sha Yulun Yaoqiu Yindu Zhengfu Jieshou Tanpan.”
35. Hak-chun Kim, *Korea’s Relations with Her Neighbors in a Changing World*, 2nd ed. (Elizabeth, NJ: International Corporation, 1993), 493–494.
36. Wu *Shinian Lunzhan: 1956—1966 Zhongsu Guanxi Huiyilu*, 533.
37. Le Duan, General Secretary of Communist Party of Vietnam; V. G. Wilcox, General Secretary of Communist Party of New Zealand.
38. Pang Xianzhi and Feng Hui, *The Chronicle of Mao Zedong’s Life*, Vol. V (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2013), 229–230.
39. Pang and Feng, *The Chronicle of Mao Zedong’s Life*, 571–573.
40. “A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement,” for detail, see Editorial Department of the People’s Daily and Editorial Department of the Red Flag Magazine, *Guanyu Guoji Gongchanzhuyi Yundong Zongluxian de Lunzhan* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1965).
41. Pang and Feng, *The Chronicle of Mao Zedong’s Life*, 233.
42. “Liu Shaoqi Fangchao Shi Baihui Jin Shouxiang Huitan Jilu,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [File No.: 203-00566-05].
43. The Soviet’s November 1963 letter proposed to stop public polemics between the CPSU and the CCP and convene an international fraternal parties’ conference, for detail, see Wu (1999).
44. Pang and Feng, *The Chronicle of Mao Zedong’s Life*, 319–321.
45. “Chaoxian Jin Richeng Shouxiang Jiejian Woguo Zhengfu Jingji Youhao Daibiaotuan Tanhua Jilu,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [File No.: 203-00767-01].

46. “Chaoxian Zuigao Renmin Huiyi Changren Weiyuanhui Weiyuanzhang Cuiyongjian Fanghua Qingkuang Jianbao,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.: 204-01267-05].
47. “Chaoxian Jin Richeng Shouxiang Jiejian Woguo Zhengfu Jingji Youhao Fangwentuan Qingkuang Jianbao. *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.:106-00767-01].
48. Zhou Enlai, *Waijiao Dashi Ji, 1949-1975* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1993), 424.
49. Robert Anthony Scalapino and Chun-yop Kim, *North Korea Today* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Press, 1983), 40.
50. “Chaoxian Jin Richeng Shouxiang Jiejian Zhongguo Renmin Daibiaotuan Tanhua Jilu,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.: 106-01479-08].
51. “Chaoxian Jin Richeng Shouxiang Jiejian Zhongguo Renmin Daibiaotuan Tanhua Jilu,” [Declassified Document No.: 106-01479-08].
52. “Jin Richeng Zongli he Zhongguo zhu Chao Dashi Hao Deqing Jilu,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.: 106-01480-07].
53. According to the Minutes of the Meeting between Premier Kim Il-sung and Chinese Vice Premier Li Xiannian (*Chaoxian Shouxiang Huijian Li Xiannian Fuzongli Tanhua Jilu*), North Korea’s trade deficit was approximately 15–20 million rubles in 1965.
54. Ralph N. Clough, *Embattled Korea: The Rivalry for International Support* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 188; Liu Jinzhi, *Dangdai ZhongHan guanxi*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1998), 41.
55. Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren bian: Shi Zhe huiyilu* (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1991), 412.
56. Li Yueran, *Li Yueran Huiyilu* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi, 2001), 187.
57. Li, *Li Yueran Huiyilu*, 187.
58. “Liu Shaoqi Zhuxi Fangchao Shi Baihui Jin Richeng Shouxiang Tanhua Jilu,” *Zhongguo Waijiaobu Danganguan* [Declassified Document No.:204-00761-04].
59. “Chaoxian Shouxiang Huijian Li Xiannian Fuzongli Tanhua Jilu,” [File No. 106-01477-04].
60. “Chaoxian-Sulian Lianhe Shengming,” *Renmin Ribao*, February 16, 1965.
61. M. T. Haggard, “North Korea’s International Position,” *Asian Survey*, (1965), 378.
62. “Chaoxian Shouxiang Huijian Li Xiannian Fuzongli Tanhua Jilu,” [File No. 106-01477-04].
63. “Deng Xiaoping Tongzhi Kabo Tongzhi Zai Shanghai Gongren Huanying a Dangzheng Daibiaotuan Dahui Shang Fabiao Zhongyao Jianghua,” *Renmin Ribao*, May 7, 1966.
64. *Rodong Shinmun*, August 12, 1966, cited in Chin O. Chung, *Pyongyang between Peking and Moscow* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 132.
65. Liu Jinzhi, *Dangdai Zhong-Han Guanxi* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shekeyuan Chubanshu, 1998), 43.
66. Liu Jinzhi and Yang Huaisheng, *Zhongguo dui Chaoxian he Hanguo Zhengce Wenjian Huibian, 1949-1994* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan, 1994), 63.

67. Liu, *Dangdai Zhong-Han Guanxi*, 43.
68. Chung, *Pyongyang between Peking and Moscow*, 127.
69. "Chaoxian Shouxiang Huijian Li Xiannian Fuzongli Tanhua Jilu," [File No. 106-01477-04].
70. Han Nianlong, *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 1990), 243.
71. Han, *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao*. Also see Huang Hua, *Qinli yu Jianwen Huang Hua Huiyilu* (Beijing: Sijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2007), 135-138.
72. On January 23, 1968, the Pueblo, a United States intelligence-gathering vessel, entered the North Korean marine belt and was seized by North Korean gunboats. The situation in the Korean peninsula became dangerous. The United States threatened to take belligerent action to free the ship and its crew. Finally, North Korea freed the crew of the Pueblo in December after reaching an agreement with the United States, in which the United States signed a confession of espionage, while publicly repudiating it.
73. "Zai Jiandiechuan Beifu Hou Jiajin Diaobing Qianjiang Wannong Ezha Yinmou, Meidi dui Chaoxian Renmin Jinxing Lougu de Zhanzheng Weixie," *Renmin Ribao*, January 28, 1968.
74. "Jianjue Fanji Meidi de Changkuang Tiaoxin," *Renmin Ribao*, January 31, 1968.
75. Wang Taiping, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi, 1970-1978* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1999), 36.
76. Wang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Waijiaoshi, 1970-1978*, 37.
77. "Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Chaoxian Minzhu Zhuyi Renmin Gongheguo Zhengfu Lianhe Gongbao," *Renmin Ribao*, April 9, 1970.
78. B. C. Koh, "North Korea and Its Quest for Autonomy," *Pacific Affairs* 38 (1965), 305-306.

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## An Attempt at Analyzing the Cross and Triangular Divided Relations among the Four Regimes in China and the Korean Peninsula after World War II

*Quan Hexiu*

The year 2012 marked the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The ROK was founded in August 1948, 14 months before the founding of the PRC. In 1949, the ROK established diplomatic relations with the then government of China, the Republic of China (ROC).

Three major points should be considered when reviewing the history of post-World War II relations between China and the Korean peninsula. First, to study the relationship between China and the Korean peninsula, we must consider the complex historical interactions among the multiple political forces that have existed in China and on the peninsula since the Anti-Japanese war.<sup>1</sup> Second, while both China and the Korean peninsula have been divided for six decades, we should look beyond this to analyze both China and Korea as integrated entities, including understanding the Sino-South Korean relationship in the twenty-first century as one with a 63-year history, rather than a history of little more than two decades.<sup>2</sup> In addition, research on the modern history of China's relationship with the Korean peninsula should not only pay close attention to the interactions and connections involved in this relationship, but also to the relationship among world powers and East Asian countries in the context of global history. It should also focus importantly on the connections and interactions among the *four* regimes of China and the Korean peninsula that reflect the post-World War II divisions of China and the Korean peninsula. These divisions have given rise to a complicated set of "cross and triangular" relationships among the four regimes of the three countries that played a key role in shaping Sino-Korean relations until the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) forged official diplomatic ties in August 1992.

Drawing upon relevant materials on China, Taiwan, South Korea, and North Korea, this chapter begins by discussing the process by which the cross and triangular divided relationships developed among the four regimes. It then analyzes how this relationship dynamic influenced China's relationship with the Korean peninsula through the early 1990s. This discussion supports the chapter's conclusions that relations and interactions among the four regimes remain an important factor in understanding contemporary Sino-Korean relations.

## THE POST-WORLD WAR II RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO REGIMES ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND CHINA

The liberation of Korea on August 15, 1945 brought an end to 36 years of colonial rule by the Japanese, but did not immediately offer the prospect of peace and unity. The United States (US) and the Soviet Union (USSR) divided the peninsula along the 38th parallel and occupied South and North Korea respectively. Both countries started to establish social and political institutions similar to their own in their respective zones. The Soviet leader Joseph Stalin admitted this, stating candidly: “[this war is like nothing in the past. Whoever occupies the place gets to build their system. Systems are set wherever the armies are. This is the only way.]”<sup>3</sup> In addition, emerging Cold War tensions provided a seedbed for the North-South split of the peninsula. In December 1945, the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom met in Moscow and decided on an international trusteeship for postwar Korea, although the decision was strongly opposed by Korean political forces.

In January 1946, the US-USSR Joint Commission failed in its attempt to build an independent temporary government for Korea. In November 1947, the Second United Nations General Assembly, manipulated by the United States, decided to hold a congressional election in Korea in March of the following year in order to establish a national government and the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK). On the peninsula, left-right cooperation among South Korean political forces, as well as North-South political consultations between opposing political parties, failed. Neither the North Korean Provisional People's Committee, founded by Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang in February 1946 and chaired by Kim as well, nor the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, established in Seoul in December of the same year and chaired by Syngman Rhee, were ideologically or politically equipped to form a united national government by themselves without international support. As a result, the long-term North-South split of the Korean peninsula after World War II was inevitable.

As for China's involvement in the Korean peninsula's political future, after the failure of postwar negotiations between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT) on founding a unified nation less than a year after China won the Anti-Japanese War, the country found itself caught up in another conflict, the Second Chinese Civil War. That the national government of the ROC and the newly born ROK established modern diplomatic relations under

such complicated and difficult national and international circumstances foreshadowed the complexity of the Sino-Korean relationship ahead.

On August 15, 1948, the Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) was founded in Seoul. Three weeks later, on September 9, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in Pyongyang. Thus, a mere three years after liberation, the Korean peninsula was officially split into two regimes, a division that has prevailed for over 60 years. At the time of the ROK's formation, the Second Chinese Civil War was advancing into its third year. The KMT's National government in Nanjing had lost its edge inch by inch and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was about to launch three major campaigns that would change China's fate. Although facing an uncertain future, the National government showed great diplomatic cordiality toward the newborn ROK. On August 12, three days before the official foundation of the ROK government, ROC Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Shijie, observed, "[Before discussion of the...report on UNTCOK at the UN General Assembly, based on the tradition of friendship between the Chinese and Korean nations, we give provisional recognition to the ROK government, and assign Dr. Liu Yuwan as the diplomatic representative bearing the title of Ambassador of the Chinese government to the ROK.]"<sup>4</sup> That a public statement of "provisional recognition" was publicly issued reflected unusual diplomatic cordiality; such statements are extremely rare in the history of diplomacy and demonstrated the tradition of friendship between the Chinese and Korean nations.

On August 7, 1948, eight days before the establishment of the ROK government, the official newspaper of the KMT Central Committee, the *Central Daily News*, published an editorial stating, "[It is a glorious chapter in the history of nationalist movements in East Asia, deserving congratulations from the world. China, in particular, is concerned about the future of the ROK, for both historical and geographical reasons. We are most thrilled to see the birth of the ROK under such difficult circumstances.]"<sup>5</sup> On September 13, after the official government was established, another editorial was issued. It presented three reasons why China recognized and supported the formation of an independent ROK government, aside from the "longstanding historical ties" that existed between the two countries. The reasons were given as follows: first, "[it has been one of the important goals of the Chinese revolution to support a nation under oppression to be free of invasion and achieve independence]"; second, it argued that, as one of the three principal participating countries of the Cairo Conference, China "[was obligated morally and legally to support the independence of ROK]"; and third, and finally, it stated that it was China's wish that "[not only would the ROK gain independence, but that it would adopt democracy.]"<sup>6</sup> Even today in the twenty-first century, the diplomatic cordiality and principles adopted by the ROC government should be recognized and applauded, despite the ROC's temporal and political limitations.

In contrast to the ROC, the CCP, which was not yet in power, characterized the South Korean Constituent Assembly election as a "pseudo-election" under the influence of terrorist violence,<sup>7</sup> and accused the United States of deliberately

creating a separatist puppet government in South Korea, in the face of Korean opposition. The CCP also called Syngman Rhee the “No. 1 Korean traitor.”<sup>8</sup> The Chinese scholar Jin Jingyi has argued that the “[CCP’s attitudes toward South Korea were mainly due to the CCP’s relationship with the US, and also the KMT’s relationship with Syngman Rhee and his political group.]”<sup>9</sup> Thus, it was these strained relationships that underlay the virulence of the CCP’s attacks against the ROC.

It was therefore not surprising that no CCP representative attended the founding ceremony of the ROK government; however, Liu Yuwan, the ROC representative to UNTCOK, was present and delivered a note of congratulations on behalf of the Chinese government.<sup>10</sup> A month later, on September 16, 1948, the ROC government established its consulate in Seoul, the ROK’s capital, with Xu Shaochang as its first consul.<sup>11</sup> Six months later, in January 1949, the ROC officially recognized the ROK government, its recognition immediately following the United States’ own, and, in July, it appointed Shao Yulin, a longtime supporter of South Korean independence, as its first ambassador to the ROK.<sup>12</sup> This made the ROC among the first national governments to recognize the ROK. Such recognition not only restored diplomatic relations between the two countries more than four decades after the Qing government of China was forced to break diplomatic ties with the Korean Empire in 1905, but also represented the first modern diplomatic relationship of both the ROC and South Korea.

The new ROK government responded positively to the ROC government’s diplomatic cordiality. On September 12, three weeks after the government’s founding, President Syngman Rhee delegated Cho Pyung-ok, a longtime proponent of Chinese independence from Japan, as Special Envoy to the ROC. Bearing the title of Special Representative of the President of Korea, he visited China and extended his sincere gratitude to the Chinese government for its “[efforts in supporting the ROK’s independence.]”<sup>13</sup> As a result, in terms of foreign relations for the newly founded ROK, the importance of its relations with the ROC was second only to its relations with the US. On November 7, after only 84 days as a new country, Special Envoy to China, Chung Hwan-bum, who was appointed by the ROK government, established the “Special Embassy of the Republic of Korea in China” in Nanjing. The embassy became the first permanent overseas diplomatic office established by the new ROK government. Although such terms as “Permanent Special Envoy” and “Special Embassy” were used, their use was not in line with common diplomatic practice because the ROC government had not yet officially recognized the ROK government, again, having then extended it only “provisional recognition,” signifying that no modern diplomatic ties had been officially established.<sup>14</sup> It was only on August 21, 1949 that the first ROK ambassador to China, Shin Seok-woo, was appointed, presenting his credentials five days later to the ROC’s then acting president, Li Zongren.<sup>15</sup>

The ROC government thus declared “provisional recognition” of the ROK before its official founding, and accredited a diplomatic representative carrying the title of Ambassador even before the official establishment of diplomatic relations. Similarly, the new ROK government sent a special envoy, carrying the title “Ambassador to China” to China to convey gratitude to the ROC before

receiving official recognition from the Chinese government. Additionally, the ROK accredited a “special envoy to China” before the official establishment of diplomatic ties.

The author believes that these actions not only demonstrate the profound and special historical relations between the ROC and the ROK, but also show the essential role that the bilateral relationship between the two countries played in their foreign relations at that time. Moreover, the ROC and the new ROK were active in establishing modern diplomatic relations with each other, not only because of the two countries’ historical and cultural common ground, but also, and more importantly, because the two countries were both following in the footsteps of the US in their diplomatic policies. That both followed the US meant consistency and significant mutual interests—in terms of both ideology and political institutions—between them. The two countries’ mutual relations with the US were undoubtedly the political bedrock that helped sustain modern diplomatic relations between the ROC and the ROK.

A *Central Daily News* editorial on January 3, 1949 called upon the newly founded Sun Ke’s Cabinet, “[as its first diplomatic action, to declare official recognition of ROK, and exchange diplomatic envoys with each other.]” It was pointed out in the editorial that “[when the situation in China turns worse, so does the situation in Korea],” a view supported by Chiang Kai-shek, who once claimed, “[without an integrated Northeastern China, there would be no independent Korea, and no peace in the Far East.]”<sup>16</sup> What is more, due to the abrupt turn of events in the Chinese Civil War, the ROK’s special envoy to China, as well as other later appointed ambassadors to China, had to move with the National government as it retreated from Nanjing, ultimately establishing itself on Taiwan. On January 19, 1949, merely two months after the Special Embassy of the Republic of Korea in China was established, for example, the National Government in Nanjing sent notices to all embassies that the capital would be moved to Guangzhou in the South. Guangzhou was where Shin Seok-woo, the first ROK ambassador to China, presented his credentials to the ROC. After Shin’s presentation, the ROK embassy, along with all other embassies, briefly moved to Hong Kong and Chongqing before permanently settling in Taipei in December 1949. The ROK maintained its diplomatic missions on Taiwan until August of 1992, when it broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Coincidentally, Shao Yulin, the first ROC ambassador to the ROK, served in office during the Korean War and was also caught in the flames of conflict, moving with the ROK government to Daegu and Pusan before eventually being able to return to Seoul with the rest of the government. The unique shared experience of permanent diplomatic representatives from both countries being “displaced” as a result of civil war served as a prelude to the future concussions that would rock the progress of ROC-ROK diplomatic relations.

As for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) founded in Pyongyang on September 9, 1948, the ROC refused to recognize it. On August 31, 1948, in its reposting of a foreign media’s piece entitled “The Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea to be convened in Pyongyang,” the *Central Daily News* referred to the DPRK as “[the puppet regime under the Soviet sphere

of influence.]”<sup>17</sup> In sharp contrast, the CCP, which was not yet in power, recognized the DPRK via a telegraph sent to its top leaders on September 19, just ten days after the DPRK was founded. The telegraph was officially sent by Mao Zedong, Chairman of the CCP Central Committee, and Zhu De, Commander-in-Chief of the PLA, and addressed Kim Tu-bong, President of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People’s Assembly, and Kim Il-sung, Premier of the “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.”<sup>18</sup> The telegraph said: “[On behalf of the Chinese people, we would like to extend congratulations to the convening of the united, independent, and democratic DPRK Supreme People’s Assembly, as well as the founding of the DPRK government, which is a great success in the liberation of the people of North Korea, and a great inspiration for the liberation of East Asian nations.]”<sup>19</sup> As the text above suggests, the National government in Nanjing and the CCP, embroiled in a civil war, responded very differently and displayed differing attitudes toward the founding of the ROK and the DPRK in 1948. Their responses and attitudes were not only shaped by the historical contexts that influenced their varying governments’ competing ideologies and goals, which in turn directly influenced how they chose to establish modern diplomatic relations between themselves and the Korean peninsula, but they also foreshadowed the complicated cross and triangular divided relations that would later characterize the four regimes.

Jin Jingyi points out in his research that China’s participation in the Korean War stemmed from factors dating from as early as the Anti-Japanese War, “[including geopolitics, Chinese domestic political issues, [and] indigenous issues related to North Korean Independence Movement, etc.]” Jin argues that the North Korean Anti-Japanese Independence Movement within Chinese borders was divided into two camps, the Communists and the Nationalists. He describes how the former built up close ties with the CCP, while the latter developed close ties to the KMT regime—political forces that would come to shape the North-South power divide on the Korean peninsula.<sup>20</sup> In fact, as the US and the USSR occupied Southern and Northern Korea respectively, and, as the political forces of the peninsula were divided, neither the ROK’s provisional government, which was supported by the ROC government, nor the Korean Volunteer Army (KVA), which was supported by the CCP, were able to dominate the politics of the Korean peninsula. Thus, the interactions between domestic political forces in China and North Korean anti-Japanese independent forces that emerged during the Chinese Anti-Japanese War, described by Jin, established the cross and triangular dynamic among the four regimes of China and the Korean peninsula,

Utilizing a four-player perspective makes clear the ways in which the post-World War II splintering of the Korean peninsula and China were closely related and mutually influenced. For example, at the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War, because the ROK was a longstanding supporter of China’s independence from Japan, the ROC government was in favor of the ROK provisional government’s attempts to dominate the southern Korean peninsula after its liberation.<sup>21</sup> The ROK even explicitly proposed to the ROC that it “[should reconstruct the party to deal with the upcoming election, and must take power in a single effort.]”<sup>22</sup>

In December 1945, the foreign ministers of the USSR and officials from the US and the UK met in Moscow and decided to create a five-year trusteeship for the Korean peninsula that would be overseen by the US, the UK, the USSR, and China. When the US-USSR Joint Commission failed to reach an agreement on the postwar status of the peninsula, the ROC government pushed the four countries to meet for discussions on the Korean peninsula. The ROC even joined the United Nations' Commission on Korea in order to stand with the US in its support of Syngman Rhee and an independent Republic of Korea. These efforts made China the third major world power to support Rhee's ambition to establish an ROK government in southern Korea.<sup>23</sup> Syngman Rhee's 1947 visit to China in April, where he met with Chairman Chiang Kai-shek, marked a turning point in the ROC government's dealings with Rhee by laying a solid foundation for a close relationship between the ROC and the newly born ROK. Ambassador Shao Yulin once pointed out that Rhee's visit to China "[gained more politically than financially . . . and Rhee's political situation became far better after it.]"<sup>24</sup>

As for the CCP, although it was not yet in power, as the USSR's Red Army was sending troops to Northeast China, it had already ordered the KVA, to which it was providing support and direction, to move quickly toward the Northeast and "[organize the North Korean people in northeastern China to help accomplish liberation.]"<sup>25</sup> However, KVA efforts in this direction proved to be futile due to the presence of the Red Army, which already had a well-established presence on the northern Korean peninsula.<sup>26</sup> Although the CCP was in fierce competition with the KMT for control of Northeast China after the Anti-Japanese War, as it assessed the changes in China's international and domestic circumstances as a result of the war, it quickly gave up its strategy of influencing the peninsula's postwar situation solely via the KVA. Instead, it turned its position into one encouraging the resolution of the Moscow conference and the formation of a North Korean regime approved by occupying Soviet authorities.<sup>27</sup> On March 12, 1947, the *Jiefang Daily* reposted a piece by the USSR's TASS entitled "The First North Korean People's Assembly Comes to a Close." This piece mentions "[Gai mee Sung [transliterated], President of the Provisional People's Committee.]"<sup>28</sup> This is the first time, to the best of the author's knowledge, that a major CCP newspaper publicly mentions Kim Il-sung, as the political leader of North Korea. On August 22, 1947, the *Jinchaji Daily*, reported, based on the Xinhua News Agency's own report from Northern Shaanxi, that two years since North Korea's liberation, through democratic reform and land reform, "[North Korea . . . was showing a heaven-and-hell contrast with 'South Korea'.]"<sup>29</sup> On February 20, 1948, the *Northeast Daily* wrote, "[the North Korean people will vote to establish the People's Republic of Korea.]"<sup>30</sup> On March 28 of the same year, the *People's Daily* of *Jinjluyu* (Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, and Henan provinces) mentioned "[Kim Ei Sun [transliterated], President of the North Korean Provisional People's Committee]" when stating that "[people from all over North Korea]" protested against the US's efforts to separate North Korea.<sup>31</sup> One day later, the *Northeast Daily* reported the same news, but used the correct name (Kim Il-sung) for

North Korea's president, citing, “[Kim Il-sung, President of the North Korean Provisional People's Committee.]”<sup>32</sup> This is the first time, to the best of the author's knowledge, that one of the CCP's major newspapers used the correct form of Kim Il-sung's name when reporting on events after China's victory in the Anti-Japanese War. The correct form shows that, compared to northern Shaanxi and Northern China in general, the liberated zone in Northeast China, adjacent to the northern Korean peninsula, had a more correct and comprehensive understanding of the North Korean situation and its regime. When taken in conjunction with the translation from the TASS's news pieces, the evolution from “Gim I Sung” and “Gim E Sung” to “Kim Il-sung” partly demonstrates that, after the Anti-Japanese War, relations between the CCP and the North Korean regime were becoming closer.

In terms of the relationship between the then not-yet-in-power CCP and post-war North Korea, Jin Jingyi points out, “[Despite the influence of CCP-USSR and DPRK-US relations on CCP-DPRK relations, the most important factor was the traditional relationship between the CCP and the North Korean communists and the convergence of their interests.]”<sup>33</sup> These shared historical traditions and common interests underlay the support provided by Kim Il-sung to the CCP, which included substantial aid, including men and supplies, to assist them in their fight for control over Northeast China against the KMT. North Korea's aid at this time was absolutely vital to the CCP and second only to that supplied by the USSR.<sup>34</sup>

As early as August 1947, the Japanese edition of *Minju Choson* (“Democratic Korea”) declared, “[Since China borders Korea, CCP actions in Manchuria exercise important influence on the people of North and South Korea.]”<sup>35</sup> In 1949, Mao Zedong, Chairman of the CCP, emphasizing the importance of unity among “international revolutionary forces,” observed, “[In the imperialist era, a true people's revolution in any country cannot triumph without aid in various forms from international revolutionary forces, and nor can it consolidate after its triumph [without this support].]”<sup>36</sup> Adhering to this idea, during the Chinese Civil War, Kim Il-sung was not an “outsider,” but an active player who could—and did—directly influence the outcome of the CCP and KMT conflict. In contrast, in South Korea, both due to challenging geography and a tense international situation, Syngman Rhee remained passive and failed to provide any direct or effective aid to the KMT.<sup>37</sup>

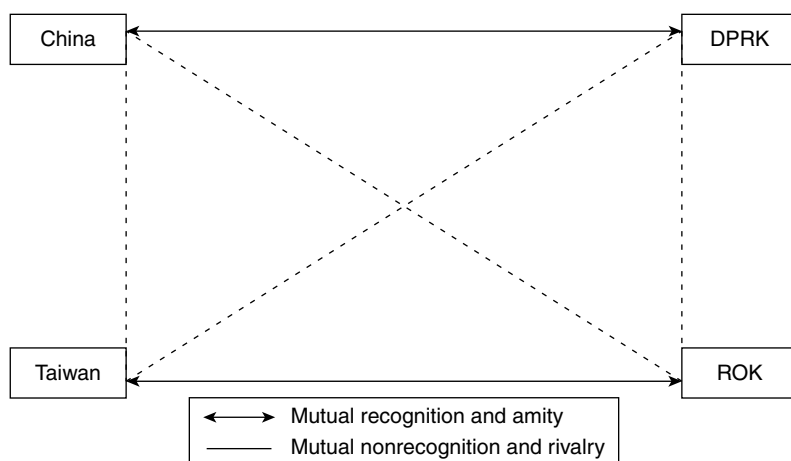
In conclusion, both the Korean peninsula and China became divided after World War II due to interconnected internal and external factors. In both divisions, a quartet of political powers—the KMT, the CCP, the North Korean regime, and the South Korean regime—were closely linked to each other. After much maneuvering, once the four powers were established, both complex bilateral amity and rivalry emerged. At the heart of this complexity was the development of relations among the four powers during the Anti-Japanese War (i.e., the KMT and the CCP in China and the left and right wings of the Korean Anti-Japanese Independence Movement in Korea). The result of the development of these relations under such circumstances is the later cross and triangular division that characterizes modern and contemporary Sino-Korean relations. As

Professor Jin Jingyi argues, “[Due to the victory of the CCP, the Northeast Asian order gradually shifted to the rivalry between the socialist camp and the strengthened capitalist camp led by the US.]”<sup>38</sup> The complex relations between the four regimes of the three countries after 1949 can be seen as a component of these international changes, as well as of changes to regional dynamics, accompanying the CCP victory.

### ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS- AND TRIANGULAR-DIVIDED RELATIONS

On October 1, 1949, a year after the formation of the ROK and the DPRK, the PRC was founded, marking the division of China into two parts: the mainland and Taiwan. Just five days later, on October 6, the DPRK announced the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with the PRC, becoming the fifth socialist country to do so.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the president of the ROK, Syngman Rhee, expressed his hostility toward the Chinese Communist regime. In an interview he gave on December 19, 1948, he declared, “[I have always emphasized that China cannot be allowed to yield to the Communist camp, and I always will.]”<sup>40</sup> Additionally, on February 12, 1949, in a letter Rhee addressed to Chang Myon, the ROK Ambassador to the US, he wrote that the “[the recent political change in China has precipitated widespread and deep unease and anxiety in the ROK. The downfall of the KMT and the subsequent rise of the Reds will inevitably disadvantage the ROK.]”<sup>41</sup>

With the establishment of the PRC, China became the second divided country in East Asia after Korea and cross and triangular divided relations were established among the four regimes of the three countries. These relationships, depicted as a square with each of the four players marking a vertex, are illustrated below in Figure 9.1.



**Figure 9.1** Cross and triangular divided relations among the four regimes in the three countries

To summarize, the two rival regimes of China engaged in mutual non-recognition and hostility, and so too did the two Koreas. At the same time, regimes from each nation with similar political systems and ideologies mutually recognized one another and established friendly relations. The triangular relations that were formed as a result of this recognition brought with them further divisions, extending the internal divisions that characterize both China and Korea to the Sino-Korean relationship. In this sense, any bilateral relationship among the four regimes will always be incomplete and divided.

The special cross and triangular divided relations can be seen as reflections and expansions of internal divisions into foreign relations. From a historical perspective, as the author has argued, these relationships have their roots in the period immediately after World War II when there was significant interplay between the ROC, KMT, and CCP, and different political groups in the Korean peninsula. From a more global perspective, the author views the relations among the four “vertices” as a regional substructure of the Cold War in Northeast Asia. The cross and triangular divided relations among the four regimes were hardly, if to any extent, based on direct or real bilateral interests, but, instead, emerged as alliances or rivalries framed in terms of shared political ideologies and institutions. That the ideological and political institutional considerations outweighed national interests in international relations is a universal feature in relations between countries from different camps during the Cold War. As scholar Shen Zhihua has pointed out, one of the problems that has plagued socialist countries during the Cold War era has been “[the conflict between the ideal of internationalism and the pursuit of nationalism, and a homogeneous ideology that replaces or blankets diverse international interests.]”<sup>42</sup>

In post-World War II East Asia, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, founded in 1945, and the Republic of Vietnam, founded in 1955, had similar relations to those shared by the two Koreas and experienced by China. However, the establishment of relations between the two Vietnams and the four regimes within the Korean peninsula and China lacked direct or close links and interactions and were never in the same league as those pursued between the three countries in terms of their duration or influence.

The establishment and development of relations among the four regimes as a regional substructure in East Asia was shaped principally by the Cold War and the regional situation, which preferred ideology and political systems over real bilateral interests. Reflecting this, the PRC and the DPRK established an “alliance of blood” after the Korean War, while the ROK and Taiwan formed an anti-Communist alliance. However, for the PRC, the DPRK was never its most important political, economic, or military ally—nor was the PRC the DPRK’s. Similarly, the ROK and Taiwan were never each other’s top allies. As a result of this structuring, major changes in the relations among the four regimes were a result of the Cold War and the regional situation. Independent internal efforts from any one of the four regimes could not dramatically alter relations.

Shao Yulin, the first ROC ambassador to the ROK, assumed his post in July of 1949 and drafted the “Wartime Anti-Communist Creed of Diplomacy and Politics.” The text advocated the establishment of an Asian anti-Communist

alliance with other countries, including the ROK.<sup>43</sup> Between August 6 and 8, Chiang Kai-shek, visited the ROK and met with Syngman Rhee in Chinhae (Jinhae-gu). In a joint statement, the leaders announced, “[We believe that Asian Pacific nations, especially Far East nations, are suffering from graver crises of the Communist menace than any other part of the world. Thus, these nations need greater solidarity and coordination than other countries.]”<sup>44</sup> In April 1950, when Wu Tieh-cheng, then Secretary of the KMT and Minister of Foreign Affairs for the ROC, and Chu Shih-min, the head of the ROC’s military delegation to Japan, visited the ROK, western media sources reported that the “[ROK and ROC have signed a secret military assistance agreement. The ROK government agreed that ROC could rent Jeju Island as an air base from which to bomb Northern and Northeastern China, and even Russia’s Primorsky Krai.]”<sup>45</sup> Despite such contacts, Taiwan and the ROK did not confirm their anti-Communist alliance until the end of the Korean War. The Asian Pacific Anti-Communist League (APACL) was established in 1954 after the armistice and was led by both Taiwan and the ROK. Although Syngman Rhee’s negative view of China was one of the factors that delayed the alliance,<sup>46</sup> the principal cause was the international situation on the Korean peninsula before and after the Korean War.

As for the PRC and the DPRK, the PRC sent three ethnically Korean divisions of soldiers to the DPRK to serve as a main force of the Korean People’s Army.<sup>47</sup> Directed by the USSR, the PRC even partially participated in preliminary planning for the Korean War.<sup>48</sup> However, before the outbreak of the war, the PRC and the DPRK did not share an “alliance of blood.” Indeed, before the war, the PRC did not even have an official embassy in Pyongyang.<sup>49</sup>

In this sense, the outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950 and the participation of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army strengthened both cross and triangular relations among the four regimes. The PRC, the only country that directly sent an army to assist the DPRK, sealed its “militant friendship cemented with blood” with the DPRK, laying a solid foundation for its later military alliance. For the DPRK, the Korean War, which started as a civil war and eventually became an international one, consolidated the division of the Korean peninsula. As a result of its military aid to Korea, the PRC lost its opportunity to liberate Taiwan by force and reunify China, so the mainland and Taiwan remained divided across the Straits. In addition, by default, the PRC and the ROK became antagonists, cut off from and hostile to each other. Taiwanese authorities failed to send an army to Korea or attack the PRC to relieve the ROK; instead, they re-entered the shelter of the US military umbrella and, thereby, managed to sustain their regime. By participating in psychological, intelligence, and other US-led forms of warfare, Taiwan strengthened its anti-Communist alliance with the ROK.<sup>50</sup> For these reasons, the Korean War was a crucial event that consolidated and maintained the cross and triangular divided relations among the four regimes.

After the Korean Armistice Agreement in July 1953, the US and the ROK signed the “Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea,” thereby establishing their current military alliance. In December 1954, the US signed a “Mutual Defense Treaty” with Taiwan. The two treaties

marked the establishment of the US-ROK and US-Taiwan military alliances and put the ROK and Taiwan on the frontlines of the Cold War in Asia. In January 1954, a year after the Korean Armistice Agreement, the ROK “extradited” more than 10,000 prisoners of war from the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army to Taiwan. Later, the ROK proposed convening the Asian Anti-Communist Conference and established the International Anti-Communist Crusade. In June 1954, the first Asian Pacific Anti-Communist Conference was held in Chinhae and the Asian Peoples’ Anti-Communist League (APACL), led by the ROK and Taiwan, was established. In 1967, the APACL was transformed into the World Anti-Communist League, a transformation that further enhanced the anti-Communist alliance between the ROK and Taiwan.<sup>51</sup> In May 1960, Park Chung-hee established his military regime in the ROK. One year later in 1961, the USSR and the PRC signed treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the DPRK. These treaties laid the groundwork for future military alliances, including a “Northern Triangle” alliance between the PRC, the USSR, and the DPRK. In June 1965, the ROK and Japan signed a “Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea,” which normalized their diplomatic relations. Soon after, a “Southern Triangle” of security, led by the US, was formed between the US, the ROK, and Japan.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1960s, under the influence of global and regional factors, such as the Cold War, the South-North separation in the Korean peninsula, the rivalry between the Southern and the Northern Triangles, and the mainland-Taiwan split, cross and triangular divided relations between the regimes reached a climax that, while resulting in no changes to relations, did drain them of much of their internal impetus. Apart from mutual support between allied regimes with shared ideologies and political institutions, relations did not significantly develop. Indeed, amid the shifts in global and regional conditions, relations tottered and even threatened to break down. For example, the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), established by the ROK in June 1966, failed to extend relations among Asian Pacific anti-Communist countries beyond ideology and security to economic, social, cultural, and other areas. In June 1973, just seven years after the establishment of the council, its ministerial meeting was postponed indefinitely, signifying the Council’s *de facto* disintegration.<sup>53</sup>

At this time, China’s foreign activities reflected the cross and triangular divided relations that characterized Northeast Asia. In April 1970, China’s then premier, Zhou Enlai, had proposed several principles for Sino-Japanese trade. Among them, he stated, “[We will not do business with any Japanese companies that want to do business with us yet still assist the Taiwan regime to counterattack the mainland or help the ROK to invade the DPRK.]” He also asserted, “[We will not do business with companies that have large investments in Taiwan or the ROK.]”<sup>54</sup> When only three years later, on June 23, 1973, ROK President Park declared that the ROK would be open to relations with nations with different ideologies and institutions, this enabled intermediary trade through Hong Kong between the ROK and the PRC. Such trade started as early as 1978, when the PRC adopted its own reforms and began to open up. In 1979, the bilateral trade volume between the two countries was recorded at USD 19 million.<sup>55</sup>

Although the PRC government denied foreign reports that it had resumed trade with the ROK,<sup>56</sup> the thawing of Sino-ROK relations had begun. As trade evolved from indirect to direct trade, relations then moved from the economic to the political sphere, and communication between the two governments moved from unofficial to official exchanges. In August 1992, the PRC and the ROK officially established diplomatic relations, ending the cross and triangular divided relations among the four regimes.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is well known that the establishment of PRC-ROK diplomatic ties on August 24, 1992 was the product of multiple external and internal forces. Reviewing Sino-Korean relations over the past 63 years after World War II and employing the historical concept of regimes seeking reunification, it is the gradual collapse of cross and triangular divided relations between China and the Korean peninsula that facilitated the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the ROK, as well as the development of PRC-ROK relations over the past two decades—there is a direct correlation between them. This essay has provided but a tentative investigation into the cross-triangular divided relations that existed between the four regimes. While further investigation is needed, the following understandings bear remembering:

First, for most of the twentieth century, Sino-Korean relations have been abnormal. The Korean Empire became Japan's protectorate in 1905, thus breaking its ambassadorial-level diplomatic relations with the Qing government. In 1910, Japan's forced annexation of the Korean Empire officially made the Korean peninsula a Japanese colony. After this colonization, the peninsula did not and could not forge formal diplomatic ties with the Communist Chinese government. After World War II, both the Korean peninsula and China were divided into two parts, forming cross-triangular divided relations among four regimes. This state of affairs did not change until 1992, when the PRC and the ROK established diplomatic relations. In other words, China and the Korean peninsula had no diplomatic relations between 1905 and 1948, and only had cross and triangular relations between 1949 and 1992. Thus, for most of the twentieth century, Sino-Korean relations were extremely abnormal.

Second, despite the fact that the cross and triangular structure of relations ended when the PRC and the ROK established diplomatic ties in 1992, studying the complicated relations among the four regimes still provides a critical perspective on the Sino-Korean relationship. In April 1985, when discussing the need to establish PRC-ROK diplomatic relations, Deng Xiaoping made the case as, "[First, China can trade with the ROK. It is for the benefit of both economies; second, the ROK should break diplomatic ties with Taiwan.]" Later, in remarks made between May and September 1988, Deng went on to state, "[China will benefit from its relations with ROK. There is no downside. It is beneficial for both economies. It is also good for China's reunification.]" Deng also pointed out that the promotion of people-to-people exchanges between the PRC and the ROK "[is a key strategic arrangement for the peace and stability of Japan, the US,

and the Korean peninsula.]”<sup>57</sup> Deng’s comments make it clear that the regimes’ cross and triangular divided relations and the influence of this substructure on China’s reunification were a critical concern of the Chinese government when it officially established diplomatic relations with the ROK. In this sense, the author holds that the relations and interactions among the four regimes remain an important international factor that should not be ignored in understanding the construction of nation-states in China and the Korean peninsula.

Third, due to China’s emergence as a global power and the important geo-strategic location of the Korean peninsula, Sino-Korean relations have been deeply influenced not only by regional realities, but also by international ones. To a great extent, this influence has altered the four regimes’ understanding of the practical benefits of improved regional relations. During the latter half of the twentieth century, the formation and persistence of cross and triangular relations among the four regimes were directly related to a lack of an intrinsic impetus for changing the status quo. The Cold War is in the past and the PRC has established and developed modern diplomatic relations with both the DPRK and the ROK. Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, with China, Japan, and the ROK all committed to building a new East Asia Community, consideration of the practical benefits of good bilateral relations among regimes should trump each state’s traditional ideological, social, and political limitations and provide the internal motivation for the further development of relationships among them.

Finally, close historical relations do not always mean amicable relations. It is commonly known that the historical and cultural connections between China and the Korean peninsula date back thousands of years. China and the Korean peninsula have already established modern nation-states, but historical relations are likely to emerge as a negative factor in current relations under the influence of modern nationalism, especially in the process of nation building. Over the past two decades, since the PRC and the ROK forged diplomatic ties, both sides have achieved unprecedented economic and cultural development. Nevertheless, differences and conflicts in the understanding of the history of their relations from ancient times to modern times are numerous. Placing too much emphasis and dependence on the history of amicable relations between the two sides may result in a neglect of the actual realities of mutual historical relations and impede a correct understanding facilitative of the development of relations in the present.

#### NOTES

1. Sitan Li Huofuman [Stanley Hoffmann], *Dangdai guoji guanxi lilun* (Beijing: Zhongguo Kexue Chubanshe, 1990), 242–251.
2. See Chen Longfeng, *Guojia Jicheng yu Pingdeng Tiaoyue* (Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 2003).
3. Gu Lasi [Djilas], *He Sidalin de Tanhuo* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1992), 30.
4. *Shen Pao*, August 13, 1948.

5. Jin Jingyi, *Chaoxian Bandao de Fenlie yu Zhongguo ru Chao Canzhan Qiyuan Yanjiu—Weiraozhe Guogong Neizhan Shiqi de Zhongguo yu Nanbei Fenlie Shiqi de Chaoxian Bandao Guanxi* (Beijing: Daxue Guoji Guanxi Xueyuan Boshi Lunwen, 2001), 44–45.
6. “Huan Chaoguo Daibiao,” *Zhongyang Ribao*, September 13, 1948.
7. Jin, *Chaoxian Bandao de Fenlie yu Zhongguo ru Chao Canzhan Qiyuan Yanjiu*, 44.
8. *Dongbei Ribao*, August 13, 1948.
9. Jin Jingyi (Kim Kyeng-il), *Jung-guk-ui Han-guk-jeon-jaeng Cham-jeon Gi-won: Han-jung-gwan-gye-ui Yeok-sa-jeok, Chi-jeong-hak-jeok Bae-gyeong-eul Jung-sim-eu-ro* (Seoul: Non-hyeong, 2005), 173.
10. *Shen Pao*, August 16, 1948.
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PART III

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The Many Facets of China's Relations  
with North Korea

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## China's Policy toward the DPRK's Nuclear and Missile Programs

*Gu Guoliang*

The nuclear and missile programs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have attracted considerable attention on the part of the international community in recent years. This is not only due to the issue of nonproliferation, as it also concerns East Asian regional security and the international relationships among the DPRK, the United States (US), China, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and others. As a close neighbor, China has its own interests and concerns vis-à-vis the DPRK and has played its unique role in handling the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs.

### THE EVOLVING HISTORY OF THE DPRK'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

According to chronologies compiled by research institutes in the United States and elsewhere, the DPRK established a nuclear research facility at Yongbyon in 1964. It received a 2MW IRT-nuclear research reactor from the Soviet Union in May–June 1965, and this research reactor became operational in 1967. On July 20, 1977, the DPRK signed a “Type 66” agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which allowed the IAEA to monitor the Soviet-supplied 2MW IRT-research reactor at Yongbyon. By the early 1980s, the DPRK had started construction of an indigenously designed 5MW graphite-moderated reactor.<sup>1</sup>

The DPRK signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) on December 12, 1985. Against the background of the completed withdrawal by the US of all its nuclear weapons from the ROK in December 1991, the DPRK and ROK signed the Declaration for a Non-Nuclear Korean peninsula on January 20, 1992. On January 30, 1992, the DPRK signed the IAEA safeguards agreement. After May 12, 1992, the IAEA conducted a number of inspections on nuclear sites in the DPRK.

After the IAEA challenged the DPRK's claims following the results of these inspections by demanding further inspections and the United States resumed planning for the Team Spirit 1993 joint military exercise with the ROK, the DPRK announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT on March 12, 1993.

On May 11, 1993, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted a resolution calling upon the DPRK to reconsider its announcement. Talks between the United States and the DPRK began on June 1993, and the two countries signed the Agreed Framework on October 21, 1994. Under the terms of the agreement, the DPRK would freeze its nuclear activity in exchange for the new light-water reactors.

The Agreed Framework collapsed in October 2002, when the United States accused the DPRK of running a covert uranium-enrichment program and cut off free fuel oil shipments to the DPRK. The DPRK retaliated by expelling the IAEA inspectors in late 2002 and announced its withdrawal from NPT on January 10, 2003.

In August 2003, the United States, the DPRK, ROK, China, Japan, and Russia started the Six-party talks in Beijing, aimed at persuading the DPRK to abandon its nuclear program in return for economic and diplomatic rewards. On September 19, 2005, the Six-party talks adopted the important Joint Statement, which laid down a road map for the DPRK to abandon its nuclear program. The talks faltered shortly after October 9, 2006, when the DPRK conducted its first nuclear test. The UNSC responded by adopting resolution 1718, enacting a variety of multilateral sanctions on the DPRK. The DPRK announced its decision on April 14, 2009 to withdraw from the Six-party talks and declared its intention to restart plutonium production on June 13, 2009.

The DPRK conducted its second nuclear test on June 25, 2009, and the UNSC responded with Resolution 1874, which intensified sanctions on Pyongyang.

In November 2010, the DPRK unveiled a large uranium-enrichment plant to former US officials and academics. IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano expressed serious concern about the DPRK's continued construction of a light-water reactor, which could be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium and highly enriched uranium.<sup>2</sup>

On April 13, 2012, the DPRK government amended its constitution to formally recognize itself as a "nuclear armed state."

## THE DPRK'S MISSILE PROGRAM

The DPRK started to pursue a ballistic missile capability in the early 1960s. In the late 1970s, its missile program became a national priority equal to that of the nuclear program. In April 1984, the DPRK conducted its first successful test of a Scud-B missile. In June 1990, it conducted its test of a Scud-C missile. In May 1993, the DPRK successfully tested its Rodong-1 ballistic missile.

On August 31, 1998, the DPRK conducted the first flight test of its two-stage Taepodong-1 missile with a range of 1,500–2,000 kilometers.<sup>3</sup>

On September 13, 1999, the DPRK pledged to freeze its long-range missile tests, and during its summit talks with Japan in September 2002, it pledged to extend its moratorium on missile tests beyond 2003. However, the DPRK fired a land-to-ship missile on March 10, 2003, a short-range missile in May 2005, and two additional short-range missiles on March 8, 2006.

The DPRK launched a series of missiles, including a long-range Daepodong-2 on July 5, 2006, and the UNSC adopted Resolution 1695 on July 15, 2006, demanding that the DPRK halt its missile program.

On April 5, 2009, the DPRK launched a long-range rocket, or satellite, according to the DPRK. Two of the rocket's three stages functioned, pushing the rocket out over the Pacific, but the third stage failed.

The DPRK launched another long-range rocket on April 13, 2012, which again failed to achieve orbit. The United States then announced it would not carry out its agreement reached on February 29, 2012 with the DPRK after three rounds of bilateral talks, whereby it would provide food aid in exchange for the DPRK imposing a moratorium on further nuclear and long-range missile tests.

On December 12, 2012, the DPRK successfully launched a long-range rocket for putting a satellite in orbit.<sup>4</sup> After this successful satellite launch, Chairman Kim Jong-un stated that the DPRK would continue its efforts to have more satellite launches in coming years.<sup>5</sup>

As space technology is dual-use, the DPRK's successful launch of a satellite into orbit means that the DPRK is now closer to having long-range missile capability.

## CHINA'S POLICY TOWARD THE DPRK

China's foreign policy, including its policy toward the DPRK, is based mainly on its traditional foreign policy principles and its own strategic interests. Maintaining its traditional friendship with DPRK and safeguarding the peace and stability of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula are the policy goals of China.

### MAINTAINING TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH THE DPRK

The DPRK is China's close neighbor, and the two countries have a relationship of traditional friendship. China wishes to maintain this friendly relationship with the DPRK. China pursues a foreign policy of noninterference and does not interfere in the DPRK's internal affairs. China holds that it is up to the people of the DPRK themselves to choose their future and their road of development. Over the past years, China has given strong political support and economic assistance to the DPRK and contributed to the political stability and economic development of the DPRK. China has remained the largest trading partner of the DPRK and provided assistance within its capabilities to the country.<sup>6</sup>

Chinese leaders have maintained good relations with the leaders of the DPRK throughout its history. The Chinese government has given strong support to Chairman Kim Jong-un, the new leader of the DPRK, and has reaffirmed China's determination to promote the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK.<sup>7</sup>

China also supports the efforts made by the DPRK to integrate into the international community, and improve, and ultimately normalize, relations with the United States, Japan, the European Union, and other countries.<sup>8</sup> It is absolutely in China's interest to remain a friend of the DPRK, rather than having it become a hostile neighbor.

### MAINTAINING PEACE AND STABILITY ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

As a close neighbor of the Korean peninsula, China has always been devoted to peace and stability on the peninsula. China has consistently supported the final realization of peaceful reunification between the two sides on the Korean peninsula through dialogue and has supported the improvement of relations between the DPRK and ROK.

China greatly appreciated President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine policy," and supported the inter-Korean summit held between Chairman Kim Jong-il and President Kim Dae-jung in Pyongyang in 2000. The Summit produced the North-South Joint Declaration, which promoted closer relations between the two sides.<sup>9</sup>

While maintaining friendly relations with DPRK, China also has good neighborly relations with the ROK. Since China and the ROK upgraded their bilateral relationship to a "strategic cooperative partnership" in 2008, during President Lee Myung-bak's first visit to China, the two countries have maintained a "healthy, stable and sustained development" in their bilateral relationship, and have enjoyed sound momentum in ever-deepening economic cooperation and trade. China is currently the ROK's largest trading partner and the ROK is China's third largest.<sup>10</sup> Chinese President Hu Jintao sent a congratulatory message to Madam Park Geun-hye on her election as the 18th President of the ROK. China expects that the two countries will "further enhance their strategic and political mutual trust, deepen exchanges and cooperation across the board, and push forward China-ROK relations."<sup>11</sup>

### SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL NONPROLIFERATION REGIMES

China is a member of the NPT and fully supports and abides by the NPT regime. China does not support, encourage, or assist any country in developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. China supports international efforts in countering proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles and related technologies and materials in Northeast Asia.<sup>12</sup>

When the DPRK declared its decision to withdraw from the NPT in January 2003, China expressed serious concerns, and stressed that the NPT was of major importance for preventing nuclear proliferation and promoting peace and security of the international community. China has striven to safeguard the universality of the NPT, and does not wish to see the Treaty being undermined.<sup>13</sup> China is firmly opposed to the DPRK's development of nuclear and missile programs, which constitute a serious challenge to the NPT and international efforts aimed at strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. China has called on the DPRK to fully implement its NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards obligations.

China is seriously concerned about the DPRK's nuclear and missiles programs. China does not wish to see the emergence of another nuclear state in its neighborhood. China needs a stable external environment to focus on its own economic development. China is also concerned that the DPRK's nuclear program may incite sentiments in Japan and other countries in the region to develop their nuclear programs. Nuclear and missile proliferation in East Asia is not in China's security interests.

### RESOLUTELY OPPOSED TO THE DPRK'S NUCLEAR AND MISSILE TESTS

China is firmly opposed to the DPRK's development of nuclear and missile programs. Whenever the DPRK has conducted its nuclear tests, missile tests, or satellite launches, the Chinese government has issued statements expressing its strong opposition and has voted in favor of the UN Security Council resolutions and the presidential statements against the DPRK.

When the DPRK conducted its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006, the Chinese government, used strong words to express its resolute opposition to the DPRK for its "flagrantly conducting a nuclear test" in disregard of the universal opposition of the international community, and demanded that the DPRK "live up to its commitment to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula, stop any activity that may worsen the situation."<sup>14</sup>

When the DPRK conducted a series of ballistic missile tests on July 5, 2006, the Chinese Foreign Ministry also expressed its "serious concern" over the tensions caused by these tests.<sup>15</sup> On July 15, 2006, China voted in favor of the UNSC Resolution 1695, which condemned the DPRK's missile tests as jeopardizing peace, stability, and security in the region, and demanded that the "DPRK suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program." The resolution banned all UN member states from selling material or technology for missiles or weapons of mass destruction to the DPRK.<sup>16</sup>

On October 14, 2006, China voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1718, which condemned the nuclear test as "a clear threat to international peace and security" and demanded that the DPRK "not conduct any further nuclear test or launch of a ballistic missile" and that it "abandon all nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner."<sup>17</sup>

The resolution called upon the DPRK to return immediately to the NPT and the Six-party talks without precondition, and continue to comply with its NPT obligations and IAEA safeguards obligations. The resolution imposed severe sanctions on the DPRK, including inspections on shipments of cargo going to and from the DPRK and the freezing of funds and other economic and financial resources related to the DPRK's weapons programs. The resolution also placed a ban on imports and exports of weapon systems, as well as an international travel ban and a ban on exporting luxury goods to the DPRK.<sup>18</sup>

When the DPRK conducted its satellite launch on April 5, 2009, China supported the Presidential Statement by the UN Security Council of April 13, 2009, which condemned the launch as "a serious violation of Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874." It demanded that the DPRK comply fully with its obligations under Security Council resolution 1718, and that it not conduct any further launches.<sup>19</sup>

When the DPRK conducted its second nuclear test on May 25, 2009, the Chinese Foreign Ministry again issued a strong statement, asserting that the test "violated the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, impaired the effectiveness of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and affected regional peace and stability."<sup>20</sup>

On June 12, 2009, China voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1874, which demanded that the DPRK comply fully with its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular Resolution 1718. The resolution strengthened existing sanctions by imposing a total embargo on arms exports and significantly expanding the ban on arms imports by creating a wholly new framework of inspections. It called on States and international financial institutions to prevent the flow of funds to support the DPRK's nuclear, missile, and proliferation activities.<sup>21</sup>

With the DPRK's failed satellite launch on April 13, 2012, China again supported the UN Security Council's presidential statement, which "strongly condemned" the launch, and demanded that the DPRK comply with Resolutions 1718 and 1874 by suspending all activities related to its ballistic missile program. The Security Council also expanded sanctions on the DPRK by designating additional entities and items.<sup>22</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that the presidential statement "reflected the fundamental consensus of the international community."<sup>23</sup>

After the DPRK successfully conducted its satellite launch on December 12, 2012, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hong Lei, stated at a press conference held on December 14, 2012 that the DPRK had the right of peaceful use of the outer space, but that this right is subject to the restrictions of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and that the DPRK had the obligation to abide by relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.<sup>24</sup>

When the DPRK conducted another nuclear test on February 12, 2013, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi summoned the DPRK Ambassador to China Ji Jae-ryong on the same day to lodge a solemn representation over the nuclear test.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry again issued a statement to express its firm opposition to the test.

