CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY
WHO MAKES IT, AND HOW IS IT MADE?

Edited by Gilbert Rozman
gram in 2003 and later faced Western air strikes), the odds are great that North Korea will never agree to discard its nuclear program, even if the United States agrees to attempt to improve bilateral ties. A new round of the 6PT is unlikely to produce the desired results of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. But it did provide a platform where all the major powers that have strategic interests in this region—the United States, Japan, Russia, and China—and the two Koreas have exchanged views on their basic stances. It should be institutionalized as a regional security mechanism where everything that is related to the peace and security in East Asia could be discussed in either bilateral negotiations or multilateral consultations.54

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54 East Asia has the most complicated international relations in the world, with six sets of major power bilateral relationships, or the 15 sets of bilateral relations that occur when each of the four—the United States, Russia, Japan, and China—deal individually with the ROK and the DPRK and the two Koreas deal with one another.
History and geography have combined to make the Korean Peninsula important to China's security. This importance lies not only in the fact that the peninsula shares a fairly long border with China's industrial heartland, but it also stems from the convergence—and often the clash—of the interests of Russia, Japan, and the United States in Korea. For the last century, Korea has served as an area of conflict and an invasion corridor for the three powerful states. The Chinese were involved in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, supporting North Korea after the United States intervened on behalf of South Korea. This, together with the close ties between the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Korean Workers Party, led by Kim Il-Sung and his son Kim Jong-II, which can be traced back to the 1930s, has reinforced the importance of Korea in China's policy calculations.

Since the end of the Cold War, the geopolitical context of the Korean Peninsula has been partially changed. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and improved Sino-Russian relations, Beijing found it possible to seek diplomatic normalization with South Korea. During the first 10 years following diplomatic normalization between Beijing and Seoul, it seemed that the imperative of good economic relations overshadowed most political problems in the bilateral relationship. The emergence of a Sino-South Korea relationship was seen as the important variable shaping China's policy towards the Korean Peninsula.

Meanwhile, the escalation of the North Korean nuclear crisis has introduced elements of unpredictability and dilemma into foreign policy concerns for the Beijing leadership. Uncomfortable with Pyongyang's nuclear program, China joined the United States and other neighboring countries in their efforts to stop it. Yet the explosion of a North Korean nuclear device on October 9, 2006, put the relationship between China and North Korea to a serious test, as Beijing publicly registered its opposition to North Korea's action. After that, China's stance toward Pyongyang seems to have undergone some changes. Although most Chinese scholars still believe that the bilateral tie with North Korea remains crucial to Chinese security, particularly in the context of the U.S.-South Korea relationship, the timeline and dynamics of such changes in China's relationship with North Korea remain to be seen.


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Korean joint military exercises in the Yellow Sea in 2010, a handful of Chinese academics and intellectuals have publicly advocated rethinking China’s policy toward North Korea.

China-South Korea relations have also experienced some problems since 2005, when South Korea successfully declared the Dragon Boat Festival as its World Heritage, which outraged many Chinese. Chinese media and Internet blogs helped stir Chinese public indignation toward South Korea. In 2007, the territorial dispute over Mount Baekdu again stimulated Chinese netizens' resentments toward Koreans. The voices from the Chinese public towards the two Koreas are becoming increasingly divided, adding a new variable influencing China's Korean policy making.

To what extent is China's Korea policy influenced by societal forces exemplified in the opinions of academia, media, and netizens? Beijing faces increasing difficulties in forming a policy that will serve its national interests and accommodate domestic public sentiment at the same time.

China’s Objectives toward the Korean Peninsula

China’s regional policy toward the Korean Peninsula is aimed at four basic objectives: (1) to maintain regional peace and stability; (2) to de-nuclearize the peninsula to avoid a go-nuclear chain reaction in the region; (3) to maintain the historically shaped “special strategic relations” with North Korea; and (4) to improve its relationship with South Korea so as not to let Seoul join the U.S.-Japan alliance in any possible future confrontation with China.

People may question what kind of international behavior an increasingly powerful China will have in the foreseeable future. President Hu Jintao stated in his carefully prepared speech at the Boao Forum in April 2011 that China promotes good-neighborly relations: “We respect each other’s choice of development paths and efforts to promote economic and social development and improve people’s lives. We need to translate the diversity of our region into a driving force for more dynamic exchanges and cooperation, increase mutual understanding and trust and take our cooperation to higher levels.”

