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**Northeast Asia's Security and  
the Challenge of a Nuclear  
North Korea: The Future  
Prospects for Peace and  
Stability**

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this dissertation is to explore the possibility of extending and systematising multilateral security co-operation in Northeast Asia through the Six-Party Talks – i.e. the international negotiations that were launched in 2003 and aimed at breaking the impasse over North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes. The talks involve the two Koreas, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Russia and the United States. The goal and main thesis of the dissertation is, thus, to advocate the development of the Six-Party Talks into a permanent system of regional security co-operation. This paper argues that Northeast Asia's security co-operation will pave the way to a far better future. It also warns about the danger of inertia in state policies and the pervasive conventional wisdom of political realism. Beyond the first goal of denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, the players of Northeast Asia will have to work together in partnership on wider security challenges for the sake of long-term stability and peaceful development in the region.

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**Figure 1. Map of Northeast Asia**



Source: University of Texas Library.

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/soviet\\_union\\_east\\_and\\_south\\_asia\\_1987.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/soviet_union_east_and_south_asia_1987.jpg)

**Table 1.** Basic data for the member states of the Six Party Talks, 2007

	Area (Km2)	Population (m.)	GDP (US\$ b.)	GDP per capita (US\$)	Military expenditure (US\$ b.)
China	9 596 960	1 330.0	3 250	2 460	58.3
Japan	377 835	127.2	4 383	34 312	43.6
North Korea	120 540	23.4	..	..	..
Russia	17 075 200	140.7	1 289	9 075	35.4
South Korea	98 480	49.2	957	19 750	22.6
USA	9 826 630	303.8	13 843	45 845	547

..= figure not available; GDP = gross domestic product.

Source: **Area and population:** Central Intelligent Agency (CIA), World Fact Book, URL <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>>; **GDP:** International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook Database, Apr. 2008, URL <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2008/01/weodata/index.aspx>>; **Military expenditure:** Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), The 15 countries with the highest military expenditure in 2007, URL <[http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex\\_major\\_spenders.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_major_spenders.pdf)>.

## **Introduction**

Northeast Asia is the most dynamic, vibrant and significant part of Asia, economically and politically. And yet it is one of the most contentious regions in the world, where major powers still struggle over numerous issues and deep-rooted scars from the dark history of the Cold War and the Second World War, even from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, remain vividly alive. It is one of the few regions on earth where multilateral security co-operation has never been able to develop. One of the major problems in Northeast Asia is a divided Korean peninsula, the two parts of which – the People's Democratic Republic of Korea or North Korea, and the Republic of Korea or South Korea – are still technically at war today. The demilitarised zone between them is often referred as the 'Cold War's last frontier'. In July 2006, North Korea tested its missile capability in defiance of the international community. It was followed by, in October 2006, its first ever test of a nuclear device that caused an international outcry. A nuclear-armed North Korea is one of the most destabilising factors in the region, alongside other problems.

The main purpose of this dissertation is to explore the possibility of extending and systematising multilateral security co-operation in Northeast Asia through the Six-Party Talks – i.e. the international negotiations that were launched in 2003 and aimed at breaking the impasse over North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes. The talks involve the two Koreas, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Russia and the United States. For the purpose and contents of this dissertation, Northeast Asia is

defined as a region that consists of these six members of the negotiations. The USA is included in this regional system as it would not be realistic to discuss security co-operation without a US military presence in the region. “Northeast Asia is the geopolitical intersection of several major powers: Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia. These countries have a long history of rivalry that has led to repeated conflicts, often drawing the United States in, because we have been a Pacific nation for most of our history.”<sup>1</sup> (US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice)

Chapter 1 spells out general facts about Northeast Asia and its history. It is essential to understand why this region has never been able to enjoy a real sense of peace or to establish mutual trust between states. The chapter identifies four key problematic characteristics of the region for purpose of the dissertation: Japan and its history, the rise of China, the current mix of traditional and non-traditional security issues and other issues, and the persistently strong realist behaviours of the region’s nation states.

In the second chapter, the focus will be on examining how and why North Korea has become nuclear armed. It offers a brief history of the country from the Korean War to the present time. It also, and most importantly, explores the objectives of the North Koreans in developing their nuclear programme and examines how a nuclear armed North Korea matters to the region.

The third chapter will focus on US policy towards North Korea. Among players in the Six-Party talks and also among leading global powers, the USA’s policy is particularly deserving of careful scrutiny. Not only is the US the most

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<sup>1</sup> The US Embassy in London, UK. June 18, 2008. <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/forpo1441.html>



powerful player but it also has the most influential policy, which could shape the entire process and regional security structure for good or ill. This chapter tries to spell out some fundamental miscalculations in the Bush administration's policy towards North Korea. Later in this chapter, the development of the US's future security involvement in Northeast Asia is discussed.

The fourth chapter examines the complex strategic interests of each member state participating in the Six-Party Talks. This understanding of each party is crucially important, not only in order to observe the complex relations between them, but also to assess what each party will gain from a wider regional security co-operation.

In the final chapter, the focus will be on suggesting a constructive vision of Northeast Asia's security co-operation for the future. The text addresses such issues as: reasons for the establishment of a security co-operation system; major hindrances, and challenges. It will also examine the reasons why the Six-Party talks should lead to the creation of such security co-operation.