The above-mentioned facts show that China has consistently supported UN Security Council resolutions, and, further, that it has fully complied with the comprehensive measures imposed on the DPRK.

### STANDING FOR SOLVING THE ISSUE THROUGH DIALOGUE

China stands for the peaceful resolution of the issue of the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs through consultation and dialogue.

China has made great efforts and played a unique role in bringing about the convening of the trilateral talks among China, the United States, and the DPRK in April 2003, and the start of the Six-party talks participated in by China, the United States, the DPRK, the ROK, Russia, and Japan in August 2003. China has been the convener and host of the Six-party talks, and has played a constructive role in mediating between the United States and the DPRK. China is still making efforts in pushing for the early resumption of the Six-party talks, as China believes they are the right forum to discuss and solve the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

China supports an appropriate and balanced reaction to the DPRK's nuclear program, missile tests, and satellite launches. While recognizing that Security Council resolutions play their positive roles by sending strong messages to the DPRK, China does not believe sanctions can really solve the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

While supporting UNSC resolutions, China suggests that the Security Council's reactions should be prudent, moderate, and conducive to maintaining peace and stability of the Korean peninsula so as to avoid further escalation of the situation.<sup>26</sup> China's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Zhang Yesui, explained China's position after China voted for the UNSC resolution 1874 by stating clearly that China believed Security Council actions "are not all about sanctions," but that political and diplomatic means were still the way to bring about peace on the Korean peninsula.<sup>27</sup> China believes that imposing sanctions is not the goal, but only one of the means, and that political and diplomatic efforts are the main ways supported by UN Security Council to resolve the relevant issues on the Korean peninsula.

China stands for just treatment and appropriate measures in dealing with proliferation issues and is opposed to applying different criteria for determining a response to the actions of different proliferators. China believes that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the legitimate security concerns and development interests of the DPRK as a sovereign country, as well as a UN member, should be respected. After its return to the NPT, the DPRK will enjoy the right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy as a state party to the agreement.<sup>28</sup>

China was opposed to the draft resolution submitted by Japan concerning the DPRK's missile tests in July 2009. At a press conference on July 13, 2009, Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Jiang Yu expressed clearly, that Japan's draft was not conducive to the objective of the Security Council of promoting the unity of member states and avoiding a worsening of the situation on the Korean peninsula.<sup>29</sup> China always urges all sides to keep calm and exercise restraint,

and to avoid actions that could further intensify and complicate the situation. After the DPRK conducted its nuclear tests, the Chinese Government called on all parties concerned to “respond in a cool-headed and appropriate manner and persist in seeking a peaceful solution through consultation and dialogue.”<sup>30</sup> When the DPRK has conducted its missile tests or satellite launches, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has repeatedly urged the parties concerned to “keep calm and exercise restraint,” and has maintained that “disputes should be defused through dialogue and consultation.”<sup>31</sup>

In fact, the UN Security Council has underlined in its adopted resolutions that measures imposed “are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population of DPRK,”<sup>32</sup> and that member states should “refrain from any actions that might aggravate tension.”<sup>33</sup>

### SAFEGUARDING CHINA’S OWN STRATEGIC INTERESTS

While treasuring its good relations with the DPRK, China has to look after its own political, economic and security interests.

China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has an obligation to safeguard and abide by international regimes. China must show to the world that it is a responsible major power by supporting and fully implementing UN resolutions, including UN resolutions 1695, 1718, and 1874.

China is now in an important period of strategic opportunity for its modernization process and, in the coming decades, its major task is to maintain political and social stability and sustained economic growth at home. China needs a peaceful and stable international environment; it does not want to be disturbed by irresponsible actions taken by its neighboring countries. The DPRK’s development of nuclear and missile programs harms China’s security interests; furthermore, the DPRK’s programs have offered an excuse for the enhancement of the military presence of the US and its allies in the Asia-Pacific, which certainly worsen China’s external security environment.

### VARIOUS VIEWS ON THE DPRK IN CHINA

Chinese scholars and the general public are the source of different observations and views on China’s policy toward the DPRK.

One set of discussions focus on the maintenance of stability versus the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Some western analysts hold that China puts stability ahead of the goal of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In China, there have been discussions over which objective is more important. The majority view is that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the Korean peninsula’s stability are equally important to China, because China is in close proximity to the DPRK. It is a widely shared view that the best scenario for China is a peaceful and stable Korean peninsula.

There is also discussion of the threat posed by the DPRK’s nuclear and missile programs. The consensus opinion among Chinese scholars is that the DPRK’s

nuclear and missile programs have not constituted a direct threat to the United States, but have posed different threats to China, Japan, and the ROK.

Chinese scholars also have different views as to the strategic role of the DPRK for China, specifically, whether and how much the DPRK still plays the role of a buffer zone for China to restrain the expansion of US military forces in East Asia.

From websites, one can see that the Chinese public holds an increasingly varied set of views on the DPRK. Many Chinese citizens suggest that they cherish China's friendship with the DPRK, while others convey uncertainty about the DPRK's future policy toward China and question the wisdom of China's strong economic support toward the DPRK.

As for the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs, many people think they harm China's political and security interests, but some question if it is fair for the United States to apply different criteria and adopt different attitudes in dealing with the nuclear issues of the DPRK. Countries like Israel and India have also developed nuclear weapons in violation of the NPT.

In the final analysis, the Chinese government's policy of maintaining its traditional friendship with the DPRK and safeguarding the peace and stability of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula serves China's interests. China should maintain a normal state-to-state relationship with the DPRK. As a major country in East Asia, China will be more resolute in defending its strategic interests and will play a more responsible role in handling the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs. China's full support of UN Resolutions 2087 and 2094 after the DPRK's satellite launch and the third nuclear test reflects new Chinese leaders' perceptions and approaches to handling the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs.

## COOPERATION AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES

As permanent members of the UN Security Council and nuclear weapon states, China and the United States share common obligations and interests in countering the proliferation of WMDs. China and the United States have common goals and share common ground in the objective of achieving a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, and they have both cooperated and had significant differences over the handling of the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs.

### *Common Ground and Good Cooperation*

China and the United States share the same goal of achieving a nuclear-free Korean peninsula and both countries have made joint efforts in persuading the DPRK to give up its nuclear and missile programs.

Both China and the United States stand for the maintenance of stability in the Korean peninsula and support the peaceful unification of Korea. China has, on a number of occasions, reaffirmed its support for the reconciliation process between the ROK and the DPRK and their peaceful reunification.<sup>34</sup> The United

States has also affirmed its position that “on North Korea, the United States and China share strong determination to maintain peace and stability.”<sup>35</sup>

China and the United States have cooperated well in pushing forward the process of the Six-party talks. Through joint efforts, the Six-party talks produced the Joint Statement and the action plan, which laid the foundation for a solution to the DPRK’s nuclear issue.

China has worked together with the United States in imposing strict export control policies and has supported the general goal of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), initiated by the United States.

China and the United States joined hands in their resolute opposition to the nuclear and missile tests conducted by the DPRK; both countries strongly supported the UNSC Resolutions 1695, 1718, and 1874, and have fully implemented them.

China and the United States have regular consultations at both the senior and working levels on the DPRK nuclear issue. Each time the DPRK conducts nuclear or missile tests, the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the US State Department hold consultations and coordinate their positions.

For example, after the DPRK conducted its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing spoke by phone with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about the latest developments on the Korean peninsula.<sup>36</sup> On the same evening, Chinese President Hu Jintao held a telephone conversation with US President George W. Bush on the situation of the Korean peninsula.<sup>37</sup>

China and the United States also kept in close consultation with each other after the DPRK’s satellite launches. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke via phone on April 13, 2012. Both sides expressed their concern and worry about the launch and its impact, and conveyed a desire to maintain communication and coordination with each other.<sup>38</sup> In 2012, the US Special Representative for North Korea Policy, Ambassador Glyn Davies and his deputy, Ambassador Clifford Hart, paid several visits to Beijing and exchanged views on the situation of the Korean peninsula with Chinese officials, as well as with Chinese scholars.

### *Different Policies toward the DPRK*

China and the United States have pursued different policies toward the DPRK. China has a traditional friendship with the DPRK, which was forged during the Korean War, and it has pursued a friendly policy toward the DPRK. The United States has no diplomatic relations with the DPRK and has pursued a hostile policy toward it since the Korean War.

China stands for the maintenance of stability on the Korean peninsula and the resolution of the DPRK’s nuclear and missile issues by diplomatic and peaceful means. Whenever there is a crisis or problem over the Korean peninsula, China tries hard to mediate among the concerned parties, with a view to maintaining peace and stability.

US policy toward the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs has undergone some changes under different administrations since the end of the Cold War. Initially, the United States tried to solve these issues as a nonproliferation challenge. As time has passed, the North Korean nuclear issue has become more than a nonproliferation issue for the US administration, but one that concerns strategic relations among the major powers in the region.

The United States has pursued a variety of policy responses to the proliferation challenges posed by the DPRK, including military cooperation with US allies in the region, wide-ranging sanctions, and non-proliferation mechanisms such as export controls. The United States has also engaged in two major diplomatic initiatives in persuading the DPRK to abandon its nuclear and missile programs in return for aid.<sup>39</sup>

It was in 1991, under then President George H. W. Bush, that the United States withdrew all of its nuclear weapons—including short-ranged land and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons—from the ROK in accordance with the DPRK's demands. This resulted in bringing the DPRK into the NPT regime and helped produce the Declaration for a Non-Nuclear Korean peninsula on January 20, 1992.

During President Clinton's administration on October 21, 1994, the United States and the DPRK signed the Agreed Framework. The Clinton administration tried to take a more cooperative approach in handling the DPRK's nuclear program through negotiations and held a number of bilateral talks with the DPRK. The two countries signed the Agreed Framework, which played an important role in freezing the DPRK's nuclear program. The two countries also held several rounds of talks on the DPRK's missile program and reached some good understandings. Relations between the two countries improved with the historic visit of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Pyongyang on October 23, 2000. Due to domestic political constraints, however, the Agreement failed and the United States lost the opportunity to solve the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

During the administration of President George W. Bush, the United States engaged in another major diplomatic initiative by joining the Six-party talks. It is clear that the Bush administration did not like the DPRK and, for most of its time in office, pursued a hardline policy toward Pyongyang, labeling the DPRK as an "axis of evil" along with Iraq and Iran. However, the United States actively participated in the Six-party talks and held frequent bilateral dialogues with the DPRK. The Bush administration wanted the DPRK to realize a "complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID)" of both its plutonium program and its uranium enrichment program. The Bush administration also made some military threats against the DPRK, with an obvious policy goal of regime change.

During these two major diplomatic initiatives, China played its important role in pushing forward the process. China actively supported the negotiations on the Agreed Framework in Geneva and China played a unique role in initiating and hosting the six rounds of the Six-party talks.

When President Obama entered office, he criticized George Bush's sanctions against the DPRK and wanted to demonstrate that engagement with hostile

nations is more effective than antagonism.<sup>40</sup> However, after the DPRK conducted its second nuclear test and made some accusations against the United States in 2009, provocations the Obama administration reacted angrily to, the administration changed its initial engagement policy drastically and also adopted a hardline policy toward the DPRK.<sup>41</sup>

When the ROK patrol ship, Cheonan, was sunk on March 26, 2010, the United States responded strongly by imposing new sanctions against the DPRK on July 21, 2010, and holding a four-day joint military exercise with the ROK in the Sea of Japan on July 25, 2010.

When the DPRK fired artillery rounds at the ROK island of Yeonpyeong on November 23, 2010, killing two soldiers and injuring seventeen others, the United States and the ROK conducted large-scale joint military exercises on February 28, 2011. The DPRK threatened to turn Seoul into a “sea of fire” in response to the exercises, causing great tensions.

China always calls upon the concerned parties to restrain from overreaction and plays the role of a mediator by pushing for dialogue and consultations.

On November 29, 2010, China called for an emergency session of the Six-party talks to exchange views on the Yeonpyeong shelling, but this proposal was rejected by the United States, the ROK, and Japan.

Knowing that the DPRK had several times expressed its wish to return to talks, on April 18, 2011, China proposed a three-step revitalization of multi-lateral talks, beginning with bilateral talks between the DPRK and the ROK, followed by similar talks between the United States and the DPRK, and, finally, a resumption of the Six-party talks.

As the DPRK’s uranium enrichment program became an important concern for the United States, the Obama administration began to restart bilateral talks with the DPRK and push for the resumption of Six-party talks, with a view to restraining North Korea’s behavior.

On July 28–29, 2011, US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth and the DPRK’s First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan met in New York, restarting high-level meetings after a two-year interval. The two sides held another round of talks in Geneva on October 24–25, 2011. These talks produced the February 29 agreement of 2012.<sup>42</sup>

It is obvious that the Obama administration has continued the Bush administration’s policy of regime change. While imposing strong sanctions on the DPRK, the United States places its hopes on the people of the DPRK to change the regime. This was clearly expressed by Secretary of State Clinton in her statement of December 19, 2011, after the passing away of the DPRK’s leader Kim Jong-il on December 17, 2011, in which she said, “The United States stands ready to help the North Korean people.”<sup>43</sup>

Generally speaking, Washington’s basic policy and approach toward the DPRK under different administrations remain unchanged. The US administration has continued to seek its policy objective of a CVID of the DPRK’s nuclear program. While continuing to engage in the “carrot and stick” tactics, its principal expectation is regime change and its approach mainly relies on imposing sanctions.

This position of the United States stands in contrast to China's policy to support the maintenance of stability of the Korean peninsula and maintain friendly relations with both the people and their leaders of the DPRK.

### *Different Approaches in the Handling of the DPRK's Nuclear and Missile Issues*

China and the United States have major differences in their approaches to handling the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

While China stands for a peaceful solution to the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues through consultation and dialogue, the US has preferred the approach of imposing sanctions to pressure the DPRK into giving up its nuclear and missile programs, with an ultimate objective of regime change or regime collapse. The US believes that, if sanctions can be made painful and severe enough, proliferators can be compelled to change their behavior.

China and the United States have taken different attitudes toward sanctions. The United States always intends to push for even harsher sanctions against the DPRK. China stands for an appropriate and balanced reaction, and always calls for calm and restraint in international responses, so as to avoid further escalation of the situation.<sup>44</sup> China does not believe sanctions can solve the issue of proliferation. "China maintains that sanctions shall not be the objective," as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying reaffirmed at a daily press briefing after the UN Security Council unanimously passed resolution 2094, condemning the DPRK's third nuclear test.<sup>45</sup>

China has criticized the United States for adopting different criteria in dealing with different proliferators. American policy and approach to treating its allies and friends are different from its treatment of its adversaries in proliferation matters.

### *Different Alliance Relations*

China and the United States have different relations with the DPRK and the ROK. China has good relations with both the DPRK and the ROK, while the United States has strong allied relations with the ROK, but hostile relations with the DPRK. The China-ROK relationship is different from the alliance between the US and the ROK. China and the DPRK have the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance of 1956. But the China-DPRK relationship is different from the military alliance between the US and the ROK.

China pursues a noninterference foreign policy and has no troops or military bases in the DPRK. China completed its withdrawal of all its troops from DPRK in October 1958. The United States pursues a strategy of forward deployment in Asia and continues to station its troops in the ROK. The United States currently stations over 28,000 troops and has 15 military bases, including two air force bases, 12 army bases, and one navy base in the ROK.<sup>46</sup>

The US has been strengthening its military relations with ROK and has held more joint military exercises with the ROK in recent years. China's relationship

with the DPRK is more economically based. China does not hold any joint military exercises with the DPRK.

The US provides the ROK with a nuclear umbrella, but China is not in the position to do so for the DPRK. China has pursued a nonproliferation policy of no assistance in helping other countries acquire WMD. While the United States had the power to stop the ROK's development of a nuclear program in the 1960s and decided recently to extend the range of the ROK's missiles from 300 to 800 kilometers, China does not have the power or leverage to do so to the DPRK. That is one of the reasons why China is unable to successfully persuade the DPRK to stop its nuclear or missile tests.

### *Different Geographic Interests and Security Concerns*

China and the United States are in different geographic situations. China is a close neighbor of the DPRK, while the US is far away from East Asia.

China is surrounded by a number of nuclear states in the region, while the United States is only threatened by the same large nuclear arsenals possessed by Russia. The DPRK's few nuclear weapons do not constitute a direct threat to the United States itself. Therefore, the threat perceptions and security concerns of China and the United States are not the same.

China supports the maintenance of stability on the Korean peninsula, while the US does not like the status quo and the present system of the DPRK, but wishes to see "regime change," or "regime collapse." For China, unrest or instability in the Korean peninsula directly affects China's political stability, economic development, and its security as a close neighbor.

The DPRK issue is not among the first priorities in the Obama administration's current global strategy and its agenda. The Obama administration pays more attention to Iran's nuclear and missile programs than the DPRK's, as Iran's status is more important and its nuclear and missile programs affect the stability of the entire Middle East and the safe transport of oil.

China is close to the DPRK, and China is certainly more concerned about the DPRK than is the United States because China has greater geopolitical interests than the United States does in maintaining the stability of the Korean peninsula.

All of these differences in state relations, geopolitical interests, threat perceptions, and security concerns have resulted in different policies and approaches taken by China and the United States in their handling of the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

## NEW EXPECTATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND THE ROK

The United States and the ROK play the major roles in facilitating a relaxed environment for the DPRK's domestic reforms and Pyongyang's decisions about the future development of its nuclear and missile programs.

The ROK's 2012 presidential election produced the first female president in the ROK. President Park Geun-hye has called for a "trust-building process" on the Korean peninsula and expressed her willingness to meet the DPRK's leader Kim Jong-un, with a view to improving inter-Korean relations.<sup>47</sup> We expect the emergence of improved prospects for new positive developments in inter-Korean relations; China's support for this effort can be counted upon.

The US presidential elections focused primarily on economic issues, and the DPRK was absent from campaign discussions. This shows the DPRK issue is not as important an issue to the American public as it is in the ROK. As the DPRK's satellite launch of April 5, 2012 made the US-DPRK's agreement of February 29, 2012 invalid, and the successful satellite launch of December 12, 2012 has further angered the Obama administration, the prospects for dramatic change in US policy toward the DPRK are not great.

It has been suggested that the Obama administration may adjust its policy toward the DPRK as it has toward Myanmar. President Obama visited Myanmar on November 19, 2012, shortly after his reelection, and met with the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, marking a new step in new US-Myanmar relations.<sup>48</sup>

The situation in the DPRK is different from that in Myanmar. There is no opposition party or opposition leader like Aung San Suu Kyi in the DPRK for the United States to support. Besides, the strategic distrust between the two countries is deep-rooted, and the US Congress and the public have long held negative views about the DPRK and its leaders. Nevertheless, since President Obama no longer has the pressure of another election, he can take bold steps to improve relations with the DPRK, including paying a historic visit to the DPRK to fulfill the unfinished vision President Clinton had more than a decade ago. Only the United States can provide the political recognition, security guarantees, and economic assistance that the DPRK is demanding. No other country can make the DPRK feel confident enough to give up its nuclear and missile programs. A military option is not feasible, nor would further financial sanctions like those imposed on Iran have significant impact on the DPRK. A good option for the United States would be to restart bilateral negotiations with the DPRK and reach a bilateral deal, while encouraging the DPRK to return to the Six-party talks to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs.

As the United States is preoccupied with such complex issues as the Syrian issue, the Israeli-Palestine issue, and has a greater focus on Iran's nuclear program, however, we may not see new policy changes to the DPRK during Obama's second term.

## NEW MOVES BY THE NEW LEADER OF THE DPRK

A solution to the DPRK's nuclear issue certainly depends on the strategic decisions of the DPRK. The international community has been watching closely to see what policy the new leader of the DPRK is pursuing.

There have been some significant positive moves taken by the new leader in promoting economic reform and an open-door policy. Over the past year, Kim

Jong-un has focused on developing the national economy and improving the people's livelihood, while consolidating his power to rule. The government is expanding special economic zones and trying to attract foreign investment to the DPRK. People can now buy western food and clothing in Pyongyang. All of these changes represent the new leader's new thinking and new style.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, the two satellite launches within one year show the determination of the new leader to fulfill his father's aspiration to continue the development of nuclear and missile programs in spite of international condemnation and pressure.

The satellite launches also show that the DPRK's strategic objectives pursuing nuclear and missile programs—to bolster its nuclear deterrence for self-defense against the “hostile policy” of the United States and to safeguard the country's political survival—have not changed under the new leader.<sup>50</sup> The successful satellite launch has consolidated the ruling power of Kim Jong-un, and the unity of the army and the people around him.<sup>51</sup> Kim Jong-un has publicly stated that the satellite launch “has consolidated DPRK's status as a space power,” and the DPRK will continue to have more satellite launches.<sup>52</sup>

It is expected that the new leader will be interested in improving relations with the US and the ROK after their presidential elections. The DPRK's foreign minister expressed a willingness to return to the Six-party talks in a meeting with the foreign minister of Cambodia in July 2012, but that position was changed after the UN imposed new sanctions. Nevertheless, the DPRK will have to return to the negotiating tables both bilaterally and multilaterally. The DPRK will continue to use its nuclear and missile programs as bargaining chips in exchange for more benefits, acting from a stronger position as a “nuclear armed state,” as defined in its recently amended constitution.

Now that the DPRK has further developed its capabilities, it will be even more difficult to persuade it to voluntarily give up its nuclear and missile programs, especially when the Libyan model no longer stands. The DPRK may have learned negative lessons from the Libyan experience. The DPRK Foreign Ministry has reaffirmed its commitment to pursuing its nuclear and missile programs in its statement that the DPRK “will never abandon nuclear deterrent.”<sup>53</sup>

If the DPRK continues nuclear or missile tests in violation of UN resolutions, the DPRK will be subject to even harsher sanctions, which will harm its new economic endeavors. This dangerous trend would damage the stability and peace of the Korean peninsula, and East Asia as a whole.<sup>54</sup>

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA-US RELATIONS

New developments in China-US relations will also have an important impact on any future resolution of the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

China and the United States have a complex cooperative and competitive relationship. Cooperation between China and the United States in the field of non-proliferation, including their cooperation in dealing with the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues, was for a long period of time the bright spot in the overall China-US relationship.

Nevertheless, China and the United States have recently experienced some new problems in their bilateral relations. There has been an increase in their mutual strategic suspicion. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's declaration of a US "pivot to Asia" and the declared "rebalancing strategy" have given rise to Chinese suspicions about the strategic intentions of the United States. China's determination to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity has also raised US concerns.

China believes that the United States' enhanced military allied relations and deployment of missile defense system in Asia, using the DPRK's satellites launching as the pretext, are actually directed to contain and encircle China.<sup>55</sup> China's perceptions naturally affect China's general policy toward the DPRK. China and the United States cannot have full cooperation in handling the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues when China feels it is being stabbed in the back by the United States. Under the new leadership of President Xi Jinping, China will be more resolute in defending its core national interests.

However, both China and the United States recognize the interdependent nature of their bilateral relationship. During the meeting between US President Obama and Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan on December 20, 2012, both leaders stressed the importance of further developing their cooperation toward a wider range and a higher level and jointly coping with regional and global challenges for the benefit of both peoples. Obama said the energetic, frank, and fruitful relations between the United States and China should continue during his second term, which is significant for both sides.<sup>56</sup> The new governments of China and the United States will continue to expand their common ground, properly handle differences, and make joint efforts in safeguarding a stable Korean peninsula, which serve both countries' fundamental interests.

## CONCLUSION

The DPRK's development of nuclear and missile programs concerns China's political, economic, and security interests. China will continue to pursue its policy of standing for the maintenance of peace and stability of the Korean peninsula, and for a peaceful solution to the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues through dialogue and consultation.

The DPRK's development of nuclear and missile programs concerns the strategic relations among the major countries in East Asia. The DPRK, the United States, the ROK, and China have a common responsibility to maintain peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. The four countries have their different interests and concerns. Neither the interests of the United States and the ROK nor those of China and the DPRK are identical. It is therefore important to take into full consideration the interests of other parties and make joint efforts to realize a peaceful Korean peninsula, free of nuclear weapons. All parties should make efforts to create a peaceful and relaxed environment and should refrain from creating problems and poisoning the atmosphere by military exercises or other provocative actions. Any misjudgments of the situation or wrong steps taken

by any side will result in disastrous consequences for the security of the Korean peninsula and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

The US, the DPRK, the ROK and China are the key players in dealing with the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues. Their relations and policies will have major impacts on the future resolution of the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

It is of vital importance for the United States to change its hostile policy toward the DPRK and help the DPRK feel secure and safe enough to abandon its nuclear and missile programs. It is essential for the DPRK to continue its economic reforms and open-door policy and abide by international norms.

Now that the power transitions in all four countries are over, we can expect some new policies, new ideas, and new moves by the new leaders in dealing with the DPRK's nuclear and missile issues.

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## China's Role and Its Dilemmas in the Six-Party Talks

*Yang Xiyu*

After the first Korean nuclear crisis of 1993 to 1994, China announced its two grand strategic objectives on the Korean peninsula: first, to resolutely realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula; and, second, to resolutely safeguard peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Since then, China has adhered to these strategic objectives, which also constitute its guidelines in initiating and promoting the Six-party talks.

However, from 1993 until 2003 (when China took the lead in launching the Six-party talks aimed at resolving the North Korean nuclear issue), China's attitude and policies reflected the principle of not directly intervening. Rather, its engagement was to actively promote direct negotiations between the United States (US) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) toward a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. During the 1993–2003 period, while participating in the Four-party talks held in Geneva, China consistently insisted that the Four-party talks be focused on achieving permanent peace on the Korean peninsula, namely through negotiations to establish a peace mechanism on the peninsula to replace the 1953 Armistice. Each of the four parties agreed that the North Korean nuclear issue should be resolved within the framework of the Agreed Framework, signed by the US and North Korea in 1994.

In October 2002, North Korea's secret development of uranium enrichment resulted in the breakdown of the Agreed Framework. The second North Korean nuclear crisis broke out and senior US officials warned that President Bush was keeping "all military options open."<sup>1</sup> This escalated the Korean peninsula crisis, and the risk of war.

Amid this crisis, the US engaged in intensive consultations with China. The Chinese government then changed the principle of "not directly intervening" that it had upheld for many years in favor of intensive diplomatic mediation between the US and North Korea. In March 2003 in Beijing, China hosted tripartite talks between the United States, North Korea and China, later launching

the Six-party talks between the US, North Korea, China, South Korea, Russia and Japan.