In his talk with Barack Obama during his visit to the United States in 2011, Hu stressed that “facts had and would continue to prove a sound China-U.S. relationship serves the fundamental interest of the Chinese and U.S. people and is beneficial to peace, stability and prosperity of Asia Pacific and the world at large.” The China-U.S. Joint Statement stated that “China and the United States agreed on the critical importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula as underscored by the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005 and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Both sides expressed concern over heightened tensions on the Peninsula triggered by recent developments.”

In Beijing's eyes, Northeast Asian regional stability requires a peaceful relationship between the United States and North Korea even though it may be a cold peace with occasional problems. China would not want to see any trouble between the United States and North Korea that may undermine its relationship with the United States. Any development in and around the Korean Peninsula that may lead to instability will be regarded as adverse to China's interests. The reasons for China to desire stability in the Korean Peninsula are obvious. A military conflict would impose upon China an extremely serious dilemma that Beijing is neither willing nor ready to face. Bound by its traditional relationship with North Korea, China may find it hard to handle the issue of whether to assist North Korea if a conflict occurs without a provocation by Pyongyang. If China chooses to assist North Korea, it will inevitably damage China's cooperative relations with the United States and Japan, and could compromise China's economic modernization program. Therefore, the primary objective of China's regional policy is to reduce tension on the peninsula.

China believes the best way to maintain regional stability is through

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inter-Korean dialogue and multilateral talks. It sees the improvement of inter-Korean relations as essential to increasing regional stability and to eventually creating a relaxed environment for resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis. The top priority of China in Northeast Asia is to actively engage in and even lead the regional security dialogue so as to make the Six-Party Talks a security mechanism for maintaining regional peace and stability.

China's second concern is the potential spread of nuclear weapons to Japan, South Korea, and ultimately to Taiwan. China takes these possible developments very seriously. North Korea's first nuclear test on October 9, 2006, sent a security shockwave across Northeast Asia. Regional powers such as Japan and South Korea began to try to find a response in the form of sanctions. China particularly worries that an unstoppable North Korean nuclear program may push Japan to develop its own nuclear program. Japan may be the first to reconsider its nuclear option, closely followed by South Korea reacting to the change of stance by both North Korea and Japan. All these developments may give Taiwan new interest in nuclear weapon capacity. Although President Bush noted his concern and expressed confidence that Japan would not go nuclear, there is a willingness in the United States to exploit the so-called "Japan Card" to encourage Japan's breaching of its non-nuclear stance as a means to punish China for its failure to pressure North Korea on its nuclear program. If Japan took that step, it would force China to reconsider upgrading its nuclear capabilities and doctrine in reaction to the nuclearization of Japan and Korean Peninsula. It would trigger an arms race in East Asia, which would be a nightmare for China's national security. Therefore, dismantling North Korea's nuclear program is in China's interests.

Beijing's overriding security interests in North Korea cannot be fully protected without a good relationship with Pyongyang. Even if regional stability is maintained, if North Korea, like Vietnam in the late 1970s, turns hostile towards China, the consequences would be adverse to China's interests. In addition, the collapse of North Korea might result in millions of impoverished people pouring into the northeast region of China, which would be equally adverse to China's national interests and domestic stability.

Among China's objectives, the most difficult to maintain is its relations with North Korea in such a way that Sino-U.S. and Sino-ROK relations will not be strictly circumscribed. Twenty years ago, the cornerstone of China's regional policy was its relationship with North Korea. Today, that has changed as the strategic importance of North Korea has declined. Beijing has also lost much of its leverage over Pyongyang due to its policies towards the United States and South Korea. No matter how much importance the Chinese leadership attaches to the bilateral relationship, North Korean leaders have always cast a wary eye on Beijing's dealings with Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo. Fortunately, Pyongyang has no Soviet card to play as it did some 20 years ago when dealing with China. Yet the nuclear program seems to give its leaders some bargaining power in dealing not only with the United States but also with China.