The goal and main thesis of the dissertation is, thus, to advocate the development of the Six-Party Talks into a permanent system of regional security co-operation. This paper argues that Northeast Asia's security co-operation will pave the way to a far better future. It also warns about the danger of inertia in state policies and the pervasive conventional wisdom of political realism. Beyond the first goal of denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, the players of Northeast Asia will have to work together in partnership on wider security challenges for the sake of long-term stability and peaceful development in the region.

## 1. Northeast Asia

### Japan: The history problem

Japan has been the distinctive and dominant regional power for more than a century, in economic, political and /or military terms. It still is one of the most important players in the whole of Asia and even the wider world. “Japan’s growing imperial ambitions coincided with its modernization and militarization, and confirmed its status as a major power at the beginning of the twentieth century.” (Beeson, 2007: 42)

Japan was, directly and indirectly, involved in all the inter-state conflicts that took place in the region between the late nineteenth century and the end of the Second World War in 1945. Japan vigorously looked outwards for natural resources to continue its industrial development and sought a way to establish hegemony within an emerging regional order. The rising Japanese power was a great threat to its neighbouring countries and it did indeed destabilise the region. The Japanese way of pursuing military expansion and imperialism in Asia was fierce and brutal, undoubtedly causing great human suffering that has left deep scars, remaining unhealed in the modern history of the region even to this day (e.g. the Nanjing massacre<sup>2</sup>, the ‘Comfort Women’<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Nanjing Massacre’ is the term used for a systematic mass killing incident that took place in Nanjing, China in 1937 where 250,000-300,000 people are believed to have been killed by Japanese troops (Morikawa, 2008: 6). BBC News. April 11, 2005. Scarred by history: The Rape of Nanjing. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/223038.stm>.  
BBC News. December 13, 2007. Nanjing remembers massacre victims. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7140357.stm>

Japan's defeat in the Second World War was probably the most significant turning point in its modern history. Japan was 'peacefully occupied' by the US and came under the US nuclear umbrella for protection against communist influence in the region. "The US military presence in Japan began at the end of World War II. Okinawa's proximity to potential hot spots determines its strategic importance in the security and defence policy of the Japanese-US relationship." (Lachowski, 2007: 39) In 1951 Japan and the US signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which was revised in 1960. "The essence of the bilateral relationship that developed between Japan and the United States in the aftermath of the Second World War was one in which Japan relied on the USA to underwrite its security while maintaining a low diplomatic profile and concentrating on the job of reconstructing the Japanese economy." (Beeson, 2007: 74) It is accurate to say that a US military presence in Japan and South Korea has shaped today's security balance in the whole of East Asia. It is widely believed, moreover, that US troops deployed in this region will still play a very important role in years to come. As Beeson rightly notes, without this security alliance with the US – starting from scratch in the aftermath of the Second World War – Japan's 'economic miracle' could not have happened as it was that made the country the second largest economy in the world.

Yet notwithstanding this great economic success, Japan's relations with its neighbouring countries have never been trouble-free. One of the most unsettling

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<sup>3</sup> 'Comfort women' is a term for women coerced into sexual slavery and prostitution during the Second World War by the Japanese military (Morikawa, 2008: 6). Amnesty International Secretariat. Japan: Women survivors of sexual slavery during WWII. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA22/002/2006/en/dom-ASA220022006en.html>

problems between Japan and its neighbours is a great difference in the understanding of modern history related to Japan's past militarism and imperialism. Not only does Japan often seem reluctant to acknowledge its past mistakes, but Japan's foreign relations with its neighbours have greatly deteriorated on occasions when a Japanese Prime Minister paid a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine,<sup>4</sup> "where convicted Japan's past time war dead including 14 class-A war criminals such as General Hideki Tojo were honoured." (Morikawa, 2008: 6) A severe deterioration was seen, for instance, in diplomatic relations between Japan and China when the then Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, visited the Yasukuni while he was still in office. As a consequence of his visit to the shrine, China suspended top level contacts with Japan between 2002 and 2007. A Japanese Prime Minister's Yasukuni Shrine visit is seen as a very offensive and insulting gesture by those neighbouring countries that Japan invaded during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, massive anti-Japan demonstrations violently spread all around China in 2005.<sup>5</sup> This incident alone has demonstrated how volatile Japan's foreign relations can be when it comes to history-related matters.

"A nation that forgets its past is doomed to repeat it." (Winston Churchill)

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<sup>4</sup> 'The Yasukuni Shrine' is a sacred war shrine in Tokyo where Japan's past time war dead were honoured. The shrine is often seen, by Japan's neighbours, as a symbol that glorifies Japanese militarism. BBC News. August 15, 2006. Japan's controversial shrine.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1330223.stm> (Morikawa, 2008: 6)

<sup>5</sup> CNN. April 17, 2005. Japan protection call over protests.