This chapter seeks to analyze China's role and dilemmas in the Six-party talks, focusing on several key issues in the Six-party talk process. It briefly points out the different dilemmas faced by the United States and North Korea, concisely describes China's basic position on the North Korean nuclear issue and the Six-party talks, and makes a number of proposals for how to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue.

## CHINA'S ROLE AND ITS LIMITS IN THE SIX-PARTY TALKS

Based on its two grand strategic objectives for the Korean peninsula, namely peace and stability and denuclearization, China pursued the Six-party talks as a peaceful means of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and realizing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. China has always seen the key to resolving the Korean nuclear issue since 1994 as being in the hands of North Korea and the United States. To this end, from the outset, China has defined its role as the organizer and mediator of the Six-party talks. In the Six-party process, China has undertaken the fundamental responsibility of promoting, to the greatest extent possible, peace talks among interested parties while planning topics for discussion and participating in the negotiations as the chair country of the Six-party process.

In comparison to the other parties engaged in the Six-party process, China has occupied a unique position and advantage in the talks, maintaining good political relations and open channels of diplomatic communication with all the other parties to the talks, including both North Korea and the United States. This unique position has advantaged China as the organizer and mediator in these multilateral negotiations. At the same time, however, within both the friendly relations between China and the DPRK, and the positive political interactions between China and the United States, there are many complex negative factors. These have restricted China's influence on both North Korea and the United States. In other words, as a mediator, China's influence on North Korea and the United States is limited.

Due to its unique advantages yet limited influence, China can play a key role only at the tactical and technical level in promoting the Six-party talks. As for the fundamental issues of the Six-party talks, namely how to thoroughly, verifiably and irreversibly stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program, while completely solving North Korean reasonable political, security and economic concerns, China does not have sufficient leverage to urge the parties concerned to reach a package deal. Despite this, in a first step toward reaching a package solution, China did succeed in pushing the parties concerned to sign the "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-party talks" on September 19, 2005.

On the following major issues, the limited progress made in the Six-party talks reflects both the importance and limitations of China's role.

### *Package Targets of the Six-Party Talks*

China has always maintained that the issues to be solved by the Six-party talks are not a single North Korean nuclear issue, but rather a package of issues with their focus on the North Korean nuclear issue. Specifically speaking, the Six-party talks need to address the serious concerns of the international community about North Korea's development of nuclear weapons; to persuade North Korea to completely abandon all nuclear weapons and related nuclear weapons program; and also to address the legitimate concerns of the DPRK for its own security, politics, economy, and other fields, so that North Korea could, like other countries, have a secure international environment and normalized external relations. North Korea must completely abandon its nuclear weapons; however, it should, like other sovereign nations, have the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In addition, the issue the Six-party talks needs to solve is not just North Korea's denuclearization, but the denuclearization of the *entire* Korean peninsula.

Despite this fair and reasonable goal, and for all of China's extensive efforts, no substantial results have been achieved.

As regards the issue of North Korea's complete abandonment of its nuclear weapons, the Bush administration first proposed "complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement"—in other words, CVID. China has accepted the CVID formulation in principle, but has repeatedly stressed to the United States that, if North Korea can both make the commitment and take practical action toward this goal, the US for its part must take appropriate substantive initiatives to address a series of legitimate concerns on the part of North Korea, especially security concerns. To reduce mutual hostility and mistrust, China has expressed its view that it is best for North Korea and the United States to reach mutually acceptable political commitments before they seek to take corresponding practical actions with each other. That is, to persuade North Korea to formally commit to CVID while, at the same time, convincing the United States to formally commit to a complete abandonment of its hostile policy toward the DPRK. These commitments would lay the basis for the political guarantees and mutual trust needed for further negotiations on more substantive issues.

However, in this regard, the United States has offered no compromises. In the second round of the Six-party talks in 2003, the head of the DPRK delegation, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan raised a very hypothetical and breakthrough question, asking the then head of the US delegation, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly whether, if North Korea promised CVID, namely, if it completely, verifiably, and irreversibly abandoned its nuclear weapons, would the United States promise to completely abandon its hostile policy toward the DPRK? Mr. Kelly did not give a direct and clear answer to this very specific and direct question. Mr. Kim Kye-gwan asked the same question again and Kelly was still unable to provide a direct answer. Clearly, Mr. Kelly was not authorized to reply with the preferred response that, if North Korea were to completely abandon its nuclear weapons program, the United States would abandon its hostile policy toward the DPRK.

That the US government was reluctant to even give a verbal commitment to such a critical issue for North Korea naturally served to spur North Korea to accelerate the development of its nuclear weapons in order to defend its own national security. Since the second round of the Six-party talks, North Korea has completely changed its attitude and stance toward CVID, taking a strong stance against CVID within the Six-party talks process.

### *The Mystery of Uranium Enrichment*

The direct impetus for the Six-party talks is the sharp opposition between the United States and North Korea with regard to North Korea's secret development of a uranium enrichment program. After the Six-party talks started, the United States informed China and other interested parties of intelligence on centrifuges smuggled with the help of the Pakistani nuclear scientist Dr. A. Q. Khan into North Korea, which could be used to produce enriched uranium.

China conducted intensive talks with the DPRK concerning the US allegations and concerns about the uranium enrichment issue. But, in October 2002, in talks with the US Assistant Secretary of State Kelly, the DPRK's First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju had expressly stated that North Korea has the right to develop uranium enrichment, without stating that North Korea had developed a uranium enrichment program. The US completely misinterpreted the solemn position expressed by Kang Sok-ju. North Korea, both in its official media and in the Six-party talks, has clearly denied US allegations of its secret uranium enrichment program, and declared that the United States intends to demonize the DPRK in order to set off a nuclear crisis.

The DPRK's above-mentioned position aroused sympathy in certain circles of Chinese scholars. Some Chinese scholars saw Kelly's visit to the DPRK as a conspiracy designed to accuse North Korea of a non-existent uranium enrichment program, aimed at setting off a North Korean nuclear crisis to disrupt the Agreed Framework and forcing North Korea to react strongly in order. The end goal of the conspiracy, in the view of these scholars, was to stop the then progressing North-South reconciliation process and the détente between the DPRK and Japan that had been started after Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang.

Objectively, however, in October 2002, the second North Korean nuclear crisis, caused by the conflict over North Korea's uranium enrichment program between the United States and North Korea, was not a premeditated "conspiracy." North Korea had in fact developed a uranium enrichment program. In November 2010, North Korea invited the trio of Stanford University professors John Lewis, US nuclear physics scientist Sig Hecker, and former US State Department intelligence official and Stanford University visiting scholar Robert Carlin to visit the Yongbyon nuclear facility, intending to show them the scene of the uranium enrichment centrifuges in operation. Hecker reported that as of 2010, North Korea not only already had thousands of centrifuge production lines to enrich uranium, but that production had also reached a very mature level of development.

As representatives in the Six-party talks engaged in heated arguments over the issue of North Korea's uranium enrichment in 2003, the United States firmly accused North Korea of secretly developing highly enriched uranium, while the DPRK completely denied the development of its uranium enrichment program. China, as the mediator, could neither require North Korea to admit to the development of its uranium enrichment program, nor could it persuade the United States to abandon the investigation of the uranium enrichment issue. The only options left for China were to convince the United States, before obtaining direct evidence that North Korea was secretly developing uranium enrichment, to continue to investigate the case of North Korea's secret development of uranium enrichment program, or shelve the controversial uranium enrichment issue in the Six-party talks, and not let this particular issue of uranium enrichment hinder discussions on how to achieve the bigger objective of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Due to China's diplomatic efforts, the Six-party talks successfully prevented deadlock on the issue of uranium enrichment, and refocused negotiations on how to implement the goal of denuclearization. However, the uranium enrichment mystery failed to be solved in the Six-party talks. Ultimately, North Korea itself announced and demonstrated the development and running of its uranium enrichment production lines.

*Defining the Scope of North Korea's "Complete Abandonment"  
of Its Nuclear Weapons Program*

Prior to the fourth round of Six-party talks in 2005, China carefully drafted a plan for the Six-party talks, the first item of which required North Korea to promise to completely abandon all nuclear weapons programs. In the draft submitted to the other parties, China recommended that the scope of North Korea's complete abandonment of its nuclear weapons programs be defined as follows: the DPRK commits to abandon all nuclear programs prohibited by the 1992 Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. This means that North Korea cannot develop nuclear weapons, nor can it develop its uranium enrichment program and weapons-grade plutonium reprocessing. However, it can develop and peacefully use nuclear energy for civilian projects.

At the beginning, the DPRK delegation firmly opposed North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear programs as defined by the draft; after China's efforts, however, the DPRK delegation ultimately accepted the text.

To the surprise and dismay of the Chinese delegation, however, the US delegation, in consultations with China, expressed its strong opposition to the definition as drafted, insisting on a much stricter definition of North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear programs. The US demanded that North Korea must give up its nuclear programs in their entirety. It also strongly opposed defining North Korea's denuclearization on the basis of the relevant provisions of the 1992 Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which prohibited both sides from developing nuclear

weapons and all related programs but did not deny the parties the right to peacefully use nuclear energy.

The US delegation's opposition to the 1992 Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula nearly brought the Six-party talks on a joint statement to a collapse. In order to save the talks, the Chinese side had to hold intensive consultations with the DPRK and the US about defining the scope of North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear programs in the draft document. Finally, the definition of North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear programs was replaced by more vague text, which could be accepted by both the United States and the DPRK. However, in order to maintain the authority of the 1992 Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the standards for denuclearization it established, China insisted on writing into the Joint Statement of the Six-party talks that all concerned parties must respect and comply with the 1992 Joint Declaration.

These three cases illustrate that China as the chair country plays a unique but limited role in the Six-party talks.

### CHINA'S DILEMMA OVER THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

China's limited role in the Six-party talks results from China's dilemma over the North Korean nuclear issue. On the one hand, for reasons of strategic security, China remains firmly opposed to the development and possession by its neighboring country, North Korea, of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, in the face of North Korea's long-term economic contraction and growing political uncertainty, China has had to be very careful to protect and maintain the stability of North Korea, trying to prevent the collapse of the regime. In other words, China both wants North Korea to completely abandon its nuclear weapons and wants to preserve the stability and security of the North Korean regime.

If North Korea were willing to abandon its nuclear weapons, China would simultaneously achieve its above-mentioned two goals. The problem is, however, that since the end of the Cold War, the security pattern on the Korean peninsula has dramatically tilted against the DPRK, which regards the development and possession of nuclear weapons as a fundamental—indeed the most important—strategic national policy. This has become all the more significant to Pyongyang, given that, after the Gaddafi regime of Libya peacefully relinquished its nuclear weapons development programs and the US resumed diplomatic relations with Libya, the US then took advantage of the civil war in Libya to barbarically bomb Libya and ultimately overthrow the Gaddafi regime. North Korea takes the Libya example as a major lesson, believing that had Gaddafi not given up the country's nuclear weapons development programs, the US and its European allies would not have dared to intervene militarily in Libya. Based on this conclusion, the DPRK has not only become more firmly determined to develop nuclear weapons, it has also accelerated the pace of its nuclear weapons program. After coming to power, North Korea's new generation of leaders

not only consider the development of nuclear weapons a national strategy—the so-called “two pronged strategy” of economic development and nuclear weapons development—they have also written possession of nuclear weapons into the DPRK constitution.

This has rendered North Korea's position on nuclear weapons and national policy in direct conflict with China's strategic security interests, thus also bringing China's ability to achieve its two major goals of denuclearization and maintaining political stability in North Korea to an impasse. If China reduces assistance to North Korea, and adopts economic sanctions and other means with the goal of forcing North Korea to abandon nuclear weapons, this will inevitably severely affect, and even damage, North Korea's economic and political stability. If China wishes to maintain political stability and preserve the prospects for an economic recovery in North Korea, it must tolerate and accommodate itself to North Korea's trampling of China's national interests on the issue of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. No matter what “outrageous” actions North Korea takes to develop nuclear weapons, China can only maintain and continue to increase assistance to North Korea.

In other words, due to North Korea's fundamental national policy and strategic needs for possessing nuclear weapons, China has been forced into the strategic dilemma of having either a pro nuclear but friendly-to-China North Korea, or a nuclear-free but hostile-to-China, and even collapsed, North Korea.

Because of this dilemma, it has been difficult for China to make substantial achievements in the Six-party talks. Even where the issue of uranium enrichment is concerned, China must play the role of protecting North Korea in the United Nations and on other occasions.

## UNITED STATES' AND NORTH KOREA'S DILEMMAS ON THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

In fact, in the Six-party talks, not only is China in a dilemma, the US and North Korea face their own dilemmas as well. This makes the relationships among parties in the Six-party talks even more complicated.

The US has endorsed and participated in the Six-party talks, not because it is instinctively willing to resolve the nuclear issue through peaceful means, but because North Korea is located in a geostrategic position, facing Seoul to the south and bordering China's northeast region to the north. The United States simply cannot use force given these circumstances; its only option is to negotiate peacefully. However, if the US wants North Korea to “voluntarily” abandon its nuclear programs through negotiation, it must also pay a high political and economic price with a large enough “carrot” to “exchange for” North Korea's abandonment of its crucial nuclear weapons. But, it is politically impossible for any US administration to provide a large enough “carrot” to a communist country that has been hostile to the US for over half a century. Especially after the rupture of the “Agreed Framework” signed by the United States and North Korea in 1994 due to North Korea's secret development of a uranium enrichment program, neither the Republican Bush administration nor the Democratic

Obama administration could use the mode of “nuclear freeze -for- compensation and nuclear abandonment-for-normalization” established in the Agreed Framework.

In a nutshell, on the North Korean nuclear issue the US faces the dilemma of being unable to either use a “big stick” or offer “carrots.” Therefore, in the Six-party talks, in addition to diplomatic rhetoric, the options among substantive initiatives—either positive “carrot” measures or confrontational “big stick” measures—that the United States has had available have been limited.

On the issue of developing nuclear weapons, North Korea faces a more difficult dilemma than either China or the US. North Korea is now emphasizing the “two-pronged strategy” of developing both its economy and nuclear weapons. In reality, however, the development of the economy and the development of nuclear weapons are mutually at odds with each other. From the perspective of domestic resource allocation, in order to develop its economy, North Korea must increase investment in economic development, while reducing input in the development of nuclear weapons. By the same token, any input to develop nuclear weapons reduces resources for economic construction: the two strategies have a “zero-sum” relationship.

From the perspective of the external environment and access to external economic resources, although nuclear weapons could provide North Korea with a powerful deterrent to protect its security, they are also the most fundamental obstacle to North Korea’s access to external resources, external markets, and thus, to the development of its economy. In May 2013, the DPRK Supreme People’s Assembly passed a law to establish more special economic zones in North Korea. Under this law, North Korea has set up special economic zones in each of its provinces and directly governed cities to attract more foreign investment and trade opportunities. However, the implementation of the United Nations Security Council’s sanctions against North Korea for developing nuclear weapons and testing them three times obstructs any large-scale flow of foreign trade and investment into North Korea.

North Korea is thus currently in a deep dilemma. It can maintain its nuclear weapons development program, thereby closing the door to normalizing relations with the outside world and imposing a self-isolation and seclusion that is fundamentally and increasingly threatening to the sustainable survival and stability of the regime. Alternatively, it has to completely give up its nuclear weapons, with all attendant risks, but also the prospect of normalizing relations with the US, with the potential security benefits that could ensue. Since Kim Jong-un has come to power, he has taken a tougher position than his father on the issue of developing nuclear weapons. However, he has also demonstrated a more flexible stance in response to the call for resumption of the Six-party talks, offering to resume the talks without conditions.

## CONCLUSION

First, with all the vicissitudes of the Six-party talks, the pace of North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons has not been checked; nevertheless, the Six-

party talks still provide a unique, effective platform and peaceful channel for North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear program and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The "Joint Statement" adopted by the Six-party talks in 2005 remains the common position to which the parties are committed to adhere, offering a genuine foundation for the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. During the prolonged deadlock in the Six-party talks process, the "Joint Statement" has become an important lever for China in its efforts to save the talks and promote the return of the parties concerned to the negotiating table.

Second, on the North Korean nuclear issue, China, the DPRK, and the United States each has its own distinct set of dilemmas. The key to progress in the Six-party talks and the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is dialogue and cooperation that will bring resolution to these dilemmas.

To break the dilemma of the North Korean nuclear issue and the deadlock in the Six-party talks, China must bring an end to a Cold War mentality. As two sides of the same coin, neither peace and stability nor denuclearization of the Korean peninsula can be neglected. A nuclearized Korean peninsula will not bring peace to the region, and the existence of a country with nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, whether it is socialist North Korea or capitalist South Korea, would be a nightmare for China's security interests. In the international landscape of the twenty-first century, if China sees North Korea as a "strategic protective screen" against the US-ROK military alliance, this only restricts China's maneuvering space on the Korean peninsula and even in Northeast Asia writ large. It also limits China to playing a less strategic role in peninsula affairs and is not conducive to the future development of China-DPRK relations on a basis of equality.

For the United States, to develop normal, friendly, and cooperative relations with both capitalist South Korea and communist North Korea simultaneously will not harm the US presence on the peninsula. Instead, it would contribute to lasting peace and stability on the peninsula and be enabling of a positive US presence on the peninsula.

North Korea is stuck in the aforementioned dilemma of trying to both ensure security through nuclear weapons development and also develop its economy. It is only through completely abandoning nuclear weapons and related programs, accepting all sanctions implemented by the international community, and establishing full normalized relations and peaceful and cooperative relations with the entire external world, including the US, that North Korea can become a strong, prosperous, and peaceful country, thus protecting its own security far better than the nuclear deterrence option it is currently pursuing.

Thirdly, objectively, North Korea has developed nuclear weapons because of concerns about its own survival and security. Therefore, resolving the North Korean nuclear issue through the Six-party talks is about much more than just how to destroy North Korea's nuclear weapons. The other five parties in the Six-party talks should act together within their framework to build an "opportunity cost" structure for North Korea to completely abandon its nuclear programs. This should let North Korea truly feel that, if it completely abandons its

nuclear program, it will see an overall improvement of its economic, political, diplomatic, and security environment, advance its economic development and improve its people's livelihood, and achieve genuine national security. If, however, North Korea plays the nuclear card to fool the international community, seeking to use the talks merely as a screen behind which it can continue to develop nuclear weapons, it will face a more crippling international environment and growing economic difficulties. An alternative "opportunity cost" structure would incentivize North Korea to make the right choices on the nuclear issue, in line with the interests of its own survival and development.

In short, the Six-party talks should seek to realize the goals of a complete abandonment by North Korea of its nuclear weapons and the permanent denuclearization of the Korean peninsula by the adoption of a package and grand bargain approach, and the use of comprehensive economic, political, diplomatic, and security resources and measures to establish new peaceful relations and cooperation on the Korean peninsula and allow North Korea to pursue the promise of development.

#### NOTE

1. See quote in Jonathan Pollack, "The United States, North Korea and the End of the Agreed Framework," *Naval War College Review*, 16.3 (2003), 43, <https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/d65ed211-2e16-4ef3-828d-5308248ab652/United-States,-North-Korea,-and-the-End-of-the-Agr.aspx>

## A Strategic and Emotional Partner: China and Its Food Aid to North Korea in the Twenty-First Century\*

*Li Nan*

In China and North Korea, natural disasters have long been popularly understood to portend dynastic transitions and, more recently, regime changes. Even today, environmental catastrophes can raise doubts as to the stability of each nation's political order. Like ruling authorities of other states, both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Korean Workers Party (KWP) attempt to enhance their legitimacy during emergencies through a variety of different mechanisms. However, unlike the CCP, the KWP has harnessed the potential of disasters as vehicles for international communication, capitalizing on these events' ability to momentarily remove the barriers that isolate it from the West.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) regime's identity as a failed system operating in a hostile international environment has long alienated nearly all of its potential food donors at times when it has most needed their help. For example, during the 1995 North Korean famine, Japan and South Korea combined contributed more than 450,000 MT of food aid after North Korea's 1995 floods, but Pyongyang's inhospitable welcome of its adversaries' food ensured this generosity was not repeated the following year when the famine reached its deadly climax.

However, in recent years, the DPRK's belligerent attitude toward external aid has begun to change and it has started to welcome humanitarian agencies within its borders. This policy shift is reflected not only in the evolving way in which the DPRK interacts with the outside world, but is also evident in the changing skillsets possessed by DPRK officials and in the perceptions and experiences of DPRK party members.<sup>1</sup> The 2007 Six-party talks' agreement mirrors this attitude change. After the Talks in February, it became widely known that the DPRK welcomed development aid from multilateral agencies and that the IFIs were quietly conducting seminars with a variety of DPRK officials on the

requirements of IFI membership, its development philosophy, its *modus operandi* and its management skillsets.

Compared to many other countries, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has a particularly significant interest in the DPRK's natural disasters and famines, which can trigger international incidents that affect its own citizens, including popular unrest. At the same time, while it is to China's benefit to ensure the continuity of the North Korean state, the Chinese government has made it clear that the scope of its internal financial reforms can leave little room for the waste of budgetary resources on aid that might be needed indefinitely<sup>2</sup> and that it expects North Korea to reform its own economy and agricultural system. However, as yet, from the PRC perspective, true reform is something that Pyongyang has failed to initiate. Therefore, China has found itself performing a delicate balancing act, weighing the short-term benefits of stability that its aid contributes to the region against the insidious long-term effects of continued support, which further retards the development of a productive agricultural and economic system and endangers the regime in the long run.

The PRC's search for equilibrium between sought-for regional stability and North Korean domestic reform is reflected in its policy on food aid to the DPRK. Analyzing China's policy toward North Korea through the lens of China's approach to food aid toward that country illustrates how Chinese policy reflects an interplay of strategic considerations related to China's (and the region's) interests and emotional considerations by China toward North Korea. The latter—emotional considerations—emerge from China's understanding that it has a “special responsibility” toward North Korea. This responsibility is evident in the deep respect China demonstrates for the legitimacy of the DPRK government and its commitment to making all of its policies toward the peninsula consistent with this perspective. At the same time, China must balance this responsibility with its interests, which include its relationships with other countries in the region, regional stability, and its own economic stability and growth. This strategic and emotional perspective shapes China's efforts to keep North Korea politically and economically stable.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

North Korea was highly successful in securing foreign aid for its post-Korean War reconstruction. In the immediate post-war period, the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries provided large-scale aid to North Korea that, in total, reached one-third of North Korea's financial budget for 1954. The aid came in the form of labor, materials and goods, reconstruction and building plants, civil construction projects, technology transfers and the education of specialists and students. Such support played a vital role in North Korea's economic recovery. On November 23, 1954, China and North Korea signed the “Sino-Korean Economic and Cultural Cooperation Agreement.” This agreement included the cancellation of North Korea's war-time debt, which amounted to RMB 729 million (USD 362.5 million), and included a gift by China of RMB 800 million Chinese (USD 400 million) in aid for the period between 1954

and 1957, of which RMB 300 million (USD 125 million) was made available during the first year.<sup>3</sup> These funds were used to purchase industrial materials, construction materials, machines, equipment, and grain, and to repair railways and bridges. In addition to this generous support, from 1954 to 1956, China also looked after 22,735 Korean child refugees.<sup>4</sup>

Socialist fraternal aid played a crucial role in the early stages of North Korea's reconstruction. In 1954, fraternal funds made up 31.6 percent of North Korea's budget.<sup>5</sup> While Soviet and Eastern European countries provided industrial projects, especially in heavy industry, China offered 130,000 tons of grain, 40 million meters of cotton cloth, 600,000 pairs of shoes, and 300,000 pieces of winter clothes.<sup>6</sup> Taking advantage of the massive amounts of foreign aid, the DPRK accomplished its Three-Year Plan by 1955—one year ahead of schedule. On October 18, 1958, China and North Korea further expanded their economic cooperation, signing an agreement to establish a science and technology commission, which included the exchange of blueprints, reference materials, samples, specialists, trainees, and technical appraisals. Ongoing foreign support by countries like China led the CCP Central Committee to approve a report by then Foreign Minister Chen Yi and State Planning Commission Chairman Li Fuchun on October 26, 1958 that focused on strengthening foreign economic and aid work and made all the aid projects in North Korea top priority projects by the various concerned units and provincial and municipal governments.

By the beginning of the 1960s, North Korea's economic development was much more impressive than was South Korea's, and would remain so until at least the mid-1970s. According to Soviet statistics, by April 1, 1960, North Korea had received a total of RUB 5.5 billion (USD 1.375 billion) of free economic aid from socialist countries, out of which RUB 1.3 billion (USD 325 million) was from the Soviet Union, and RUB 900 million (USD 225 million) was from China. In addition, the Soviet Union offered RUB 3.6 billion (USD 900 million) in low interest loans (China provided three batches of no-interest loans). According to South Korean statistics, from the end of the war to the 1970s, the total aid from socialist countries to North Korea was USD 2.043 billion in total, out of which USD 1.653 billion was given between 1950 and 1960. USD 1.638 billion was free economic aid (including USD 340 million, for which North Korea was exempted from paying back). Out of this total, Soviet aid made up 43.14 percent, while Chinese aid occupied 30.75 percent.<sup>7</sup> As these data make abundantly clear, without foreign aid, the DPRK could not have achieved its ambitious post-war reconstruction.

Although the Sino-Korean political relationship was often volatile during North Korea's reconstruction, PRC-DPRK economic relations remained stable. China never suspended its food aid to the DPRK, even during times of political strain or economic hardship. However, in its bilateral relations with the North, China valued "ism" while North Korea cared about "interests." In the 1960s, when the dispute between China and the Soviet Union reached a climax within the socialist camp, every socialist country had to choose sides. North Korea sought to balance its relations between two great powers. In order to win Kim Il-sung's political support for the disputes between China and the Soviet

Union, China was forced to tolerate North Korea's growing requests for material and technical aid. Through the Cultural Revolution, however, the relationship between China and North Korea shifted towards distrust, even as the latter benefited materially from its relationship with China.

The immediate challenge for China in managing economic relations with North Korea in the mid-1980s and the early 1990s stemmed from its desire to lessen the aid burden North Korea extracted from it by promoting greater market-based trade, especially in raw materials. Although Beijing hoped to adjust its economic relationship with the DPRK, Pyongyang was clearly unprepared to respond to such requests. The impact of Beijing's efforts amplified ongoing political tension in Sino-North Korean relations resulting from China's normalization of relations with South Korea. PRC-DPRK bilateral trade dropped from almost USD 900 million in 1993 to USD 550 million in 1995 and USD 370 million in 1997.<sup>8</sup>

While China's official policy regarding the Korean peninsula is to avoid any situation that could drag the PRC into an armed conflict, this policy is beginning to show signs of wear. In recent years, the PRC has felt a need to distance itself from Pyongyang's military ambitions. Such distancing is complicated by the Chinese government's ongoing commitment to North Korea's social stability and its close economic relationship with it. Moreover, from a North Korean perspective, Beijing's attempt to encourage reforms in the DPRK, often through offering its own experience as example, is threatening to Pyongyang. Indeed, Kim Jong-il's frustration with this was "so strong that a number of North Korean officials were dismissed and arrested for praising Chinese economic policies."<sup>9</sup> In their official communiqués and speeches, however, Chinese and North Korean leaders continue to insist that Beijing and Pyongyang enjoy "[traditional friendship],"<sup>10</sup> and that "[their friendship is eternal and unbreakable.]"<sup>11</sup> As a result, even with the increasing tension between the two countries in some areas of the relationship, Chinese humanitarian aid, including food, to North Korea remains a constant dimension of their bilateral dynamic.