The fourth concern is the future direction of Seoul's foreign relations. It seems that the possibility of Seoul joining the U.S.-Japan alliance in a potential confrontation with China is increasing. The Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island incidents and China's awkwardness in responding to the two issues strained Beijing's relations with Seoul. In 2010, South Korea did not mark the anniversary of diplomatic relations with China for the first time since normalization in 1992. And the public impression of China in South Korea has deteriorated. In late 2010, the Northeast Asia History Foundation in Seoul released a survey that found positive perceptions of the relationship were down from 50.8% to 45.8%. At the same time, South Koreans' favorable views of Japan had risen. Facing a common-threat perception, South Korea-Japan-U.S. trilateral security measures seem to have strengthened. In the 42nd Security Consultative

5 Christopher W. Hughes, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan," Asia Policy 3 (January 2007): 79-104.
Meeting in October 2010, Seoul and Washington agreed to increase combined naval operations around the Korean Peninsula and institutionalize an Extended Deterrence Policy Committee. In January 2011, the South Korean and Japanese defense ministers discussed enhancing cooperation with each other and trilaterally with the United States and decided to draft agreements on acquisition, cross-servicing, and intelligence-sharing on North Korean weapons of mass destruction. Ironically, China’s interests in the Korean Peninsula are self-conflicting. China does not want to see nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula, so it has tried to use its limited leverage to promote denuclearization and nonproliferation, which is contrary to the interests of North Korea. At the same time, China does not want to see any kind of destabilizing change in North Korea and would like North Korea to continue to be a buffer state on its border. For that purpose China has tried to maintain the “brotherly friendship” relationship with Pyongyang and provide political and economic support, including protecting it from serious sanctions that may harm North Korea’s regime stability. Noting that China may not give up North Korea, Pyongyang takes it for granted and continues to develop its arsenal for security or for negotiation leverage, which harms the stability and peace of Northeast Asia. Moreover, China’s reluctant accommodation of North Korea may create resentment in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington. These leaders may lose trust in China’s support for denuclearization and nonproliferation and urge more sanctions against Pyongyang, which may in turn destabilize the North Korean regime. For that reason, China insists that the North Korean nuclear issue be resolved in a peaceful manner that would not undermine the stability of the region.

The North Korean Nuclear Issue in 2009-11

After Obama’s inauguration, North Korea intended to test the new U.S. administration’s Korean policy. On April 5, 2009, North Korea launched the “Kwangmyongsong-2,” an experimental communications satellite, into orbit with the Unha-2 (Taepodong-2) space launch vehicle from North Korea’s Musudan-ri launch site in North Hamgyong province approximately 80 kilometers from the Chinese border.

Before that, Wang Jiarui, chief of the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party, had tried to persuade Pyongyang not to launch the satellite, requesting that no action be taken that might jeopardize the Six-Party Talks or destabilize the region. Beijing also encouraged North Korea to consider signing the Outer Space Treaty and the Convention on the Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space in order to improve its international image.

After the rocket launch, the UN Security Council discussed how to respond and debated whether the launch had violated Security Council Resolution 1718. Japan, whose territory was crossed over by the rocket’s trajectory, pressed the United States and the UN to take a stronger stance. Obama called the launch a “clear violation of UNSC Resolution 1718 and a threat to the Northeast Asian region and to international peace and security.” While Beijing insisted that North Korea had the right to peaceful use of nuclear and rocket technologies, it proposed a non-binding, strongly worded presidential statement instead of the binding resolution supported by the United States and Japan. Although the statement recognized that the launch was in contravention of Resolution 1718 and any future launches using ballistic missile technology would also be in violation of existing Security Council resolutions, it did not use the word “violation” for this launch.

However, after the statement was released, Pyongyang was outraged, demanded that the UN apologize, and announced its permanent withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks. North Korea also said that it would boost its nuclear deterrent for self-defense in every way. Ironically, Pyongyang was not happy about China’s role in ensuring a non-binding statement rather than a resolution.

On May 25, 2009, North Korea conducted its second nuclear test. Although Beijing resolutely opposed the test, it continued to call upon...
parties to “respond in a calm and appropriate manner and persist in solving the problems through consultations and dialogue.”

Upon Japan's request, an emergency meeting was called for the UN Security Council, and a non-binding statement was issued condemning the nuclear test as a clear violation of Security Council resolutions. Two weeks later, on June 12, 2009, UN Security Council Resolution 1874 condemned the nuclear test and demanded that North Korea not conduct additional nuclear tests or launches using ballistic missile technology, including a prohibition on all arms exports from North Korea, a new framework for national authorities to inspect North Korean ships, and financial sanctions against North Korean entities as designated by the sanctions committee. Although China agreed on the relatively robust sanctions regime against Pyongyang, it blocked the use of force and any sanctions against non-military trade. And Beijing asserted that the sole purpose of sanctions was to bring North Korea back to negotiations.

