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**FOUR KILOGRAMS TO TIP THE SCALE:  
CHINA'S EXPLOITATION OF THE NORTH KOREAN  
NUCLEAR CRISIS**

by

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December 2007

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**FOUR KILOGRAMS TO TIP THE SCALE:  
CHINA'S EXPLOITATION OF THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

China has incentives to exploit the North Korean nuclear crisis to exact diplomatic, economic and security advantages. The inherent dangers involved in the crisis (that it sparks a nuclear cascade or regional proliferation of nuclear weapons, that Japan will build a more offensive military as a deterrent, that North Korea could explosively collapse, or that the United States will preemptively strike Pyongyang and start a regional conflict) do not completely constrain China's foreign policy decisions. Furthermore, Beijing enjoys a certain coercive influence over Pyongyang as the old "lips and teeth" relationship eroded to one of mild indifference or embarrassment allowing China to exploit its little brother. To this end, the crisis offers Beijing opportunities at gaining regional leadership, greater economic development, and affords certain positive consequences for the Taiwan issue.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In one-millionth of a second, a hot gas bubble formed underground, the temperature rose to one million degrees, and a sonic shockwave broke and melted the rocks in every direction, continuously expanding until finally collapsing in on itself.<sup>1</sup> In Seoul, the Richter scale read a 3.58<sup>2</sup> earthquake originating in North Korea's North Hamgyeong Province, a sign that Pyongyang detonated a large underground explosion.<sup>3</sup> Days later, radiological material leaked into the atmosphere confirmed the report that North Korea indeed detonated a plutonium-based device.<sup>4</sup> North Korea hinted at nuclear weapons, declared its possession of said weapons, and ultimately detonated one over a span of 16 years under the weary and watchful eye of the international community.

Only Pyongyang reacted positively to the October 9, 2006, test. The United States and Japan adamantly called for sanctions and a strongly worded condemnation from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). South Korea, China and Russia, while disappointed in Kim Jong-Il's actions, demanded a softer tone. In the end, Resolution 1718 fell shy of full sanctions and was considerably less threatening than Tokyo desired. Beijing's role in calming the region during the second nuclear crisis, beginning in 2002 and immediately after the test, is commendable. The consistent statement from Beijing's foreign ministry requests that all parties "keep calm and show restraint" and that regional neighbors should "Adopt a responsible attitude to safeguard regional peace and

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the description of an underground nuclear test found in: Samuel Glasstone and Phillip J. Dolan, "The Effects of Nuclear Weapons," *United States Department of Defense and the Energy Research and Development Administration*, 1977, 61, <http://www.princeton.edu/~globsec/publications/effects/effects2.pdf> (accessed February 2007).

<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Geological Survey Richter scale readings read 4.2.

<sup>3</sup> "Nuclear Weapons Testing," *Weapons of Mass Destruction, Global Security.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/dprk/nuke-test.htm> (accessed February 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Thom Shanker and David E. Sanger, "North Korean Fuel Identified as Plutonium," *The New York Times*, October 17, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/world/asia/17dipl.html?ex=1172811600&en=9a08eac03f725c73&ei=5070>, (accessed February 2007).

stability.”<sup>5</sup> The United States and Japan may not agree with the direction Beijing takes in the crisis and, while both states can appreciate the effort, questions remain.

Is China fully committed to the denuclearization and peaceful end to the North Korean nuclear crisis? What are Beijing’s most prevalent concerns regarding the peninsula and do those concerns limit its actions? Is China in a position to influence North Korea and is it willing to do so? How does the continued crisis benefit Beijing? This thesis shows that Beijing is not fearful of a nuclear North Korea and that its coercive influence over Pyongyang helps exploit the situation for diplomatic, economic and security advantages.

Several schools of thought assess the depth of China’s commitment to North Korea’s denuclearization and its ability for influencing North Korea diplomatically. The six arguments below differ in estimating Beijing’s influence over North Korea during the crisis and the degree to which it uses or does not use that influence. The first argument suggests that Beijing has very little to no influence over Pyongyang and will not take any steps to exert pressure during the crisis. While Beijing once enjoyed a “lips and teeth” relationship with Pyongyang, today’s relationship lacks any semblance of warmth.<sup>6</sup> Andrew Scobell cites one example of when a Chinese visitor to the DPRK museum in Panmunjom reflected his disappointment that there were no references to China’s immense role in the Korean War. “It is no exaggeration to say that many Chinese view the North Koreans as ingrates.”<sup>7</sup> As the past few years have exposed this weakening relationship, Beijing has struggled to remain a viable member of the multi-lateral talks. As Bruce Klingner points out:

Beijing was unable to compel North Korea to give up either of its nuclear weapons programs, despite having identified it as a core

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<sup>5</sup> Sun Shangwu. “Restraint is ‘Best Way to Ease Tension.’” China Daily Website, October 13, 2006. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2006-10/13/content\\_707322.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2006-10/13/content_707322.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Scobell, “China and North Korea: From Comrades-In-Arms to Allies at Arm’s Length,” *Strategic Studies Institute* (March 2004): 19, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi>.

<sup>7</sup> Scobell 2004, 19.

strategic national interest of China...North Korea's missile launch [on July 4, 2006], despite the unusual public warning by Chinese President Hu Jintao, was seen as a significant loss of face for Beijing.<sup>8</sup>

As Klingner points out, not only is Beijing unable to protect its own national interests, but even during intense consultation with Pyongyang over the missile launches, it was incapable of affecting North Korea's actions. This argument also asserts that China is unwilling to influence North Korea despite, or perhaps because of, international pressure. This school of thought is the least prevalent among the six perspectives presented here.

The second and most popular assessment surmises that Beijing retains limited influence that has been overshadowed by fear of the consequences of action. Essentially, Beijing is crippled by the fear of collapsing the North Korean regime or losing face in the process of exerting influence. This argument points out that Beijing has the capability to stop oil and food flowing to North Korea, but it is more concerned with a regime collapse or with maintaining the semblance of stability than a nuclear weapon in the hands of Kim Jong Il.<sup>9</sup> One contention is that refugees threaten to drown an already sinking economy in China's "rust belt" along the North Korean border.<sup>10</sup> One of China's specific fears is the reaction of the ethnic Koreans in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture if China took violent action against fleeing North Koreans during a mass exodus.<sup>11</sup> The local economy, already suffering from severe unemployment, could not accept the increase of hundreds of thousands of dispossessed North Koreans. The second

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Klingner, "The Regional Security Implications of North Korea's Missile Launch," *Korea and World Affairs* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 344-360.

<sup>9</sup> Doug Bandow, "Enlisting China to Stop a Nuclear North Korea," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 73-93; Denny Roy, "Going Straight, but Somewhat Late: China and Nuclear Nonproliferation," *Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies* (February 2006), <http://www.apcss.com>; Scobell 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Bandow 2006; Scobell 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Howard M. Krawitz, "Resolving Korea's Nuclear Crisis: Tough Choices for China," *Strategic Forum* 201 (August 2003), <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/press/nduphp.html>, (accessed January 2007).

contention in this camp is that “Beijing’s top priority is to preserve North Korea as a buffer state.”<sup>12</sup> In this argument, action by Beijing could fold North Korea in with South Korea, which places United States forces, or U.S. allies, on China’s border. For Beijing, this is a fear worse than nuclear proliferation on the peninsula and severely hinders its actions. As one author points out, Beijing can live with a nuclear North Korea, but it cannot live without North Korea itself.<sup>13</sup>

The third argument contends that Beijing has limited influence in the crisis but does not have the political will to use that influence. One author even reports, “Beijing does not believe North Korea threatens Chinese interests or Chinese national security, nor does China necessarily see North Korea as a destabilizing element in East Asia.”<sup>14</sup> Under those conditions, Beijing is unwilling to exert undue pressure on North Korea because there is no shared threat from the United States. Most authors agree that China provides a majority of North Korea’s basic needs and this argument references that economic fact as the main leverage Beijing has with its neighbor. After detailing the support China provides for North Korea, Victor Cha and David Kang, two well-respected scholars in the field, conclude that the amount of aid is a “testament to the capabilities Beijing can bring to bear on the North if the political will is there.”<sup>15</sup> In essence, Beijing has coercive, threatening influence over Pyongyang. The logic then follows that if China has not yet introduced the severe sanctions to limit these supplies, the PRC must lack the political will.

The fourth argument asserts that Beijing has some influence on North Korea and is working the issue via its own method. In other words, Beijing is not using coercion as pressed by the United States, but rather an incentive-driven

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<sup>12</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, “Great Expectations: Washington, Beijing, and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 7-29.

<sup>13</sup> Scobell 2004, 14; Thomas L. Friedman, “Brussels Sprouts,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2005, A19.

<sup>14</sup> Krawitz 2003, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 165.

policy. The most common element of this argument is that Beijing is using a Ukrainian model for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula while the United States seeks the Libyan model.<sup>16</sup> The Ukrainian model refers to the international incentive method used to entice Kiev into relinquishing the nuclear weapons it inherited upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. Basically, as applied to Korea, the model seeks to “maintain peace on the Peninsula, resolve the crisis through dialogue rather than military pressure or sanctions, and oppose nuclear weapons.”<sup>17</sup> Based on the successful coercion against Libya’s burgeoning nuclear program, the Libyan model calls for sanctions and military pressures against North Korea. Another assertion is that Beijing practices Realpolitik with Chinese Characteristics, adopting neither realism nor liberalism as its international political models, but a hybrid model. By this logic, Beijing acts reactively and in a disciplined manner, neither seeking hegemony nor expansionism.<sup>18</sup> John Park points out another interesting element in China’s approach, and that of every nation in the Six Party Talks, that the “foreign ministries working on the Six Party Talks are not Northeast Asian specialists . . . they are Americanists.” In other words, China’s approach in this matter is not to fix the nuclear problem so much as to “discourage a U.S. misadventure.”<sup>19</sup> A Chinese writer points out that Beijing holds a “three no’s principle: no nuclear weapons, no war, and no chaos.”<sup>20</sup>

The fifth argument contends that Beijing has influence in Pyongyang, but its goals are truly one-sided, towards Beijing’s national security objectives, to the

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<sup>16</sup> Denny Roy, “China and the Korean Peninsula: Beijing’s Pyongyang Problem and Seoul’s Hope,” *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2004), <http://www.apcss.org>.; John S. Park, “Inside Multilateralism: The Six Party Talks,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 2005): 75-91.

<sup>17</sup> Roy 2004, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Laura Renner, “The Growing Relationship Between South Korea and China: Consequences for North Korea: (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, March 2006).

<sup>19</sup> An Americanist refers to an academic or political analyst that deals on issues surrounding the United States. Park 2005, 88.

<sup>20</sup> Zheng Shenxia, “China’s Peaceful Development and Asia-Pacific Security,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 171-181.

detriment of others. Stephen Blank compiles a list of scenarios that compose an “evil China” model that includes a call to arms that “ROK’s and Russia’s rapprochements with China represent a significant loss of political support for Washington to China and should raise serious concern in America.”<sup>21</sup> Blank’s article sites Yi Xiaoxiong as declaring Beijing’s goals as “transforming North Korea into a large economic development zone for China” and “to reduce the American influence in South Korea.”<sup>22</sup> A less distressing and negative assertion says Beijing’s “ultimate objective is to ensure a Korean Peninsula friendly to its interest and great-power politics in Northeast Asia significantly less hostile to its rise.”<sup>23</sup> An even less devastating argument, proffered by Eric Teo Chu Cheow, says China is coming “full circle after 320 years” to quietly take its position of preeminence on the Korean peninsula. Cheow recalls historical memory to suggest that Beijing’s actions during the crisis are nothing more than the natural flow of relationships in the region back to China as the hegemon.<sup>24</sup>

The sixth and last argument makes the assertion that Beijing has nearly unlimited influence in Pyongyang and refuses to use it. This argument is premised on a U.S.-centric policy and contends that China is single-handedly thwarting the peace process. Those who argue this are not academics and include politicians. Referring to China’s ongoing role in the crisis, Senator Arlen Specter contends that, “China could do more, having had such a long-standing relationship with North Korea, to help the negotiations.”<sup>25</sup> The Senator from Pennsylvania was quick to point out that although Beijing has taken some steps, including establishing the Six Party Talks, he believes it could certainly influence

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Blank, “The End of the Six-Party Talks?” *Strategic Insights* 6, no 1 (January 2007), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/>.

<sup>22</sup> Blank 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Yong Deng, “China and the Six-Party Talks,” *Korea and World Affairs* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 361-378.

<sup>24</sup> Eric Teo Chu Cheow, “The North Korean Missile and Nuclear Crises: China’s Historic and Strategic Stakes on the Korean Peninsula,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 31-50.

<sup>25</sup> “U.S. Senators Press China on Iran, North Korea,” *Defense News*, August 11, 2006, <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=2017022&C=america>.

Pyongyang to a peaceful conclusion. His reference to past friendship between the two countries exemplifies the argument in this camp that China and North Korea are close and Beijing is holding back in the process. Senator John McCain points out that China, as an emerging power in the world, must do more to support peace and the denuclearization of the peninsula. "If they're going to be a superpower in the world, they're going to have to act like it."<sup>26</sup> This camp leans heavily on the contention that China wishes to become a superpower – that it will operate and look similar to that of the United States, and that Beijing is clearly not playing its part in this crisis. One author points out in an article in the *Asia Times* that these arguments are "not wrong in its overall assessment of China's role in these negotiations . . . the effectiveness or limitations of the 'China Card' will only be determined by China."<sup>27</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, famed *New York Times* columnist summarizes this argument with his own statement:

All China has to say to Kim Jong Il is: "You will shut down your nuclear weapons program and put all of your reactors under international inspection, or we will turn off your lights, cut off your heat, and put your whole country on a diet. Have we made ourselves clear?"<sup>28</sup>

This thesis argues that China's influence over Pyongyang is wholly coercive in nature, that concerns associated with the crisis are limited by Beijing-led initiatives as well as pre-existing conditions, and that these two conditions combine to allow Beijing certain latitude to exploit the North Korean crisis for diplomatic, economic and security advantages. To demonstrate this, this thesis first rebuts arguments that Beijing is crippled by its fears or that these fears drive how it responds to the crisis. Second, it argues that evidence of China's relationship with and coercive influence over North Korea show Beijing is capable

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<sup>26</sup> "McCain: Pressure From China Key to North Korea Threat," *NewsMax.com Wires*, October 19, 2006, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2006/10/18/171635.shtml>.

<sup>27</sup> Ehsan Ahrari, "Paying China for Pressuring Pyongyang," *Asia Times Online*, October 28, 2004, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FJ28Ad03.html>. (accessed February 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Friedman, Thomas, "Brussels Sprouts," *New York Times*, May 11, 2005, A19.

of taking action and will do so for its own interests. The final portion argues that China exploits the crisis to its own advantage. Each chapter addresses one of the three main targets of the thesis.

Chapter II identifies the four specific concerns for Beijing caused by North Korea's actions and explains how existing conditions combined with Chinese-led initiatives help constrain their effect. The four concerns are: that North Korea may initiate regional nuclear proliferation, starting with Japan; that Japan will reemerge as an aggressive state; that the Kim regime will collapse, leaving China's northeastern border exposed to U.S. forces; and finally that Washington will take preemptive actions, initiating a regional conflict. The main point of this chapter is that Beijing has greater freedom of maneuver in responding to the North Korean crisis than is generally believed.