## FACTORS DRIVING CHINESE AID TO NORTH KOREA

### *China's Strategic Goals toward North Korea*

Whereas Chinese foreign policy under Mao Zedong was often characterized by aggressive internationalism to better promote communist ideals, Chinese foreign policy today places its highest priority on serving China's national interests, particularly within the East Asian geopolitical environment. When the Soviet Union was falling apart, there was a serious debate in China over whether China should take a lead among the socialist countries. In the end, Chinese government officials agreed that China's main foreign policy goals are to serve domestic affairs, improve Chinese economic development, and keep social stability. To achieve these goals, Deng Xiaoping quoted a Chinese Taoist saying to sum up the principles of China foreign policy: "keep a low profile; never be number one, and practice "the art of the possible" (*taoguang yanghui, juebu dangtou, yousuo zuowei*). Since 2008, these principles have evolved into an emphasis on

“improving friendly relations with other countries on a non-ideological basis,” a position felt to be better suited to China’s national interests. In this regard, Beijing remains highly concerned with the maintenance of stability along its borders, even to the exclusion of what would previously have been called its “international communist” duties.

What this has meant for North Korea-China relations since the twenty-first century is nothing less than a renewal of the alliance. This is a sea change, brought about first by the rule of Kim Jong-il, and then by the insecure international environment the regime is facing, and finally, by the climate of Sino-US relations. Both sides’ policies toward the other have become a “new game,” dictated by a state of emergency that places them in a tightly fixed structure reducing much of the latitude for new strategic thinking.

If there is one country that truly understands China strategically, politically and emotionally, it is North Korea, which has maintained a close relationship with China since World War II. Both countries not only share common boundaries, but also a similar political system and political culture, making it relatively easy for North Korea to figure out who in China is guiding the issues in which it is interested. However, both countries have different strategic goals from one another. Since the start of the new millennium, the differences in Chinese and North Korean strategic orientation have produced a new transformation of the traditional alliance, which is officially called a “bilateral strategic and cooperative partnership.”

Since the twenty-first century, China’s strategic goals toward North Korea have taken the following form:

1. China will ensure the continuity of the North Korean state. During the nuclear crisis, China has been firm in opposing any radical remedy in resolving the confrontation, especially regime change. Since 2009, although China approved the UN resolutions condemning North Korea’s nuclear tests, it has opposed any enlargement of economic sanctions against North Korea. At the same time, China has increased its own assistance to North Korea to secure the survival of the regime.
2. Helping North Korea can support China’s own economic development, and China can be a cooperative partner with both Koreas in economic development. North Korea needs a large amount of aid from Beijing every year. However, China also needs some of North Korea’s raw materials, such as iron and coal, along with access to port facilities. At the same time, China’s relationship with South Korea has continued to grow and it has become its largest trading partner. In addition, there is a national project in China called the Northeast Revival project (*dongbei zhenxing gongcheng*), which is being implemented in Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces. The Northeast region has lagged behind China’s Southern region since the 1980s. Chinese believe that improving trade with both Korean states, but especially with North Korea, can bring great benefits to this economically depressed Chinese region.

- North Korea can provide raw materials and cheaper labor and South Korea can export high-tech products for China's domestic consumption. Preserving close ties to both Koreas is beneficial for China's own economic growth.
3. China's support of North Korea provides an example to other potential allies. China treats both itself and North Korea as "developing countries," a self-categorization on China's part that allows it to focus more on domestic issues and also maintain its leading status among developing countries. China supports other developing countries in their struggles to improve their economies and achieve social stability. Unlike western countries, China respects the legitimacy of all existing regimes. In regard to the two Koreas, China tried to play a facilitating role in the Six-party talks and was prepared to be a mediator, providing an example of how to be a responsible rising power for other developing countries.
  4. China can provide a possible paradigm for North Korea's development. When former Premier Wen Jiabao visited North Korea in the autumn of 2009, he remarked that he wished to introduce Chinese experiences drawn from China's economic reforms and open-door policy to North Korea.<sup>12</sup> China's rapid economic development offers the lesson to North Korea that a socialist country does not necessarily have to be poor. Although there is little evidence that North Korea has any desire to import the Chinese model, China hopes to direct Pyongyang's attention back to economic development, and help it find its own way to reform its economic and political systems.

In accordance with those strategic goals, China maintains a certain level of food aid toward North Korea in order to help stabilize North Korean society. At the same time, China seeks to cooperate with North Korean on agricultural reforms and technical innovation, helping to change the rigid economic system through Chinese reform experiences. Food aid thus serves as an important source of strategic leverage over North Korea.

### *Emotional Ties to North Korea*

North Korea and China share a similar emotional language and historical memory, so capitalizing on these similarities has always been used to maintain a positive element in the relationship, and also improves public opinion about the other country, even when some aspects of the bilateral relationship may be strained.

In China, there are many emotional idioms applied to North Korea. These can be seen in the CCP's condolence letter on Kim Jong-Il death, which praises Kim's great achievements, emphasizes the traditional party friendship between the two nations, and ends with the striking sentence, "The Chinese people will always stand side by side with the DPRK people!"<sup>13</sup> This emotional letter received a very positive response from North Korean leaders and civilians.

The North Koreans understood how important the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were to China. The government prepared for the torch relay in Pyongyang months before the actual event, repairing roads, renovating major buildings and mobilizing residents to hold Chinese and North Korean flags to welcome the athletes. According to many Chinese reporters, the ceremony was the best Olympic ceremony they saw. In addition, after the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, North Korea kept its flag at half-mast on the day of China's national mourning. These acts of solidarity greatly improved China's view of North Korea.

The shared emotional language and related sense of solidarity is, from my perspective, a vital tool in the Sino-North Korean relationship. Since World War II, Chinese leaders have made efforts to understand North Korea's emotions. They are cautious about any actions that might hurt North Korean feelings. As one Chinese specialist has said, "[you should treat North Korea according to their own idea of their international standing.]"<sup>14</sup>

Seen through the lens of emotion, China's food aid toward North Korea strongly shows the brotherhood between two countries. Ideologically, when a socialist country has experienced hardship, other socialist countries should assist it to express "proletarian revolutionary emotion." Since the end of the Korean War, China has provided aid to improve emotional ties with North Korea. During the famines of the 1990s, China enlarged its food aid toward North Korea. Kim Jong-Il often expressed gratitude to Chinese leaders during his visits to China. In the official media of both countries, strong emotional idioms are applied in discussions of food aid, underscoring the two countries' traditional brotherhood.

### *Chinese Unofficial Views and Public Opinion about North Korea*

The North Korean issue is increasingly influenced by Chinese academic circles and public opinion, which may make the emotional dimension of the official relationship more important than ever.

Within Chinese think tanks, Chinese scholars have long held divided views on North Korea that reflect their different political inclinations about China's own rise. Most scholars believe that China's foreign policy is at a crossroads and that it is important to look critically at China's North Korea policy. Three main groups occupy different positions on China's North Korean policy. The first suggests that China's protection of North Korea's security demonstrates China's influence and commitment to other developing countries, while shaping a new and more active Chinese policy toward neighboring countries, according to "basic principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness."<sup>15</sup> The second group believes that China can keep its current policy vis-à-vis the regime, pushing it to accept economic reform and an open policy, while pursuing cooperation with Japan, South Korea and even the United States to reduce the risk of a "new cold war." A third group advocates that China adjust its policy to be harder on North Korea, putting more pressure on the country and even joining economic sanctions with the US, if North Korea takes any aggressive action. Although the views above are clearly divided, they sit atop a consensus

that China should ensure the continuity of the North Korean state and push its leaders to reform when opportunities present themselves.

As for public opinion, according to a 2007 survey, favorable views of North Korea declined dramatically in China from 39.8 percent in 2001 to 21.8 percent in 2007.<sup>16</sup> The main reason is that North Korea conducted a nuclear test in 2006, which the Chinese government strongly criticized. China's harsh official response expressed dissatisfaction with North Korea that had existed in China's society for some time. More and more critical comments subsequently appeared in the Chinese media, affecting broad Chinese public opinion on its "little brother." In 2003, the China Youth Research Center published a report that showed Chinese youth viewed Russia, Pakistan, and North Korea as the three most favorable countries to China.<sup>17</sup> But, in 2010, a Shenzhen University survey of college students' views of North Korea reported that 77.6 percent of respondents agreed that North Korea is a socialist country, but it is also poor and isolated. However, after several incidents involving South Korea, only 31 percent of respondents thought that North Korea is a socialist country and the other half identified it as a troublemaker. At the same time, however, an overwhelming 85 percent of respondents indicated that they still saw North Korea as strategically important to China. The same survey reported that 41 percent surveyed thought that the US should play the biggest role in the reunification of the Korean Peninsula, while only 26.7 percent thought it should be China.<sup>18</sup> From this, we can infer that China's policy on North Korea has been constrained by its diverse domestic constituencies.

With public opinion influencing Chinese foreign policy, the ability of the Chinese government to invoke the emotional ties between the two countries with reference to shared history, among other factors, serves to counter those voices within China that argue for a harder line approach by Beijing to Pyongyang, which would include ending or reducing aid.

## THE MECHANICS OF CHINA'S FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA

### *China's Humanitarian Aid Policy*

China's policy on humanitarian assistance is based mainly on three elements: the reality of the crisis, the severity of the natural disasters, and the recipient countries' requests. From a Chinese perspective, humanitarian assistance in the international political environment cannot be divorced from the shadow of diplomatic and domestic political and economic factors. Traditionally, Chinese humanitarian assistance has mostly focused on so-called "friendly countries."<sup>19</sup> However, since 2004, new principles for foreign assistance have been approved by Chinese government, and Chinese humanitarian aid has become more all encompassing in order to "consolidate and enhance bilateral relations."<sup>20</sup> For example, China's humanitarian assistance in the wake of the 2011 Japanese earthquake went far beyond its usual level for an "unfriendly" country. By offering generous assistance, the Chinese government sought to show it could act in

the spirit of “good neighbors and friendly partners,”<sup>21</sup> to convey a positive image of China to the Japanese government and its people, hoping to ease some of the tension caused by the East China Sea issue.

The Ministry of Commerce is the main Chinese government department responsible for formulating policy for humanitarian assistance programs, determining aid projects, and implementing the use of aid funds. The Ministry of Defense is responsible for humanitarian facilities and transportation arrangements. Many other departments facilitate and coordinate humanitarian assistance, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Health, the China Earthquake Bureau, the General Administration of Customs, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, the Administration of Inspection and Civil Aviation.<sup>22</sup> To ensure effective co-ordination of humanitarian aid, military and administrative departments work in tandem, with various administrative departments completing the required approval processes and the military providing supplies and transportation.

### PATTERNS IN CHINA’S FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA

For decades, China has been North Korea’s biggest aid donor, investor, and trading partner. China’s economic assistance to the DPRK includes not only its official grant aid based on a “friendship price” designed to promote North Korea’s economic recovery; it also comprises non-governmental organizations that provide humanitarian assistance. China’s nonreimbursable aid is so essential to the DPRK that it both helps it weather various natural disasters and is vital to maintaining the wellbeing of its populace and economy. In fact, at the end of the Cold War, North Korea was so reliant on China for aid that 40 percent of its food and more than 80 percent of its energy was provided by China.<sup>23</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea’s access to social-ist aid from a large number of countries disappeared. The successor of the Soviet Union, Russia, terminated almost all economic and technical assistance toward the DPRK. When North Korean President Kim Il-sung appealed to China for more aid in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in October 1991, Premier Li Peng took into account China’s own domestic economic situation and politely declined to enlarge Beijing’s economic assistance to Pyongyang. His decision was quickly followed in early 1992 by the cancellation of China’s “barter” trade with North Korea in favor of the implementation of trading in hard currency.<sup>24</sup> Due to these actions and the establishment of diplomatic relations with South Korea later that same year, as mentioned, China-DPRK relations deteriorated.

In 1994, North Korea suffered severe famine and domestic food supplies were very low. That year, China provided North Korea with 100,000 tons of free food aid. In 1995, North Korea’s food crisis became even more critical. At the request of the DPRK, the UN, the United States, Japan, South Korea and the European Union began to provide North Korea with food assistance. Faced with an aid competition between “economic migrants”—North Koreans flocking to the Sino-Korean border—China increased its own aid efforts. In

May 1996, Chinese Premier Li Peng and North Korean Vice-premier Hong Song-nam signed the “Sino-DPRK Economic and Technological Agreement,” whereby China committed to provide North Korea with 500,000 tons of grain annually, 120 million tons of oil and 1.5 million tons of coal within five years,<sup>25</sup> with more than half of the committed substances provided without compensation to China. After the agreement was signed, Chinese food aid returned to pre-1992 levels.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, North Korea’s economic situation improved and China’s food assistance toward the country quietly changed. At the end of 2002, better bilateral relations between the two Koreas and the promise of further economic aid encouraged North Korea to participate in the Six-party talks. At the talks, China’s attitude toward North Korean economic aid was revealed to be motivated in part by the goal of furthering two main strategic objectives: to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and to create a stable surrounding environment for China’s economic development. Under these conditions, China’s aid to North Korea reflected its ability to pay more attention to the root causes of Korea’s slow economic development and to try to achieve more mutually beneficial (reciprocal) aid exchanges. For example, in 2004 to resolve the lack of float glass in North Korea, China constructed the Taean Friendship Glass Factory, shared its glass technology with the DPRK government, and provided training for factory workers—all without charge. Currently, glass production not only meets domestic Korean demand, but is also exported back to the Chinese market.<sup>26</sup>

This approach reflects what has become the framework for China’s economic cooperation with North Korea based on several guiding principles: “Government Guidance, Enterprise-based, Market Operation, Mutual Benefit and Win-win.” With these principles, China aims to maintain steady growth in bilateral trade and promote mutual investment and cooperation projects. In 2010, the volume of Sino-Korean trade reached USD 3.47 billion, a year-on-year growth of 29.3 percent, accounting for 56.9 percent of the USD 6.09 billion of North Korea’s total foreign trade.<sup>27</sup> Chinese investment has also flowed to North Korean port facilities, information technology, and energy development. In December 2010, the China Commercial Land Computer Associates Investment Co., Ltd. announced plans to invest USD two billion in the Rason region’s coal fired power stations, roads, an oil tanker wharf, oil refining factories and ironworks construction.<sup>28</sup>

China’s policies correspond to a period when relations between North and South Korea have been particularly strained. When South Korea’s Lee Myung-bak took office in 2008, his administration implemented a tough policy toward aid for North Korea—what it called “semi-humanitarianism.”<sup>29</sup> In addition, dissatisfied with how the DPRK government was allocating and supervising aid, the European Union and the United States both suspended their humanitarian contributions in 2008 and 2009 respectively. In January 2011, after an unusually cold and wet winter, the DPRK requested emergency food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP), citing that between October and November 2010 food shortages amounted to 886,000 tons.<sup>30</sup> The EU provided North Korea with food aid valued at USD 14.5 million,<sup>31</sup> but the United States and

South Korea insisted on implementing an assistance supervision system to prevent possible military use of aid before committing resources.

These policy changes left North Korea once again almost solely dependent on Chinese largess. In combination with the economic cooperation framework mentioned above, relative Chinese influence in North Korea has increased dramatically in recent years. This has led some international experts to contend that China is deliberately trying to increase its own influence in the Korean Peninsula with the goal of exerting virtually exclusive economic influence over the DPRK.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, one American scholar has argued that “Beijing’s policy toward the North is motivated more by domestic development priorities than it is by twisting North Korea’s arm to denuclearize.”<sup>33</sup>

To ease such speculation, China argues that its assistance is in support of a goal shared by the whole international community: that of solving North Korea’s nuclear crisis and that its efforts are attempts to address the crisis by solving its root economic cause. Although in recent years China has stopped publishing data on its assistance toward the DPRK, China’s MOFA spokesman has stated on many occasions that China has been providing assistance to the DPRK with the express purpose of helping the DPRK improve people’s livelihood and promote economic development.<sup>34</sup> To maintain stability and foster further development of the Korean Peninsula, China is reluctant to simply follow other countries and dramatically adjust its own aid policy toward North Korea. On June 12, 2009, Pyongyang conducted a second nuclear test and the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1874 with sanctions against North Korea. The United States, Japan, and South Korea asked China to join in sanctions against the DPRK, which it did. However, in its decision, then Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Yesui stressed that any relevant measures taken by the UNSC resolution on the North Korean problem should not affect the livelihood of its people, nor its economic development or normal trade activities, nor should it should impact humanitarian assistance to the country. China’s decision reflected its ongoing commitment to North Korea and its aid.<sup>35</sup>

## CHINA’S FOOD FLOWS TO NORTH KOREA

China not only provides its own aid to North Korea, but also actively pursues opportunities through the international community to implement assistance to the DPRK.

China’s food aid contributions reflect this in their division into two parts. One part is China’s own assistance, which is not disclosed to the public; the other part is contributed through the WFP and other international organizations. In 2010, the Chinese government donated USD one million to the WFP and did not immediately specify its use. When the WFP asked, China confirmed it was to be used to aid North Korea, stating, “In 2011, the Chinese government donated another \$1 million U.S. dollars, marked to be used to aid North Korea.”<sup>36</sup>

Food aid to North Korea underlay China’s emergence as world’s third largest food aid donor as early in 2005. According to the World Food Programme,

“donations from China totaled 577,000 metric tons and were mostly directed to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, with small quantities donated to Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Sri Lanka and a dozen other countries.”<sup>37</sup> Unlike the cases of other countries to which donates, however, China has provided its food aid to the DPRK directly to the government of North Korea rather than through a third party. In addition, it has not established a mechanism to monitor the distribution of aid within the DPRK.<sup>38</sup>

However, China’s food aid drastically decreased after 2005, after North Korea conducted its underground nuclear test and the Six-party talks came to naught. In 2006, China reduced its aid to 250,000 tons and only allowed the amount to rise slightly (to just over 300,000 tons) in 2007 and 2008. With the rise in international grain prices around that time, China also introduced controls on grain exports, controls which extended to commercial food exports to North Korea. One news report, which cited customs data from Dandong, a major port for China-North Korean trade, reported that in late 2007, food exports to North Korea had been suspended.<sup>39</sup> In 2009, China contributed only 120,000 tons of food aid to the DPRK.<sup>40</sup>

Beginning in 2010, however, the amount of China’s food aid to North Korea began to climb again. There are suggestions that Kim Jong-il’s visit to China in August 2010 was followed by a direct contribution of one million tons of food aid by China to the North. Research from the International Crisis Group and South Korea’s Samsung Research Institute suggests the amount may have been less than that, at around 300,000–500,000 tons; nonetheless, this is a significant amount.<sup>41</sup> In 2012, South Korea’s *East Asia Daily* published a report indicating that “informed sources” suggested that in late February that year the Chinese government had promised China’s “largest package of free aid” to North Korea, including food, oil, and goods.<sup>42</sup> While the Chinese Foreign Ministry did not provide details about the grant, it did confirm that “China has been making all efforts to provide assistance to North Korea.”<sup>43</sup>

It should be noted that when North Korean demand for food is not met by aid, smuggled supplies come to play a larger role in supplying the North Korean populace and indeed may have a measurable impact on food prices there. One source observed, for example, that there is enough grain smuggled that it has a direct effect on Korean food prices. Most smuggled grain to North Korea is carried by boat, with individual boats each transporting hundreds of tons of grain. In Yanbian, along the border of China and North Korea, there are also those engaged in business through general trade channels through the use of false names, false declarations, or otherwise concealing smuggled foodstuffs. Some villagers in the border region have even organized smuggling gangs. Having seen the demand for food in North Korea, they take advantage of their ability to regularly cross the border, smuggling just a few pounds of food at each crossing. More and more villagers also simply try to avoid the customs process by illegally crossing the border to engage in smuggling activities, crossing the Tumen River when it is frozen or at points that are shallow enough to walk across. The transactions may occur in broad daylight—parties on the two sides may simply throw food or take advantage of the opportunity to skate in the winter or swim

in summer to move grain across the border. Prices for smuggled grain are closely related to quota levels. When quotas run out, grain prices increase and the profit in smuggling grain becomes worth the risk.<sup>44</sup> Most smuggling uses the barter system with a variety of goods being exchanged for food, such as scrap metal, wood, or copper. Only when in urgent need of food will North Koreans buy food using RMB.

Another source of food comes from the sale of low quality foodstuffs, which are not sold on the Chinese market. As described, when international food prices soar, China has limited grain exports through official channels, corresponding to sharp declines in Chinese food flows to North Korea. In response, North Korean food traders travel from Sinuiju, North Korea to Dandong in China, where there is a national distribution center for rice, flour and other foodstuffs available for the North Korean populace. The food is solely sold (at very low prices) to North Korea. Dandong has taken a leading role in this North Korean food trade with the support of several trading companies that gather local information, organize local sources, and pick shipments. When the Chinese government limits food exports, this business model has become very popular over the last ten years in Dandong.

Over the past decade, China has repeatedly both increased and decreased North Korea's overall grant aid. Examining these fluctuations suggests that aid decisions in China are influenced by the North Korean political and economic situation, and the Sino-DPRK relationship. However, even if there are more voices in China today calling for a more open mechanism the process is still not transparent.

## CONCLUSION

China has provided food aid toward North Korea for decades, but it has done so in a way that has reflected the evolution of the Sino-North Korean relationship. Although shared interests and a common emotional language strengthen and reinforce the alliance between China and North Korea, the relationship between the two countries is very much in transition and can be expected to continue to evolve as the two countries develop. It will not be surprising if China's humanitarian aid policy toward North Korea is adjusted in the future to reflect ongoing Chinese governmental reform, new economic policy in North Korea, and changing developments in Northeast Asia.

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## Evaluating North Korea's Economic Policy in the 2000s—Economic Cooperation with China Is an Inevitable Choice

*Lin Jinsu*

North Korean economic policy in the first decade of the twenty-first century was characterized by experiments with reforms followed by sharp reversals. The “7.1 Improvement Measures” economic recovery plan introduced by Pyongyang for its domestic economy was combined with some efforts by the country to open up its economy to foreign participation. However, as of 2006, these policies had been reversed and the North Korean government had launched a campaign to ban what it now labeled “non-socialist” development. Subsequently, in 2009, a fifth monetary reform was carried out, triggering market depression and further economic atrophy. By early 2010, North Korea had once again relaxed controls on market activity and sought to promote the development of light industry and agriculture. A new “Ten Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development” was formulated, accompanied by a stated goal of “opening the door to a strong and prosperous nation.” Building a strong and prosperous nation will remain the core of North Korean economic policy; gradual reform and opening up is the only way to realize this goal, and continuing to strengthen economic and trade cooperation with China is an inevitable choice in its foreign economic policy.

North Korea's economic policy from 2000 to 2010 can be divided into two distinct periods. Improvements to the country's economic system, including some steps toward economic opening, marked the first half of the decade; the latter half of the decade saw a shift toward a more conservative economic policy. In the early part of the decade, North Korea executed an economic recovery strategy, achieving considerable results through its focus on developing the power, coal, metals, and transportation sectors. In 2002, it implemented its so-called “7.1 Economic Management and Improvement Measures” aimed at internal reforms. During the same period, it also tried opening-up externally

through such special zones as the Sinuiju Special Economic Zone, the Mount Kumgang Special Tourism Zone, and the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC).

North Korea's economic policy reversed considerably toward the latter half of the decade, however. The market economic phenomena that had arisen after the "7.1 Measures" were implemented were deemed "non-socialist," with campaigns introduced to ban them beginning in 2006. A fifth monetary reform carried out in late 2009 reduced currency holdings within the private sector causing market depression and further economic atrophy. Facing a situation in which citizens were dissatisfied with this reform, and there were shortages of consumer goods, since the early 2010s, North Korea has once again relaxed controls on market activity and pushed officially for the development of light industry and agriculture. A new "Ten Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development" has been formulated and new references are being made to a slogan of "opening the door to a strong and prosperous nation" in 2012.

In the 2000s, North Korea also boosted economic and trade cooperation with China. Bilateral trade volumes increased significantly. Meanwhile, the country's trade dependency on China also began to rise. At the same time, North Korea actively introduced Chinese enterprises to investment opportunities. With the "China-North Korea common development and management over two-islands and one district—Wihwa Island, Hwanggumpyong and Rason Special Economic Zone Plan" launched in 2010, moreover, economic and trade cooperation between these two countries can be said to have entered a new stage.

### NORTH KOREAN INTERNAL ECONOMIC POLICY IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 2000S—ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

After suffering nine years of negative growth during the 1990s, beginning in 1999, the North Korean economy began to move toward recovery, due to both international aid and its own strenuous efforts. Entering the 2000s, North Korea put forward its policy of economic reconstruction, designating "Four Leading Departments" to focus on stimulating recovery in the power, coal, metal, and transportation sectors. In 2002, a new Three Year Plan (2003–2005)<sup>1</sup> launched to address the fuel and power situation, insuring investments would flow to the power sector, with an emphasis on the construction of large-scale hydroelectric stations. More than ten new stations have been completed to date, including Taechon No. 4, Orangchon No. 1, Samsu, Hwanghaebuk-do (North Hwanghae Province), Yeseong-gang (Ryesong River) Youth No. 1 Power Station, Wonsan Youth Power Station, and Baekdusan (Baekdu Mountain) Songun Power Station. In 2009, North Korea made ensuring an adequate supply of coal for its Pukchang and Pyongyang power stations a priority.

In order to revitalize coal production, repairs were begun on 230 mining areas in Suncheon, Dokchon, Pukchang, Kangdong, Chonnae counties—these are areas that had been heavily damaged by floods in the 1990s. Meanwhile, all

local governments were strongly encouraged to develop and manage small and medium-sized coal enterprises to expand coal supply. In 2004, new production was launched in 100 small and medium-sized coalmines. At the same time, foreign businesses were also actively encouraged to participate in coal exploitation. In addition, plans to expand productivity in coal included the expansion of non-powered coal mining, as well as the wide use of technologies such as horizontal hierarchical technology and timber conservation technology and high-speed harvesting technology.

In 2002, a decision of the Fifth Session of the 10th National People's Congress called for accelerating production of non-ferrous metals and reinvigorating production of the Huishan area's ferrous metal mines and smelting works. In 2003, targeting development of the Maoshan iron mine, North Korea continued to expand open-pit mining while also promoting the extraction of additional underground reserves. Also that year, North Korea reorganized seven subordinate mining area of Korea Mining Development Trading Corporation (KOMID).<sup>2</sup>

After 2000, new capital investments were also made in the steel industry. In February 2003, for example, the Kim Chaek Iron and Steel Complex operated 1.6–1.8 million tons in daily output of anthracite furnaces, and this technology was further improved in June that year. In March 2007, the Sunjin Steel Mill Complex upgraded its equipment, introducing an ultra-high temperature electric furnace, a refining furnace, as well as new steel rolling techniques, among other new technologies.<sup>3</sup> In September 2008, the Kim Chaek Steelworks began using a large air separator in production.<sup>4</sup>

During this period, North Korea also concentrated on improving the operation of its railways, requiring trains to run on schedule, and imposing administrative penalties on trains that were not on schedule. These efforts were accompanied by extensive maintenance on railways, including repairs to 130 electric trains and investment in new trains for the country's main lines.