In October 2009, during the first visit to Pyongyang in the last 18 years by a Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao delivered a large aid package to North Korea and got North Korea to promise to return to the Six-Party Talks. However, in the slowly warming atmosphere, the Cheonan, a South Korean Navy corvette, sank on March 26, 2010, in the Yellow Sea after being torn in half by an underwater explosion that killed 46 of its 104 sailors.

The Chinese foreign ministry’s first official comments, nearly a month after the incident, called the sinking a “tragedy” and stated that Beijing had “note(d) that the ROK plans to carry out a scientific and objective investigation and believes the issue will be properly handled.”

ROK president Lee Myung-Bak lobbied Chinese president Hu Jintao in Shanghai to take a stronger stance toward the North on April 28, 2010. But China refused to do so. What made South Koreans unhappy was that Hu also welcomed Kim Jong-Il to Beijing on May 5, just one week after Lee’s departure.

During his visit to Seoul at the end of May 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao pledged that Beijing “will not protect anyone” after it had made an “impartial judgment” about who was responsible. China was not pleased that it was not invited by the South Koreans to investigate the Cheonan sinking incident.

American President Barack Obama talked to Chinese President Hu Jintao during the G-20 summit in July and called on the Security Council to issue a “crystal clear” message. But China repeated its position that a critical statement would “pour fuel to the flames.” Finally, a Security Council presidential statement acknowledged the incident as an attack and condemned the act, but not North Korea.

Making things worse, provoked by a live-fire exercise by South Korea, North Korea shelled Yeonpyeong Island on November 23, 2010, killing two civilians and two marines, which was the first artillery attack against South Korean territory since the end of the Korean War. On the day of the attack, the Chinese foreign ministry announced that Beijing was “concerned about the issue,” although “the specific circumstances have yet to be verified.” The next day, Premier Wen Jiabao stated that Beijing opposed “any provocative military acts” on the Korean Peninsula. And two days later, the foreign ministry warned against “any military activities...without permission” in China’s “exclusive economic zone.”

In order to reduce the inter-Korean tensions and the international pressures, China resorted to its panacea for Korean issues again—the Six-Party Talks. On November 28, 2010, Beijing called for an “emergency meeting of delegates to the Six-Party Talks” at the end of State Coun-

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Yufan Hao
The primary reason for North Korea’s constrained response to South Korean military exercises is that it has to overcome its economic predicament by seeking to end the financial sanctions imposed by the United States. It is well known that North Korea has various kinds of economic difficulties. Being suspicious about China’s reform and open-up policy, it missed a historical chance at the end of the Cold War to concentrate on economic reform. Instead it focused on improving relations with the South and sought peaceful reunification of the peninsula. The nuclear issue raised by the United States slowed down the progress of Pyongyang-Seoul contact and forced Pyongyang to put security before economic development. Since Kim Jong-Il took full control of North Korea, the country has pursued a policy of “military first,” that accelerated its economic plunge.

Of course, Washington’s policy toward Pyongyang is an important factor leading to North Korea’s economic stagnation. At the beginning of the new century, there were signs that North Korean leaders would like to consider options for changing their economic policy. Kim Jong-Il visited China on an unofficial basis to study China’s economic achievements. Pyongyang actively sought diplomatic relations with European countries, demonstrating its eagerness to look outward, and some reform policies were introduced. However, the Bush administration quickly adopted a hostile attitude towards Pyongyang and made it impossible for North Korea to adjust its development strategy. After that, a nuclear deterrent seemed to become a primary concern for North Korea’s survival.

Therefore, a final solution of the nuclear issue may offer a major opportunity for Pyongyang to bring about positive changes in its internal and external environments. That is why Pyongyang’s major objectives in the talks are to obtain a formal non-aggression guarantee from and to normalize its relations with the United States. For Kim Jong-Il, trading North Korea’s nuclear program for the normalization of U.S.-North Korea relations may be a feasible strategic choice.