Chapter III assessed Beijing's four most significant policy options and the coercive influential capability it enjoys over Pyongyang. By assessing the four main policy options, this chapter shows that Beijing's best choice requires that it take a leading role and use the situation to meet goals advantageous to China. This chapter also surveys the extent of Beijing's influence over Pyongyang and its willingness to exert it to meet those advantageous goals. Like the most prevalent argument in the literature, this thesis contends that China maintains a coercive, or threatening, relationship over Pyongyang but goes beyond the literature in asserting Beijing has the political will to exert that influence.

Chapter IV evaluates China's advantages in the crisis. The major advantages that Beijing seeks in the crisis are increased regional leadership, increased economic development, and concessions on the Taiwan issue. Increasing regional leadership and hegemony requires first limiting Washington's influence in the region as well as disrupting the alliance system, isolating Japan and limiting Tokyo's regional influence, enhancing current security arrangements, improving the military's size and modernity and gaining influence in the future Korean unification. Economic development and economic primacy in North Korea require increased investment in China's Northeastern region, providing the

cheapest regional labor, maintaining primary economic influence in North Korea, and limiting economic competition with its neighbors. Finally, North Korea is a negotiation chip for concessions with respect to Taiwan and the crisis limits Washington's strategic flexibility and focus. The conclusion of this chapter is simply that Beijing benefits from a continued non-violent crisis on the Korean peninsula.

Washington praises Beijing's efforts in the crisis while demanding more at every turn. Beijing seems the most capable of affecting Pyongyang and yet only on occasion does it seek to do so. Washington and Beijing may sit at the same table in the Six-Party Talks, but they are playing different games.

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## II. THE DRAGON IS NOT AFRAID

### A. INTRODUCTION

The plutonium-based small-scale explosion in North Korea on October 9, 2006, triggered more than just the 4.2 on a Richter scale. For Beijing, it was another harbinger of danger to its three-decade long economic expansion as a regional conflict thwarts Beijing's efforts toward growth and national security. North Korea seems poised to make that concern a reality. The nuclear crisis arguably highlights four specific security concerns for the growing dragon. The first concern is the beginning of a nuclear domino effect. Japan is the next domino expected to fall with repercussions on regional security, including an eventual nuclear Taiwan. Second is the concern for a reemerging militarist Japan. In its quest for deterrence, Japan may rearm (physically and legally) triggering a more expansive regional arms race or worse. Third is the concern for a Kim regime collapse, as it offers only negative outcomes for China's national security. Finally, Beijing is concerned with a U.S.-led preemptive attack. The Bush administration policy of preemptive defense threatens to destabilize the region by initiating a war on China's border. Beijing is not concerned with the specific issue of the crisis but rather the consequences of the mostly symbolic gesture that is the North Korean nuclear weapon.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, while each specific concern is legitimate in its own right, there are several international factors, as well as Beijing-led initiatives, that limit the impact of the crisis on Chinese national security.

This chapter counters the most prevalent argument that the nuclear crisis endangers Beijing, crippling it with fear, and renders the state incapable of acting. Between pre-existing international conditions and Beijing's diplomatic, economic and military engagement, the four major security concerns quickly fade

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<sup>29</sup> John S. Park, "Inside Multilateralism: The Six Party Talks." *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 2005): 75-91.

to relative insignificance. Each section of this chapter identifies and discusses a major concern followed by an analysis of efforts and conditions that minimize the threat.

## **B. NUCLEAR DOMINO EFFECT**

Also known as the “nuclear cascade,” the nuclear domino effect refers to the possibility that other states in the Northeast Asian region will adopt nuclear weapons as a viable deterrent to the North Korean threat. Much like a game of stacking dominos for a falling wave, the initiator is the first push. In this case, Pyongyang is the first domino. Specifically, the argument follows that Beijing fears Japan is next, followed by South Korea, and then ultimately Taiwan. Japan sits at what Kurt Campbell calls the “nuclear tipping point.”<sup>30</sup> The argument that Tokyo is likely the next to go nuclear is based on three factors: eroding security, pride and prestige, and technical availability.

The “eroding security” factor focuses first on North Korea’s developing nuclear weapons and testing medium and long-range missiles amidst international scrutiny, displaying Pyongyang’s lack of sensitivity to international confluence and propriety. North Korea has proceeded to test the Taepo-Dong and No-Dong missiles in the East Sea, threatening Tokyo and Japanese interests.

The second factor eroding security is the perceived collapse of the U.S. umbrella. The security treaties signed throughout the decades since 1950 created an umbrella of support that in the event of attack, the U.S. would respond, in-kind, against the aggressor. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States redistributed its forces away from the region, giving Japan the sense that a depleting conventional umbrella means a depleting nuclear umbrella. If the United States is not there with conventional forces, it may not be there with a nuclear or tactical counter-strike. In September 2006, prior to North

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<sup>30</sup> Kurt M. Campbell, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2004).

Korea's underground test, former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone held a press conference over the nuclear question. He told reporters:

Whether or not the United States (which has provided Japan with a nuclear umbrella) will maintain the same attitude is unpredictable. There is a need to study the option of nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup>

During the Cold War, the United States and Japan shared the same fear of a nuclear attack from the USSR. Today, Japan's chief nuclear threat is North Korea, a nation with very few delivery methods. One missile, the Taepo-Dong II, which supposedly can reach the United States mainland, experienced two failed launches. The 1998 test failed to put a satellite into orbit, and the 2006 launch exploded 45 seconds into flight. In essence, the United States and Japan do not share the same fear from a nuclear North Korea. In fact, Japan may see that the United States will resist attacking North Korea with a nuclear weapon following any attack on Japan for fear of international reprisal and further North Korean attacks against neighboring countries. Japan finds itself in a Gaullist situation, asking repeatedly if America will risk the life of one Californian for the sake of Tokyo.

Beijing is the culprit for Japan's third perceived security concern. More than just the unprecedented economic growth, China's growing military prowess also threatens Japan. China is increasing its military efficiency, updating its weapons technology, and improving nuclear weapon delivery systems. A report released in 2003 showed that China spent twice as much on its military than openly reported. China "believes it imperative to vigorously pursue the modernization of its military" and "believes that its military strength should be proportionate to its national power."<sup>32</sup> In essence, China will increase its military capability to meet the growing economy.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "Nakasone Calls For Studying Option of Arming Japan with Nuclear Weapons," *Tokyo Shimbun* (translated), September 6, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Yutaka Kawashima, *Japanese Foreign Policy At The Crossroads* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2005), 107.

<sup>33</sup> Kawashima 2005, 107.

In this faltering sense of security, Japan has little recourse. Tokyo's past method of economic deterrence proved ineffective. For example, in 1995, China continued to test nuclear weapons despite requests from Japan to cease the activity. Tokyo hoped to discourage the tests by threatening removal of economic aid (a projected \$5 billion (U.S.) for the period 1996-2001) but China did not respond as the Japanese had hoped.<sup>34</sup> Other than a strong trade relationship, Japan no longer holds a position of economic assertion over China. While Beijing welcomes this, it may regret that it has upended a Japanese sense of security. These several real and perceived security issues represent one model for Japanese ascension as a nuclear state.

Pride and prestige are essential for states hoping to lead the region and this second argument may help explain why some fear Japan will adopt nuclear weapons. Japan has been an economic powerhouse for decades and even during the 1996 economic crisis, Tokyo maintained a trade surplus over the United States. Two major events thin its pride in East Asia. First, China's emergence as the new economic power slowly usurps Japan's status, and second, Japan's desire to take a lead in world politics is constantly overshadowed.

China's economic prowess threatens to overshadow Japan in the coming decades. There is always a struggle for power in East Asia. There is only ever one hegemon in the region at a time - "One mountain cannot accommodate two tigers."<sup>35</sup> China was the largest power for many centuries, until 1894 when Japan proved victorious in the first Sino-Japanese War. Japan led the region, asserting itself on Korea and China, defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, and expanding throughout the Pacific until its defeat in World War II. The United States exerted itself as the East Asia hegemon with military power while Japan developed economically. Japan took a superior economic position,

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<sup>34</sup> Steven W. Hook and Guang Zhang, "Japan's Aid Policy Since the Cold War: Rhetoric and Reality," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 11 (1998): 1064.

number two economy in the world, by the 1980's. Recent years showed slower growth. As the Japanese economy slows and China swells into the position of economic leadership, Japan may feel a certain loss in status and prestige.

A significant amount of pride rests in protecting its own citizens. As North Korea continuously defies international pressures and threatens Japan's security, Tokyo may feel a twinge of pride and attempt to exert more power in the situation. This is evidenced by its insistence on resolving abduction issues with North Korea prior to any submission to agreements spawned in the six-party talks. Moreover, Pyongyang's threats combined with Tokyo's reliance on the United States for deterrence certainly stresses that Japan lacks the full extent of desired domestic security capability. To make up for this, Japan also stresses its global prestige.

Tokyo seeks a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC). Its robust donations to the United Nations combined with relatively recent peacekeeping operations in several regions show its global capacity and partnership. A veto-wielding vote in the UNSC is tantamount for securing its future against a Beijing consensus, or a perceived Beijing-led coalition of United Nations voters. Unfortunately, China and South Korea do not back the Japanese ascension as a permanent member, which damages its pride and limits its prestige. The United States offered support, politely asking that China back Japan's bid and promising to "strongly support" the bid itself.<sup>36</sup> The five current permanent members of the council are nuclear powers; therefore, Japan may see a correlation between the two and seek nuclear weapons to this end. As Japanese pride and prestige suffer blows and setbacks it may seek an alternate route to restore itself as a regional and global leader via the nuclear route.

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<sup>35</sup> Zheng Shenxia, "China's Peaceful Development and Asia-Pacific Security." *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 175.

<sup>36</sup> "U.S. Called on China to Support Japan's Bid for UNSC Seat: Silverberg," *Yomiuri*, 27 January 2007.

The third major nuclear argument follows that Japan's nuclear hedging is a sign that it may adopt nuclear weapons because it has the technical means to do so. The premise here is that a nation which has the technical means for acquiring nuclear weapons will develop them; having the capability will ultimately lead to the capacity. Nuclear hedging, "a national strategy lying between nuclear pursuit and nuclear rollback,"<sup>37</sup> brought the peaceful and non-nuclear state to a within a reasonable timeline in acquiring nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom found in early 1993, that "Japan has key bomb making components, including plutonium and electronic triggers and has expertise to go nuclear very quickly."<sup>38</sup> Japan will possess a plutonium stockpile greater than 145 metric tons by 2020, far exceeding the 100 tons in the United States. Even today, Japan possesses over 45 kilograms of weapons grade fissile material and 45 tons of stockpiled plutonium.<sup>39</sup> Japan also out-sources its plutonium reprocessing, with several tons in Great Britain, Germany, and France. Furthermore, Japan developed a uranium enrichment program, which also creates weapons grade fissile material. The estimated amount of weapons-grade plutonium necessary for a nuclear weapon is as low as four kilograms,<sup>40</sup> which puts Japan's possible yield for nuclear weapons at approximately ten using high-grade refined plutonium, and hundreds using low-grade plutonium.

Japan nearly has a delivery system. In February 1994, it launched the H-2 rocket, built with domestic technology, placing a satellite into orbit. This technology readily adapts for military purposes. Japan also worked with solid-fuel rocket systems comparable to U.S. ICBMs, which transport nuclear

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<sup>37</sup> Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (2002): 59.

<sup>38</sup> T. V. Paul, *Power versus prudence: why nations forgo nuclear weapons* (New York: Queens University Press, 2000): 51.

<sup>39</sup> Barnaby, Frank and Burnie, Shaun. "Thinking the Unthinkable: Japanese Nuclear Power and Proliferation in East Asia." *Citizen's Nuclear Information Center*. (August 2005), <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefings/Japanreport.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Cirincione, *Deadly Arsenals: Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Threats* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005): 47.

weapons.<sup>41</sup> Japanese nuclear hedging includes the fact that the large reserve of weapons grade plutonium, enriched uranium, electronic triggers, and comparable delivery methods remain separated. However, in a matter of three to six months, Japan could turn its capability to a hard fact of ownership.

China witnesses Japan's nuclear hedging, its search for pride and prestige, and possibly understands its perceived security erosion, but historical memory links these factors to the overall fear of a nuclear Japan. Japanese atrocities in China during World War II are common knowledge for Chinese citizens. Older generations pass stories to younger generations and propagate the anger. Anger over former Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine highlight the continued frustration and concern over Japan's militarist past.<sup>42</sup> For concerned Chinese, a worst-case scenario places Japan with just such a destructive weapon and a means to deliver it against other countries.

A nuclear Japan also disturbs South Korea, which shares the historical memory with China over Japanese atrocities. Not to be left wanting of security, surrounded by China, North Korea and a newly nuclear Japan, South Korea would, as the argument goes, surely prove the next domino. To back that argument, Lee Hoe Chang, once head of the Grand National Party, pushed for an investigation into the "utility of nuclear weapons" to "counter North Korea and a nuclearized Japan."<sup>43</sup> It appears that the specter of a nuclear enemy to the north was not enough to sway South Korean discussion until Japan entered the equation.

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<sup>41</sup> Paul 2000, 37.

<sup>42</sup> The Yasukuni Shrine is dedicated to the spirits of passed soldiers and houses the souls of World War II convicted war criminals. China and South Korea do not believe the prime minister of Japan should pay homage to this shrine given the damage inflicted on both during the war.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," *Asia Policy* 3 (January 2007), 95.

Finally, another nightmarish issue presents itself in Taiwan. “The real horrors of nuclear proliferation in Asia lie ... in Taiwan.”<sup>44</sup> The China-Taiwan issue is well known and precarious. China maintains a robust military presence and threat over Taiwan but a nuclear weapon would destabilize the current status quo. Part of the Chinese Communist Party legitimacy rests on its commitment to eventually reunify Taiwan under Beijing’s control. A nuclear weapon might empower the Taiwanese to finally declare independence, determining that mutually assured destruction deters Beijing from attacking Taipei. China will not allow this and will stop at nothing to discourage diplomatically, economically, and militarily any domino effect that leads to Taiwan adopting nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, is the nuclear domino effect a legitimate fear? Japan’s domestic politics does not support legally or popularly a nuclear weapons arsenal. Japan adopted its non-negotiable non-nuclear policy quickly. In 1957, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi resigned under pressure when he stated that Japan had opted not to seek nuclear weapons despite that, “it was not unconstitutional for it to do so.”<sup>45</sup> Public opinion against nuclear weapons was too strong to support even a discussion. Prime Minister Sato’s similarly controversial statements in 1965 prompted the Three Non-Nuclear Principles – “that Japan would not manufacture, possess, or permit the introduction of nuclear weapons onto Japanese soil.”<sup>46</sup> Three months later, Sato developed the Four Nuclear Policies:

1. Promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy
2. Efforts toward global nuclear disarmament
3. Reliance and dependence on U.S. extended deterrence

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<sup>44</sup> Howard M. Krawitz, “Resolving Korea’s Nuclear Crisis: Tough Choices for China,” *Strategic Forum* 201 (August 2003): 2. <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/press/nduphp.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Campbell 2004, 221.

<sup>46</sup> Campbell 2004, 221.

4. Support for the Three Non-Nuclear Principles under the circumstances where Japan's national security is guaranteed by the other three policies.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, Sato ordered the 1968/1970 Report, which researched the costs and benefits of nuclear weapons. The report found: the U.S. nuclear umbrella was sufficient to support the needs of Japan and South Korea; that a small nuclear arsenal was extremely vulnerable to pre-emptive strikes; and gaining a nuclear weapon would ostracize the still growing nation against the international community.<sup>48</sup> While Japan discussed and even researched the acquisition of nuclear weapons, its pacifist popular opinion ruled against it. Every Prime Minister since Sato reaffirmed the Three Non-Nuclear Principles and the Four Nuclear Policies, keeping the nuclear argument shallow for several decades.