The North Korean government's decision in the 2000s to choose four leading sectors to spur its economic recovery was well advised. As a critical component of any national economy, electricity supply must be a priority to achieve economic growth, and to achieve expansion of electric power, increasing coal production and transportation through rail improvements were critical. North Korea's economy follows patterns typical of heavy industrial economies and, therefore, the recovery of the metallurgical industry is valuable to the development of other industrial sectors in line with this pattern.

The strategy yielded significant results. Coal production increased 13 percent from 2.250 tons to 2.550 tons from 2000 to 2010, with electricity production increasing by 22 percent from 19.4 billion kWh to 23.7 billion kWh during the same period. Similarly, iron ore production increased 34 percent from 3.79 million tons to 5.03 million tons and steel production increased 19 percent from 1.08 million tons to 1.27 million tons from 2000 to 2010. During the same period, food production also rose 25 percent from 3.59 million tons to 4.48 million tons.<sup>5</sup>

International interpretations of the extent of North Korea's economic recovery during this period vary. Some Chinese specialists evaluate these economic gains as a return to production levels achieved during the 1980s. South Korean specialists take a less sanguine view, however. They see North Korean economic indicators as indicating production levels at around just two-thirds those of the 1980s. North Korea publishes growth rate figures, but does not supply the concrete, underlying data, leaving open the question of which assessment is relatively more accurate. It is difficult to draw a conclusion. South Korea has many specialists focused on analyzing and deconstructing growth indicators announced by North Korea, giving South Korean assessments a certain scientific basis. However, Chinese specialists have also done specific field studies, giving their work an empirical dimension based on what they have actually seen and heard. How can the discrepancy between Chinese and South Korean assessments be explained? This author believes that to some extent the expansion of market activity in North Korea's economy resulted in additional unplanned production by enterprises as well as new production from cottage industries, with additional goods—from industrial equipment to consumption goods—imported from China. This additional production along with imports may account for the gap between the data as calculated by South Korea and realities. No matter how economic improvements are calculated, North Korea is still facing challenges in such areas as energy, raw materials, food and foreign exchange supply, etc., all of which have been acknowledged by North Korea itself.

### *The “7.1 Economic Improvement and Management Measures”*

In July 2002, North Korea implemented its so-called “7.1 Economic Improvement and Management Measures.” The principal components of this program were as follows:

- (1) Raising prices. Prices were increased 25 times: the price of rice increased from 8 chon per kilo to 44 won per kilo, a jump of 550 times; the price of pork rose from 7 won per kilo to 180 won per kilo, a jump of 26 fold; the price of electricity for residents jumped from 3 chon per unit to 2.1 won per unit, a 70-fold increase;
- (2) Improving salaries (there were salary increases 18 times). The income of normal workers (skilled versus unskilled) increased from 110 won to 2,000 won per month; the income of advanced (skilled) workers reached the range of 2,000—4,000 won, an 18-fold increase;
- (3) Increasing foreign exchange rates. In August 2002, North Korea changed its foreign exchange rate for American dollars from 2.2 won to 1 dollar to 153 won to 1 dollar, a 70-fold depreciation;
- (4) Enlarging the decision-making power of enterprises and strengthening the agricultural reward system. This involved strengthening the wage system that had been highly focused on benefits (focused on productivity) to link wages more closely to productivity. This also

involved devolving some decision making power to determine prices to some enterprises.

In addition, in March 2003, North Korea renamed what had been described as the “farmers’ markets” as an “integrated market” to reflect the fact that industrial products were now permitted to be sold in the market. It also implemented a dual track price system. Along with these changes, three new agricultural policies were implemented: first, the state procurement prices for agricultural products were increased; second, fees for land use were introduced; and, third, the management autonomy of cooperative farms was expanded. After 2004, enterprises were given further autonomy when North Korea further devolved control over prices and salaries. With the exception of products under strict national control, prices of most everyday products could be decided by the enterprises. Enterprise managers could now also adjust workers’ salaries within the range of profits that enterprises were permitted to retain.<sup>6</sup>

The “7.1 Measures” and related policies drew considerable attention from the international community. Although officially labeled improvements to the management system of the planned economy, measures such as increasing prices and adjusting wages, reforming the exchange rate, enhancing the decision-making power of enterprises and strengthening the agricultural reward system were clearly market-oriented in nature. Their inclusion in the “7.1 Measures” signified Pyongyang’s acknowledgment and acceptance of elements of the market economy. These measures recalled China’s reform and opening of the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

The “7.1 Measures” have thus played an important role in North Korea’s economy, as a government officially recognized market pricing mechanisms—already familiar to the people—and increased wages significantly. The government also implemented a reward system to improve the enthusiasm of enterprises and workers to boost production. In addition, the government gave official recognition to the “integrated market,” allowing the trading of industrial goods and seeking to diversify supplies of commodities. The positive economic impacts of the “7.1 Measures” should be fully recognized.

One limitation of the “7.1 Measures” lay in the fact that the reforms did not start with production but were focused on circulation and distribution. Although the government implemented measures such as increasing the state procurement prices for agricultural products and expanding the decision-making power of enterprises managers, these reforms did not address the fundamental issue of ownership and the fundamental limitations of a planned economy. As China’s experience shows, reform and opening-up began with the agricultural sector, with the rural household contract responsibility system having a dramatic impact on food production. This in turn paved the way for industrial reform. North Korea’s history of economic difficulty has led to significant deprivation. A first requirement is to address the problems of inadequate supplies of food and clothing. North Korea’s reform policies did not solve the problem of grain supply; food supplies remained insufficient, while, absent of other reforms, wage reforms alone only led to a new round of price rises.

In addition, there was inadequate preparation for these changes in the areas of ideology and theory. In a January 2001 New Year's editorial, Kim Jong-il called for "[getting rid of old ideas and the fetters of old ways as through putting new perspective into practice, innovation can be achieved.]" Such guidance laid the ideological foundation for the "7.1 Measures." However, North Korea has not experienced the ideological enlightenment that occurred in China at the beginning of its reform and opening period; North Korea lacks both the ideological and theoretical preparation for reforms.

With the implementation of the "7.1 Measures," the expansion of market mechanisms in the distribution of goods affected the interests of the military, political parties and government organs and other special classes. The reintroduction of a more conservative agenda in 2006 marked a setback for the country's market-oriented economic policies. In the face of this reversal, North Korea's leaders reverted to tinkering with the original planned economic system. Since 2006, the clamp down on "non-socialist activities" has been accompanied with the cancellation of numerous "7.1 measures," effectively reversing the momentum toward reform.

### *The Return of Conservative Policy and the Ban on "Non-Socialist" Activities*

Along with the reversal of reforms in 2006, North Korea felt new international pressures following the nuclear crisis and the economic sanctions imposed by the international community. Furthermore, North and South Korea experienced new tensions. In 2008, North Korea announced its goal of becoming a strong and big country by the year 2012. To achieve this ambitious national goal, Pyongyang recognized that strengthening its national economic capabilities was key. It chose to do so through a consolidation of its planned economic system, building on efforts introduced after 2006 to curb small business activities, as well as the activities of small-scale regional and border trade companies. In December 2007, for example, selling industrial products in the integrated market was prohibited and women under the age of 50 were prohibited from participating in business activities. In 2009, Pyongyang launched a so-called "150 days of fighting" campaign to strengthen its planned economic system.<sup>8</sup>

However, restricting market activity affected both the majority of residents' daily lives as well as the production of many enterprises, which had grown dependent on resources available as the result of market opportunities. After early 2010, North Korea once again eased restrictions on the market, and reversed such policies as the prohibition of the sale of industrial products on the market, restrictions on the ages of those permitted to conduct business in the market, as well as other extreme measures. The result was an expansion of market activity. At present, North Korea has over 300 small markets, with more than 20 markets in Pyongyang alone; market economy factors have penetrated various areas of economic life and developed to a degree that cannot be simply outlawed.

### *The Failure of Monetary Reform*

At the end of 2009, North Korea conducted a fifth monetary reform. In November 30, 2009, the government issued documents 423-1 and 423-2, setting an exchange ratio for a new currency of 1:100; namely, that 100 old won could be exchanged for 1 new won. Initially, directives stipulated that each household could convert a maximum of 100,000 in old currency; workers could exchange additional amounts up to 500 new won; college students could exchange amounts up to 300 new won. Any currency that was not exchanged could be deposited in the bank at a ratio of 1:1,000. However, because most residents demanded that the limits on the amounts of currency that could be exchanged be increased, the government raised the limit on the amount old currency that could be exchanged by 50,000 old won. The period during which the old currency could be exchanged for new won was limited to a week, from November 30, 2009 to December 6, 2009, with a complete ban on the usage of old currency after December 7, 2009.<sup>9</sup>

The primary purpose of the monetary reform was to curb inflation. As noted, in 2002, North Korea had introduced its “7.1 Measures.” The objective was to correct the serious disjunction between the prices set by the national plan and prices in the open market by raising the prices of some agricultural products and wages. However, reforms of prices, wages and the exchange rate were executed during a period of serious shortages of goods, and, in the absence of additional timely policy measures, a new round of price rises and exchange rate increases took place.

A second motivation for the monetary reform was to restore the banking system. Prior to these monetary reforms, because of complex procedures for and restrictions on making bank withdrawals, the majority of businesses and residents had deposited money in a work unit or simply stored their money at home. As a result, money was mainly saved and circulated outside the banking system, influencing the normal operation of the banking system and state control of the economy. Through this currency reform, the North Korean government thus sought to strengthen state control of the economy.

A third aim was to restore the production capacity of state-owned enterprises. The North Korean government believed that, as a result of the spread of market activity, with a majority of women engaged in commercial activities, the normal operation of enterprises was affected. The government tried to confiscate currency from this non-state commercial activity through the monetary reform to force more employment and activity back into the planned economy.

A fourth objective was to accumulate additional financial and material resources to build a strong and prosperous nation, which required considerable financial and material resources. In 2008, Pyongyang declared that it would open its doors toward this aim to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of President Kim Il-sung's birthday in 2012. However, after the “North Korean nuclear crisis” in 2006, UN sanctions had been imposed twice, and the Lee Myung-bak government in South Korea had toughened its stance toward North

Korea. North Korea therefore faced a very difficult international environment and thus sought to amass the necessary financial and material resources through monetary reform.

However, the monetary reform failed to achieve its intended purposes. First of all, inflation became far more serious after the reform. The exchange rate between old and new currency was 1:100 with the fifth monetary reform, but wages were not adjusted. This triggered more serious inflation and high black market exchange rates. Second, the banking system was not strengthened. After the monetary reform, most North Korean residents and businesses not only did not deposit money in the bank, they also changed their preferences to alternative currencies, principally to RMB and USD. Third, former small business operators did not reenter the state-owned sector. Due to a lack of raw materials and old production equipment, production could not be increased even with the additional labor. In addition, government restrictions on foreign exchange only made the black market become more and more prosperous. Fourth, although financial and material resources could be accumulated in the short term through such monetary reform, the amount of currency circulating among households decreased significantly, further depressing the market and adding to economic atrophy.

The failure of these economic measures can be attributed to the following factors: first, the compulsory measures resulted in popular discontent. The monetary reform was announced unexpectedly, with strict limits on the period granted to complete the currency exchange time as well as on the amount of currency permitted. People accepted the reform passively; however, this masked their discontent. Second, the exchange rates were unfair. In addition to the terms described above, the North Korean government set a currency exchange upper limit; that is to say, a limit was set for 100,000 old North Korean won for conversion. Greater amounts of old won could be deposited at a different exchange rate: below 150,000 won, the exchange rate was 10:1, and above 150,000 won, the exchange rate was 1,000:1. In terms of limits on bank deposits, these changed from 300,000 to 3,000,000 won. Third, to ensure circulation of the new currency and increase the country's foreign exchange reserves, North Korea announced a ban on the use of foreign exchange. This resulted in extended market closures as price increases became unpredictable. Failure to take into account the impact of inflation on individual households in combination with restrictions on the sale of industrial products contributed to widespread dissatisfaction.

The North Korean government acknowledged that the monetary reform failed. On February 5, 2010, the Prime Minister of North Korea Kim Yong-il, apologized to the people. The Central Committee of the North Korean ruling party removed Pak Nam-gi, Director of the Planning and Finance Department from his office, held several economic conferences, and adjusted economic policies, including easing market restrictions and easing the ban on the use of foreign exchange.<sup>10</sup>

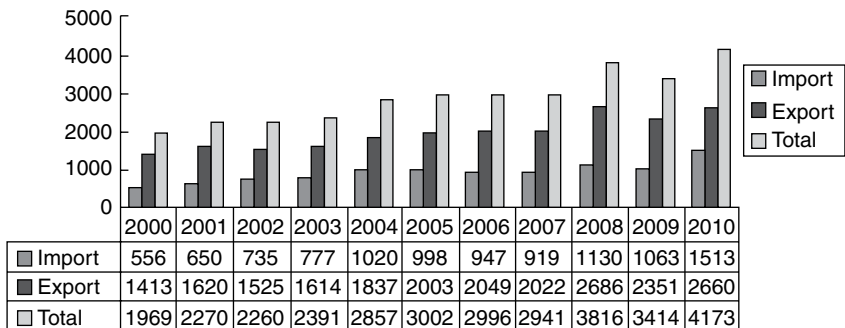
## NORTH KOREA'S EXTERNAL ECONOMIC POLICY

### *The Development of Foreign Trade*

In the early 1990s, the Soviet-led Eastern European socialist countries transitioned to a market economic system, requiring cash transactions in foreign trade rather than the barter or quasi-barter exchange that had been traditionally conducted with other centrally planned economies. This was an enormous shock to the foreign trade of North Korea. After encountering a devastating flood in 1995, North Korea's economy experienced continuous negative growth for nine years. Energy and grain shortages seriously affected the production capacity of enterprises, further contributing to the substantial drop in foreign trade. The total value of foreign trade of North Korea decreased from 4.17 billion USD in 1990 to USD 1.44 billion in 1998. In order to promote the recovery of its domestic economy, North Korea devoted itself to developing foreign economic relationships in the 2000s. As a result, as shown by Figure 13.1, the value of its foreign trade increased from USD 2.39 billion in 2000 to USD 6.31 billion in 2011(excluding the value of South Korea-North Korea trade).

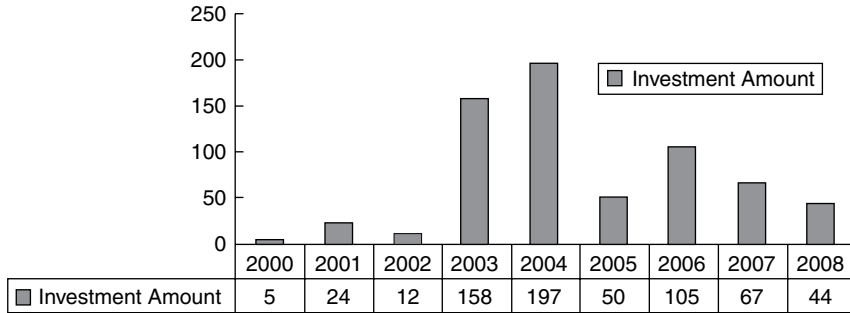
### *Attracting Foreign Direct Investment*

In 2002, North Korea carried out a number of investment-promotion activities, establishing the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), the Mount Kumgang Tourist Zone and the Sinuiju zone. In order to attract foreign investment, North Korea issued cabinet-level documents in November 2005 loosening restrictions on foreign-funded enterprises. These included such measures as allowing the products produced by foreign-funded enterprises to be sold to factories and enterprises in the North Korean domestic market at a designated price. Second, foreign-funded enterprises were now allowed to retain profits in foreign



**Figure 13.1** The foreign trade value of North Korea in the 2000s (million dollars)

*Source:* [South Korea] KOTRA, North Korea foreign trade trends each year, excluding the trade value of South-North Korea.



**Figure 13.2** Committed foreign direct investment in North Korea, 2000–2008 (million US dollars)

Source: Data from UNCTAD, World Investment Report; UNCTAD statistics, <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/Statistics/About-UNCTAD-Statistics.aspx>.

currency. Third, foreign-funded enterprises were permitted to freely withdraw cash in bank deposits. Fourth, some fees (such as harbor use fees, electricity, taxes, and heating charges) were now imposed on foreign-funded enterprises based on the same criteria as local enterprises.

Furthermore, wages for workers in the foreign-invested enterprises were reduced from the initial level of USD 80 to 100 to USD 38. As shown in Figure 13.2, the total amount of committed foreign direct investment (FDI) in North Korea totaled USD 662 million from 2000 to 2008.

### *Outbound Investment*

North Korea also increased its own investment in China, Russia, Southeast Asia, and other places in wide-ranging areas from the catering industry to processing and manufacturing. North Korea's outbound investment has the following characteristics:

First, the North Korean bodies involved in outbound investment are very special.

In general, the sources of foreign investment from North Korea are Party and government institutions, as well as the military and other special departments. Foreign direct investment by North Korean enterprises is rare. The main reason for this is that, with the exception of those special state and party agencies, enterprises generally lack the right to invest overseas. North Korean agencies invest overseas with the main purpose of obtaining foreign exchange to supplement the inadequate funding of key institutions, such as the Party and army.

Second, the North Korean bodies involved in outbound investment principally concentrate on small and medium enterprises and labor-intensive industries. Until 2005, the total amount of North Korean-invested enterprises registered with the Chinese Ministry of Commerce was 443, of which 200 enterprises were in operation. The cumulative investment under contract amounted to USD 250 million with USD 94 million of actual investment. Although the average investment in a project amounted to a modest USD 500,000, 10 enterprises had

investment in projects exceeding USD 1 million. The main reason for the small-scale of these investments is that North Korea has a great shortage of foreign exchange.<sup>11</sup>

North Korea's outbound direct investment has been focused on the overseas labor service. It is thus heavily concentrated on labor-intensive industries (such as construction, forestry, catering), with very few investments in manufacturing. Until the 1990s, North Korea's investment in China was mainly concentrated on the food and beverage industry, such as the Naengmyeon (cold noodles) restaurant in Beijing and other similar hotels in Shenyang, Yanji, and Dandong. The largest investment project for North Korea in Northeast China, valued at about USD 20 million, is the Chilbosan Hotel in Shenyang. The investor, the Korea National Insurance Corporation (KNIC), invested in the project in August 1995 and the hotel began operating in April 2000.

In the 2000s, due to serious shortages of energy and raw materials, some North Korea enterprises invested overseas for production and processing. On May 16, 2004, a Chinese-North Korean joint venture enterprise for kimchi processing was set up in Qianyang, a village in Donggang County in Liaoning province. The total investment in the enterprise amounted to USD 158,000. It had 300 tons of cold storage capacity and 50 tons of speed cold storage capacity. It imported advanced kimchi processing equipment from overseas and transferred five senior technical staff from the famous Okryu Restaurant (Okryu-gwan) in Pyongyang. This enterprise processed 3,000 tons of pickles annually, exporting all of its products overseas.<sup>12</sup>

Third, investment is concentrated within specific countries and regions, such as China, Russia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. To date, China is the country that has attracted the greatest amount of FDI from North Korea. North Korean outbound investment in China is mainly concentrated in the three northeastern provinces (Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang), as well as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong, but includes a number of other regions as well.

North Korean investment in Russia is mainly concentrated in forestry, fisheries, aquatic products, and processing and construction industries in the Russian Far East region. In the 2000s, North Korea dispatched various labor teams to work in Russia. According to data published in Russia, the number of North Korean workers living in Russia increased from 14,700 in 2004 to 32,600 in 2006; in coastal areas alone, the increase amounted to between 5,300 and 7,000 people.<sup>13</sup>

North Korea's foreign investment in Southeast Asia is concentrated in hotels, trade, transport, and other areas. In addition, it also exports labor, with as many as 3,500 construction workers in Kuwait. It has also sent workers to produce goods, dispatching 1,600 garment production workers to the Czech Republic in 2006.<sup>14</sup> After 2010, North Korea also sent laborers to work in various sectors in the Northeast region of China.

Another important way for North Korea to invest abroad is through overseas construction projects. In the 2000s, revenue from various construction projects—such as presidential residences, a variety of museums, stadiums, cultural centers, and monuments—in countries including Namibia, Equatorial

Guinea, Angola, Senegal, and Congo, as well as other African countries, reached about USD 160 million.

## ACTIVELY PROMOTING ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

In June 2000, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung visited North Korea, resulting in the “June 15th North-South Joint Declaration.” After this, the Sinuiju Special Economic Zone (September 2002), the Mount Kumgang Special Tourism Zone (October 2002), and the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) (November 2002) were set up. To promote the introduction of foreign capital, in September 2004, North Korea reduced the minimum wage of workers in foreign enterprises from USD 80 to 120 a month to USD 38.<sup>15</sup> Joint ventures were allowed to export their products directly and to pay electricity and the recurrent costs in North Korean currency. In addition, the foreign enterprise tax was reduced. North Korea also introduced preferential policies for overseas compatriot investment, establishing the Overseas Korean Trade Association (OKTA) in 2003, targeting compatriots from 21 of the article countries, as well as other foreign investment promotion activities. From 2000 to 2008, a total of 1.9 million South Korean tourists traveled to Mount Kumgang, generating an annual income of USD 400 to 500 million in foreign exchange.<sup>16</sup> After the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) was established by the end of September 2012, there were a total of 123 South Korean companies in operation there, employing 51,000 North Korean workers.<sup>17</sup> The foreign exchange earned from the north-south economic cooperation had played an important role in the Korean economic recovery. In the first half of 2000, for example, North-South economic cooperation, especially through the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), can be said to have opened a new chapter in North-South relations, and it was a pity that this situation did not last for long. In 2008, under the Lee Myung-bak administration, South Korea adopted a hardline policy toward North Korea, followed by the Cheonan incident and the “Yeonpyeong island event.” With this increase in North-South tensions, South Korean tourism to Mount Kumgang ceased and North-South economic and trade cooperation hit an all-time low.

### *Enhancing Economic and Trade Cooperation with China*

Since liberation, North Korea has always attached great importance to economic and trade relations with China. In the 1990s, China became North Korea’s most important trading partner. In the 2000s, trade and economic cooperation between China and North Korea came to play an important role in the economic recovery of North Korea. In the 2000s, the value of trade has increased annually by as much as 25–30 percent on average. The volume of trade between the two countries expanded from USD 480 million in 2000 to USD 5.629 billion in 2011—an increase of 11.8 times; during the same period, North Korea’s total foreign trade value increased from 1.97 billion to USD 6.31 billion in 2011.<sup>18</sup> North Korea’s degree of dependence on foreign trade with China reached

**Table 13.1** China-North Korea trade scale and percentage (100 million dollars, %)

<i>Year</i>	<i>North Korea trade value</i>	<i>China-North Korea trade</i>		<i>China's export value to North Korea</i>	<i>China's import value from North Korea</i>
		<i>value</i>	<i>Percentage</i>		
2000	19.7	4.8	24.8	4.5	0.3
2001	22.7	7.3	32.5	5.7	1.6
2002	22.6	7.3	32.6	4.6	2.7
2003	23.9	10.2	42.8	6.2	4
2004	28.6	13.7	48.1	7.9	5.9
2005	30.0	15.8	52.7	10.8	5
2006	30.0	16.7	55.7	12.3	4.6
2007	29.4	19.7	67.1	13.9	5.8
2008	38.2	27.8	72.9	20.3	7.5
2009	34.1	26.8	78.5	18.8	7.9
2010	41.7	34.6	83.0	22.7	11.8
2011	63.1	56.2	89.1	31.6	24.5

*Note:* North Korea's foreign trade, not including North-South trade volume.

*Source:* North Korea's foreign trade data from "North Korea's foreign trade trends," from the Korea International Trade Association (KITA), <http://www.kita.org/>;

China-North Korea trade data from China Customs Statistics, <http://www.customs.gov.cn/>.

89 percent. (This figure excludes North-South trade; when North-South trade (USD 1.91 billion) is included, the degree of dependency falls to 68 percent.)

The effects of the trade between China and North Korea on North Korea's economic recovery are principally as follows: First, North Korea imports petroleum, iron, and coal used in the steel industry, as well as machinery, vehicles, food, and some other important materials from China. At the time of writing this chapter in 2013, as much as 90 percent of these materials were imported from China. Second, North Korea exports principally anthracite coal, mineral products, clothing, and seafood to China, exports that thus effectively drive the country's mining industry, coal industry, and garment industry. There has thus been a very close relationship between the rapid recovery of North Korea's mining industry and garment industry in the 2000s and China-North Korea trade and the investment of Chinese enterprises in North Korea. In addition, to a certain degree, China-North Korea trade compensates for the shortage of raw materials and supplies in North Korea. Currently, many products in North Korea's integrated market are imported from China (see Table 13.1).

## THE PROMOTION OF DIRECT INVESTMENT FROM CHINA

In the 2000s, with sharp increases in the prices of raw materials in the international market and the related rise in demand for raw materials, exploiting resources has become an important objective for China's enterprises investing overseas. North Korea is rich in mineral resources and its transportation distances from China are very short, it also can take advantage of compensation trade with China. Therefore, China prefers to invest more in mineral resources rather than other fields. In 2003, the Yanbian Tianchi Industry & Trade Company invested

**Table 13.2** Direct investment by Chinese enterprises in North Korea (100 million US dollars)

<i>Years</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
<i>Annual rate of investment</i>	112	1,413	650	1,106	1,840	4,123	586	1,214
<i>Progressive total</i>	117	2,174	3,104	4,555	6,713	11,863	26,152	24,010

*Note:* Some Chinese enterprises are not included in the calculations of total investment because their investments took the form of compensation trade. Therefore, the actual number of investment companies and the volume of investment exceed the total value as published by Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

*Source:* 2010 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment, (Ministry of Commerce, China: September, 2011).

RMB 130 million RMB in mining equipment in Maoshan iron ore mines and imported iron ore powder through Nanping port.

Maoshan is the largest iron mine in North Korea, with mineable reserves of between 1.1 and 1.3 billion tonnes and an annual mining capacity of 8 million tonnes per year. This is an important project for Jilin Province. The government plans to import iron ore powder from Maoshan to supply Jilin Province's Tonghua Steel factory to boost its production capacity. Jilin Province, for its part, has adopted measures to help mitigate Maoshan's insufficient power supply. Jilin Province now delivers electrical power to Maoshan with a value of USD 70 million.

In February 2005, Jilin Province's Changbai County collaborated with Shandong's Zhaojin Group to invest RMB 200 million in mining equipment in the Hyesan Youth Copper Mine in Ryanggang. The Hyesan Youth Copper Mine is one of the largest copper mines in Asia and its copper grade is 16 percent, double that of Northeast China.<sup>19</sup> In 2003, North Korea Sangmyeong Trading Corporation and China's Beijing Synthetic Chemical Trading Co. signed a joint cooperation agreement. Under the agreement, North Korea opened the sea near Wonsan, north of the northern boundary of the East Sea of North Korea, to Chinese fishing boats, allowing the Chinese to fish until 2009, with 25 percent of the catch to be repaid to North Korea in electronic products.<sup>20</sup>

According to statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, as of 2010, there were more than 120 Chinese enterprises invested in North Korea, with an investment volume totaling USD 240 million. Data on direct investment by Chinese enterprises in North Korea is provided in Table 13.2.