Now the question is whether the United States is willing to give North Korea a chance. Having rejected Clinton’s engagement policy, the Bush administration adopted a high-handed policy towards Pyongyang.
Yet such an approach does not help solve the nuclear issue, as it makes North Korea more vigilant and causes it to take a continuously hostile stance toward the United States. It also keeps Beijing in a continuously difficult position in dealing with both countries.

Now there seems to be an equally important need for the Obama administration to bring North Korea back to the negotiation table. Obviously, hawkish policy did not work well. The major stumbling block in the talks so far is that both the United States and North Korea made extreme demands but failed to demonstrate good faith in the negotiation by considering a compromise. Confidence-building is essential for both sides at this moment. The need for a settlement from both North Korea and the United States is clear. However, it must be recognized that dismantling North Korea's nuclear program is a complex process.

What China can do is limited. So far, there are four commonly agreed-upon instruments under China's disposal in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue: (1) bilateral diplomatic capital of persuasion of both North Korea and the United States for a peaceful settlement of the denuclearization issue; (2) multilateral talks, as exemplified in the Six-Party Talks, in which China's prestigious position and its effective working relations with all the five concerned parties make it a unique and effective leader; (3) leverage over North Korea as the most important supplier of energy and food to that country; and (4) a model of economic reform for North Korea.

China will continue to exert its influence to encourage Pyongyang to talk with the other four parties regarding the nuclear issue and to open its economy to the world as China has done. Beijing favorably noted North Korea's recent plan to reform its economic system and to set up special economic zones.29 In May, 2011, Kim Jong-II went on a one-week trip to China, including Yangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing, where he visited many enterprises and learned about China's reform and economic development. At the end of his trip, Hu Jintao urged Kim to engage in dialogue with South Korea. He said, "China believes that both sides must maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and uphold the goal of denuclearization, while maintaining objectivity and restraint in tackling obstacles and improving mutual relations." Kim stated that "North Korea is currently focusing its efforts on economic development and we really need a stable environment for this." He also hoped to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula and stick to the objective of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, and believed that the Six-Party Talks should be resumed at an early date.30 Even though Pyongyang is reluctant to give up its strategy of self-reliance in its development, Beijing leaders seem confident that they can influence North Korea's future economic orientation if China's own modernization program proves to be successful.

Anti-South Korean Sentiments in the Chinese Media and Internet
Multiple actors affect China's Korean policy making. The International Liaison Department of the CCP remains the leading policy initiator for China's North Korean policy, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main implementer of this policy. In recent years, the military, official think tanks, and academics have participated in the debate over China's Korean policy making. Even public opinion has become important in affecting this policy debate. Among various societal factors, the media-stimulated public opinion seems to be increasingly important.

Forty years ago, Canadian social scientist Marshall McLuhan presented a theory that rocked academia. According to his theory, the medium is not the carrier of the message, instead, "the medium is the message." In other words, what is carried through by the medium is secondary to the form in which the message is packaged and presented by the medium.31 Inevitably, due to the interactive attributes of online communication, the decentralized structure of cyberspace, and the immaculate technology of online channels, scholars have shown their solicitude for the development of political communication.

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29 Kim Jong-Ill visited several provinces in China in May 2011.
In authoritarian China, online technology provides a platform to strive toward the inclusive sphere, even though the government shields and screens sensitive expressions and comments. The Chinese online sphere is increasingly fomenting the discussion of international affairs with growing nationalist emotion. Meanwhile, Chinese academics are playing together with the media, the role of opinion-makers in China. More and more academics have been consulted by CCTV and local TV as well as radio talk shows and have written about international events for local newspapers, resulting in more informed and less biased reporting. They have begun to influence public views on international affairs.

The Koguryo Kingdom dispute between Chinese and South Korean netizens became a public issue during the summer of 2004, deeply influencing Chinese public and elite opinions about South Korea. The discontent in China over South Korea's extreme nationalism swept over the Internet. In the spring of 2005, China-South Korea relations witnessed turbulence within the Chinese media and Internet circles. Anti-South Korean sentiments in China were increasing as China began disputing South Korea's attempts to register the Gangneung Danoje Festival as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage. In 2007, unsubstantiated reports from the Chinese media that South Korea was attempting to register Chinese characters at UNESCO also ignited significant controversy. These reports also spread to the Hong Kong and Taiwanese media quickly.