The utter destruction incurred on the citizenry created anti-militarist norms that shaped the country's foreign policy. This argument refers to the nuclear allergy of the World War II generation and its desire for pacifism. Scholars point out that the constructivist paradigm, which argues social norms will lead to the next generational norms, created a pacifist identity in Japan, which remains pervasive to current times.<sup>49</sup> This is evident in the low public opinion for obtaining nuclear weapons and the strong opinion towards pacifism that continues in Japanese society despite the outcry against North Korea. The popular nuclear allergy prefers avoiding nuclear weapons at all costs.

The region faced nuclear activity in the past without the outbreak of war, an arms race or further proliferation. Russia introduced nuclear weapons in 1949 and China tested its first in 1964 without Northeast Asian regional despair. South Korea admitted conducting limited nuclear testing in 2004 and North Korea freely

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<sup>47</sup> Campbell 2004, 221.

<sup>48</sup> Campbell 2004, 224.

<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Lind, "Pacifism or Passing The Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy," *International Security* 29 no. 1 (2004): 92.

bragged of its nuclear capability as early as 2005 without sparking an immediate violent response. The test in 2006 did not spark a preemptive attack or initiate Japan's nuclear program as feared. Simple geography of weapons is not enough to press Japan and the region into a nuclear arms race.

Finally, Japan faces several international calls that seek to keep the island chain non-nuclear. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Tokyo soon after the October 9 test to confirm America's historical commitment to collective defense and the U.S. nuclear umbrella.<sup>50</sup> Chinese Foreign Minister, Liu Jianchao, also openly reminded Japan of its historical position. He specifically "called for Japan to stick to its 'three non-nuclear principles' and adopt a responsible attitude to safeguard regional peace and stability."<sup>51</sup> President Bush also expressed concern over Japanese discussion of nuclear weapons while Wen Jiabao applauded Abe's more conservative tone.<sup>52</sup> Japan's largest and most influential neighbors are so obviously concerned that Japan cannot take the next step. Michael Green points out that "an independent nuclear capability would destroy the U.S. nuclear umbrella and ultimately render Japan less safe" making the initial fear a reality.<sup>53</sup> A PRC scholar re-enforces that point stressing, "there is no need to indulge in blind pessimism" as Japan does not wish to "erode the U.S. alliance system."<sup>54</sup> The former director general of the JDA, Ishiba Shigeru, also pointed out:

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<sup>50</sup> "Japan: PM's Hard Line Stance On N. Korea Toes the U.S. Line," *Global Information Network*, (Oct 26, 2006): 1.

<sup>51</sup> Sun Shang Wu, "Restraint is Best Way to Ease Tension," *China Daily*, Oct 18, 2006. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-10/18/content\\_710570.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-10/18/content_710570.htm).

<sup>52</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," *Asia Policy* 3 (January 2007), 78.

<sup>53</sup> Michael J. Green, "Future Visions of Asian Security: The Five Rings," *Asia Policy* 3 (January 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Shen Dingli, "Considerations Behind DPRK's Nuclear Test," *Qingnian Cankau* (translated), Sep 5, 2006.

If we develop nuclear weapons, that would be tantamount to saying we don't trust the nuclear deterrence of the United States...We thereby could make enemies out of both the U.S. and China, which is the scariest scenario.<sup>55</sup>

Recognizing this conundrum, Secretary of State Rice “offered an emphatic guarantee” that “Japan’s security is the United States’ security.”<sup>56</sup> Japan is not interested in exchanging its “comfortable position” under the U.S. umbrella for nuclear weapons.<sup>57</sup> At this point, the nuclear dominos may be stuck on North Korea and it will take more than tests and aggressive talk from the peninsula to tilt Japan.

### **C. MILITARIZED JAPAN**

The second major concern attributed to the Korean nuclear crisis is that it may spark a reemergence of a militarized Japan. Referring again to historical memory, China, South Korea and every country in the region still remember the horrors inflicted by Japanese soldiers. This argument stresses that the unstable North Korean situation forces a new look at the old ways and Japan may consider becoming a “normal country.”

Similar to the nuclear debate, the creation of the military is a deep-rooted argument. The 1946 peace constitution, specifically Article 9, technically, and literally, makes an Army or Military illegal. Pacifists in Japan continue support for the position that the Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) is unconstitutional. They stand on three arguments. First, is the legalist point of view; the constitution specifically outlaws any military force. Second is whether deterrence, a large military combined with a security relationship with the U.S., will entangle Japan in an unwanted conflict. Third is a debate on whether a democratically elected government can avoid becoming the feared militaristic

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<sup>55</sup> As quoted in Hughes 2007, 90.

<sup>56</sup> Hughes 2007, 89.

<sup>57</sup> Roy, Denny. “China and the Korean Peninsula: Beijing’s Pyongyang Problem and Seoul’s Hope.” *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2004): 4.

Japan.<sup>58</sup> Today the argument against an offensive military focuses on the protection offered and promised by Washington. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1951 hinted the notion of this protection and the 1960 Treaty of Security and Mutual Cooperation between the U.S. and Japan provided clearly stipulated legal obligations on the United States to protect Japan.<sup>59</sup> Since this time, Japan became the model of restraint in world crises and in military development. The “culture of anti-militarism” that developed following WWII forced Japan into a “highly restrained foreign policy” and Japan chose to “forswear the development of offensive military forces.”<sup>60</sup> However, North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests threaten to overturn 60 years of peaceful Japanese policy.

North Korea can attack Japan, and Tokyo takes these threats seriously. The DPRK’s delivery capability is somewhat limited, as it relies on medium and long-range missiles, but effectively destructive. In July 2006, Pyongyang tested the No-Dong missile (as well as several others) over the East Sea. The No-Dong has a range of approximately 1500 km, putting Japan well within the range of a 1200 kg weapon system. Japan has less than ten minutes warning between launch in North Korea (assuming a radar or imagery observed launch) and impact on Japanese soil.<sup>61</sup> There is an inherent danger that 80 percent of the Japanese population sits on 20 percent of the land and an accurate hit on a populated area could produce mass casualties. The 200 known missiles<sup>62</sup> deployed in North Korea, even with low relative accuracy, can cause catastrophic damage to the population and industry. Also in continuous production is the

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<sup>58</sup> Kawashima 2005, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Kawashima 2005, 26.

<sup>60</sup> Lind 2004, 92.

<sup>61</sup> Cirincione 2005, 151.

<sup>62</sup> “Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment: North Korea Armed Forces.” July 2006. *Jane’s Information Group*. <http://www.janes.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/>.

Taepo-Dong long-range ballistic missile – another of those tested in July. With a range of 6000-9000 miles, the missile can target all Japanese cities and parts of the U.S. coastline.<sup>63</sup>

With only a few minutes warning, Japan desires the opportunity to respond preemptively against missile sites. Shinzo Abe stated openly that Japan needed to explore the capabilities and reserved the right to a preemptive strike defense. The head of the defense agency, Fukushima Nukaga, echoed those sentiments.<sup>64</sup> “North Korea’s ability to hold Japan hostage in its effort to deter the United States is a primary reason Japanese policymakers have revisited the idea of acquiring offensive strike capabilities.”<sup>65</sup> This is a dramatic change in the Japanese philosophy of pacifism that prevailed for 60 years.

Contrary to the low polls for nuclear weapons, the opinion polls in August 2006 show 21.8 percent believe Japan should possess a preemptive strike capability and 29.2 percent believe Japan should consider such a capability for a total of 51 percent approval rating for seeking, discussing, or having a preemptive strike capability.<sup>66</sup> Just as significant, Japanese public opinion of North Korea continues deteriorating. Recent polls in Japan found 88 percent of the respondents felt “negativity” towards North Korea with 78 percent believing North Korea is a military threat to Japan.<sup>67</sup> The increased public opinion for increasing military offensive capability, combined with the public perception of the threat, is not an earth-shattering majority, but still encouraging for those in the Diet intent on “normalizing” the state.

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<sup>63</sup> As per David Kang in Cha, Victor D, and Kang, David, *Nuclear North Korea : A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003): 61.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Fackler and Warren Hoge "Japan Finds Still Sterner Words For North Korea's Missile Tests," *New York Times*, July 11, 2006, A6.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel A. Pinkston and Kazutaka Sakurai, “Japan Debates Preparing for Future Preemptive Strikes Against North Korea,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 108.

<sup>66</sup> “Jiji poll: Over 50% of Japanese affirmative about Japan possessing enemy-base strike capability” Sankei from translation, August 13, 2006: A3.

<sup>67</sup> “Japan-ROK joint poll: No way out of anti-Japanese sentiments in South Korea; Pro-ROK mood cools down in Japan” Yomiuri from translation. August 7, 2006: A12.

Japan's Air Self-Defense Force is dual purpose and appears to possess a strike capability. Japan's inventory of current attack capable fighters is 45 Mitsubishi F-2 variants (strikingly similar to the U.S. F-16) and 158 U.S. made F-15J Eagles.<sup>68</sup> For note of reference, the 1981 Israeli attack on the Iraqi Osirak Nuclear facility used older models of the F15s and F16s to a very successful end.<sup>69</sup> Japan acquired systems for defending the islands against invasion. Therefore, the Army maintains very few tanks, considering the manpower is as large as the United Kingdom,<sup>70</sup> but a very robust Air Force capable of attacking ground targets. Furthermore, the JSDF is developing a more robust airborne radar jamming capability - a necessity against the thorough North Korean coastal air defense. The combat power is not all-inclusive as the air power cannot attack without reliable targeting information.

Japan understands this importance and is improving its domestic intelligence capability. The first intelligence satellite launched in 2003. In September 2006, Japan launched its third intelligence satellite, not quite reaching the original goal of eight by the end of the year.<sup>71</sup> The first two were imagery platforms, with one being a synthetic aperture radar (SAR) capable of collecting imagery despite adverse weather conditions. The third is a suspected imagery platform as well.<sup>72</sup> Japan also has a robust airborne Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) and Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) capability. Its collection platforms routinely collect electronic order of battle (EOB), the "location of each detected

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68 "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: Japan Air Forces." Jane's Information Group <http://online.janes.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/index.html>.

69 Jewish Virtual Library. "Raid on the Iraqi Reactor." <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Osirak.html>.

70 For a detailed look at the comparative military strengths, use Jane's Online. <http://online.janes.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/index.html>.

71 Eric Talmadge, "Japan Plans September Launch for New Spy Satellite" Space.com (July 26, 2006). [http://www.space.com/missionlaunches/ap\\_060726\\_japan\\_spysatellite.html](http://www.space.com/missionlaunches/ap_060726_japan_spysatellite.html).

72 Tetsuo Hidaka and Yasuda, Koichi. "Better spy Satellite System needed/Reliance on U.S. Intelligence on Missile Launch Shows Need for Improvement." Daily Yomiuri Online, July 31, 2006. <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20060731TDY03003.htm>.

signal emitter and the parameters of the signals.”<sup>73</sup> The EOB determines the locations of missile sites, command and control sites, and air defense radars as well as changes in patterns. The SIGINT/ELINT capability, combined with the Imagery capability, gives Japan the necessary edge for identification and tracking North Korean missile launch sites and provides the early warning necessary for determining an eminent attack.

North Korean targets, while well protected, are not as prolific as believed. As stated before, the DPRK has over 200 No-Dong Missiles, but, according to unclassified reporting, North Korea may only have as many as 50 launchers.<sup>74</sup> The No-Dong missile is liquid fueled, as is the Taepo-Dong and SCUD variants, meaning the missiles are not mission ready. The fuel and the oxidizer are kept separate, due to the volatility of the mixture, and fueling a missile for launch takes several hours. The U.S. intelligence community identified the fueling process prior to the launches in 2006, giving the international community ample warning for the event. It seems plausible that Japan is slowly assuming a more offensive role for deterrence capabilities.

Even with the technical capability and some shifting public opinions, is a reemerging militarized Japan a feasible concern for the region? If Japan does opt for a preemptive strike capability, it risks three key factors. First, there is no guarantee of total success and despite the size and quality of the Air Forces, the JSDF is not prepared for such an offensive role. Secondly, the DPRK may launch a series of reprisal attacks, and third, developing the capability brings condemnation from the international community – counter to Japan’s global leadership aspirations.

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<sup>73</sup> Desmond Ball and Graham, Euan., “Japanese SIGINT Takes Off.” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, December 2000. EOB collect intelligence on enemy electronic signals such as the frequency (wavelength), strength, pulse rate, pulse repetition frequency, scan rate, antenna pattern (beam width), antenna gain, antenna polarization, pulse width and pulse shape, and the transmission schedules.

<sup>74</sup> “Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat.” National Air and Space Intelligence Center. NAIC-1031-0985-03. (August 2003).

As stated above, Japan has three imagery satellites in orbit as of September 2006. There is no guarantee, however, that the three are operating perfectly or that all three are specifically oriented on North Korea. Moreover, China's successful downing of a satellite in 2007 emphasizes intelligence satellite vulnerability. Even with functioning collection assets, Japan may miss several launchers. What if the intelligence is old and some launchers have moved? Suppose Japan launches a preemptive strike against all 50 launchers, and only destroys 40, the other 10 targets surviving due to pilot error, intelligence failures, or DPRK air defense success. At this point, Japan could face at least 10 launchers and the remaining missiles would undoubtedly target Tokyo. At that point, Japan would need the missile defense capability against the reprisal attack.

Reportedly, the PAC-3, the desired missile defense system, maintains it has a 92% success ratio.<sup>75</sup> However, other reports consider it a much lower success rate. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, for example, the PAC-3 mistook two friendly aircraft for incoming missiles – showing its immaturity as a trustworthy system.<sup>76</sup> Japan's initial desire for a preemptive strike is the destruction of missile sites to protect its cities from eminent attack. If the preemptive attack fails, its situation could be wholly reliant on a less than perfect missile defense system.

The JSDF is not prepared for such a mission or a war. According to the Japan Defense Agency, its annual defense budget steadily decreased since 2001 and the projected mid-term defense program out to 2009 will decrease by 3.08 percent.<sup>77</sup> Procuring necessary equipment, training on the new equipment, and flight time for pilots drops significantly with less spending and places Japan

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<sup>75</sup> PAC-3. <http://online.janes.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/index.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Wade Boese, "Patriot Scorecard Mixed; PAC-3 Use Limited." *Arms Control Today*, *Arms Control Association*, May 2003. [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003\\_05/pac3\\_may03.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_05/pac3_may03.asp).

<sup>77</sup> Pinkston and Sakurai 2006, 114.

at a disadvantage. Even if spending increased immediately, Japan is wholly incapable of launching an attack until it acquires the in-flight refueling capability scheduled for late 2008.<sup>78</sup>

Second, Japan's actions would escalate the region to war. North Korea has repeatedly threatened turning Seoul into a "sea of fire." Japan's preemptive strike could lend confidence to Kim Jong Il to launch an unprecedented artillery, missile, and air attack against Seoul and Tokyo. The reprisal attacks would cost millions of lives in conventional warfare alone. North Korea's suspected nine nuclear weapons could also come into play. Japan is unwilling and unable to absorb these attacks and accept the ruin to its economic strength and source of its current power and prestige.