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/asiapcf/04/10/china.japan.protest/index.html>

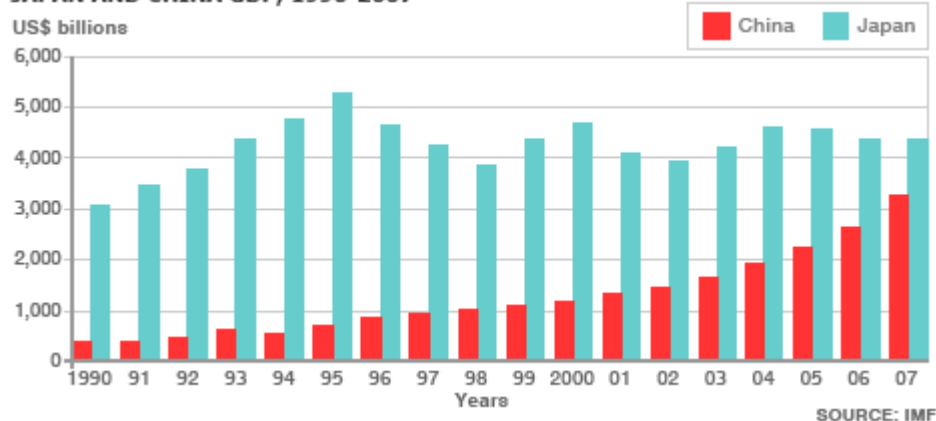
## **The Rise of China: Threat or ‘responsible stakeholder’?**

Through its modern history, China has traversed and experienced political and military struggles. In its modern history, the first major war fought between China and Japan – which characterised the successful modernisation and fast emergence of Japan – was the Sino-Japanese war of 1894, where the regional dominance of power started to shift from China to Japan. China’s province of Manchuria was invaded by Japan in 1937, leading to the Second Sino-Japanese war. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China also suffered serious internal conflicts between the Nationalists and the Communists. The Second Sino-Japanese war, lasting until 1941 when the US became involved, came to prove “the potential weakness of the Nationalist government” (Beeson, 2007: 35). Japan’s defeat in the Second World War brought another phase of major internal problems for China. The battle between the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists led by Mao Zedong became full-scale and intensified in 1946. In 1950, Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist troops were beaten and fled to Taiwan, while the Chinese Communist Party seized the control of the mainland China.

The People’s Republic of China was formally inaugurated in 1949. The Soviet Union recognised the People’s Republic instantly after its inauguration. In 1950, the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. The Sino-Soviet relations gradually became less friendly, starting what came to be called ‘the Sino-Soviet split’, from the late 1950s and the two communist regimes also became distanced in the details of their

communist ideologies and politics. In 1969, China and the Soviet Union engaged in military clashes across the border area. China established formal diplomatic relations with the US in 1979 and this was seen as one of the most significant landmarks in terms of China's relations with the external world. Under Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s, China's economic reform began to revitalise the economic system. Deng officially endorsed the pursuit of wealth in 1983. "Even before the collapse of the Communist governments of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party set a course toward a model of development that privileged economic might as the engine for political strength and stability." (Bremmer, 2006: 244) Yet, politically, China held on to Communism in 1989-90 at a time when it was abandoned across the Soviet empire.

**Table 2. Japan and China GDP, 1999-2007**  
**JAPAN AND CHINA GDP, 1990-2007**



Source: BBC News. May 8, 2008. China & Japan: Rival giants, URL <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7388077.stm>>.

Today, an immense economic power shift is taking place in Northeast Asia. Within the next decade, China's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is expected to

exceed that of Japan and China will thus take over from Japan's status of the world's second largest economy. China's rapid and powerful emergence is not confined to the economic spectrum. China is also expanding its military expenditure and strengthening its military capabilities.<sup>6</sup> China's political influence is reinforced by all these factors. Many experts on East Asia believe that the international currents of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be determined by how the Chinese state conducts itself (Arai, 2007).

There are two principal different views on the emergence of China: optimists argue that China's emergence as a superpower is good for the region and the whole world. Their arguments are based on the 'responsible stakeholder' theory (Zoellick, 2007) which argues that China will grow in a peaceful and responsible manner as its national interests heavily depend on economic interaction with other states, so long as strong forces of globalisation continue to spread around the globe. Wishing to continue its economic growth and prosperity, China will be constrained not to behave in a way which undermines its continuing trade relations. China's positive involvement in international institutions and groupings such as ASEAN Plus Three<sup>7</sup>, the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum)<sup>8</sup>, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation<sup>9</sup> and its

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<sup>6</sup> GlobalSecurity. China's Defence Budget.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/budget.htm>

<sup>7</sup> ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation. <http://www.aseansec.org/16580.htm>

<sup>8</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum.

<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/AboutUs/ARFParticipants/tabid/131/Default.aspx>

ASEAN Regional Forum's objectives are: "1. to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and 2. to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region."