Many in China believe the Gangneung Danoje Festival derived from the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, and China pursued a joint registration of the Gangneung Danoje Festival and the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival. South Korea, however, claimed that the Gangneung Danoje Festival is a unique cultural tradition of Gangneung, Korea, completely different from the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, and rejected joint registration. Despite Chinese opposition, UNESCO has registered the Gangneung Danoje Festival as an intangible cultural heritage. Upon registration, provocative words such as “discrimination,” “looking down upon,” and “infuriating Chinese people's feelings,” were frequently used in the Chinese media and Internet. Influenced by these issues, South Korea was named the most hated country in an Internet survey of Chinese netizens, according to the Chinese newspaper International Herald Leader in 2007. In the opinions of South Korean scholars, the Dragon Boat Festival of the ROK and that of China differ vastly. China's Dragon Boat Festival contains Dragon Boats sacrificed to Qu Yuan, while Jiang Ling, though located by the seaside, does not contain this activity of worshipping regionally renowned figures as patron saints. These scholars pointed out that at the Asia International Folk Customs Symposium in 1997 and 2002, Chinese scholars acknowledge that Jiang Ling's Duan Wu customs are different from China's. However, Chinese media still made accusations about South Korea stealing Chinese culture and expressed regret and humiliation at losing the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival to South Korea. This greatly incited Chinese cyber nationalism to rapidly spread online.

The UNESCO intangible heritage controversy was followed by a series of similar accusations from the Chinese media and Chinese netizens. In November 2010, the United States and South Korea held joint military exercises close to China's Yellow Sea, which almost engulfed the Chinese online news commentary. It illustrated the functions of academic scholars, mass media, and the Internet in prompting and stimulating public debate on China-related Korean issues and facilitating the formation of anti-South Korea sentiment in China.

Specifically, when it comes to the issue of the two Koreas, many Chinese scholars and observers blame Washington (and in some cases Japan) for at least two interrelated counts: (1) for establishing and sustaining an overt policy of hostility toward Pyongyang that essentially forces the North to undertake desperate and provocative measures; and (2) for manipulating and using the North Korean crisis in order to strengthen Washington's larger strategic position in Asia and, specifically, to put pressure on China. A significant number of Chinese pundits and scholars favor a “wait-and-see” attitude, centered on continued negotiations and behind-the-scenes efforts to encourage Pyongyang to comply with the international community, while keeping Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo in the game. Many people in Beijing hope that the North
Korean crisis will remain controllable through such means until a more moderate, less hostile government emerges in either Washington or (more likely) Pyongyang. In the meantime, the dilemma China faces in Northeast Asia will remain and most likely worsen. This has sometimes associated with the notion that the Chinese leadership needs to sustain the nuclear crisis at manageable levels in order to reduce the likelihood that Washington will transition to a more confrontational policy toward China. In other words, by keeping the United States engaged on the North Korean problem, the argument goes, Beijing hopes to sustain bilateral cooperation, prevent the emergence of a more hostile U.S. policy, and enhance China’s strategic leverage. Chinese scholars sometimes express this viewpoint. Chinese experts have also said that the Korean Peninsula is still manageable.  

The United States and South Korea cannot afford to launch a massive retaliation against North Korea. China will not stand by and see the collapse of North Korea. Because of continuing disputes over cultural, territorial, and commercial issues, the relations between China and South Korea have become tense. In March 2011, South Korean media reported that Chinese Internet security annexed and accessed the data of the South Korean military and government, which might have set off a new wave of distrust and hatred on the Internet.  

So far the rising anti-South Korea sentiments within Chinese society and dissent from Chinese scholars have made the Beijing leadership hesitate when they make their Korea policy. China’s foreign relations started to account for a large amount of the online publications and online discussions, and never before has the Chinese leadership considered the interests and opinions of various domestic political constituencies. For example, the Chinese leadership decided to take a tough stand to 

36 http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/  

torcades that followed Kim, saying the money was taken from the "flesh and blood" of the North Korean people.

China has become a networked society, which has made it difficult for the Chinese government to control. Although the Chinese Communist Party has found the vast commercial potential of the Internet useful for China's economic growth, it has also realized the danger and has tried to tighten state control over the Chinese Web and its usage. Being aware that an unregulated network may shift power from the state to citizens by providing an extensive forum for discussion and collaboration, Beijing has taken steps to prevent this commercial gold mine from becoming political quicksand.