Third, the threat of international retaliation against Japanese aggression is more than the Japanese can bear. Japan only recently emerged from its economic slump caused by the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the bursting housing market. Japanese exports to the United States, China, and South Korea amounted to over \$451 billion, and it cannot afford to lose those markets. Furthermore, any attempts to enter the Security Council as a permanent member are lost against the retribution of current members, mainly China, Russia and possibly the United States.

Even the recent discussions by the Japanese Diet created general anger in the region with the Chinese vocalizing mistrust of Japanese decision makers. Peter Hays Gries points out that the *Peoples Daily* published a "scathing" editorial entitled "Japan, Do Not Do Stupid Things" that admonished Tokyo's aggressive discussions. It inspired several anti-Japanese books and articles of similar title and substance.<sup>79</sup> Even Japanese acquisition of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) from the United States invokes Chinese concern and anger. As

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<sup>78</sup> This date is chosen based on the established procurement of in-flight refueling capability but does not take into account that Japan lacks cruise missiles or air-to-surface missiles as pointed out by Pinkston and Sakurai 2006, 113.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 124.

one author puts it, “First the shield, then the sword,” highlighting Beijing’s worry that Japan will foolishly rush in to an arms race.<sup>80</sup>

It is not feasible for Japan to acquire a preemptive strike capability to counter the North Korean nuclear crisis despite the acquisition of in-flight refueling in 2008. According to Daniel Pinkston and Kazutaka Sakurai, “debate on preemption against North Korea is mostly for domestic consumption as Japanese politicians and policymakers seek to establish their credentials as tough leaders.”<sup>81</sup> Talk of preemption seems geared mostly towards courting the rising popular opinion for such a capability. More importantly, “the Yoshida Doctrine has been institutionalized in ways that make sharp discontinuity less likely than continued incremental change,”<sup>82</sup> and Japanese voters are “not likely to reward excessive tilts by their leaders in one direction or another for long.”<sup>83</sup> One can expect that militant calls for preemptive strike offensive capability will slowly fade in favor for small-scale changes over time. While there are arguments that this is a legitimate fear for Beijing, the overall message in China is one of confidence in Chinese superiority over Japan’s military, and Japan’s needless military growth. Several Chinese authors point out that cooler heads will prevail in Japan. The economic relationship Japan holds with China and other regional trading partners is too great to risk on confrontation.<sup>84</sup> Political, diplomatic and military discussions will actively prevent deterioration to unilateral action.<sup>85</sup> The risks for Japan currently outweigh the gains and Beijing can rest assured that Japan is not on the offensive.

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<sup>80</sup> Joseph Cirincione, “The Asian Nuclear Reaction Chain,” *Foreign Policy* 118 (Spring 2000), 129.

<sup>81</sup> Pinkston and Sakurai 2006, 121.

<sup>82</sup> Richard J. Samuels, “Japan’s Emerging Grand Strategy,” *Asia Policy* 3 (January 2007), 62.

<sup>83</sup> Samuels 2007, 62.

<sup>84</sup> *International Strategic Analysis, 2003-2004*. (Beijing: NDU Press; 2004)

<sup>85</sup> Bai Ruixue, Fan Yongqiang, and Dou Chen, “Policy, Harmonious Military: China Should Handle Defense with the Door Open (translated),” *Guoji Xianqu Daobao* (December 28, 2006).

#### D. REGIME COLLAPSE SCENARIOS

North Korea is a physical buffer between U.S. ground forces and the Chinese mainland and Beijing's concern is that heavy-handed actions on Pyongyang (e.g., sanctions) will cause instability in the regime and eventual collapse. There are two ways for North Korea to collapse, implosion or explosion. An implosion model is the more peaceful means for the Kim regime collapse. In this scenario, the regime loses legitimacy and dissolves or an internal revolution destroys the DPRK from within. The United Nations, ROK and possibly the U.S. military might occupy North Korea as peacekeepers and attempt Korean reunification. The explosion model, on the other hand, is a violent collapse. In a last ditch effort for survival and domestic legitimacy, Kim Jong Il launches a massive artillery, missile and even nuclear attack on South Korea, Japan or even China. The United States and ROK militaries would counterattack and occupy North Korea as conquerors and peacekeepers for nation building and eventual unification. Both scenarios bode ill for China. First, a collapse places the United States on China's border for the first time since the Korean War. Second, the incredible refugee flow would destabilize China's northeastern region, and, third, war counteracts China's economic growth.

China does not want the United States military on its border. Historically, the Korean peninsula served as a natural bridge and a launching point for Japanese attacks into mainland China. The first time, 1592-1598, was a failed attempt by a newly unified and powerful Japan followed centuries later in the 1890s as Japan flexed its regional power defeating the Chinese on the peninsula in 1895 and then the Russians at sea in 1905.<sup>86</sup> Since World War II, Beijing went to great lengths keeping a buffer between itself and its enemies. In 1950, Mao Zedong launched millions of Chinese volunteer soldiers into North Korea to

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<sup>86</sup> Gilbert Rozman, "Regionalism in Northeast Asia: Korea's Return to Center Stage," in Armstrong, Charles, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel Kim and Stephen Kotkin, eds., *Korea At The Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 151.

repel the U.S. military attack. China lost an estimated 980,000 volunteers, including Mao's son. Since then, North Korea served as an excellent barrier between the Chinese and U.S. militaries.

The second problem involved in a DPRK regime collapse is the massive refugee flow into China. Even without a war, estimates of refugees (or illegal border crossers) in 2002 stood at 150,000 while 2003 estimates doubled the number escaping across the Yalu into China.<sup>87</sup> The Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, directly north of the Yalu, is littered with closed and inoperable industrial plants throughout the area. Unemployment in Yanbian is rampant with no social safety net, making domestic peace tenuous. Moreover, the cultural Koreans in the area, the largest Korean diaspora population, prefers to speak Korean rather than the official Mandarin.<sup>88</sup> An unexpected surge of refugees flooding across the border as the Kim regime collapsed would create significant issues for Beijing. First, it cannot house, feed, employ and secure that many ethnic Koreans in an area already suffering severe unemployment and depressed economic conditions. Second, the millions of ethnic Koreans legally living in the Yanbian area could undermine Chinese attempts to block the border. A mass Korean demonstration of "ethno-national conflict" against the Chinese government would make the situation chaotic.<sup>89</sup> Third, the international community, specifically the Red Cross, doctors without borders, and other humanitarian non-governmental organizations, would find it necessary to explore China's actions in refugee camps. China does not enjoy entertaining external pressures that question its governance, sovereignty or actions.<sup>90</sup> Based on

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<sup>87</sup> Gloria Koo, "China and North Korea," *Stanford Journal of International Relations* (2006) [http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/6.1.02\\_koo.html](http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/6.1.02_koo.html).

<sup>88</sup> Krawitz 2003.

<sup>89</sup> Samuel S. Kim, "Inter-Korean Relations in Northeast Asian Geopolitics," in Armstrong, Charles, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel Kim, and Stephen Kotkin, eds., *Korea At The Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 173.

<sup>90</sup> In the past, China barred admittance of international aid presence, including any role for the United National High Commission for Refugees. U.S. Congress, "Korea: U.S.-Korean Relations – Issues for Congress." Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Larry A. Niksch, IB98045, June 7, 2006.

international law, as China is a signatory to international agreements on the treatment of refugees, the refugees would require better treatment than that given to rural Chinese.<sup>91</sup> This would create another domestic dispute that China hopes to avoid. Beijing has even gone to the extreme of conducting “refugee round-ups” throughout the Jilin Province, deporting the captured to North Korea.<sup>92</sup> David Shambaugh points out that this “round-up” serves several purposes including reducing the embarrassment of embassy compound break-ins by asylum seekers, reduces the second order effect of Pyongyang regime collapse caused by a mass exodus of citizenry, and placates North Korea who specifically requested the repatriation of so many refugees.<sup>93</sup>

The third major concern pertains to the Chinese economy. The explosion collapse scenario would severely damage the South Korean and Japanese economies. Both countries invest billions in foreign direct investment in China and both are major trading partners. The sudden withdrawal of South Korean foreign direct investment (FDI), for example, would “seriously undermine the Chinese leadership's ability to reach its 2020 economic development target.”<sup>94</sup> In addition, the influx of refugees, as discussed above, would put a strain on the northern economy. All the effects of a regional war would certainly idle, if not collapse, China’s impressive growth.

Keeping the Kim regime afloat counters these arguments. As Samuel Kim points out, “China’s foreign policy wish list with respect to its communist neighbor includes at least five ‘No’s:’ No instability, No collapse, No nukes, No refugees or defectors, and No conflict.”<sup>95</sup> China provides a majority of North Korea’s food and fuel imports, supplying 70-90 percent of Pyongyang’s oil and over 40 percent

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<sup>91</sup> Park 2005, 83.

<sup>92</sup> U.S. Congress, “Korea: U.S.-Korean Relations – Issues for Congress.” Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Larry A Nicksch, IB98045, June 7, 2006.

<sup>93</sup> David Shambaugh, “China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2003), 43-56.

<sup>94</sup> Park 2005, 82.

<sup>95</sup> Kim 2006, 172.

of its sustenance needs with very little reciprocal trade.<sup>96</sup> Despite UN Resolution 1718 calling for sanctions against North Korea, China was slow to impose border inspections or stem the flow of items onto the peninsula. Beijing believes Pyongyang will survive longer based on its decisions not to enact an economic blockade.<sup>97</sup> Often, the United States and Japan voice concerns and want China to stop oil and food shipments to North Korea until Kim Jong-Il ends the crisis. Yet Beijing does not heed the call despite having the capability to do so. Evidence suggests that Beijing stopped oil shipments to the DPRK in the past. In 2003, China stopped the flow for three days. Supposedly, Chinese officials warned North Korean Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun that Pyongyang should not provoke the United States. Soon afterward, the Daqing pipeline shutdown for what Beijing labeled “technical difficulties.”<sup>98</sup> Immediately following the underground test in 2006, Beijing delayed shipments of oil until Pyongyang received Hu Jintao’s personal representative, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan. Soon after the meeting, Kim Jong-Il pledged no further tests in the near future.<sup>99</sup> Beijing is also willing to withhold support. On occasion, China has suspended shipments of humanitarian aid because Pyongyang “regularly forgets to return railroad rolling stock.”<sup>100</sup> China has the capability to shut all oil and goods flowing into North Korea, but it is not in Beijing’s interest to do so. As Andrew Scobell points out, “China has a major stake in ensuring the continued survival of the North Korean regime and may be willing to go to considerable lengths to guarantee this.”<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Beijing certainly recognizes that the United States,

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<sup>96</sup> Park 2005, 83.; and Koo 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Xing 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Park 2005, 83; Yong 2006, 368.

<sup>99</sup> Eric Teo Chu Cheow, “The North Korean Missile and Nuclear Crises: China’s Historic and Strategic Stakes on the Korean Peninsula.” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 37.

<sup>100</sup> Dick K. Nanto, “North Korea’s Economic Crisis, Reforms, and Policy Implications,” in Kihl, Young Whan and Kim Hong Nack, eds., *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 136.

<sup>101</sup> Scobell, Andrew. “China and North Korea: From Comrades-In-Arms to Allies at Arm’s Length.” *Strategic Studies Institute* (March 2004): 29, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi>.

Japan, South Korea, and Russia are reliant on China's initiatives in resolving the crisis and thereby has the opportunity to act in its own self-interests.

Beijing remains confident about Pyongyang's survival. Chinese investment in North Korea rose over the past five years with investment reaching \$59 million in 2004, 85 percent of all foreign investment in the DPRK.<sup>102</sup> One scathing Chinese commentary claimed that "conjectures" of DPRK collapse are distracting from the six-party talks, "insensitive" and a "left-over from the Cold War era." The report continues, "Certain western countries are always pinning their hopes on a DPRK regime collapse so as to win their game ... but the base policy is mistaken and the chances of success extremely remote."<sup>103</sup>

#### **E. UNITED STATES OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS**

The final argument shows concern for a U.S.-led preemptive attack on North Korea, violently ending the nuclear crisis. This argument surmises that even if North Korea does not initiate conflict, a war will still take place under the guise of preemptive defense. An American assault will trigger an explosive collapse scenario, incite insurgent fighting, or draw the region to war. Similar to the regime collapse scenario, China's concerns include U.S. military forces on its border, mass refugee movements, and economic disruption in the region.

President George W. Bush announced his philosophy on preemptive strike defense in the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) and later reaffirmed the strategy in the 2006 update. In 2001, only weeks after the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City, the United States launched a major offensive on Afghanistan destroying the Taliban regime. In March 2003, it attacked Iraq to overthrow a dictator, end a regime, and destroy weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Operation Iraqi Freedom proved difficult to handle and threatens to

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<sup>102</sup> Xing Jun, "Analysis and Assessment of PRC-DPRK Economic Cooperation Environment," *Dongbeiya Yanjiu* (March 25, 2007).

<sup>103</sup> Ba Ke, Sun Xiuping, Wang Wen, Zhang Nanyi, "ROK Reveals Sensitive Report," *Huanqiu Shibao* (December 20, 2006).

destabilize the Middle East region. In this regard, Washington's actions are inherently dangerous as it correlates to North Korea. President Bush mentioned both Iraq and North Korea in his infamous "axis of evil" speech and one year later attacked Iraq. The excuse to attack was WMD and North Korea's nuclear weapons facilities and Yongbyong nuclear reactor certainly fit that description as well.

That said, is it feasible for the United States to launch a preemptive strike or otherwise initiate an offensive against North Korea? Over 170,000 soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines fight a difficult insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. The press consistently reports how thinly stretched the military has become and it will take billions of dollars to recoup the Army when it finally vacates Iraq. President Bush lacks support in the Congress and the international community for almost every initiative. U.S. bases in South Korea are pulling further south, away from the DMZ, to areas around Pusan. One Chinese author attests that the U.S. will "definitely not attack the DPRK because China opposes it, the DPRK has nuclear weapons as an effective deterrence, the size of the DPRK ground forces are too large, and the U.S. military is busy elsewhere."<sup>104</sup> If Beijing recognizes these factors, then the specter of U.S. preemptive attack on North Korea loses its luster. Washington's actions in the past years make it difficult if not impossible to launch an offensive against North Korea.

China's reaction is also a major factor in curbing a preemptive strike option. Beijing has not officially rescinded its defense treaty with the DPRK and yet has not openly stated that it will support North Korea in a war. Ambiguity is a powerful deterrent against unilateral military action. Washington must remain wary of China's position in the matter and should not risk an accidental war from efforts designed to secure South Korea and Japan against Pyongyang's nuclear weapons. China is also proactive in keeping the United States military busy in other regions. Reports surfaced showing China supplies Iraqi and Afghan

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<sup>104</sup> Shen 2006.

insurgents with weapons.<sup>105</sup> While China is concerned with a U.S. preemptive strike or offensive move against North Korea, the current international situation combined with China's posture and ambiguity successfully limits the danger.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

The North Korean nuclear crisis threatens to destabilize the region. The United States and Japan are set on ending the crisis swiftly, removing nuclear weapons from the peninsula. Washington projects fears on China and U.S. policy makers express exasperation towards Beijing's inactivity to end the crisis. Literature identifies four major concerns surrounding the crisis: that it will spark a nuclear domino effect; that Japan will reemerge as a military power; that the Kim regime will collapse, exposing China's border; and that the United States will launch a preemptive strike or conduct offensive operations. While these concerns seem valid explanations for Chinese timidity in dealing with Pyongyang, this chapter showed that international conditions and Chinese actions dissipate the concerns rendering them toothless. With the fears assuaged, the following questions remain. Why does Beijing not take stronger Washington-like actions against Pyongyang? What options does Beijing have in dealing with the issue in the most effective manner? Does China have significant influence over the Kim regime? Will Beijing exert that influence over a friend and communist brother? In the end, the region is wholly reliant on China to make the concerted effort in solving the crisis.