<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/AboutUs/ARFObjectives/tabid/129/Default.aspx> (Morikawa 2008: 18)

<sup>9</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation consists of China, Russia and four central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). "The main goals of the SCO are strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighbourly relations among the member countries; promoting their

chairmanship role in the Six Party Talks may be seen as positive signs that China is recognising its international responsibility and is trying to display its co-operative side to the world. “(Former Deputy Secretary of State) Robert Zoellick<sup>10</sup> expressed hope that a rising China would play a proactive and positive role in the world with that power and become a ‘responsible stakeholder’ in the international system, helping to solve common security and economic problems and reducing regional and global tensions.” (Christensen, 2005: 2-3)

Sceptics on the rise of China, on the other hand, argue that China’s rising power holds great potential to become a threat and destabilising factor for regional peace and stability. As history has shown, any emerging power can become a dangerous force if it chooses a destructive way of pursuing its narrowly self-interested aims. According to a conventional political realist theory that mainly explains states’ behaviours in terms of material interests and military power, both China’s challenge to US hegemony and the possibilities for conflict between the two are inevitable developments (Mearsheimer, 2001). The consequences may be especially troublesome in the situation now emerging where most of the world’s economic activities are heavily dependent on diminishing natural resources. “Consequently, ‘realist’ and environment-conflict analysts such as Horner-Dixon (1999) may be right, and the twenty-first century will be characterized by an

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effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture as well as education, energy, transportation, tourism, environmental protection and other fields; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region, to move towards the establishment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order.” The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. <http://www.secsco.org/html/00026.html>

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. State Department. BIOGRAPHY of Robert B. Zoellick. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/42449.htm>



increasingly intense and possibly violent struggle over the planet's diminishing resources. However, not only would there be no long-term winners in such a process, but the delicate webs of interdependency that distinguish the contemporary international economic order would also be rent asunder. The history of East Asia provides powerful reminders of how important such inter-connections are, and how dangerous, and ultimately self-destructive, it can be to break them." (Beeson, 2007: 250)

China's thirst for natural resources is, historically speaking, nothing new in term of typical nation-state behaviours. What is new today, however, is that oil reserves may not last for the next half-century, while massive CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into atmosphere caused by excessive consumption of fossil fuels and other industrial human activities are already believed to have altered the pattern of climate on a global scale. China's major expansion of its military budget is also seen as an alarming factor. While the Taiwan issue<sup>11</sup> still remains unsolved, sceptics argue that tension across the Taiwan straits<sup>12</sup> is still very high and holds the potential to explode if things should develop in the wrong direction, perhaps leading to massive destruction within the region. In addition, domestically, China's modern history has shown its willingness to resort in conflict and violence. "Regardless of its dramatic capitalistic transformation, the international community still holds sceptical views on China today given its history of undemocratic approach to self-determination: the

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<sup>11</sup> BBC News. Taiwan Flash Point.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/asia\\_pac/04/taiwan\\_flashpoint/html/introduction.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/asia_pac/04/taiwan_flashpoint/html/introduction.stm)

<sup>12</sup> "China claims sovereignty over Taiwan and regards it as the 'breakaway province of China.' China says it will take military action against Taiwan should the island declare formal statehood." (Morikawa, 2008: 5)

Tiananmen Square incident in 1999; continuing oppression of religion, freedom of speech and human rights, violence in Tibet etc.” (Morikawa, 2008: 20) The fact that China has not taken military action since its last war against Vietnam in 1979<sup>13</sup> does not necessarily imply that China’s political and military tensions with other states are inactive. Tensions are still vividly noticeable, especially with Taiwan; with Japan; with the US; and to a lesser extent (maritime claims) with China’s Southeast Asian neighbours.

Considering the merits of both sets of arguments, put forward by optimists and sceptics, on the rise of China, it is still not clear at this stage how this enigmatic but powerful nation will behave in years to come. What seems already very clear is that the region will experience severe destabilisation and threats to the peaceful co-existence of states, should the latter set of arguments be proved right. Either way, it is already evident that China will determine the future of the region and even the wider world.

### **Traditional and non-traditional security threats**

Several territorial disputes remain unsolved between Japan and neighbouring countries: the Japanese-Russian dispute over sovereignty of the islands known as the Northern Territories<sup>14</sup>, ownership disputes over several islands in the Sea of Japan

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<sup>13</sup> Global Security. Chinese Invasion of Vietnam February 1979. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/prc-vietnam.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Andersen, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria. May 2001.

between Japan and South Korea<sup>15</sup>, and in the East China Sea between Japan and China. A large amount of natural resources, oil and gas, are believed to exist undersea around these disputed islands. It was seen a sign of positive development between Japan and China when, in June 2008, the two parties agreed on the joint exploration of a natural gas field.<sup>16</sup> Yet this is only the beginning of a possible end to the problems between China and Japan. Other territorial problems between Japan and its neighbours do not seem to have an early chance of resolution.

In terms of prominence, the most visible traditional security problems in this region are the Korean crisis and the Taiwan issue. The Korean crisis will be discussed in a latter chapter. After the Chinese Civil War in the late 1940s, China and Taiwan fell under separate rule and have remained politically and ideologically divided for more than a half century. China regards Taiwan as a 'breakaway province of the mainland' and it is ready to take military action against the island should Taiwan declare its formal statehood. According to the AFP News Agency, the numbers of missiles directly aimed by China against the island have risen from 200 in 2000 to 1300 in 2008.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Taiwan is one of the world's biggest arms buyers and the main supplier is the US. The US has been involved in the tension between

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South Kuriles/Northern Territories: A Stumbling-block in Russia-Japan Relations.