On the one hand, the emergence of civil society has broadened the foundation for an open-door policy. On the other hand, the rise of the civil society makes it more challenging for the government to monopolize Chinese foreign policy. Decision makers in Beijing now must take the growing societal factors into consideration when making policies toward Korea. There is growing demand in Chinese society for equal international status and meeting international standards on trade, human rights, and many other issues. There will be a strong popular reaction whenever the people feel that China is treated unfairly by foreign powers.

Since 1949, Chinese foreign policy has been traditionally viewed as highly centralized, dominated by a few powerful senior officials acting free from domestic public pressure. Chinese leaders continuously have tried to maintain relations with Seoul and not harm the $207 billion in annual trade between the two countries. However, the Beijing leadership has had to accommodate domestic nationalist sentiments in the wake of certain bilateral events in the hope of maintaining or even continuing to improve Sino-South Korea relations. The moment may come when policy makers cannot make policy initiatives without a serious consideration of public opinion. This may represent a gradual but significant shift from the Communist Party's centralized control over

China's foreign policy making, relatively free of social pressure, to a new pattern characterized by increasing domestic restraints.

Conclusion
China needs peace and stability in Northeast Asia. For that purpose, it is likely that Beijing will remain active in finding a solution for the North Korean nuclear issue. That sense of urgency has been well reflected in Chinese initiatives since 2003. The direct talks between North Korea and the United States, which resumed in Beijing in late February 2012 after the death of Kim Jong-Il, was a good indication that China, indeed, wants to have the issue resolved. Although there is strategic consensus among all major powers on the goal of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, most Chinese analysts believe that the key to the nuclear issue remains in the hands of the United States.

American hardliners have never trusted North Korea and have always dismissed diplomatic give-and-take as rewarding bad behavior, arguing that Kim Jong-Il duped President Clinton by halting North Korea's plutonium program while starting a covert uranium-enrichment program. However, most Chinese observers believe that the United States bears more responsibility for the current impasse. It is the United States that first reneged on the 1994 Agreed Framework, failing to reward North Korea's good behavior. Washington managed to freeze Pyongyang's plutonium program, which, if it had continued to operate, would have generated enough plutonium for at least 50 bombs, yet Washington failed to live up to its end of the bargain. Since Republicans took control of the Congress after the accord was signed in the mid-1990s, Clinton did little to ease the sanctions until 2000 throughout the rest of his administration. Although the United States had pledged to provide two nuclear power plants by a target date of 2003, the concrete for the first foundation was not poured until August 2002. In addition, the delivery of heavy oil was seldom on schedule. Above all, the United States did not live up to its promise to "move toward full normalization of political and economic relations."

In the mid-1990s, there was an illusion among Washington policy makers that the North Korean regime might not last long.
many people within the Washington Beltway preferred economic sanctions and a naval blockade when dealing with Pyongyang. Yet China, Russia, South Korea, and Japan would not go along because they all knew pressure would only provoke the North to arm sooner rather than later. Therefore, changing the course in Washington is the key to resolving the issue. Only a U.S. willingness to reconcile would alter North Korea’s course.

However, there are some good reasons to look beyond what “should” have happened but instead at what is likely to happen. Considering the domestic political climate in the United States, it is likely that Obama will continue to put pressure on North Korea, but he may realize that a hard-line strategy is not working and engage in diplomacy give-and-take to press for denuclearization. The prospect of a successful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner is still within reach. The joint pact signed on February 13, 2007, has provided the guiding principle for further negotiation and implementation.

The death of Kim Jong-II seems to have provided an opportunity for the North Korean leadership to reconsider its fundamental approach. The international community was surprised by Kim Jong-Un’s sudden decision to suspend its Yongbyon nuclear weapons program in exchange for food aid. Pyongyang has agreed to implement a moratorium on long-range missile launches, nuclear tests, and nuclear activities at Yongbyon, including uranium-enrichment activities and has also agreed to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to verify and monitor the moratorium on uranium-enrichment activities at the Yongbyon plant. Although this may represent a major step forward toward the de-nuclearization of the peninsula, people have reasons to remain cautious about the prospects.

Because of the strategic importance of North Korea, China cannot treat Pyongyang too harshly. North Korean leaders may not like some of the Chinese policies, but they also recognize that to a large extent they must depend on China economically and militarily, and more importantly China is the principal counter to U.S. pressure. This unavoidable

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