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<sup>105</sup> Demetri Sevastopulo, "U.S. concerns over China weapons in Iraq," *Financial Times*, July 6, 2007.

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### **III. BEIJING'S OPTIONS ARE OPEN**

During the first North Korean nuclear crisis, heating rapidly in 1993 and 1994, Beijing did little to quell the rhetoric or cool tensions in the region. Eventually, North Korea and the United States signed the Agreed Framework and the crisis calmed considerably. In 2002, when it erupted again, China emerged as a major bulwark for the region, stressing bi-lateral, then hosting tri-lateral and finally multi-lateral talks to discern a feasible outcome. Beijing is now a major player in the crisis. What are Beijing's options and is it capable of influencing the situation to favorable ends? Why do China's actions not follow the United States' desires?

This chapter briefly explains Beijing's four policy options and then shows that China maintains the will and ability to influence Pyongyang for its own self interests. The four options include, revive the "lips and teeth" closeness, taking a more hardline stance similar to the U.S. method, ignore the issue, or maintain a certain status quo and use the issue to its advantage. After identifying the best policy option, a glimpse into the relationship between Pyongyang and Beijing shows that China holds a coercive influence and the political will to use that influence over its neighbor.

#### **A. OPTIONS**

The "lips and teeth" refers to China and North Korea's past relationship. It was often said by Beijing that if the lips are gone (referring to North Korea), the teeth would grow cold. If Beijing and Pyongyang revived the old close relationship, similar to the days when Mao provided hundreds of thousands of soldiers in the Korean War, Beijing would enjoy several positive results. First, the close relationship would ensure regime survival. Food and fuel would continue to flow if not increase in quantity and quality, and the partnership could bolster the Kim regime's domestic legitimacy. Second, a very specific guarantee

of military support would further deter a U.S. preemptive strike on North Korea. While this option avoids regime collapse and U.S. offensive action, it also holds dangerous consequences.

In this option, China essentially isolates Japan in the region. First, if China does not admonish North Korea for its threatening stance against Japan, Tokyo will rightfully see a delineation of states – those for and those against North Korea. Second, Japan may feel the Sino-North Korean relationship further degrades the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Washington may not reciprocate North Korean attacks, as promised to the Japanese, if China guarantees to attack America in return (as would be a possible outcome of the revived lips and teeth relationship). This would notify the Japanese that the United States will not trade one Californian for Tokyo. In the end, an isolated Japan will opt for a robust military and/or nuclear weapons to deter the combined Sino-North Korean threat.

The second option is to take a more threatening stance against Pyongyang, enacting sanctions and diplomatic demands or even supporting a U.S. led military operation. This option is a departure from Sino-DPRK relations and a decision to clamp down on trade between the two. The positive outcome of this action includes a closer relationship with Japan, which means Japan may feel less a need for nuclear weapons or offensive capabilities. Any attempts by the Chinese to back firm Japanese-led resolutions or actions will bolster the bilateral relationship. Unfortunately, this option creates a handful of negative consequences. First, South Korea will feel betrayed by the only other country willing to keep the north from collapsing. Second, the Kim regime will most likely collapse without full Chinese support; inciting either the implosion or the explosion collapse scenarios accompanied by the negative effects discussed above. A great uncertainty is how Pyongyang would react to a harsh Chinese willingness to follow the Washington consensus or threaten North Korea militarily. This could spur a “do or die” attitude in Pyongyang, releasing the

feared explosion scenario.<sup>106</sup> Third, the United States may feel emboldened by perceived or real Chinese support and seek an even more aggressive stance against North Korea. Preemptive strikes and offensive operations may seem feasible to avoid a violent collapse scenario and an opportunity to encapsulate and control the situation as quickly as possible. Finally, harsh sanctions against North Korea send mixed signals to Tehran. Iran is still a large provider of Chinese imported oil and Beijing has played a major role in stopping Security Council resolutions to protect this energy source. A sudden reversal on North Korea, opting for harsh sanctions, may convince Iran that it is further isolated. Iran in turn could do something rash, either launch an assault or test a nuclear weapon, threatening Chinese and American oil interests in the region. While Washington seems more apt to press China into introducing sanctions and constantly pushes Beijing to “act responsibly,” this option proves the most detrimental to Beijing.

In the third option, China ignores international calls for intercession and sanctions and takes no major part in resolving the talks to avoid losing face. Like the four wise monkeys that hear, speak, see and do no evil, China would maintain a certain aloof attitude to the crisis. As prerequisite, Beijing would maintain the current Sino-North Korean ties via trade and less-than-hostile relations. The constant flow of oil and food would keep North Korea afloat, avoiding regime collapse. In addition, this option will help China save face. If there is no effort, there is no failure. “The specter of a possible public diplomacy failure and the prospect of subsequent international humiliation are real fears for Beijing.”<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, this scenario also has negative effects. First, China’s refusal to enter into multi-lateral discussions with other regional players would hurt China with respect to other regional matters. Beijing’s refusal to intervene in the North Korea crisis could leave other Chinese partners (e.g., Sudan, Iran and Venezuela) feeling stranded against the Washington consensus. If those

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<sup>106</sup> Krawitz 2003, 3.

<sup>107</sup> Krawitz 2003, 4.

countries cannot count on China, they may contradict past bilateral agreements with Beijing. Another negative consequence is that Japan and the United States may increase efforts against North Korea, which could strain Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese relations. More pressure or aggressive action against North Korea with a disengaged China may increase the possibility of North Korean collapse under security pressures, incite the explosion collapse scenario, and draw China into a much-discouraged regional war.

The final option pits Beijing as an interested member of the regional community that takes limited opportunities to develop the situation to a healthy conclusion that suits its economic, security and diplomatic goals. For Beijing, the nuclear crisis presents an opportunity to adopt what Andrew Scobell calls a “wait and see” stance on the issue.<sup>108</sup> Consequences of this option are mostly positive because China can adopt middle of the road criteria for almost every issue. For example, by adopting limited sanctions against luxury goods, Beijing can claim a hard-line stance that follows the international community’s lead, but can also keep Pyongyang afloat by continuing fuel and food shipments without abatement – thereby keeping North Korea from collapse. As one senior Chinese leader said, “We can either send food to North Korea or they will send refugees to us – either way, we feed them. It is more convenient to feed them in North Korea than in China.”<sup>109</sup>

Second, China can make damning statements of admonition towards Pyongyang without agreeing to military action and reminding the world that North Korea is still China’s only defensive treaty partner. This keeps the Kim regime from feeling isolated and keeps the United States from adopting an offensive minded platform. Beijing has also stated it would not support North Korea

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<sup>108</sup> Andrew Scobell and Michael R. Chamber, “The Fallout of a Nuclear North Korea,” *Current History* (September 2005): 292.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in David Lampton and Richard Daniel Ewing, *The U.S.-China Relationship Facing International Security Crises: Three Case Studies in Post-9/11 Bilateral Relations* (Washington DC: The Nixon Center, 2004): 70.

militarily if Kim Jong-il launched an offensive. This is a very clear statement to North Korea that unilateral action would remain unilateral.

Third, China can help the region “slow boil” into accepting a nuclear North Korea.<sup>110</sup> In this case, the North Korean nuclear crisis occurred over an almost 17-year period from 1989, when it first shut down the reactor to extract plutonium, to 2006, when it first tested a nuclear device. The issue has been ongoing for such an extended period that each step in the process seems only slightly worse than the one before – incrementally increasing the temperature of the water. The missile tests in July 2006, for example, performed just such a task. As Bruce Klingner points out, “Kim Jong-Il assessed that a missile test would be less inflammatory than a nuclear test and, therefore, less likely to generate a strong allied response.”<sup>111</sup> With the “heated” international community over the missile test, raising the temperature with a nuclear test was not as extreme as it could have been even a year earlier. China can help the international community accept the situation by slowing North Korea’s nuclear aspirations long enough to avoid “flash boiling” the region. For example, if Japan “accepts,” even begrudgingly and non-officially, a nuclear North Korea, Tokyo will not acquire nuclear weapons or adopt an offensive military posture. This will work only if North Korea draws out the next step in testing or fielding long enough to make a nuclear North Korea the norm.

On the contrary, China could lose face if North Korea does not act according to Beijing’s wishes. The recent nuclear test, which Hu Jintao specifically called on Kim Jong Il to refrain from conducting, is one signal that this option may not come to fruition. The 2006 missile tests are another. Also, the longer this crisis is prolonged the more China must invest in keeping North Korea from collapsing and the more diplomatic currency it must spend in keeping the

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<sup>110</sup> “Slow boil” is a way of slowly heating food or water until it finally reaches a boiling temperature. A popular saying postulates that if you throw a frog in boiling water, it will jump out, but if placed in warm water and the temperature is slowly raised, the frog allows itself to boil.

<sup>111</sup> Bruce Klingner, “The Regional Security Implications of North Korea’s Missile Launch.” *Korea and World Affairs* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 346.

situation calm. Chapter IV is dedicated to this fourth option and Beijing's efforts to not only placate the region and North Korea, but also use the situation to its full advantage.

## **B. COERCIVE INFLUENCE AND THE WILL TO USE IT**

Years of “on-again, off-again” closeness between Pyongyang and Beijing offers interesting commentary of China’s effect on its “little brother.” One argument generally follows the logic that the two no longer carry a “lips and teeth” relationship. There lacks a certain “fraternal sentimentality.”<sup>112</sup> That said, the most prevalent argument, while not deviating from the belief that the closeness is lacking a certain “spark,” points out that Beijing’s heavy support towards Pyongyang places China in a very advantageous position. Victor Cha and David Kang explain that the sheer amount of supplies shipped across the Yalu River is a “testament to the capabilities Beijing can bring to bear on the North.”<sup>113</sup> China provides nearly all the fuel oil, estimated at 90 percent, and the largest single percentage of food support to Pyongyang, approximately one-third of North Korea’s food imports. Samuel Kim points out, “Although the exact amount and terms of China’s aid to North Korea remain unclear, it is generally estimated at one-quarter to one-third of China’s overall foreign aid.”<sup>114</sup>

Beijing is also a large trading partner with North Korea. Sino-DPRK trade has doubled since the beginning of the second nuclear crisis, jumping from 738 million in 2002 to 1.6 billion in 2005, making Chinese trade 40 percent of North Korea’s total foreign trade.<sup>115</sup> This relationship seems to have grown naturally rather than as a Chinese design. As one author argued, “Intensifying economic

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<sup>112</sup> Stephen Blank, “The End of the Six-Party Talks?” *Strategic Insights*, 6, no. 1 (January 2007). and Andrew Scobell, “China and North Korea: From Comrades-In-Arms to Allies At Arm’s Length,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, (March 2004), <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi>.

<sup>113</sup> Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 165.

<sup>114</sup> Samuel S. Kim, *Demystifying North Korea* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007).

<sup>115</sup> Kim 2007, 19.

sanctions may push North Korea further into the Chinese economic embrace and may increase Pyongyang's political dependence on Beijing's will and benevolence."<sup>116</sup> This increased economic, aid-induced, and dependent relationship drives China's lone capability to wield influence over the crisis.

Evidence of past actions illustrates China's coercive influence over North Korea for its own gains. As discussed earlier, in 2003, Beijing shut off oil supply citing mechanical issues. While there are those that believe the mechanical excuse, it did precede North Korean concessions in the Six Party Talks.<sup>117</sup> In late 2005, the Bank of China, the second largest state owned financial institution, froze North Korean accounts to "combat Pyongyang's counterfeiting and money laundering activities."<sup>118</sup> Whether this was designed to place stress on Pyongyang is unclear, but it does highlight China's willingness to exact "narrowly tailored, non-publicized punitive action" against its neighbor.<sup>119</sup> Immediately after the October nuclear test, Beijing "delayed" the shipments of oil and "insisted that Kim receive Hu's personal representative, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan."<sup>120</sup> Immediately afterward, Pyongyang announced no further nuclear tests. One report showed that China will withhold aid supplies on occasion as punishment for unreturned rolling stock.<sup>121</sup> When the situation permits, Beijing is capable of placing necessary stress and pressure on Pyongyang. Right now, North Korea's

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<sup>116</sup> Alexandre Y. Mansourov, "Economic Takeoff Possibilities And National Security Realities in the DPRK," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 20, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 75.

<sup>117</sup> Andrew Scobell, "China and North Korea: The Limits of Influence," *Current History* 102, no. 665 (September 2003): 278. and Scobell 2004, 23.

<sup>118</sup> Bruce Klingner, "The Regional Security Implications of North Korea's Missile Launch," *Korea and World Affairs* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 352.

<sup>119</sup> Klingner 2006, 352.

<sup>120</sup> Eric Teo Chu Cheow, "The North Korean Missile and Nuclear Crises: China's Historic and Strategic Stakes on the Korean Peninsula," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 36.

<sup>121</sup> Nanto 2006, 136.

isolation (to a point) is in China's diplomatic interest.<sup>122</sup> The less Pyongyang can do on its own, the more influence China has over its future. But how can China do this to its little brother?

The Sino-DPRK relationship suffered early and often throughout the decades. If the relationship is characterized by Chinese support in the Korean War and immediately afterward, one can argue it was never that strong. For example, the Chinese name for the Korean Conflict from 1950 to 1952 is, "Resist America and Aid Korea," (kangmei yuanchao), which shows that the main effort was not solely a support of the DPRK or expanding the communist ideology. Instead, it shows that limiting America's northern march and helping the DPRK defend against America were the primary factors to achieve what Beijing wanted – a physical barrier. In the early 1950's, Kim Il-Sung purged the pro-China faction in North Korea under the watchful eye of the Soviet Union despite the severe human toll China absorbed in the Korean War.<sup>123</sup> In 1974, Mao Zedong argued against the Kim succession to Kim Jong Il citing it was against good practice.<sup>124</sup> Then, Kim Il-Sung was openly critical of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As Andrew Scobell puts it, the relationship went from "comrades-in-arms to allies at arms length."<sup>125</sup> More importantly, as China continued economic improvement, the impoverished neighbor became an embarrassing reality of what used to be and what could have been.

Popular opinion inside China of North Korean actions continues to slide. State-run CCTV allowed "heavy coverage of international condemnation of North Korea" and "little effort was made to explain the DPRK's position."<sup>126</sup> In addition,

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<sup>122</sup> You Ji, "China and North Korea: A Fragile Relationship of Strategic Convenience," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, no. 28 (2001): 392.

<sup>123</sup> You Ji 2001.

<sup>124</sup> You Ji 2001.

<sup>125</sup> Scobell 2004, 19.

<sup>126</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, "Great Expectations: Washington, Beijing, and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 22.

many Chinese view the North Koreans as “ingrates,” citing specifically a lack of references in the Panmunjom war museum to China’s immense role in the Korean War.<sup>127</sup> A Chinese public opinion poll taken in February 2006, found North Korea as the second most hated country, behind Japan, and only 12 percent of the respondents believed Beijing needed to increase bilateral relations with Pyongyang.<sup>128</sup> The significance of the poll is that it occurred prior to the July missile launch and the October underground test. It seems apparent there is a societal break between the two countries.