<http://www.cancaps.ca/andersen.html>

<sup>15</sup> Yonhap News. July 14, 2008. South Korea angrily reacts to Japan's claim to Dokdo.  
<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2008/07/14/23/0301000000AEN20080714007100315F.HTM>

<sup>16</sup> The China Post. AFP. June 19, 2008. Tokyo, Beijing strike landmark gas-sharing deal.  
<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/asia/japan/2008/06/19/161638/Tokyo-Beijing.htm>

<sup>17</sup> SinoDaily. May 15, 2008. US defends arms sales to Taiwan, criticizes Chinese missile buildup.  
[http://www.sinodaily.com/reports/US\\_defends\\_arms\\_sales\\_to\\_Taiwan\\_criticizes\\_Chinese\\_missile\\_buildup\\_999.html](http://www.sinodaily.com/reports/US_defends_arms_sales_to_Taiwan_criticizes_Chinese_missile_buildup_999.html)

China and Taiwan and US influence has played the role of counterbalancing China's military threats across the Taiwan Strait.

Although the political tension across the Strait is still ongoing, both China and Taiwan have enjoyed healthy economic interaction and trade in recent years.

Furthermore, in terms of political exchange between the two parties, there have lately been signs of significant improvement in bilateral relations.<sup>18</sup> In July 2008, China and Taiwan launched the first regular direct flights between them for almost six decades<sup>19</sup>, and this was welcomed by both parties as a 'new beginning' in China-Taiwan relations. It is, however, important to note that the fundamental problems across the Taiwan Strait still persist beneath the seemingly positive surface of current bilateral relations. The general effect of these long-unsolved security issues – territorial disputes between states, the divided Koreas and Taiwan – is to inevitably increase the likelihood of nuclear proliferation and arms races in the region. It is important to recall, in terms of Northeast Asia's geopolitical landscape today, that several nuclear states are clustered within this area: the US, Russia, China and North Korea. In the very worst scenario, escalation to nuclear war would not be a very remote possibility should any inter-state conflict break out.

This region also, however, faces shared non-traditional security problems such as the spread of pandemic disease, mass migration, drug trafficking, terrorism, climate change and possible environmental disaster, energy security and food security,

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<sup>18</sup> BBC News. June 12, 2008. Media praise China-Taiwan talks. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7450878.stm>

<sup>19</sup> Taipei Times. July 5, 2008. Excitement greets start of direct flights. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/07/05/2003416592>

etc. “Defining security from a non-state centric perspective, one finds the following issues as constituting major non-traditional security challenges in Northeast Asia: environmental deterioration and its deleterious effects on human health and trans-boundary pollution problems; growing pressures on natural resources due to expanding market demand, particularly with respect to forestry and fishery resources; legal and illegal migration and resulting ethnic tensions in and around China; increasing gaps in wealth and income within and between neighboring regions in part as a result of international and transnational economic exchanges; illegal drug trafficking; and, mismanagement of national economies and their vulnerability to the intensifying forces of globalization, resulting in major economic and social dislocations among the local populations.” (Akaha, 2002: 4)

The great difference between today’s world and that of a century ago is that the forces of globalisation and degree of interdependency are much stronger today than in any previous period of human history. The very nature of non-traditional security threats such as the spread of pandemic disease, mass migration, drug trafficking, terrorism, climate change, environmental disaster, energy security and food shortages etc. is problematic in many ways, including that fact that none of these problems can be confined within any single national border. Escalated by the strong forces of globalisation, these truly transnational threats could spread from one part of the Northeast Asian region to another within a day. Events such as the ‘East Asia Financial Crisis’ of 1997<sup>20</sup>, which originated from a local currency crisis in Thailand

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<sup>20</sup> Federation of American Scientists. February 6, 1998. THE 1997-98 ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS. <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/crs-asia2.htm>

and spread shortly after to the wider region, and the spread of the SARS virus in 2003, showed how quickly a single local event could affect the entire region. The common nature of today's non-traditional security problems means that these problems simply do not discriminate between nations or regions: no country is immune to such problems and no country can take effective measures alone. The sad reality is that, in Northeast Asia, such problems do exist and they spread rapidly across national boundaries without any effective restrictions. Yet the common regional institutional capability to tackle such transnational threats does not exist in today's Northeast Asia.

### **The Persistent Realist behaviours of states**

Realism argues that the behaviours of nation states can be explained by the following factors: state sovereignty; the search for power (political, economic and military); political prestige and national interests. In the realist account, all politics can be described as a power struggle; thus the fundamental character of state behaviours is deeply rooted in an egoistic and aggressive human nature that is universally embedded from the beginning of human history. Realism claims that states, by the nature, try to increase their power and also to gain the political upper hand and relatively greater power vis-a-vis other states. Where the pursuit of relative gain occurs, a 'Zero-Sum' competition is inevitable. "The conception of the world offered by realists is easy to grasp. Rational, calculating, and egoistic states are the most important actors in a non-hierarchical international system. States' survival strategies

are based on amassing power and forming alliances against any state that threatens to upset the existing balance of power. Power politics is the name of the game and the game is zero-sum. That is, one state's gain is another state's loss. Moreover, under conditions of scarcity and international anarchy, morality is regarded as a statesperson's folly." (Acharya, 2001: 9)