### *Tourism Cooperation between China and North Korea*

North Korea is known for its large and beautiful territory. It has rich natural and cultural tourism resources. Inbound tourism plays a vital role in North Korea's potential for economic recovery and development. Throughout the 2000s, it has been an important dimension of the economic cooperation between China and North Korea. With the increasing numbers of Chinese traveling abroad,

the number of Chinese tourists to North Korea has also risen. This has been encouraged by measures that North Korea has taken to expand the number of tourist attractions and improve tourism facilities. To date, North Korea has designated more than 300 sightseeing places. In 2001, North Korea stated that it wanted to become a tourist destination country for China. However, as it still had not met the official standards for this designation, China did not approve this request. In October 2009, the two countries signed a “Memorandum of Understanding for Implementation of Chinese Tourist Groups to Visit the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.” North Korea had already become a key tourist destination country for Chinese citizens by then. On April 12, 2010, North Korea officially launched a tourism business to enable Chinese citizens to travel to North Korea in groups. Direct flights for Chinese tourists to Pyongyang were introduced from Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai, as well as other big cities, marking a new historic chapter in tourism cooperation between China and North Korea.

According to statistics from the North Korea National Tourism Bureau, North Korea receives an average of more than 200,000 foreign tourists annually, among which approximately 80 percent are Chinese. In 2002, the number of Chinese tourists reached 121,000. However, beginning in 2008, the number of Chinese visitors began a steep decline. In 2010 when North Korea relaxed its restrictions on Chinese tourists, there were twice as many visitors from the Chinese border city of Dandong alone as the total number of Chinese tourists in 2009. North Korea’s tourism resources and North China’s border tourism are complementary in some respects. For instance, although the Tumen River is close to the sea, it lacks access to the sea from within Chinese territory. However, North Korea’s Rason City is directly on the East China Sea. In terms of cultural tourism resources, China’s Yanbian Autonomous Region has many customs, cultural practices, and ways of life in common with North Korea. Nevertheless, it is somewhat different. With tourism cooperation with North Korea, the Tumen region includes Yanbian, North Korea, and Russia’s Vladivostok sights, enlarging its tourist appeal. In 2010, it was explicitly stipulated in the Law on the Rason Economic and Trade Area that Rason is “a specific economic zone to conduct specific trade and investment, transit transportation, finance, tourism and services.” In addition, North Korea introduced a system that permits tourists to enter Rason City without a visa. At present, tourism cooperation is very active in the border area between China and North Korea, especially from Rajin port to Mount Kumgang, Yanji City to Kumgang, and over road tourism from Yanbian to Chilbosan and Rajin has become increasingly popular.

### CHANGES IN NORTH KOREAN ECONOMIC POLICY AFTER 2010

On January 1, 2010, North Korea published a New Year’s day editorial titled “Embrace the 65th Anniversary Of The Party, Restart Revolutions in Light Industry and Agriculture to Fundamentally Improve People’s Lives,” declaring a

goal of concentrating new economic activity on the development of light industry and agriculture. Since 2010, successive New Year's editorials by the North Korean leadership have stressed the importance of developing light industry and agriculture, as well as improving the quality of life for North Korean citizens. This indicates that North Korea has been trying to change its historically heavy industry-focused economic development strategy.

On June 28, 2012, North Korea circulated the document internally, "Guidance on Establishing New Economic Management" (hereinafter referred to as the "6, 28 policy"). The principal thrust of this new directive was "to reduce work team sizes on farms from the original 15–20 people to 4–6 people, distribute agricultural products according to a ratio of 7:3 (70 per cent to countries and 30 per cent to farmers), and to allow the portion above the quota to be retained by individuals."<sup>21</sup> Although this new direction has not been announced publicly and as yet is only piloted in some individual areas, it shows that reform is an irresistible trend.

In 2010, Kim Jong-il visited China five times, carrying out economic investigations in Dalian, Tianjin, and other places. On January 4, 2010, North Korea's Rason city was upgraded to a "special city," with a complete overhaul of its regulations on foreign investment and trade. In June 2011, China and North Korea jointly announced "Plans on Jointly Developing and Managing Two Islands and One area for Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa Islands and the Rason SAR."

On August 13, 2012, Jang Sung-taek, the vice chairman of North Korea's National Defense Commission and Executive Minister, visited China. Jang discussed the Rason economic and trade zone and the cooperation development program of the Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa Island economic zone. He also visited Southern China as well as Northeast China, a visit that then appeared to signify that North Korea was prepared to launch a new round of opening up.

## CONCLUSION

The Workers' Party's Fourth Party Congress was held on April 11, 2012, electing Kim Jong-un as its First Secretary, marking the beginning of the Kim Jong-un era. Will North Korea walk the road of reform and opening up or will it continue to maintain a planned economic system? The international community is watching economic trends in North Korea closely. North Korean policy is complex, including such factors as a sustained nuclear program. In addition, South Korea's domestic policy and other external factors exert an influence on North Korean policy, making the future direction of North Korea's economic policy difficult to predict. However, any economic policy is the product of its domestic and foreign political and economic environment. As long as we conduct careful analysis of North Korea's political and economic environment, we are able to make some educated guesses about its future policy orientation. My own efforts in this direction are as follows:

First, building a strong and prosperous nation will remain at the core of North Korean economic policy. In 2008, North Korea put forward a policy of "opening

the door to a strong and prosperous nation in 2012.” The late Kim Jong-il proposed and had been dedicated to that policy and Kim Jong-un must solve problems related to this policy. In the 2000s, North Korea shifted the party’s work focus to economic construction. In recent years, every New Year’s editorial, which offers indications of the direction of economic policy, has focused on making significant improvements to people’s livelihoods. This suggests that recovering and developing economically toward the goal of building a more prosperous country will be at the center of North Korean economic policy.

Second, gradual reform and opening is the only road to make the country strong. To achieve its goal of building a strong and prosperous nation, Pyongyang must adopt certain policy measures. North Korea lacks funds and it is technologically backward. Given these conditions, it must attract foreign capital and open to the outside world. The Chinese experience indicates that opening to the outside world and reforming the domestic economy are the “plane’s indispensable wings”; opening alone cannot ensure success when reform is not carried out internally as well. Transforming a socialist nation is hardly easy—twists and turns are inevitable. The time required to make the transition may be protracted given the distinct political conditions and system of North Korea. However, the turn from a planned to a more market-oriented economy is an inevitable trend in historical development, North Korea is no exception, but its experience is more tortuous. Since the 1990s, aspects of a market economy have developed to a considerable extent in North Korea. The daily lives of North Koreans are increasingly inseparable from the market and raw materials supplies are also increasingly reliant on the market. The leaders of North Korea must recognize this domestic situation and the inevitable trend of historical development and must reform and open up. The international community, in turn, should create an international environment that is favorable to reform and an opening-up policy in North Korea.

Furthermore, continuing to strengthen economic and trade cooperation with China will be an inevitable direction for North Korea’s foreign economic policy. Since China and North Korea launched the “Plans on Jointly Developing and Managing Two Islands and One Region” in 2011, trade and economic cooperation between the two countries has entered a new stage of development. China’s Tumen River development success is inseparable from the increasing participation from and cooperation with North Korea and North Korea must strengthen economic cooperation with China to restore its economy and build a strong and prosperous nation. Especially when there is no improvement in the long-term on the North Korean nuclear issue and North-South Korean relations, economic cooperation with China will be all the more important. Carrying out the program to jointly develop and manage the two islands and one region will boost North Korean rail, highway, port, electricity, communications, and other key infrastructure development. At the same time, it will promote the recovery of Korean agriculture, help drive the development of tertiary industries with tourism as the leading sector, and promote the country’s trade and economic cooperation.

## NOTES

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## North Korea's Guiding Ideology and Its Impact

*Li Yongchun*

Juche, the political philosophy instituted by Kim Il-sung, is a guiding ideology for North Korea and its party. It also serves as the foundation upon which principles, guidelines, and policies are developed for North Korea's socialist revolution. With changes in North Korean domestic conditions and its international situation, Kim Jong-il inherited and further developed the Juche idea, proposing the Songun (Military First) policy as North Korea's ruling ideology and governing practice. After Kim Jong-un took office, he proposed Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism as the guiding idea for the party. The guiding principles proposed by three generations of North Korean supreme leaders ideologically guide the country's political, economic, cultural, and military affairs. They are fundamental ideas on which the study of North Korean policies and national strategies should be based. A study of the origin, core value, and impacts of North Korean guiding ideologies will help us better understand the country and grasp the Sino-North Korea relationship.

### THE JUCHE IDEA

#### *The Origin of Juche*

Juche is the guiding ideology of North Korea and its party. It is also the foundation for developing principles, guidelines, and policies for North Korea's socialist revolution. Juche germinated in the historical era of the national democratic revolution led by Kim Il-sung. It was officially put forward in the mid-1950s. As the North Korean revolution and international situation evolved, the basic principles and content of Juche were constantly enriched. In the late 1960s, Kim Jong-il systematically finalized Juche ideology.

The birth of Juche is closely related to North Korea's national democratic revolution. In the 1920s, new developments took place in the struggle of the

working class and the popular masses against exploitation and oppression. Under these new historical conditions, the working class and masses of all countries could establish the sense that they were the masters of their own destiny, able to solve problems according to their own situation. However, in North Korea, the Nationalists and Communists, who were allegedly engaged in the national liberation movements, gave no thought to the necessity of going among the masses to educate, organize, and rouse them into waging a revolutionary struggle. Instead, they were divorced from the masses and were engrossed in scrambling for hegemony and empty talk; they did not unite the masses, but instead divided them through factional strife. They did not try to carry out the revolution under their own initiative; instead, they dreamt of achieving independence by depending on foreign forces. At this time, those who were allegedly engaged in the communist movement formed their own party organizations and called frequently at the Comintern to gain political recognition. They endeavored to imitate mechanically established theories and relied on the experiences of others, without taking into consideration the historical conditions and specific realities of their own revolution.

Kim Il-sung advanced the Juche idea, a new revolutionary idea, on the basis of practical experience and lessons gained in the revolutionary struggle and proposed a new revolutionary idea: the Juche idea. At the meeting of the Leading Personnel of the North Korean Youth Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Youth League held in Kalun Town in Jiutai County, Jilin Province in June 1930, Kim delivered a speech, entitled “North Korea’s Revolutionary Road Ahead,” proposing, “[North Koreans are the master of North Korean people’s revolution. The North Korean revolution must be carried out by its own people and based on the country’s actual situation. Experiences prove that we must go among the masses to mobilize and organize them in order to lead revolution to success. We should not rely on others to solve all problems raised during the revolution. Instead, we should rely on ourselves and address all problems in accordance with our actual situation.]”<sup>1</sup> Kim Il-sung’s speech was an historical event that heralded the creation of the Juche idea and the birth of the Juche-oriented revolutionary line.

The Juche idea is closely related to the domestic and international conditions that North Korea faced after the Korean War. Establishing Juche had become vital due to the harmful activities of flunkeyism, sectarianism, and dogmatism. In addition, after Stalin passed away in March 1953, there were anti-Stalinist waves in the Soviet Union. Likewise, there were forces against Kim Il-sung’s leadership within the Workers’ Party. Facing such threats to the political system, establishing the Juche idea fulfilled an urgent need. At the working conference of the Workers’ Party in December 1955, Kim delivered a speech entitled “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work,” explicitly proposing establishing the Juche idea for the first time. Kim pointed out that the “[Korean revolution is the Juche in our Party’s ideological work. Juche has not been firmly established in ideological work, which leads to dogmatic and formalistic errors and does much harm to our revolutionary cause],” and “[to make revolution in Korea we must know Korean history and

geography and know the customs of the Korean people.]”<sup>2</sup> He also emphasized the need to eliminate the tendency to copy and memorize foreign things. Instead, he suggested the Party should understand its own routes and policies to educate party members and the working people. In April 1965, Kim further elaborated on the Workers’ Party standing as “[Juche in ideology, independence in politics, self-sufficiency in the economy, and self-reliance in defense,]” doing so in a speech at the Indonesia Academy of Social Sciences, where he used the word “Juche idea” for the first time. In November 1970 and December 1972, the Workers’ Party of Korea respectively wrote the Juche idea into the new Party Constitution passed during the Fifth National People’s Congress and establishing the Juche idea in the form of Party rules and national legislation. The documents clearly state that the “[Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is guided in its activities by the Juche idea, which applies Marxism-Leninism creatively to our own conditions.]” During the Sixth National People’s Congress in October 1980, the Workers’ Party of Korea set the Juche idea as the only guiding principle for the party, and identified “realizing Juche ideology in the whole society” as the “general task of the Korean revolution.”

### CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE JUCHE IDEA<sup>3</sup>

Kim Il-sung pointed out that the “[Juche idea means that the popular masses are the masters of revolution and construction and they are also the motive forces of revolution and construction. In other words, it means that people see themselves as the masters of their own destiny.]”<sup>4</sup>

#### *Philosophical Principles of the Juche Idea*

The Juche idea is based on the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and, therefore, decides everything. Being the master means that man rules the world and his own destiny; that he decides everything means that he plays the decisive role in transforming the world and in shaping his own destiny. Man holds this special position in the world because he is a social being with independence, creativity, and consciousness. He is a being with independence—that is, an independent social being. Independence is an attribute of social man, who is desirous of independently living and developing as master of the world and his own destiny. Creativity is also an attribute of social man, who transforms the world and shapes his destiny purposefully and consciously. Finally, consciousness is an attribute of social man. It is ultimately consciousness that allows man to determine all his endeavors to understand and reshape the world and himself.

#### *Socio-Historical Principles of the Juche Idea*

The socio-historical principles of the Juche idea are fundamental principles in the social movement, the revolutionary movement of the working masses who create

and develop history. The socio-historical principles elucidated by the Juche idea comprise four aspects:

1. The masses of the people are the subject of social history:  
The masses of the people are the masters of revolution and its construction and the decisive factor in transforming nature and developing society. They produce all social wealth and transform the world and advance history by their struggle. But for the creative activity of the masses, social change and progress would be inconceivable.
2. Human history is the history of the people's struggle for independence:  
The history of human society is the history of the struggle of the popular masses to defend and realize independence. Throughout history, people have ceaselessly struggled to free themselves from the fetters of society and nature. All the struggles to transform society, nature, and man are struggles to defend and realize independence for the masses.
3. The socio-historical movement is a creative movement by the popular masses:  
The socio-historical movement is a creative movement by the popular masses to transform and change nature and society. The activity of the masses for an independent life is characterized by creativity. The objects of man's creative activity are nature and society. By means of creativity, man can transform nature and reform the society in which he lives, creating new material and cultural wealth and building a new system and life.
4. The people's consciousness of independence plays a decisive role in revolutionary struggle:  
The revolution is propelled forward to victory by the conscious struggle of the masses. Consciousness means the awareness of being the master of one's own destiny, thereby signifying the will to shape one's destiny by one's own initiative. Only when a man has the consciousness of independence can he conduct conscious activity to conquer nature and actively struggle against the oppressors who encroach and trample upon his independence.

### THE JUCHE IDEA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of the Juche idea are the guide to establishing Juche not only in party and state activities, but also in all spheres of revolution and construction. An independent stance must be maintained. This includes ideological independence, political independence, economic independence, and military independence.

1. Juche in ideology:  
To establish Juche in ideology means having the consciousness that one is the master of the revolution and its construction, therefore

devoting both one's thinking and actions to the revolution in one's own country, and acquiring the viewpoint and attitude of solving all questions through one's own talents and strength. Establishing Juche in ideology is the primary requirement of the masses revolutionary struggle for independence.

2. Independence in politics:

Maintaining independence in politics means upholding national independence and the sovereignty of one's people, defending their interests and conducting policies by relying on them. Political independence is the first criteria, and the life and soul, of an independent sovereign state.

3. Economic Self-sufficiency:

Building an independent national economy means building an economy that is free from dependence on others—one that stands on its own feet. This economy should serve its people by developing the resources of its country through the efforts of its people. Economic independence is the material foundation for political independence, as well as necessary for national defense.

4. Self-reliance in defense:

Self-reliance in defense is a fundamental principle of an independent sovereign state. Only when one implements the principle of self-reliant defense will one be able to repel imperialist aggression and intervention, defend the nation's political independence and economic self-sufficiency, and safeguard the revolutionary achievements and the security of one's people.

The creative method should be applied, which is to utilize the creativity of the people to solve all problems arising in the revolution and construction in conformity with actual conditions. This is the principle one should always strictly adhere to in the revolutionary movement. First, apply the method of relying on the people. The masses are the decisive force that propels the revolution; one can successfully solve any difficult problem and energetically speed up the revolution and construction only when one relies on them. Second, apply methods suitable to the actual situation. In order to correctly carry out the revolutionary struggle, one must actively inquire into new principles and methods of revolution and construction that are suitable to the historical conditions of the time and one's own concrete situation and take a critical and creative approach to foreign experiences.

The principal stress should be placed on ideology. The popular masses' consciousness of independence plays a decisive role in the revolutionary movement. Therefore, in the revolution and construction one must place the main stress on ideology and give priority over all work to the remolding of ideology, the political work, which is aimed at raising the consciousness and activeness of the masses.

## THE IMPACT OF THE JUCHE IDEA

North Korea entered a new era of revolution after Kim Il-sung established the Juche idea. During the report "The Path of the Korean Revolution" at the Kalun

meeting, Kim stated, “[the main task of the Korean revolution is to overthrow Japanese imperialism and win independence for Korea and, at the same time, to eradicate feudal relations and introduce democracy. In view of the main task of the Korean revolution, its character at the present stage is anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democracy.]”<sup>5</sup> In addition, Kim elaborated on strategies to achieve such a major task, which included national unification and a united front of armed struggle that was anti-Japanese. With the Kalun meeting as a turning point, the Korean anti-Japanese revolution and communist movement started down a new path of development. Kim Il-sung formulated the Juche idea, led and organized anti-Japanese struggles, established glorious revolutionary traditions, accomplished the historical task of national independence, and laid a solid political, economic, cultural, and military foundation for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on that foundation.

The Juche idea was formed under specific historical conditions in North Korea and thus has practical implications suitable for Korean society. At the beginning of the revolution, North Korean revolutionaries did not have experience managing a country or its economy. As a former agricultural colony with an undeveloped economy and culture, North Korea had to rely on itself to start a new road of socialism. The new road must solve all problems in revolutionary construction independently and creatively. It offers a scientific guideline for independence in politics, self-sufficiency, the economy, and self-reliance in national defense, while fighting against flunkeyism, sectarianism, and dogmatism.

The emergence of the Juche idea can be traced to the fact that North Korea has long been at the frontline of the Cold War in the East as well as holding a weak position in Northeast Asia’s international structure. Juche fulfilled a practical need during the confrontation of two major camps. Major threats from the international situation to North Korea’s security and contests in domestic politics made it a necessity for North Korea to have a powerful ideology to guide and explain its line of revolution and construction. Under the guidance of Juche, during the war in the 1950s, the Workers’ Party of Korea led Koreans to defend national independence. During socialist construction, Korean people used the Juche idea as a guideline to consolidate the socialist system, establish collective methods of production, start industrialization, and achieve some strategic goals in industrialization.

## SONGUN POLITICS

### *Origins of Songun Politics*

Songun politics are closely related to the history of Korea’s anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle.

The two pistols Kim Il-sung inherited from his father Kim Hyong-jik and the program of the “Down-with-Imperialism Union” are the starting point of Songun ideology, the ideology of giving precedence to arms and the military.<sup>6</sup> As the leader of Korea’s anti-Japanese revolutionary movement, Kim Hyong-jik proposed to equip the popular masses with advanced ideology and organize

them to fight a national liberation war. He also proposed specific measures: to achieve this proletariat revolution, people should take weapons and defeat Japanese imperialists using their own strength. In June 1926, Kim Hyong-jik passed away under torture by Japanese police and illness. Before he passed away, he left his two pistols to Kim Il-sung. These two pistols embodied the revolutionary idea of restoring the country through armed struggle. Inheriting a revolutionary heritage in the two pistols, Kim Il-sung founded the Songun ideology and became a leader of the Songun revolution.

The other ideological origin of Songun politics is the “Down-with-Imperialism Union” program. In October 1926, Kim Il-sung founded the “Down-with-Imperialism Union,” a proclamation of do-or-die battle to crush the Japanese imperialists. The down-with-imperialism ideology embodied a method of struggle that relied on revolutionary violence: in other words, armed struggle. This ideology later became the core of Songun ideology. Kim Il-sung put forward this line of armed struggle as the principal line of anti-Japanese national liberation struggle in the historic Kalun meeting in June 1930, thereby proclaiming the birth of Songun ideology to the world. In April 1932, Kim Il-sung formed the Anti-Japanese People’s Guerrilla Army, the first revolutionary armed force that started armed struggle against the Japanese and announced the beginning of Songun revolutionary leadership. In August 1945 after Korea was liberated, Kim Il-sung accomplished the historical tasks of establishing the Army, the Party and the nation. Together with a Chinese voluntary army during the Korean War, he also won the war against the “united army” led by the United States. This approach was different from the traditional socialist approach of forming the Party first, then the army and, finally, the nation. North Korea first established its army, then its Party, then its nation, relying on the army to safeguard political authority. This unique experience is the ideological foundation of Kim Il-sung’s Songun politics.

Songun politics are closely related to North Korea’s reflection on and prevention of drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In the early 1990s, the world’s political structure and balance of power changed dramatically. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the drastic changes in Eastern Europe were major setbacks to the international communist movement. Against this backdrop, the US-led western countries not only refused to provide security guarantees for North Korea, but also intensified isolation and their blockade against the country based on their presumption of a “Korean collapse.” These actions made North Korea feel deeply threatened about its survival against subversive forces. At the same time, North Korea’s market was also thrown into stagnation and regression. This was partly due to the disappearance of the traditional market that no longer existed between various socialist countries, along with malpractices of rigid planned economy and consecutive natural disasters.

This situation, combined with the sudden death of President Kim Il-sung and Korea’s nuclear standoff with the United States, made political stability and national security the most pressing issues for the country. Kim Jong-il believed that the direct cause of drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was that these countries had abandoned the socialist system and military

leadership with the result that the military had appeared “non-ideological” and “apolitical” and wavered at a critical moment. Kim Jong-il, emphasizing the power of the military, observed that the outcome of war is not decided through technical or quantitative advantages, but by the power of political thought. This is a truth proved by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist army in Eastern European countries.

Facing the complicated situation of the second half of 1990s, Kim Jong-il pointed out, “[The power of the revolutionary army is essentially the power of thoughts, and therefore to grow the People’s Army to an invincible steely fighting army, we must further strengthen the ideological education of soldiers, effectively establish the party’s leadership system of the military, and achieve unified revolutionary ideology of supreme commanders so that all soldiers will be bullets and bombs, standing at the frontline to protect the party and leaders with their lives. This is the basic direction and basic goal of the ideological work of the people’s army.]”<sup>7</sup> As a result, Kim Jong-il stressed the party’s leadership over the military and its reliance on guns to adhere to and achieve the socialist cause. On New Year’s Day in 1995, Kim Jong-il visited the KPA at Ryanggang, demonstrating his political determination to rely on the military to overcome difficulties and develop his country’s future. During the 10th Supreme People’s Congress in September 1998, the Constitution was amended and a national leadership system led by the National Defense Commission was established. This provides legal and institutional guarantees for Songun politics as the country’s basic politics that should be fully reflected in all areas of national building and activities. In February 1999, Kim Jong-il said to the People’s Army, “[Songun politics is my basic politics as well as the universal sword that will lead our revolution to victory,]”<sup>8</sup> announcing domestically and internationally that the leadership of the Korean Workers’ Party is Songun leadership and that Kim Jong-il politics are Songun politics.

## CORE ASPECTS OF SONGUN POLITICS

Songun politics are a basic political mode making military affairs a national priority, relying on the revolutionary spirit and fighting strength of a people’s army to protect the country, revolution and, by extension, socialism—thereby proactively promoting socialist construction.<sup>9</sup> Theoretical contents of Songun politics cover almost all areas of North Korea’s domestic affairs, foreign affairs, and social lives.

Songun politics are the politics that manifest the military-first principle. Kim Jong-il pointed out that the “[Songun era requires solving all problems that have arisen during revolution and construction according to the principle of military first.]”<sup>10</sup> The military-first principle is one of the essential elements of Songun politics. Military first means treating military affairs as the first priority in national affairs and making strengthening military power as the first goal when making and implementing the party’s national path and policies. The reason why the military-first principle became one of the essential contents of Songun

politics is that, firstly, it guarantees putting the military in a position to make national policies, placing more focus on military strengthening, national defense industry building, and war preparation compared to other issues, and proposes a clear political direction—a defined path with specific tasks that need to be performed. Secondly, during economic development, the military-first principle guarantees the prioritized development of a national defense industry by investing heavily in developing it and providing guarantees to build defensive military forces. Strengthening the independence of the defense industry, realizing high levels of modernization and informationalization, and continuously increasing investment in the defense industry are important requirements to strengthen defensive military power. Therefore, Songun politics, with their devotion to the defense industry, are a way of guaranteeing the strengthening of a country's comprehensive national power.

Songun politics are the politics that manifest the principle of putting the army before the working class. The principle of putting the army before the working class is to put the revolutionary army as the primary vehicle of revolution and construction—the “backbone” of the revolution. Though Marxist revolutionary theory regarded the working class as the main force of the revolution, Kim Jong-il believed that times had changed and altered the social environment, class relations, and the situation of the working class. Meanwhile, with the development of capitalism, reactionary bourgeois ideology and culture had become more rampant, which suppressed class-consciousness and revolution among the working class. As a result, the working class no longer provided the core strength of proletarian revolution. Kim Jong-il put forward the “[putting the army before the working class]” principle with the People's Army as the revolutionary leaders.<sup>11</sup> Defining the People's Army as the main force of revolution was decided by the current status and role of the People's Army in the Korean revolution. Taking up the gun to protect the Party, the country, and the people remains the mission of the People's Army and, as a result, the working class or any other social group cannot usurp the Army's importance. In North Korea, there is no stronger group than the People's Army in terms of revolution, organization, or combat effectiveness. The People's Army protects the Party and the leaders, resolutely implements the Party's policy, and fights for the completion of the Party's cause and socialist enterprise. The revolutionary and organizational characteristics of the People's Army constitute the special and unique style of this armed force and provide the fundamental foundation for strengthening the army's combat effectiveness and its ideological and political power.

Songun politics are the politics that focus on building a mentally strong army as the fundamental principle of army building. Songun politics make strengthening the revolutionary army fundamental. Strengthening the army does not just include strengthening political thought and military technology, but also encompasses strengthening political ideology. Kim Jong-il stressed that the power of the military and the fate of war is not decided by quantitative or technical advantages, but by the power of political ideology. This is a truth proved again by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the socialist

armies in Eastern European countries. Facing the complicated international situation in the second half of the 1990s, Kim Jong-il pointed out,

“[the power of revolutionary army is essentially the power of thoughts, and therefore to grow the people’s army to an invincible steely fighting army, we must further strengthen the ideological education of soldiers, effectively establish the party’s leadership system of the military, and achieve unified revolutionary ideology of supreme commanders so that all soldiers will be bullets and bombs, standing at the frontline to protect the party and leaders with their lives. This is the basic direction and basic goal of the ideology work of the people’s army.]”<sup>12</sup>

Songun politics are the politics that make the revolutionary army the role model for and main force of the revolution. They are based on an ideology and set of beliefs rooted in a sense of camaraderie and morality and a devotion to creating societal unity between the party, army and nation. Therefore, the revolutionary entity of Songun politics is a unified entity of leaders, the Party, the army and the people and its strength lies in this unity. Kim Jong-il pointed out that the essence of army-people unity lies in the ideology and fighting spirit of the army that is based on “revolutionary military strength” and on the people. This is also the foundation of Korean society.<sup>13</sup> Army-people unity is the driving force of Songun politics and it guarantees success of struggle against imperialists and accomplishes the enterprise of Juche.