There are several accounts that North Korea’s actions over the past five years resulted in Beijing’s loss of face. “The [nuclear] tests made a mockery of ...China’s policy of good neighborliness.”<sup>129</sup> Zhu Feng, the director of the International Security Program at Beijing University, also notes contemptuously that past action “shows undeniably that Pyongyang not only lacks a basic appreciation of China’s painstaking efforts on its behalf, but contempt for China’s security interest in Northeast Asia.”<sup>130</sup> He goes on to refer to Pyongyang’s actions as “No less than a slap in the China’s face.”<sup>131</sup> The week North Korea chose for testing missiles in 2006 was also seen as disrespectful to Beijing. That week was celebrated as the 45th anniversary of the PRC-DPRK Friendship Treaty.<sup>132</sup> That week, Hu Jintao made an unusual public warning to Pyongyang against the launch, but his efforts were ignored – another loss of face.<sup>133</sup> The test also occurred on the heels of a historic Abe Shinzo visit to Beijing and just prior to the arrival of President Roh.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, Hu Jintao, as well as his predecessors, made several overt calls for Pyongyang’s adoption of Chinese-

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<sup>127</sup> Scobell 2004.

<sup>128</sup> Zhu Feng, “Shifting Tides: China and North Korea,” *China Security* (Autumn 2006): 39.

<sup>129</sup> “China’s Little Brother Is A Big Headache,” *The Economist*, March 29, 2007.

<sup>130</sup> Zhu 2006, 38.

<sup>131</sup> Zhu 2006, 40.

<sup>132</sup> Cheow 2006, 34.

<sup>133</sup> Klingner 2006.

<sup>134</sup> Cheow 2006, 37.

style economic opening which the Kim regime ignored. In 1999, for example, Chairman Jiang Zemin “suggested conducting economic reform so as to promote economic growth,” but Kim Young Nam responded, “national defense took number one priority.”<sup>135</sup> There are also reports that officials and scholars urged North Korean counterparts’ cooperation with “Chinese leaders’ expectations.”<sup>136</sup> When little brother doesn’t listen, big brother is disgraced. As Eric Teo Cheow aptly states, “one could indeed get badly scorched by tugging too hard at the dragon’s tail.”<sup>137</sup> North Korea may have stepped over its bounds and lost its only potential true friend.

The widening chasm of Sino-DPRK relations, whether taken as public opinion, a historical argument, or a matter of face demonstrates why the Chinese may have a “clear conscience” and an “open road” to use North Korea and the crisis to its full advantage. “For China, relations with the United States and Europe are a much higher priority than those with North Korea.”<sup>138</sup> However, China is clearly unwilling to expend its influence at Washington’s requests and demands. On its own volitions, it sees great opportunities to impact its diplomatic, military and economic goals by using its coercive influence over the crumbling neighbor.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

Washington may wish for Chinese action in solving the crisis but Beijing’s options may not follow the same logic. This chapter showed the four most prevalent policy options for Beijing in dealing with the North Korean crisis. Reviving the “lips and teeth” relationship bodes ill for the blossoming Sino-ROK

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<sup>135</sup> Zhang Xizhen and Eugene Brown, “Policies Toward North Korea: A Time For New Thinking,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 9, no. 25 (November 2000): 542.

<sup>136</sup> Liu Ming, “China’s Role on the Korean Peninsula: Its Characteristics and Development,” *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies* 11 (2001): 109.

<sup>137</sup> Cheow 2006, 50.

<sup>138</sup> “China: The Shifting Strategy On Korea,” *Stratfor.com* (April 23, 2007), [http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read\\_article.php?id=287646](http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read_article.php?id=287646), (accessed April 2007).

and Sino-Japanese relationships as well as the continuing friendship with the United States. Dropping all support for North Korea as well as ignoring the issue are steps backwards in developing leadership roles and maintaining peace in the region. The final option available, using the situation to advantageous ends, provides for regional peace and negates the concerns outlined in the second chapter. This option requires influence over Pyongyang and this chapter showed that not only does Beijing enjoy coercive influence over the DPRK, but it is also willing to exert that influence for its own interests. The Sino-DPRK relationship lacks the warmth it once had and now China's hold on Pyongyang is really a food and fuel leash rather than a firm handshake between friends. Beijing holds coercive influence over Pyongyang, a willingness to exert influence, and its best option in dealing with the crisis involves taking the lead and using the situation to its best advantage.

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## **IV. MAKING IT WORK FOR BEIJING**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

A disruptive, stable, but non-violent, North Korea benefits Beijing. The previous chapters argued that existing international conditions and Beijing-led initiatives counter the perceived dangers of the North Korean crisis to Beijing's security. As well, Beijing's policy options are limited to keeping the Kim regime alive, taking the lead in the crisis and using it to its full advantage. Finally, China holds certain coercive influence over Pyongyang and the willingness to exert that influence for its own self-interests. This chapter argues that with that foundation, Beijing can then take advantage of the situation. This crisis, while not caused by Chinese initiatives, offers certain opportunities fulfilling some diplomatic, security and economic goals only so long as Beijing retains leadership in ending or continuing the Kim regime.

This chapter is divided into three sections that identify the advantages to Beijing for continuing, supporting, or simply denying other nations the capability to end the crisis. Gaining and maintaining regional leadership and hegemony is the first such advantage. The crisis widens opportunities to limit Washington's capabilities in the region by exposing fissures in alliances, limiting Japanese leadership and influence, enhancing security arrangements in the region, creates excuses (as if they are needed) to increase the size and modernity of the military, and it helps Beijing gain a foothold in determining Korean unification parameters. The second advantage is found in domestic economic development and primacy. Improving the Northeastern region, continuing cheap labor pools, maintaining primary economic influence in North Korea, and limiting economic competition with its neighbors help thrust China's economy towards its 2020 goal and beyond. The final advantage concerns Taiwan. By maintaining a controlling share of North Korea's future, China keeps the United States military in a more Korean focused posture versus Taiwan focused and China may someday trade

its hold on North Korea for concessions on the Taiwan question. As James A. Baker III points out, “North Korea is a Chinese trump card – one Beijing will almost certainly play.”<sup>139</sup> Beijing’s exploitation of the crisis is neither malicious nor immediately threatening to United States’ interests. As presented before, an explosive, collapsing Korea or war on the peninsula is anathema to both Washington and Beijing’s interests – something the two countries share. This crisis is an opportunity of advantageous scenarios and a reason to keep Pyongyang alive but non-violent.

## **B. REGIONAL LEADERSHIP**

After a century of humiliation, China is prepared to retake its place as regional power. Realizing this goal requires dismantling the current hegemon and creating a sphere of influence most pliable to direct Chinese influence. Beijing can exploit the North Korean crisis to its successful realization of several steps in the process. First, Beijing is watching and then assisting with limiting United States hegemony in the region. Fissures already present between Washington, Seoul and Tokyo are magnified through the crisis. Second, isolating Japan from the region limits Tokyo’s influence, thereby increasing Beijing’s. Third, controlling the crisis allows China an opportunity to enhance security arrangements including work with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), maintaining a buffer state, and possibly working towards a regional security forum. Fourth, the crisis presents the Peoples Liberation Army goals towards increasing the size and capability of the military. The regionally tenuous situation is all the more reason for increased efforts. Finally, Beijing can use its leadership in the crisis towards a unified Korean peninsula friendly to Chinese interests. China knows that strong relations with South Korea increase its chances of being the third party (behind the DPRK and ROK) in the unification

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<sup>139</sup> James A. Baker III, “China Plays Its China Card: North Korea or Human Rights,” Los Angeles Times, April 10, 1994, 2.

talks, increased economic ties, and a “foot in the door” for a myriad of other issues. These few lofty goals are progressed through a prolonged and relatively peaceful North Korean crisis.

### **1. Disrupt the United States’ Alliance System and Hegemony**

Disrupting the U.S. hegemony and widening fissures in already established alliances limit Washington’s capability and influence in the region. The first point is that the United States limited itself through its hard-line foreign policy decisions. Second, its ties with the region are weakening as illustrated by its loosening relations with Japan and flourishing anti-U.S. sentiment in South Korea. Finally, China’s actions widen those fissures in the alliance and sway the region to its interests.

The United States took a hard-line stance against North Korea, which limited its ability to affect the situation. The nearly unilateral attack on Iraq in 2003 placed the world on notice of Washington’s “belligerence” and possible impending anti-North Korean operations. North Korea repeatedly stated that its stance is directly predicated on the United States’ military posture and threatening position but Washington did nothing to limit that fear. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated bluntly in 2003, “America’s policy toward the DPRK-that is the main problem we are facing.”<sup>140</sup> In addition, Washington’s insistence that sanctions will solve the problem drove North Korea deeper into Beijing’s embrace.<sup>141</sup> Where the United States lacks patience in solving the crisis, China has displayed its willingness towards gradual responses.<sup>142</sup> Reliance on China and calls for Chinese action reflect the limits of Washington’s options.<sup>143</sup> Washington’s actions explain why the delegates sent to the Six Party

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<sup>140</sup> Carpenter 2006, 20.

<sup>141</sup> Mansourov 2006, 75.

<sup>142</sup> Scobell 2004, 13.

<sup>143</sup> Klingner 2006, 349.

Talks are “Americanists” rather than North Korean or Nuclear experts.<sup>144</sup> With the United States in a predicament where it cannot affect the situation to a speedy end, Beijing takes a stronger lead.

The United States’ treatment of Japan during the crisis creates fissures in the alliance. Public opinion in Japan holds the political leadership to a hard-line stance of resolving the abduction issue prior to any reconciliation with Pyongyang. To this end, Abe hoped the United States would join Tokyo in solving the issue and hoisted his trust in Washington’s stance in the crisis. When Christopher Hill met with North Korean negotiators in Berlin, it signaled a complete reversal in past policies and placed Japan in the difficult position of being the lone belligerent.<sup>145</sup> “Going against its own word that it would not deal bilaterally with the North, Washington concluded a secret pact with Pyongyang.”<sup>146</sup> As Congressman Edward Royce points out, “the United States now risks undermining one of its most crucial relationships in return for mere North Korean promises on its nuclear program.”<sup>147</sup>

Tokyo is also sensitive to changes in United States policy decisions regarding Japan, and China enjoys the windfall of recent issues and alliance fissures. In May 2007, Victor Cha, a well respected specialist in East Asian affairs stepped down as National Security Council director for Japan and Korea. Although this made little to no news in the United States, Japan was horrified in learning a 29-year-old woman with approximately 6 years analytic work in the region was replacing Victor Cha. A senior Foreign Ministry official in Tokyo remarked, “It must be a mistake. I wonder if Japan is being downplayed,” while

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<sup>144</sup> John S. Park, “Inside Multilateralism: The Six-Party Talks,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 2005), 88.

<sup>145</sup> “S.Korea, U.S. Shifting Focus From Japan to China,” *Chosun* (March 27, 2007), <http://wenglish.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200703/200703270011.html>, (accessed March 2007).

<sup>146</sup> Fuji Kamiya, “Addressing Nuclear and Abduction Issues Simultaneously Not Possible,” *Sankei* (abridged and translated by U.S. embassy Tokyo), May 18, 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Edward Royce, “Commentary: U.S., Japan and North Korea,” *Washington Times*, April 28, 2007.

another remarked, “They must be kidding!”<sup>148</sup> Then in 2007, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning Japanese use of “comfort women” during its occupation activities surrounding World War II and demanded public official apologies. Coming on the heels of the hotly debated topic in East Asia, it is a slap in the face to Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet. The Japanese may question whether the United States Congress openly chose South Korea and China over Japan. The timing of these fissures, during stressful times for fearful Japanese, fits nicely for China’s use in gaining regional hegemony.

For its part, China used its influence in North Korea and the crisis taking steps in gaining influence in Japan and exemplifying the fissures in the U.S. – Japan alliance. First, China laid the groundwork for assistance in solving the abduction issue. Beijing, if successful in providing information or an end to the stalled Japan-DPRK reconciliation, would gain a new level of support and coordination in Tokyo. Prime Minister Abe understands the importance China plays in solving the crisis and the fissures in the U.S. – Japan alliance. “Hoping to restore Japan’s strained ties with China, [Abe] made Beijing – rather than Washington – the destination of his first foreign visit.”<sup>149</sup> This represents two major shifts: that the United States is not seen as primary to solving the region’s issues and that Japan sees China as more significant than South Korea or Russia in Northeast Asian affairs. As Jiang Wenran points out, “It became necessary for Beijing’s prestige that the new Japanese prime minister’s first overseas trip be a symbolic one to China.”<sup>150</sup>

The crisis also wounds an already fragile relationship between the United States and South Korea affording Beijing ample opportunities for increased ties in Seoul. Years of confrontational actions against Pyongyang by Washington

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<sup>148</sup> “Japan Downgraded With 29-year-old Woman Named Director For Asian Affairs at White House NSC,” *Shukan Bunshun*, May 24, 2007, 52.

<sup>149</sup> Jiang Wenren, “China’s Renewed Summit Diplomacy With Japan,” *China Brief* 6, no. 21 (October 25, 2006).

<sup>150</sup> Jiang 2006.

disrupt South Korean efforts at unification. Specifically, Seoul sees America's "hard-line policy and confrontational approach as having hindered inter-Korean rapprochement and being the primary impediment to resolving the nuclear impasse."<sup>151</sup> At every turn, the United States' foreign policy seems anathema to South Korea's goals. Even following the July 2006 missile launches, President Roh and his Minister of Unification Lee Jong-seok more harshly criticized the United States reaction than the missiles themselves.<sup>152</sup> China's opposite approach, one that demands diplomacy and patience, naturally draws South Korea closer and widens the fissure in ROK-U.S. alliance. Denny Roy also aptly points out that "it is reasonable to assume that an unstated goal of Chinese diplomacy is to separate South Korea from the U.S.-Japan bloc and draw Seoul closer to China."<sup>153</sup>

By keeping the crisis alive but non-violent, the United States will continue to be the cause or belligerent actor and Beijing can slowly draw South Korea and Japan closer to Beijing's influential circle. As one Australian observer notes, "With Washington preoccupied, Beijing is having a field day maximizing its influence. If this continues, Beijing will come to acquire a form of veto on many aspects of U.S. foreign policy, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region."<sup>154</sup> The United States is an unwitting participant in Beijing's goal to limit American leadership in East Asia.

## **2. Isolate Japan**

By maintaining an active crisis, China is effectively isolating Japan politically and limiting Tokyo's regional leadership. North Korea is an excellent central figure presenting anti-Japanese sentiment without severe retribution. For

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<sup>151</sup> Klingner 2006, 357.

<sup>152</sup> Klingner 2006, 357.

<sup>153</sup> Denny Roy, "China and the Korean Peninsula: Beijing's Pyongyang Problem and Seoul Hope," *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2006): 2.

<sup>154</sup> Sushil Seth, "China Is The Genuine Victor In Any Deal With The North Koreans," *Taipei Times*, February 26, 2007, 9.

example, the *China Daily* reported North Korean officials thoughts on Japan, “Because it is no more than a state of the U.S. it is enough for Tokyo just to be informed of the results of the [Six Party] Talks by Washington.” The report continues, “The Japanese authorities have thus clearly proved themselves that they are political imbeciles incapable of judging the trend of the situation and their deplorable position.”<sup>155</sup> Kim Kye-gwan, the North Korean negotiator in the Six Party Talks, reportedly will eat a myriad of foreign dishes but refuses Japanese food.<sup>156</sup> Making Japan the subject of ridicule or debate hinders Tokyo’s leadership efforts and although Pyongyang is not a respected source for judgments, it’s biting comments are the perfect tool for that effort.