Realism sees the international system as anarchic: therefore the security of a state can only be sustained by constantly increasing its military and economic power so that the absolute sovereignty of the state becomes enhanced. On such a view, international institutions are not sufficient to contain state behaviours. Realism sees international institutions as an arena where powerful states can defend their own national interests and promote their own national agendas. Mogenthau once remarked that: "1. Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.... 2. The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power. This concept provides the link between reason trying to understand international politics and the facts to be understood.... 3. Power and interest are viable in content across space and time.... 4. Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states.... 5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of particular nation with the moral laws that governs the universe.... 6. The difference, then, between political realism and other schools of thought is real and it is profound... Intellectually, the political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere." (Mogenthau, 1954: 4-10)

The modern history of Northeast Asia, pervaded by mutual distrusts and hostility caused by the deadly spiral of war and violence in the past century, may be explained by such a realist account. “From the realist perspective Northeast Asia appears trapped in security dilemma that has resulted in a regional arms race. Northeast Asian countries pursue robust military modernization programs, both offensive and defensive, and arms build-ups to protect their national security and to secure their expanding national interests.” (Yang, 2006: 5) It is, of course, nothing unusual but rather normal that a nation state should wish for growing prosperity and should act upon its national interests. However, problems occur when states pursue their interests at the expense of the others. Competing for relative gains combined with a setting of strategic power struggles increases the risk of conflict. It has always been the case through human history that the chances of conflict increase where states compete for relative gains from finite sources. If, as realism claims, state behaviour is indeed chiefly motivated by relative gains in power and political prestige and by national interests – a vision that links these traits with deep-rooted, inherent and universal elements of egoism and aggression in human nature – peaceful co-existence of states cannot be expected in this region for the future.

In the modern history of the region, Japan’s behaviours have been described largely on the basis of realist theory, with the effect that the rise of Japan became a threat to other countries and devastated the region. If such state behaviour is inherent, permanent and a universal part of human nature – which the realist school describes as egoistic and aggressive – then the current rise of China must indeed be perceived as an enormous threat and destructive factor for the peaceful co-existence of states.



“It must needs be taken for granted that all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers.”

(Machiavelli, 1970: 170)

## **Section Conclusion**

Friedberg describes Northeast Asia as a “ripe for rivalry.” (Friedberg, 1993-4)

“Northeast Asia is the geopolitical intersection of several major powers: Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia. These countries have a long history of rivalry that has led to repeated conflicts, often drawing the United States in” (US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice). Given the problematic characteristics of Northeast Asia, the players of the region face both theoretical and practical challenges today that are truly formidable. The region needs to come up with an answer now and all the major players need to work in partnership for it. Any solution must be realistic and has to lead to a real sense of peace and stability. Peaceful co-existence, prosperity and stability can only be actualised when and if all the regional players come to co-operate with each other. Hence the increasing necessity and urgency for a Northeast Asian security regime. The prospects for the region’s future will be positively different if such co-operation comes into being; without it, the geopolitical forecast for Northeast Asia’s future will be grim indeed. The argument running through the remainder of this dissertation is that the Six Party Talks should be developed into a lasting and systematic framework of regional security co-operation. In the early 21<sup>st</sup>

century world of today, lessons of experience should be carefully learned and persistent realist notions must be challenged, if nation states truly wish for stable development in a regional environment of peaceful co-existence.

## 2. North Korea and its nuclear ambitions

**Figure 2.** Map of the Korean Peninsula



Source: University of Texas Library.

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/korean\\_peninsula.gif](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/korean_peninsula.gif)

### The divided peninsula

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the Korean peninsula, which had been colonised by the Japanese for more than decades, was divided by the world superpowers. The US backed the formal statehood of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in 1945 while the Soviet Union announced the formal inauguration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) at almost the same time. The Soviet authorities appointed Kim Il Sung – father of the today's leader of North

Korea, Kim Jong Il – to take charge of this newly formed satellite state of the Soviet Union. Kim Il Sung promptly sought authorisation from Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China to invade the South. In 1950, both powers agreed and Kim marched his armies towards the South to 'reunify' the peninsula. None of the three leaders involved (Stalin, Mao and Kim) expected American intervention in such a conflict, as the Korean peninsula was believed to lie outside the US sphere of strategic interest. "Neither the Soviets nor the Chinese expected the Americans to intervene in the way they did, given that Korea was not inside the 'premier fence' that defined the outer limits of America's strategic commitments." (Beeson, 2007: 72) Nevertheless, a UN-authorized force mainly consisting of US and South Korean troops fought back against the Northern invasion. The most important issue for the US at that time was to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence in the region and avoid a 'potential flashpoint and source of instability' (Beeson, 2007: 72) The People's Liberation Army of China also entered the war to back the North Koreans shortly after the outbreak of hostilities.