Songun politics are the politics that vigorously promote socialist construction with the revolutionary army as the pillar. Songun politics require the revolutionary army to undertake the arduous task of developing a national economy and providing impetus for socialist construction so that all members in society will promote socialist construction with a “revolutionary army spirit” and military fighting style. The “revolutionary army spirit” is a lofty revolutionary spirit with three separate spirits as its foundations—the spirit to protect leaders to death, the spirit to implement the party’s principles and policies to death, and the spirit to heroically sacrifice. It is the highest expression of class-consciousness and revolutionary spirit of the working class, as well as the revolutionary spirit that symbolizes and represents the Songun era. It is the ideological weapon that enables the army and the people to achieve miracles and make contributions in revolution and construction.<sup>14</sup> It provides the impetus to carry out a second “Chollima big march” to build a strong nation after supporting the army and the whole society to successfully finish the “difficult march” and the “forced march of socialism.”

### IMPACTS OF SONGUN POLITICS

The current academic world has mixed comments about Songun politics with an overall low evaluation. Songun politics are North Korea’s ruling ideology and also shape its governing practices. Although people have different understandings and interpretations of its significance and value, it is undeniable that Songun politics play an important role in maintaining national security and guiding Korean revolution and construction.

First, Songun politics have helped North Korea's political leaders realize a peaceful and smooth transition. Facing the most severe international and domestic situation since the country was founded, Kim Jong-il decided to rely on the People's Army to safeguard national security and overcome economic difficulties. He chose to comprehensively promote the path of Songun politics. Songun politics are based on the principle that the army is the party, the country and the people. Based on the revolutionary army, Songun politics safeguarded national sovereignty, strengthened the Party's leadership, and solved economic problems. First, Songun politics further strengthened the Party's ideology within the army, established the Party's leadership of the army, established the Party's leadership over the military, and called on people to study the "spirit of the revolutionary army," thus realizing the unity of thoughts, fighting spirit, struggle, and fighting style between the army and the people, further strengthening national unity and social unity, and providing the ideological weapons and mental motivation to promote "the march of Socialism." Second, Songun politics have enabled the army to carry forward "the spirit of the revolutionary army" and become the main force of economic development, laying a foundation for North Korean economic recovery and development. The People's Army followed Kim Jong-il's guidelines for building a socialist country, by fulfilling "the spirit of the revolutionary army," "protecting the country and building socialism" in the main front of the electricity, coal, metallurgy, railway transportation and agriculture sectors. All people in the country have learned "the spirit of the revolutionary army" and the fighting spirit from the army and its innovating during this time of socialism building. Because of Songun politics, combined with the People's Army as the main revolutionary force, North Korea realized high army-people consistency and unity (around the Workers' Party), ensured a high level of political stability, overcame economic difficulties, successfully ending "harsh marching" and "forced marching," and began construction of a powerful socialist country.

Second, Songun politics safeguard national sovereignty, and uphold the socialist system. Songun politics provide the guideline for North Korea's policies to ensure its national survival. In international politics, national survival is the physical existence of a sovereign state. It is the basis and prerequisite for all national activities as well as the most important national interest. Hans Morgenthau believed that national survival includes territorial integrity, political systems, and cultural traditions. Measured in terms of national interest, all subordinate interests, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, regional or global, must be subordinated to the fundamental national interest of "self-survival."<sup>15</sup> For North Korea, national survival, in particular maintaining its national political system, is of great significance. Facing the harsh post-Cold War international environment and severe domestic economic situation, Kim Jong-il had to make a choice about North Korea's future path of development. The West proposed the concept of "a change in direction" for North Korea, but Kim rejected this argument comprehensively, stating, "[Don't expect me to undertake changes. For socialism, maintaining it is victory and abandoning it is the end.]"

Given the lessons of drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Kim Jong-il decided to fully implement Songun military-first policies. Facing

the US threat of force, Kim stated that North Korea should strengthen and consolidate its national defense through improving its national defense leadership system, strengthening its armed forces, and improving the technological level of national defense, which is based on a preventive national defense policy. On the basis of “arming all the people and making the whole country a fortress,” North Korea modernized the regular army and invested in the research and development of strategic weapons of deterrence. The purpose of North Korea’s missile research and development of nuclear weapons and other strategic weapons of deterrence is not to wage war, but rather to have the means and tools to realize its survival strategic goals and achieve its foreign policy objectives.<sup>16</sup> It is because of the implementation of Songun politics for the purpose of achieving the strategic goal of national survival—in other words, to “stick to the socialist position”—that North Korea has had the courage to broaden its diplomatic space through a full range of diplomatic activities and has the power to initiate economic adjustments, shifting focus to economic development and proposing the national development strategy of building a “socialist strong country.”

## KIMILSUNGISM-KIMJONGILISM

### *Propositions of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*

During the fourth Representative Conference of the Korean Workers’ Party on April 11, 2012, Kim Jong-un was elected as the First Secretary of the Korean Workers’ Party. The day after, during the fifth plenary of the twelfth National People’s Congress, North Korea revised and amended its constitution, electing Kim Jong-un as the First Chairman of the National Defense Commission. Kim became “the supreme leader of the country to lead all work in the country.” A year later, he received the title of Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army; as a result, he now holds power over both the party and the army, a consolidation that announces the official start of the “Kim Jong-un era.”

In fact, the “Kim Jong-un era” was germinated during the third Representative Conference of the Korean Workers’ Party in September 2010. After Kim Jong-il’s health deteriorated in 2008, the power transfer issue was put on the agenda. In 2009, Kim Jong-il conducted a series of personnel adjustments in the military and political system in preparation for Kim Jong-un’s succession. During the third Representative Conference of the Korean Workers’ Party on September 28, 2010, Kim Jong-un was elected as a member of the Central Committee and Vice Chairman of the Party’s Central Military Commission, ranking only second to Kim Jong-il in the Central Military Commission. His status as successor was thereby established. On September 27, Kim Jong-un was granted the title of *Daejang* or general. On October 5, he watched the 851st unit conduct a live fire drill as his first public event. After this, Kim Jong-un accompanied Kim Jong-il to participate in a variety of “on-site guidance” activities that gradually consolidated his position as successor and established his image as the “young general.”

Since the sudden death of Kim Jong-il at the end of December 2011, Kim Jong-un has stood at the frontline of Korean politics. On December 30, 2011,

the second day of Kim Jong-il's memorial services, an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Korean Workers' Party was held. The meeting elected Kim Jong-un as the supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, fulfilling the last of the political procedures needed for him to assume office.

The fourth Representative Conference of the Korean Workers' Party held on April 11, 2012 was the most important conference in North Korea after Kim Jong-il passed away. The conference elected Kim Jong-il as "Eternal Secretary General." This decision means that the North Korean Workers' Party no longer has the position of secretary general available. Soon after, during the fifth plenary session of the 12th Supreme People's Congress, Kim Jong-il was also named the "Eternal Defense Councilor." The defense councilor thus also became a distinguished title for Kim Jong-il that is no longer publicly available. This approach has precedents in North Korea. After Kim Il-sung passed away in 1994, during the first plenary session of the tenth Supreme People's Congress, Kim Il-sung was named "Eternal President." Since bestowing the title, North Korea's government has no longer had the position of "National President" as an available office. More importantly, the fourth Representative Conference of the Korean Worker's Party officially named Kim Il-sung's Juche idea and Kim Jong-il's Songun policy "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism," identifying this as the "only guiding ideology" for the Korean Worker's Party. This identification makes this the ideological starting point for party building activities, the "foundation" for consolidating organizational thinking and guidelines to lead revolution and construction, and affirms the lofty status and ideological importance of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Core of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*

The cores of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism include the Juche idea, a mass-centered revolutionary theory, and a leadership style that correctly guides revolution and construction. As a result, Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism can be understood as an integral entity of the idea, theory, and method of the Juche idea. Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism reflects the reality that the masses will become the masters of history. It is a people-centered worldview and a people-centered revolutionary theory. As a consequence, it has become the most correct, universal, and vital revolutionary idea.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Juche Idea*

The essence of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is the Juche idea. As described, the Juche idea is a people-centered philosophy. Not only can people use creativity to change nature and produce material assets, they can also use it to play an important role in developing scientific culture. The reason why people enjoy such a special status and role is that people have a social existence that encompasses self-determinacy, creativity, and acknowledgment. By identifying people as central figures, the Juche idea shapes a path that enables people to acknowledge that, as masters of the world and their own destiny, they are capable of independently advancing social history and their own destiny.

### *Mass-Centered Revolutionary Theory*

Mass-centered revolutionary theory features prominently in Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. In Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, the word “revolutionary” suggests a struggle that overcomes injustice and backwardness to institute a rightful and advanced state of affairs. The mass-centered revolutionary theory is a strategic and operational method that identifies the masses as the masters of the revolution and gives them freedom to fulfill their creative role as architects of the process of creating a new just world and realizing national progress. Revolution and construction is an enterprise that serves the mass population and is accomplished by them. As a result, strategic and operational methods should safeguard people’s interests and give full play to their creative role. The value of a theory depends on how it safeguards people’s interests. The power of ideological theory depends on how it allows the creative role of the mass population to be fulfilled. Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism safeguards people’s fundamental interests by correctly giving full play to their endless creative power. It integrates theories of national liberation, class liberation, and human liberation, as well as social transformation, natural transformation, and human transformation, into its theoretical system.

### *A Leadership Style That Correctly Guides Revolution and Construction*

The leadership style of the leading party that guides revolution and construction is also an important component of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. Kim Il-sung once pointed out that the success of revolution and construction depends on the working style of the leader as he guides the mass population, after the leading party develops the correct path, policies and measures. The leadership issue is of great theoretical importance in realizing national development. Radically transforming the old world is a complicated and profound struggle in which the mass population participates. Only by securing the right guiding principles, theory, and leadership can the struggle be successful. Giving full play to the creativity of the masses—pivotal for revolutionary success—depends on a continually improving and adapting leadership that responds to constantly evolving revolution and construction. As a result, Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism proposes a leadership style that engages the mass population and their thoughts, further strengthens the unity of the people, and gives full freedom to people’s revolutionary enthusiasm—the creativity, motivation, and mental strength that are required during revolution and construction. Kim Jong-un has stressed that he will faithfully uphold the banner of “serving on behalf of the people,” as originally proposed by Kim Il-sung, and vigorously pursue a Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism-style struggle, respecting the masses.

## CONCLUSION

### *The Future of “Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism”*

North Korea has accomplished a smooth transition of power at present. However, the Kim Jong-un Administration still has many challenges ahead. Whether Kim

Jong-un can successfully implement basic strategies to develop the economy, improve people's living standards, and lead Korea toward a future as a powerful country are not only the key criteria by which his leadership will be tested, but this is also critical to political stability. The accomplishment of Korea's strategic goals also depends on continuing peace on the Korean Peninsula and the tolerance and help of the international economic environment. Since the founding of North Korea, the United States has implemented a hostile policy of containment towards North Korea based on its strategic orientation and ideology. This creates an environment of high pressure for North Korea and is the fundamental external reason why North Korea follows Songun politics. Acknowledgment of security threats forces North Korea to allocate its limited resources to its military, resulting in economic difficulty and thus a stronger sense of insecurity. This results in the vicious cycle that underlies the so-called "North Korea issue," including the unresolved nuclear issue. Maintaining regime stability in North Korea is not only conducive to maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, but also meets the interests of all parties concerned. The international community should abandon its Cold War mentality and understand North Korea's "ideological theme" and "Songun military first politics" objectively and comprehensively. Such an understanding would lead countries to eliminate the external threats that are causing extreme insecurity for North Korea and provide appropriate security guarantees and economic aid to create a relatively relaxed environment for North Korea to smoothly pass through its transition period. North Korea's recent policy measures have shown that it is also expecting changes in the global political environment; when these occur, North Korea will immerse itself more fully into international society and make greater progress in improving the people's livelihood and developing its economy.

History has proved that the domestic and foreign policies of a state and authority do not stay the same. Instead, they change with the international environment and people's thinking. To realize pre-set goals, North Korean leaders will appropriately adjust domestic and foreign policies in accordance with domestic and international changes, transferring their focus to economic development and investing more in their national economy. Leaders will also pay more attention to people's livelihoods. This is the general trend of development in North Korea. Meanwhile, the Kim Jong-un Administration is likely to proactively take new measures to expand foreign cooperation and make flexible adjustments in some areas, such as proactively seeking to improve the North Korea-US relationship, accelerating the resumption of the Six-party talks, thereby re-immersing the country in international society, and promoting peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula in the hope of eventually realizing peaceful unification.

#### NOTES

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## “Hereditary Succession” and the DPRK Leadership

*Jin Zhe*

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) regime has entered its third generation of leadership under the family of Kim Il-sung. This multi-generational rule by a single family has led many countries and individuals to understand the DPRK’s leadership as one of hereditary succession. For many years, North Korea allowed this understanding to remain unchallenged. However, on April 30, 2012, the DPRK began to publish articles condemning Republic of Korea (ROK) conservatives for maliciously slandering the DPRK by referring to its leadership since the 1970s as hereditary. Such articles illustrate North Korea’s disavowal of any form of hereditary leadership.<sup>1</sup>

North Korea’s rejection of hereditary succession is based on three key points: Firstly, the DPRK points out that hereditary succession emerges from private ownership and class privilege, which reflects the interests and requirements of an exploiting class’ interests. Such exploitation is at the heart of all hereditary succession systems. While hereditary succession systems may be diverse and vary from one another across different times and countries, they all serve to strengthen the privileged position and wealth of the exploiting class. Because the DPRK is a socialist system, class exploitation has been eliminated and the masses are the masters of their country. Therefore, the social root that could give rise to hereditary succession also does not exist.

Secondly, hereditary leadership is designed to sustain social privilege or identity and wealth (including property) from one generation to the next. A hereditary system in any society requires laws that recognize and guarantee social privilege or identity and property ownership. A hereditary system is not only the legacy of the exploiting class, but also a valued instrument of the exploiting class. Under the socialist system of the DPRK, the exploiting class does not exist.

Finally, hereditary succession also cannot exist in the DPRK’s political system because North Korean succession rests on the people and their respect and trust. North Korean leadership cannot be based on heredity or the credit of parentage;

rather it is the outcome of the demonstrated dedication of the leader to the motherland and the Korean people. The DPRK army and people view their leader as a blessing; this perception cannot be conveyed through a hereditary leadership system.

So, how should the DPRK regime's leadership succession be understood? This chapter seeks to provide an understanding of the DPRK's succession system and Kim Jong-un's succession that is based on academic research and theories, drawing principally on North Korean materials.

## EXPLAINING THE INHERITANCE OF LEADERSHIP

Within the DPRK, officials have recognized leadership succession as a significant issue with the ability to affect the future of the North Korean state, nation, and revolution. The goal of North Korea's revolution is the autonomy of the masses; such a goal is realizable only after several generations of struggle. Only if leadership of the revolution is handed down correctly can the revolution advance toward victory. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the resulting upheaval within Eastern Europe offer painful lessons about what can happen when this does not occur.<sup>2</sup>

## THE ESSENTIAL CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSION

The essence of inherited leadership is for the successor to inherit the former leader's thoughts and performance. The leader's thoughts serve as a unique guiding ideology and guide for advancing North Korea's revolution toward victory. The leader's performance, itself, then can be understood as the leadership system, style, and experience of the leader for promoting the revolutionary process and a foundation for sustaining the DPRK revolution. As a result, in order to successfully further the DPRK's revolution, the leader's successor must correctly inherit both the former leader's thought and performance, which, in combination with practice, can carry the revolution forward.

The inheritance of leadership also means inheriting the past leader's noble style. The leaders of the DPRK revolution are not politicians. They are viewed by their followers as benevolent fathers who have the masses' happiness at heart; the leader is what binds thousands of military personnel and civilians together like strands of a single rope. People chose to follow their leader not only because of his thoughts, but also because of the attractiveness of the leader's noble style.

## NECESSARY QUALITIES IN A SUCCESSOR

A leader of the DPRK must have unique qualities that an ordinary person would not possess. First, he must be absolutely loyal to the present leader. The present leader has personally carried on and developed the great cause of the DPRK revolution. Only through uncompromising faithfulness to the present leader can he inherit his ideas to advance the great cause and move forward guided by the leader.

The international communist movement offers many hard lessons in the dangers leadership succession poses for revolutionary progress. Leadership competition led some successors to declare their absolute loyalty to their predecessors before assuming leadership, but once they achieved power, they then slandered, manipulated, or attempted to blot out past leaders’ achievements—actions that have spelled disaster for the revolution. Uncompromising loyalty to the present leader is therefore the most important quality for the leader’s successor.

The successor must also feel strong love for ordinary people. The DPRK sees the revolution as belonging to the people; it is, first and foremost, their cause. Without love for the masses, the leader cannot reflect the will of the people and they will not be served. Only those successors with strong love for the public can inherit “people’s type leadership” (*renminshi lingdao fangshi* or *inminsik jido bangsik*). Only such leaders can see clearly the needs of the people, be a great father to the people who is dedicated to their happiness and able to see the revolutionary struggle through to the end.

The successor should be able to wield both a pen and a gun. The current DPRK is marching forward in the process of conducting intense political and military confrontations against counter-revolutionary forces. This requires a successor proficient both politically and in military affairs, capable of defending revolutionary achievements and leading the revolution to victory against any challenges.

## HOW THE SUCCESSOR INHERITS LEADERSHIP

How can succession be successfully resolved? This requires both selecting an outstanding successor based on the will of the masses and the institutionalization of a leadership system for the successor with the party and society as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

A successor is not chosen by an individual or a specific group, but is, instead, elected according to the consensus of the party, the army, and the people. The selection process for a successor is vital to the consolidation and success of the leadership system. Only a successor with the full support and trust from the masses, elected according to the desire and will of the people, will fulfill the unique leadership of the revolution and its construction, and unite the people around him. The people’s unanimous election of a successor indicates their belief in his demonstrated quality, ability, and character—their admiration and trust in his leadership comes from the heart.

The successor’s leadership system cements his new leadership and is institutionalized not only within the party, but also throughout society as a whole. If the election of a successor who has outstanding qualities and character is the fundamental condition for resolving leadership succession, the leadership system of the successor will assure the inheritance of leadership.

To elaborate, the work of establishing a successor’s leadership system takes place under the direct leadership of the current leader and should be fully established by the end of the leader’s ruling period. While it is common for a new leader to establish his leadership and political system after he assumes office, in the DPRK, the current leader leads the establishment of his successor’s leadership system while he is still in office, dedicated to making sure that power transitions

are seamless. By establishing the successor's leadership of all departments and units, this also establishes confidence that the leadership of the successor is the leadership of the leader. This ensures a complete and seamless transition in the leadership of the party and society.

Kim Il-sung regarded succession as an important mission for all countries and nationalities as well as the motherland and the revolution. Kim Il-sung comprehensively established Kim Jong-il's leadership system in the party, government, and military after he was introduced as his successor. After Kim Jong-il was identified as the successor, Kim Il-sung made him an example for others to emulate, with the aim of guiding people to hold high the leadership of Kim Jong-il. On December 24, 1991, he appointed Kim Jong-il Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and on April 9, 1993, Kim Jong-il was elected Chairman of the National Defense Commission; from then on, Kim Jong-il's leadership system was fully established.

The process of establishing the successor's leadership system is designed to not only promote the successor, but is also used to help realize the current leader's vision and intention. This is because election of a successor absolutely loyal to the leader strengthens the leader's own leadership and power. The cause conceived by the leader will be implemented under the leadership of the successor.

This is apparent in the North Korean motto embraced by Kim Jong-il: "Kim Il-sung is the sun in heaven, Kim Jong-il is the sun warrior." This phrase reveals how absolute Kim Il-sung's authority over Kim Jong-il was, with Kim Jong-il's authority and prestige deriving from his predecessor, Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-un in turn has called himself Kim Jong-il's "revolutionary soldier," devoted to carrying out Kim Jong-il's work and considering sustaining his authority his most sacred duty.

The successor's leadership system is also established and consolidated on the basis of the respect and trust of the people. This foundation is absolutely necessary in order to ensure the consolidation of the leadership system. Instead of relying on position or power to build political clout, absolute trust in the successor and his outstanding qualities character guarantees that leadership will be inherited effectively.

## FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH KOREANS' TRUST IN THEIR LEADERS<sup>4</sup>

The DPRK regime has now spanned three generations of Kim Il-sung's family and the worship and respect that the DPRK people hold for their leaders remains very strong. Research suggests that this respect derives from the trust North Koreans have in their leaders and that this trust is passed down from leader to successor from one generation to the next.

### *The DPRK People's Trust in Their Leaders Has Deep Historical Roots*

The formation of trust is vitally important to the consolidation of leadership. In North Korea, the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the people's trust in their

leader was established long before the leaders become leaders or successors. The DPRK’s people’s trust in Kim Jong-un was formed long before Kim Jong-un was ever formally presented as a successor. As a child, legends formed around Kim Jong-un. It was said that he possessed an unbeatable genius as well as incomparable courage and insight. As he matured, the nobility of his character became clear and became widely known among the soldiers and the people. Popular trust in Kim Jong-un was well established. In the struggle for the people’s happiness alongside Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un’s total loyalty to Mr. Kim, his infinite love for his revolutionary comrades and the people, his proficiency in politics, military matters, economics, culture and advanced science and technology, and his special combat and organizational abilities established his image.

Kim Jong-un’s actions coupled with his personality and charm have ultimately completely conquered the KPA and the North Korean people who have faith that he is the one and only successor who can lead their great revolutionary cause to victory. The confidence the DPRK’s party, army, and people have in Kim Jong-un has been volcanically powerful since he assumed the title of Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and it is clear his image is firmly established in the hearts of millions among the army and the people.

***The Trust of the North Korean People’s Army and People  
Is Unswerving in Any Wind or Waves***

The slogan: “Defend the party central committee headed by comrade Kim Jong-un” permeates the will of the army and the people. As stated earlier, DPRK leaders are not merely political figures, they are viewed as kind fathers who embrace the nation they seek to nurture; like the sun, their presence is necessary for growth and life. This reinforces the trust of the KPA and the people in their leaders. It is unwavering in the face of any test or difficulty—unswerving and absolute, it is able to resist temptation and intimidation.

***The DPRK’s Army and People’s Trust in Their Leaders  
Is Hereditary and Eternal***

What does hereditary eternal trust mean? Only if trust remains constant over time and from one generation to the next can it be described as eternal. It is very rare to find this sort of trust, but it can be found in North Korea. The DPRK revolution has continued over several generations, yet the DPRK’s army and people have continued to respect their leaders and to put their fate in their hands.

The first generation of the revolution gave rise to the tradition of defense and liberated the motherland as eulogized in Kim Il-sung’s song, “The Star of Korea.” Still under the leadership of Kim Il-sung, the next generation overthrew US imperialism, defended the motherland and national autonomy, and defended the Central Committee, headed by Kim Il-sung. The third and fourth generation loudly sang the song “Loyal Down through Generations.” Closely united around Kim Jong-il, members of this generation faithfully implemented

the program set out by their leader even under periods of great suffering and deprivation and inherited the glorious tradition of defense, laying a solid foundation for more prosperous times. Now, a new generation of revolutionaries and elders has elected Kim Jong-un as their party and country's leader. Loudly singing the song "Forward in Keeping with the Step of Dear Respected Kim Jong-un," under Kim Jong-un's guidance, they have carried on the tradition of revolutionary martyrs, launching a new attack to realize Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il's lifelong revolutionary desires and ideals.

The DPRK army and its people have thus honored the rare and great and held high their leaders' banner from generation to generation.

### KIM JONG-UN'S LEADERSHIP IS THE FUNDAMENTAL GUARANTEE OF ACHIEVING THE DPRK'S GOALS<sup>5</sup>

The DPRK revolution and the military first revolution is the cause of the masses, which regards the military first concept as a vital safeguard for national and ethnic autonomy, which rests on the barrel of the gun.

Kim Jong-un is a great man who has inherited the patriotic blood, firm faith, and perseverant revolutionary spirit of his Mangyongdae family origins. This Mangyongdae revolutionary spirit is the will and character to carry on fighting even in difficult conditions, facing death to realize national prosperity, and assuming the previous generation's cause with a temperament of perseverance passed from one generation to the next.

Kim Jong-un is a great man born with the Mangyongdae family's revolutionary faith, will, and moral integrity. He leads relentless military strikes against the United States' imperialist invasion with the Mangyongdae family's patriotic temperament, resisting political and diplomatic pressure, and directing an offensive of revolutionary thought against the offensive of reactionary thought, leading the military first revolution to victory.

Kim Jong-un is a Baekdu Mountain type, a great man who has the character and quality to lead the revolution and the North Korean army to victory. Kim Jong-un is devoted to Kim Jong-il and is his "most loyal soldier." He has special abilities in military affairs, including mysterious insight and vision. A good general must possess keen intelligence and ingenuity in military affairs. From the start, Kim Jong-un has possessed these qualities. An adept student of his predecessor's military first strategies, he has fully grasped their thoughts and theories. Kim Jong-un conquered his enemies with his strong and aggressive spirit, tactical skill, and resourcefulness. His success has been characterized by his unique wisdom and clarity of analysis.

Kim Jong-un has mystical insight and vision; he can see the future trends in the development of a situation and formulate subtle countermeasures from even small changes in military situations.

Kim Jong-un is an outstanding leader, elected by the army and the people. He has been trained in military leadership, has a deep grasp of politics, economics, science, and technology, and has assisted Kim Jong-il in leading his military

first revolution. He has made brilliant achievements in strengthening national defense and socialist construction, winning him the admiration and joy of both the North Korean army and people.

The North Korean army and people are keenly aware that only with Kim Jong-un’s guidance will the DPRK achieve a bright future. On September 27, 2010, Kim Jong-il promulgated order No. 0051, awarding Kim Jong-un the rank of general in the KPA. The following day, in an historic DPRK labor party representative meeting, Kim Jong-un was elected Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers’ Party of Korea. After this was formally announced at home and abroad, Kim Jong-un began to strengthen national defense and capabilities for armed revolution, fully demonstrating the party leadership’s control over the military.

## CONCLUSION

Uniqueness is the most distinguishable characteristic of North Korean’s leadership system, which means a unique ideology and unique leadership system. Such uniqueness determines that the North Korean leadership system can only be inherited by people of Mangyongdae family origins from one generation to the next. In addition, North Korea has established a corresponding theoretical system and operational system for its leadership inheritance leadership system. The superior leadership of North Korea is sacred and inviolable.

North Korea has a unique political culture. North Korea’s political system may seem incongruous or even irreconcilable with today’s democratic politics. However, North Korea’s political system is a product of history. It needs time and process to adapt to democratic politics. Moreover, it needs patience and help from international society. As a consequence, we should make rational choices between isolation and sanctions and guidance and cooperation.

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