Japanese efforts towards solving the abduction issue with North Korea also isolate Tokyo. A 2007 television advertisement “blitz” geared towards increasing popular public support states, “Japan will get back all abduction victims at any cost.” Even before the ad blitz, an opinion poll posted 70.6 percent of the respondents thought Japan should not provide any energy aid unless there is progress in the abduction issue despite regional consent on solving the nuclear crisis.<sup>157</sup> The International Crisis Group characterizes it as an “obsession,” writing, “Tokyo’s stubborn insistence has been criticized by other participants, suggesting it could be left with no meaningful role in the Six Party Talks.”<sup>158</sup> As discussed before, the United States’ departure from fully supporting Japan’s position to making bilateral arrangements with Pyongyang helped isolate Tokyo even further. Christopher Hill “clearly affirmed that the abduction issue was one

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<sup>155</sup> “North Korea Wants Japan To Stay Away From Six-Party Talks,” *China Daily*, November 4, 2006, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2006-11/04/content\\_724549.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2006-11/04/content_724549.htm) (accessed January 2007).

<sup>156</sup> Anna Fifield, “The Smiling Face of North Korean Diplomacy,” *Financial Times*, March 11, 2007.

<sup>157</sup> “Poll On Abe Cabinet, Political Parties, Local Elections, Upper House Election, North Korea,” *Sankei*, April 3, 2007, 5.

<sup>158</sup> “After The North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation,” *International Crisis Group*, April 30, 2007, 8.

to be decided between Japan and North Korea.”<sup>159</sup> A political cartoon posted in March 2007 shows a starving and desperate Prime Minister Abe on a deserted island waving frantically to another island where Kim Jong-Il and President Bush enjoy a feast together.<sup>160</sup> Without North Korea, Beijing would rely on historic memory as its only real means for isolating Japan against the region. As it is, Pyongyang’s reckless behavior adds a dimension to China’s efforts towards regional leadership.

### **3. Enhance Security Arrangements**

China wants a security situation that protects its borders and protects against a regional conflict. The first step requires maintaining a buffer state protection. Second is the removal of alliance systems in the region followed by the formation of a regional security forum under Chinese leadership.

North Korea is a physical barrier keeping the U.S. military and its allies from encircling China. As discussed in Chapter II, the importance of that buffer zone is immeasurable to Beijing as it serves as a “geographic and psychological comfort to the Chinese.”<sup>161</sup> Regime survival proves a major step in keeping that comfort alive. As a result, aid and trade increased since 2002. As one Chinese scholar puts it, “When China provides aid to North Korea, some would view this as buying security insurance at a basement bargain price.”<sup>162</sup> He goes on to say the Sino-DPRK alliance is more important to China than the U.S.-Japan alliance because at least the DPRK provides something physical.<sup>163</sup> With that barrier in place, China can work towards other security goals.

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<sup>159</sup> Jang Jung-soo, “Japan’s Diplomatic Isolation and Hard-Line Policy Toward North Korea,” *The Hankyoreh*, April 6, 2007, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/201271.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/201271.html) (accessed April 2007).

<sup>160</sup> “Political Cartoon,” *Sankei*, March 10, 2007.

<sup>161</sup> You Ji 2001, 387.

<sup>162</sup> Shen Dingli, “North Korea’s Strategic Significance to China,” *China Security* (Autumn 2006): 21.

<sup>163</sup> Shen 2006, 21.

As discussed before, Beijing values the disruption of the alliance system. Beijing can effectively build a Northeast Asian regional security forum under its leadership and with its interests in mind. Michael Yahuda points out “There is no overarching body that brings together the key actors in Northeast Asia on a regular basis.”<sup>164</sup> The Six Party Talks, while currently singularly focused on solving the nuclear crisis serves an excellent segue for creating a new regional order. The talks brought Japan, South Korea, Russia, the United States, and China to the same table for security discussions several times and continuing that trend directly supports the entire regions’ security objectives. The steps are in place: a shaken alliance system, Japan’s isolated by its own hard line stance, South Korea “let down” by the United States, and then China “woos” Tokyo and Seoul into a more Beijing centric security forum.<sup>165</sup> Discussions for “gradually converting the Six Party Talks into a more coherent and enduring collective security structure” occur often between Chinese and American security experts.<sup>166</sup> By including every major player in the region, including the United States, Beijing magnanimously accepts a “responsible stake holder” position and leadership role in continuing regional peace without excluding or dismissing the current leader.

#### **4. Increase Military Size and Modernity**

Beijing can exploit the North Korean crisis to increase the size and modernization of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). Chapter II described Japanese militarization as a negative that Beijing and the international community can choose to dismiss. This chapter argues that Beijing opts to use it as a pretext for military build-ups and spending. Historic memory fears that a

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<sup>164</sup> Michael Yahuda, “The Evolving Asian Order: The Accommodation of Rising Chinese Power,” in *Power Shift: China And Asia’s New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 357.

<sup>165</sup> Robert Sutter, “China and Japan: Trouble Ahead?” *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 37-49.

militant Japan will attempt what it did from 1894 to 1945. While Japan may focus its own modernizations on North Korean threats and Chinese modernizations, China can cite every Japanese offensive capability as a true threat. “Changes in China’s security environment would provide a basis for the Chinese military to demand a bigger budget and scale up military forces.”<sup>167</sup> Another Chinese scholar, Zhang Liangui, notes:

Japan has sharply increased its military spending, set up the missile defense system in cooperation with the United States, launched several reconnaissance satellites, expanded the maritime combat force, drawn up a strategy for a preemptive strike and strengthened the Japanese-American alliance, thereby accomplishing a long held wish.<sup>168</sup>

Zhang’s thoughts are mirrored in several Chinese writings. One author referred to Japan’s “strategic movements” as “latent risk of military clashes between China and Japan,” adding that Japan fabricated the China threat to hide its intention of becoming a political and military power.”<sup>169</sup>

The Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), designed to thwart North Korean missile attacks on Japan, is a standard-bearer for those wishing to build the PLA. Beijing accentuates fears that BMD will neutralize its own nuclear deterrent force and may lead to Japan’s offensive stance saying, “First the shield, then the sword.”<sup>170</sup> Combined U.S.-Japanese efforts at BMD in the region does not directly threaten China’s missile capabilities, given the sheer number of missiles in China versus the number of PAC-3 systems in Japan. However, it is an

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<sup>166</sup> David M. Lampton, “China’s Rise in Asia Need not Be at America’s Expense,” in *Power Shift: China And Asia’s New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 315.

<sup>167</sup> Zhu 2006, 38.

<sup>168</sup> Zhang Liangui, “Coping with a Nuclear North Korea,” *China Security* (Autumn 2006): 10.

<sup>169</sup> Liu Jingbo, *Chinese National Security Strategy in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century (translated: 21 Shijichu Zhongguo Guojia Anquan Zhanlue)* (Beijing: Shishi Chubanshe; 2006).

<sup>170</sup> Joseph Cirincione, “The Asian Nuclear Reaction Chain,” *Foreign Policy* 118 (Spring 2000): 129.

excellent pretext to modernize and increase the raw number of missiles in the region while blaming Japan for disrupting the balance.

Japanese reconnaissance satellites are also viewed negatively.<sup>171</sup> Japan's capabilities are limited as it only began its program in 2003. The latest reconnaissance platform launched in September 2006 and set its orbit at about 300 miles.<sup>172</sup> Four months later, China destroyed one of its aging weather satellites at a height of 500 miles. While this test is seen largely as a signal to the United States, as it most surely is, it also threatens Japanese intelligence collection efforts.

## 5. Korean Unification

China supports a unified Korean peninsula only so long as it has a voice in its inception. Beijing may recognize some current unification concerns: that Seoul's alliance with the United States may place U.S. military units on China's border; that Korean nationalism will incite severe domestic issues in China; and that unification might limit Beijing's economic initiative on the peninsula in favor of Seoul's economic inducements. The economic question is explored in-depth in future sections. Concern for Korean nationalism disrupting China's domestic political scene is palpable. In September 2003, a large military force was sent to the Jilin province to discourage North Korean refugees and rogue soldiers of the Korean Peoples Army.<sup>173</sup> A Korean journalist succinctly put it, "China welcomes Korean nationalism pointing south, to Japan, but is concerned about its possible advance northward, to China."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Several Chinese authors point to satellite launches as a part of the militarization of Japan and its lack of transparency. Yang Yi, "Occupy the Moral High Ground of A Rich Country with a Powerful Army," *Huanqiu Shibao*, Apr 27, 2006.

<sup>172</sup> Stephen Clark, "Japanese Spy Satellite Rockets Into Orbit," *Spaceflight Now*, 11 Sept 2006, <http://spaceflightnow.com/news/n0609/11h2aigs/> (accessed August 2007).

<sup>173</sup> Scobell 2004, 24.

<sup>174</sup> Chung Kweon-hyun, "China's Colonization of North Korea," *Chosun Ilbo*, March 9, 2007, <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200703/200703090036.html> (accessed March 2007).

The blossoming Sino-South Korean relationship is instrumental in qualifying Chinese influence on unification and curbing Korean nationalism. “There is no other bilateral relationship in all of Asia that has developed as quickly and cooperatively over the last decade as that between Beijing and Seoul.”<sup>175</sup> Chinese efforts at securing ties with South Koreans covers the spectrum from economic and military relations to cultural exchanges for better mutual understanding. A recent report shows more South Korean students study in China than in the United States and South Koreans make up half of the total registered foreign students.<sup>176</sup> Over 10,000 South Korean companies operate in China, and China is the ROK's largest trading partner.<sup>177</sup> Reciprocally, South Korea is China's third largest. Beijing knows that leverage on the Korean peninsula is not found in backing the most likely economic loser (Pyongyang) but in enjoying stronger ties with Seoul.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, the Seoul-Washington alliance, as discussed earlier, lacks the “oomph” that Beijing now stresses. The increased relationship and understanding between the two countries also limits the possibility of anti-Chinese nationalism in Korea. Anti-Japanese rhetoric and shared historical memory also provide an excellent foundation for a pro-Chinese Korean peninsula. While Beijing and Seoul benefit simultaneously from the increased ties, the strategic value to China's future influence in unification talks is immeasurable.

### **C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL PRIMACY**

Economic development drives Chinese strategy. Since 1978, domestic improvement led nearly every strategic decision. As Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping aptly put it:

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<sup>175</sup> David Shambaugh, ed., *Power Shift: China And Asia's New Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>176</sup> David Shambaugh, “Return to the Middle Kingdom: China and Asia In The Early Twenty-First Century,” in *Power Shift: China And Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 34.

<sup>177</sup> Shambaugh 2005, 34.

<sup>178</sup> Shambaugh 2005, 34.

The central objective of China's grand strategy in the past two decades – strategy that may well last to 2050 – can be captured in just one phrase: to secure and shape a security, economic and political environment that is conducive to China concentrating on its economic, social and political development.<sup>179</sup>

It is feasible and realistic that China exploits every situation to attain this goal. Specifically, this section focuses on four major economic advantages to China for the life of a non-violent North Korean crisis: improve the northeastern region; continue leading the market in cheap labor; maintain primary economic influence on the northern half of the peninsula; and limit economic competitors.

Domestic economic development fell short in the northern provinces and in order for China to remain competitive in the northeast, it must improve the entire region in general and Yanbian specifically. The Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture and the Tumen River area are appropriately labeled the “rust belt” for the poorly maintained industrial sector and rampant unemployment. Taking lessons from southeastern development, Beijing relies heavily on foreign direct investment. Mobilizing South Korean investors, who may feel a kinship tie to the largely Korean diaspora in the region, introduced a vast majority of the funds in the form of direct investment, donations and remittances. One report shows that South Korean FDI made up 74 percent of all direct investment in the region in 2002, provided over \$10 million in donations and that Korean remittances valued approximately \$650 million in 2003 alone (double the local budget).<sup>180</sup> Japanese direct investment in the region is also high and more technologically advanced than that provided by South Korea.<sup>181</sup> North Korea plays a key, but indirect, role in maintaining northeastern development. North Korea's collapse scenarios provide the negative snapshot of a war torn region

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<sup>179</sup> Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, “China's Regional Strategy,” in *Power Shift: China And Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 48.

<sup>180</sup> Outi Luova, “Mobilizing Transnational Korean Linkages for Foreign Development on China's Frontier,” *Japan Focus* (2006), <http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2388> (accessed August 2007).

<sup>181</sup> Luova 2006.

littered with refugees. Korean unification, even if brokered and controlled peacefully, also negatively affects the area. When the northern portion of the Korean peninsula is finally open to outside investment, Japanese, Russian, U.S., Chinese and especially South Korean companies will pull a majority of direct investment from Yanbian for projects in Korea. The “sudden withdrawal” of funds from China for the “North’s reconstruction” is a realistic concern.<sup>182</sup> The net result is lowered economic turnout for areas like the Tumen River project and the Yanbian Prefecture. Maintaining a non-violent and non-provocative Pyongyang-led regime equates to greater opportunities that support China’s northeast development.

China’s exploding economy and receipt of FDI is directly related to its cheaper labor costs. A researched and analyzed estimate in 2004 found the Chinese labor force averages \$0.64 per hour compared to the United States’ \$21.11 and even Mexico’s \$2.48 average.<sup>183</sup> Long Yongtu, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation said that “China will take advantage of its cheap labor to attract foreign investment,” and “just as water always flows to the lowest point, China is bound to be the first option for foreign capital investment.”<sup>184</sup> However, some companies are already turning to Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam to replace China’s cheap labor. Wal-Mart, for example, boasts a line of inexpensive products produced from all over Southeast Asia; moving some factories out of China in favor of cheaper labor in newly developing states. This competition may unsettle Chinese leaders and executives as unemployment is still estimated in the double digits.

The next logical country taking jobs from China is North Korea where millions of workers could provide the cheapest labor in Northeast Asia. Russia is

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<sup>182</sup> Park 2005,82.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Coy, “Just How Cheap is Chinese Labor?” *Business Week*, 13 December 2004, [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04\\_50/b3912051\\_mz011.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_50/b3912051_mz011.htm) (accessed August 2007).

<sup>184</sup> “China’s Cheap, High-quality Labor Lures Foreign Investment,” *People’s Daily Online*, 21 Dec 2002, [http://english.people.com.cn/200212/21/eng20021221\\_108883.shtml](http://english.people.com.cn/200212/21/eng20021221_108883.shtml) (accessed August 2007).

already benefiting from cheap Korean labor. Samuel Kim exposed a “debt-swap” between Moscow and Pyongyang “whereby North Korea would cover 5.5 billion in Soviet era debt during the next 30 years by supplying workers who would toil unpaid in Russian labor camps across Siberia.”<sup>185</sup> Although the Russian method is extreme, Beijing may see this as one early example of how Chinese workers missed an opportunity for employment. This scenario runs parallel to the changing FDI market as foreign money and manufacturing moves to North Korea for cheaper labor. Keeping the crisis active severely limits foreign use of the ample North Korean labor pool in favor of Chinese workers.

Blocking foreign investment and foreign use of North Korea’s labor pool are primary for ensuring Chinese economic influence on the northern half of the peninsula. Crisis continuation gives Chinese businesses extended timelines for investment projects and long-term contract negotiations. Projects underway in North Korea include an expressway linking China’s Jilin Province with North Korea’s Rajin and Chongjin Ports, a 50-year development plan for Rajin port, and investment in the western line of the trans-Korean railway (the Gyeongui line).<sup>186</sup> Yi Xiaoxiong says part of the “Beijing ‘road map’” would “facilitate the transformation of North Korea into a large economic development zone for China’s economic development.”<sup>187</sup> Certainly, recent Chinese economic gains “create the possibility for a potential economic colony for China in North Korea.”<sup>188</sup> Crisis longevity cedes a majority of investment to Chinese businesses with an ulterior motive of blocking Japanese investment. Beijing is keenly aware that Japan is “well positioned to establish economic and political influence in

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<sup>185</sup> Kim 2007, 31.