The war was brought to an end in 1953 when the three parties, the US led-UN force, the DPRK (North Korea) and the People's Republic of China, agreed to sign the Korean War Armistice. Consequences of the war were catastrophic. Some 33,000 US troops and 3,000 others on the UN side died in the conflict. South Korea lost 59,900 people while the North lost 215,000 personnel, and the death toll for the Chinese was 400,000. (Becker, 2005: 59) The fighting also destroyed much of the infrastructure in both countries. After the Korean War in the 1950s and with the aid and support of the Soviet Union, North Korea under Kim Il Sung started to build its

own way based on the ‘Juche’ – self-reliance – philosophy to consolidate its newly established statehood. Its economic and political development was indeed faster than that of the South until the 1970s, when the price started to be paid for its isolated and limited political and economic system. The country’s economic stagnation was to be long-lasting and deteriorated into a serious destitution after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the chief guarantor of North Korea and other communist states. Kim Jong Il, the current incumbent leader of the DPRK, assumed the leadership of the state 3 years after the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994. Between 1994 and 1998 the country faced severe famine that is believed to have killed 2 to 3 million of its population. (Natsios, 1999) Despite such hardship, under Kim Jong Il’s government the military spending of the state has been estimated at as much as a quarter of its GDP.<sup>21</sup> According to the CIA’s (the US’s Central Intelligence Agency) report, North Korea’s GDP was a mere 2.2 billion US dollars by 2006, which places the country in the 156<sup>th</sup> place out of 190 UN member nations.<sup>22</sup>

Despite more than five decades that have passed since the armistice was signed, the two Koreas are still technically at war and military tension still exists across their border situated on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Over the last 50 years the two Koreas have developed in completely different ways. Today, South Korea’s GDP is the 13<sup>th</sup> largest in the world<sup>23</sup> – making it economically one of the most successful countries in the world in relation to its size and population, whereas the North’s economy

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<sup>21</sup> US Department of State. Background Note. North Korea. August 2008.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. The World Fact Book. North Korea.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>

<sup>23</sup> World Bank. Gross domestic product 2007.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf>

collapsed decades ago and is still devastated today. In 2005, 37% of the total population of 22 million North Koreans were estimated to be malnourished. (Bremmer, 2007: 36) North Korea is probably the last remaining Stalinist communist regime and as such is considered to be, politically and economically, one of the most 'failed' states in the world today. Ordinary people of North Korea live under the harsh dictatorship of Kim Jong Il and are systematically oppressed by the government. Human rights, freedoms (of expression, choice and movement etc) and civil liberties are completely non-existent in this country. The satellite image attached below illustrates how significantly different North Korea is from its successful neighbours.

“How poor is North Korea? Satellite photographs taken of Northeast Asia at night reveal the bright lights of modern capitalist Japan, the robust growth of twenty-first-century China, the relative prosperity of dynamic South Korea, and complete darkness from the northern half of the Korean peninsula. As the photo below shows, from space, South Korea looks like an island, floating in the Sea of Japan between China, Japan, and Russia. Even the capital city of Pyongyang goes dark once the sun sets. No photograph better tells the story of today's North Korea.” (Bremmer, 2007: 37)

**Figure 3.** Satellite image of North Korea at night



Source: GlobalSecurity. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/dprk/dprk-dark.htm>

### **North Korea's nuclear development**

North Korea's nuclear ambitions did not begin just a few years back. Kim Il Sung – Kim Jong Il's father – started to seek a way to build a nuclear arsenal already a few years after the end of the Korean conflict, in the 1950s. Kim Il Sung was believed to have been hugely disappointed with Moscow during the conflict in the peninsula. Stalin had not provided Kim with as much support Kim as expected. From Stalin's viewpoint there was insufficient motive for his country to become embroiled in such conflict. Stalin also feared what America's response would be. (Chang, 2005) Soon after the end of the conflict, Kim came to realise accordingly that he would need to

establish some system that allow his country to sustain itself independently without outside help, even if the North remained under the Soviet umbrella. “(The Juche philosophy was) introduced within two years after the end of the Korean War. Juche literally means ‘master of one’s self’ or self-reliance....In the world of Juche, the state is an organism with the leader being the head and the people the body.” (Chang, 2005:12) In terms of security, the nuclear weapons programme represented for Kim both the absolute guarantee of success in his Juche philosophy, and a perfect justification for it. In fact, North Korea’s nuclear programme secretly started obtaining technological help from Pakistan in the late 1980s.

In 1992, international speculation grew about the actual amount of plutonium North Korea possessed and about undeclared nuclear sites in the country, following an inspection by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) – the UN’s nuclear watchdog. North Korea withdrew unilaterally from the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) in 1993. The US, under the Clinton administration, seriously considered a military strike at the time on North Korea’s undeclared nuclear sites. Reversing the tension, however, Washington and Pyongyang came to an agreement in 1994: the Agreed Framework, which required Pyongyang to freeze its suspected nuclear programme. In return, Pyongyang would receive two light water nuclear reactors and 500,000 tonnes of crude oil per year to meet its civil energy needs.

Early in 2002, international allegations flared up again over Pyongyang’s alleged secret programme for uranium enrichment. In October 2002, North Korea admitted to have secretly developed its nuclear weapon programmes. The US immediately halted oil shipments to the North. North Korea consequently expelled



IAEA inspectors from the country and reactivated its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon. Today's North Korean nuclear crisis is directly related to these events in the past, and to the increased tension which they reintroduced to the peninsula generally and to North Korea's nuclear diplomacy in particular.