<sup>186</sup> Chung 2007.

<sup>187</sup> As quoted by Stephen Blank 2007 from Yi Xiaoxiong, “Chinese foreign Policy in Transition: Understanding china’s Peaceful Development,” *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 19, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2005): 89-90.

<sup>188</sup> Blank 2007.

Pyongyang.”<sup>189</sup> However, the current crisis limits investment by the other major economic players, Japan and the United States.

Competition with the world and regional market drives China’s economic development. The continued North Korea crisis blocks certain competitive moves detrimental to China’s economy. This section postulates that Beijing counters competition with Russian and South Korean railway production and oil pipeline plans by keeping the North Korean crisis active.

Linking the Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) with the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR) offers faster routes for Korean goods to Europe.<sup>190</sup> If North Korea were peaceful and compliant, the rail system would significantly cut shipping times and limit the need for sea transport, thereby lowering shipping costs. In 2006, the European Union imported over 38 billion euros of merchandise from South Korea.<sup>191</sup> Shortening shipping times and costs would only increase that amount and possibly replace some Chinese goods with South Korean made products. For future thoughts, a unified Korea with cheap land routes to European markets would affect China’s exports. Furthermore, China only recently by-passed South Korean ship building in an impressive push that increased yearly production by 48 percent.<sup>192</sup> If Korea, Japan, and other East Asian economies took advantage of the TSR-TKR linkage, the Chinese ship building economy would suffer a tremendous hit.

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<sup>189</sup> Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1997), 97.

<sup>190</sup> “S.Korea Calls For Talks With Russia On Rail Links, Economic Cooperation,” *Associated Press*, May 3, 2007.

<sup>191</sup> European Union Trade Statistics with South Korea, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc\\_113448.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113448.pdf) (accessed August 2007).

<sup>192</sup> Zhang 2006.

Russian President Vladimir Putin refers to the TSR-TKR link as the “iron silk road”<sup>193</sup> and envisions that it would rival China’s Pan-Asian Railway.<sup>194</sup> Putin hopes the transport lines will reap \$4 billion in annual profit from container-rail freight traffic alone.<sup>195</sup> Linking the TSR with the TKR also opens a new market for Russia’s struggling eastern region. However, the weak link in the rail line lays in North Korean unpredictability. China already seized advantage of this factor and stepped up its development of the Pan-Asian Rail lines that link Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, and Singapore with China and eventually the European market.<sup>196</sup> Not only does this increase cooperation in the region, but also beats the competition to Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. As long as North Korea remains belligerently unresponsive to both Russian and South Korean attempts at improving rail line connectivity, China can continue competing with sea-lane shipping manufacturers and methodically develop its own land bridge connectivity.

Another competitive angle surrounds Russian oil and natural gas. Not only does China want to remain the primary supplier of North Korean oil provisions, but also wants an edge over South Korean and unified peninsular development. Gazprom offered natural gas from the Sakhalin islands and East Siberia to the peninsula via a planned pipeline and Putin’s Far East Plenipotentiary Representative offered shipments of crude oil to the Sheungli Petrochemical plant in exchange for a large portion of the refined product. Pyongyang is currently not receptive to these plans for fear of developing a

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<sup>193</sup> Putin’s reference to the “iron silk road” is a direct reference to the land route to Europe that China enjoyed and by referencing that, he is quietly challenging Chinese interests. In Vladimir Putin, “Russia: New Eastern Perspectives,” (09 November 2000), [http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2000/11/09/0002\\_type104017\\_133540.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2000/11/09/0002_type104017_133540.shtml) (accessed August 2007).

<sup>194</sup> Esook Yoon and Dong Hyung Lee, “Vladimir Putin’s Korean Opportunity: Russian Interest in the North Korean Nuclear Crises,” *Comparative Strategy* 24 (2005), 195.

<sup>195</sup> Yoon and Lee 2005, 195.

<sup>196</sup> “Wen: China to speed up Pan-Asian Rail Link,” Xinhua (January 15, 2007), [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2007-01/15/content\\_783295.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2007-01/15/content_783295.htm) (accessed August 2007).

dependent relationship for Russian oil<sup>197</sup> – despite its dependence on China for the same. In Putin’s 2000 paper on Eastern Russian development, he postulated that his country’s natural resources were only barely being used and that Russia could provide oil and natural gas to the Asia Pacific Region with steadfast regularity.<sup>198</sup> Russia seems intent on including everyone in the region for its distribution plan. Pipelines to China and Japan are already in negotiation<sup>199</sup> and Moscow vies for connections with the Korean peninsula as well. The Kovyktinskoye gas field in the Irkutsk region has an estimated capacity to supply Russia, China and the two Koreas for the next 30 years, “covering half of all energy requirements of the DPRK and the ROK at a price one-quarter lower than today.”<sup>200</sup> A gas pipeline to Korea would cut the cost of energy shipments and increase productivity and profits for South Korean companies. It would also lower China’s ability to control Pyongyang’s actions with oil – a devastating realization for Beijing. Russia requires infusions of money from the region to complete these major projects. The prospects that North Korea would damage or limit the effectiveness of oil pipelines makes it non-profitable to South Korean, Japanese, and even Chinese investors.<sup>201</sup> For the time being, China can maintain a certain advantage and “strangle-hold” on Russian pipeline deals by maintaining the current North Korean regime.

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<sup>197</sup> Paik Keun-wook, “Challenges and Opportunities in Sino-DPRK Energy Cooperation,” *China Brief* 6, no. 16 (August 2, 2006).

<sup>198</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Russia: New Eastern Perspectives,” (November 09, 2000), [http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2000/11/09/0002\\_type104017\\_133540.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2000/11/09/0002_type104017_133540.shtml) (accessed August 2007).

<sup>199</sup> Yu Bin, “China and Russia: Normalizing Their Strategic Partnership,” in *Power Shift: China And Asia’s New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 239.

<sup>200</sup> Evgeny P. Bazhanov, “Korea in Russia’s Post-Cold War Regional Political Context,” in *Korea At The Center: Dynamics Of Regionalism In Northeast Asia*, ed. Armstrong, Charles K., Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 225.

<sup>201</sup> Kim 2007, 33.

#### D. THE TAIWAN ISSUE

The issue of Taiwanese sovereignty permeates much of Beijing's foreign policy. It is not surprising then that the North Korean crisis provide leverage in attaining certain goals toward the island. The complexity of the quagmire is beyond this thesis; however, it can be summed up as: Beijing wants full recognition of its rights over Taiwan and to unify the island with the mainland. Beyond that simplicity are security concerns for extending and defending sovereignty over Taiwan. Beijing hopes to avoid a clash with the United States, and a dangerous North Korean crisis focuses the United States military machine against that single target, sparing China the threat of a strategically flexible opponent. Second, North Korea is a chip that Beijing may trade for concessions on Taiwan. What China may want in the future in exchange for North Korea is yet unknown.

The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act placed the United States squarely between Beijing and Taipei. Since then, the situation heated several times, including the 1995-96 strait crisis and President George W. Bush's overt Taiwan defense declaration. Making matters more tenuous, Washington recently declared it would stage military forces from Korea in a more strategically flexible posture, deployable where and when needed throughout the region.<sup>202</sup> China hopes to avoid open conflict with the Washington, but U.S. forces prepared to deploy anywhere can disrupt Chinese maneuvers against Taiwan.

Keeping the United States busy effectively steers its attention away from the Taiwan Strait. The unstable and unpredictable Kim regime "ties down thousands of military forces who might otherwise be assigned to Taiwan."<sup>203</sup> Shen Dingli, a strategist at Fudan University in Shanghai, aptly refers to North Korea as a guard post that works "to contain the freedom of U.S. policy

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<sup>202</sup> The "Strategic Flexibility" plan places U.S. military forces near Pusan, South Korea in a "ready to deploy" status.

<sup>203</sup> Blank 2007.

choices,”<sup>204</sup> and allows the PLA’s unhindered build-up directly opposite Taiwan.<sup>205</sup> China’s goal in using North Korea for this matter is also evidenced by Beijing’s drop in anti-U.S. military rhetoric regarding the peninsula. As long as the United States stays peacefully in Korea, focused northward, China can enjoy limited freedom of maneuver towards the Taiwan question.

Preserving the peace is one step, but China is also willing to trade North Korea for an end to the Taiwan strait standoff. Reportedly, in 2003 Hu Jintao offered a quid pro quo of, “Taiwan in return for North Korea” and repeated the offer to Vice President Cheney in 2004.<sup>206</sup> It is even argued that China slackened its pressure on North Korea as a “gesture to show its discontent” with Washington’s arms sales to Taipei.<sup>207</sup> Beijing will seek concessions on the Taiwan question and North Korea provides an excellent trade for an American administration desperate for success and closure.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

China maintains coercive control over North Korea and holds an exploitative position over Pyongyang. Maintaining that primacy in crisis negotiation affords China opportunities at gaining and maintaining regional leadership and hegemony, domestic economic development, and proves useful in the Taiwan Straits. By watching and supporting the disruption of Washington’s alliances and regional hegemony, and isolating Japan from taking leadership roles, China can improve its security through a regional security forum that caters to its interests. The North Korean crisis offers opportunities increasing the size and modernity of the PLA, maintains a buffer state protection, and helps China gain influence in future Korean unification negotiations. Economically, Beijing

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<sup>204</sup> Shen 2006.

<sup>205</sup> “China’s Little Brother Is A Big Headache,” 2007.

<sup>206</sup> International Crisis Group. “China and North Korea: Comrades Forever?” *Asia Report* 112 (Feb 2006), 18, <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0610.pdf> (accessed August 2007).

<sup>207</sup> Yoon and Lee 2005, 193.

can use the crisis to maintain FDI in Northeast China, continue cheap labor trends, retain primary influence in North Korean economic decisions, and limit competition brought on by the TSR-TKR connection and Russian oil pipelines. Finally, maintaining coercive control over North Korea means China can keep the United States singularly focused on defending Seoul rather than strategically flexible towards Taiwan, and Beijing can readily trade Pyongyang for concessions over Taipei. The many advantages to the North Korean crisis fall nicely in step with Beijing's diplomatic, security, and economic goals.

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## V. CONCLUSION

Whether China is the mighty dragon rising to fight or the panda joining the international community, the North Korean crisis is most decidedly advantageous to Beijing. Chinese initiatives and current international conditions combine, affording Chinese leaders an unprecedented opportunity to exploit the situation for Beijing's interests.

Present literature identifies four significant dangers for Beijing involved in the North Korean crisis: that Japan will acquire nuclear weapons as a deterrent, triggering a Northeast Asia proliferation chain; that Japan, short of adopting nuclear weapons, will militarize the state and threaten regional stability; that the DPRK will collapse in either an explosion model or implosion model; and that the United States may adopt a preemptive strike option similar to its actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Evidence of international conditions and Chinese initiatives limit the impact of each danger allowing Beijing a greater freedom for action.

The most prevalent policy options presented in Chapter III help explain why Beijing chooses to take a lead in the crisis and use it to its own advantages. When the road is clear of obstacles, the last remaining discussion is whether China has the will and capacity to influence North Korea. While arguments go in both directions, evidence asserts that Beijing enjoys coercive influence that directly effects Pyongyang's actions. Moreover, the limited relationship, what used to be a "lips and teeth" arrangement, is more like a humiliating family experience. North Korea is often the cause for loss of face for Beijing and the Chinese feel North Koreans are ingrates. Little brother often makes big brother look bad. The "intergroup attribution bias," where people favor the "in-group" versus the "out-group," that previously described the Beijing-Pyongyang relationship, eroded over time and is now only a memory.<sup>208</sup> China's obligated

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<sup>208</sup> Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 100.

work with North Korea exists in spirit but there is no warmth. Instead, China provides enough food and oil for the survival of the Kim regime, “mostly as a mechanism to monitor its neighbor,”<sup>209</sup> and exploits its little brother’s crisis to certain advantages. Through a continuation of the crisis and by maintaining primary influence on crisis control, Beijing can attain and maintain regional leadership, continue unprecedented economic development, and receive certain concessions on the Taiwan issue.

Gaining regional leadership and hegemony requires five significant developments for which the North Korean crisis inadvertently produces. For Beijing to truly lead the region, it must gain positions of influence greater than the United States and Japan. Therefore, the first step requires disrupting the United States alliance system and hegemony in the region, and second, isolating Japan politically and limiting Tokyo’s leadership opportunities. When the alliance system and the other two regional leaders are marginalized, China can work its third goal, enhancing security arrangements that answer to Beijing’s interests. This includes maintaining a physical buffer zone between the U.S. military and Chinese forces as well as turning the Beijing-led Six Party Talks into a regional security forum. Fourth, the crisis opens opportunities for improving the size and modernity of the military. Whether as an excuse to defend against Washington, or against Tokyo’s aggressive response to the DPRK, the PLA has warrant for greater improvement. The fifth development in this crisis is that Beijing can gain an increased hand in deciding the future of a unified Korean peninsula. “With more power, wealth, prestige, and influence than ever before, China has gradually become an indispensable regional presence ... where the Korean question is concerned.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Samuel S. Kim, “Sino-North Korean Relations in the Post-Cold War World,” in Kihl, Young Whan and Hong Nack Kim, ed., *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 189.

<sup>210</sup> Jae Ho Chung, “Korea and China in Northeast Asia: From Stable Bifurcation to Complicated Interdependence,” in Armstrong, Charles K., Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin, ed., *Korea at the Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 211.

A non-violent but continuing crisis creates situations for continued economic development in four areas. First, China and its investors (e.g., Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) can expend more capital in the Northeastern Chinese provinces instead of investing in a newly open and peaceful North Korea. Second, it allows China to continue providing the cheapest labor in Northeast Asia. If North Korea opened itself to investment, its several million workers would take jobs that China so desperately desires. Third, as long as North Korea remains isolated, Beijing retains economic influence in the northern portion of the peninsula, establishing long-term economic interests and investments prior to Japanese companies having the ability to do the same. Fourth, the crisis limits certain economic competition surrounding oil and natural gas pipelines as well as over-land shipping routes. Russia, South Korea, and Japan are unwilling to risk billions of dollars in a rail connection that runs through North Korea while the criminal Kim regime remains in place. In the meantime, China can advance its own Pan-Asian railway linking Europe to Southeast Asian and Chinese goods.

Concerning the Taiwan issue, Chinese leaders see an opportunity in the North Korean crisis. First, the Americans' focus on Pyongyang's destabilizing and dangerous actions keeps military forces on the Korean peninsula rather than in the Taiwan Strait. Second, by maintaining coercive influence over Pyongyang, Beijing can trade the Kim regime for concessions on Taiwan. In effect, Taiwan is greatly more important to Chinese sovereignty and legitimacy than North Korea.

China has the time and momentum for leading and continuing the situation. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons took over 16 years and so many resources that Pyongyang is not likely to relinquish them in the near term.<sup>211</sup> Beijing is following Deng Xiaoping's advice to bide one's time while

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<sup>211</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program to 2015: Three Scenarios," *Asia Policy* 3 (January 2007): 108.

building up capability and balancing Washington's "power and influence in non-confrontational ways, implemented so subtly so as to not to draw attention of or irritate U.S. policy makers and Asian leaders."<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Robert Sutter, "China's Regional Strategy and Why it May Not Be Good for America," in David Shambaugh, ed., *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 296.

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