### **Motives for the nuclear programme**

On 10 October 2006, the North Korean official news agency issued this statement: "The field of scientific research in the DPRK successfully conducted an underground nuclear test under secure conditions on October 9, Juche 95 (2006) at a stirring time when all the people of the country are making a great leap forward in the building of a great prosperous powerful socialist nation. It has been confirmed that there was no such danger as radioactive emission in the course of the nuclear test as it was carried out under a scientific consideration and careful calculation. The nuclear test was conducted with indigenous wisdom and technology 100 percent. It marks a historic event as it greatly encouraged and pleased the KPA and people that have wished to have powerful self-reliant defence capability. It will contribute to defending the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the area around it."<sup>24</sup>

In July 2006, North Korea had already tested its missile capability in defiance of the international community. Three months later, in October 2006, the regime managed to conduct its first-ever test of a nuclear weapon – immediately and strongly

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<sup>24</sup> KCNA (KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY of the DPRK). October 10, 2006. DPRK Successfully Conducts Underground Nuclear Test. <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>

condemned by the international community. When looking at the prospects of an eventual denuclearisation of North Korea, it is essential to analyse the motives for North Korea's nuclear development. There are several reasons that may explain the North Korean regime's behaviour.

Firstly, by possessing nuclear weapons capabilities, North Korea has an absolute security guarantee for its own existence and survival as an independent state. Especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country started to realise the urgent need of ultimate protection for its own existence. Regardless of whether the international community accepted it or not, the North Koreans decided to take the most extreme steps for self-determination. "As Hwang Jang-yop has observed 'Given the choice between regime survival or and national prosperity, it's pretty clear which Kim Jong Il would prefer.'" (French, 2005 : 272)

The second point about motives is closely related to the first. More specifically, North Korea perceives the US as an aggressive enemy: while the US sees North Korea as a serious rogue state that poses great threats to its security interests in the region and its allies. Especially after George W. Bush's State of Union Speech in 2002 where he branded North Korea as part of an 'axis of evil', and having seen the American-led invasion of Iraq and the fate of the Iraqi dictator, the North Korean regime was convinced that US strikes would be inevitable. To avoid the same fate as Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong Il strongly believed that nuclear weapons were the only way to deter possible US pre-emptive strike. "There is no conventional force in the world that could fight an all-out war against America and win. Indeed, to put it in wholly unrealistic terms, were all the rest of the world to mount combined attack on

the United States they would be defeated....the United States has no reason to fear an other country....except of course in the nuclear field. Here the United States is unavoidably vulnerable.” (Cooper, 2004: 45-47) For the North Korean leader, possessing nuclear weapons assured his own survival and existence. “Kim Jong Il’s foreign policy embraces the state’s survival in a manner substantially different from the foreign policy of most countries” (Henriksen & Mo, 1997: 170) “North Korea is looking for a guarantee of its regime survival, and it needs to do that directly with the United States, because they see the United States as the greatest threat to its survival.” (Wendy Sherman, Former adviser to President Bill Clinton and Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Warren Christopher)<sup>25</sup>

Thirdly, North Korea hoped to enjoy a prestigious nuclear status on the world stage that should give a country a stronger position in international negotiations. “As Charles de Gaulle once said ‘No country without an atom bomb could properly consider itself independent.’ And as important a nuke permits the angry and the weak to assert national pride. It is after all, the ultimate badge of ‘big guy’ status in the world.” (Chang, 2005: 196) In other word, ‘big guy’ can get away with murder because he has the gun. Given the way in which other ‘illegitimate’ nuclear states such as India, Pakistan and Israel are recognised de facto and are feared by their neighbouring countries, it should not be too difficult to understand why North Korea also aspired to the ‘big guy’ status. “What I think he (Kim Jong Il) wanted to do was to establish himself as a leader on the world stage, and the only way he could do it

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<sup>25</sup> CNN. January 10, 2003. AMERICAN MORNING WITH PAULA ZAHN. Interview With Ambassador Wendy Sherman. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0301/10/itm.01.html>

was by developing various aspects of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, and to have some kind of missile projection, because that's their only cash crop. It is an economy that doesn't work, but they do manage somehow to figure out how to build various high-tech missile components." (Madeleine Albright, the 64<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of State)<sup>26</sup>

Fourthly, despite its dangerous nature, the weapons programme can also be used as a diplomatic bargaining chip. North Korea is, in contrast to its Juche self-reliance philosophy, utterly dependent on the international community in practice for energy and food. To feed Kim's elite soldiers who support the leader's status, international aid is essential for the survival of Kim's regime. The North Koreans do not have many sources of leverage other than a nuclear weapons programme that they can deploy in international diplomacy to extract aid from the international community.

Fifthly, North Korea might be ready to sell its nuclear weapons and technologies to whoever is interested in purchasing them at high cost. That is what precisely Washington is mostly concerned about. The Americans are, in fact, more anxious about the nuclear proliferation implications than about any scenario of a North Korean attack on US soil. "Mr Bush, in his statement on the test, sounded more anxious about nuclear technology seeping from North Korea than he was about the test itself."<sup>27</sup> In today's world, many states or non-state actors may be interested in acquiring unconventional weapons capability for whatever their own purposes may

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<sup>26</sup> PBS Frontline. March 27, 2003. Kim's Nuclear Gamble. Interview with Madeleine Albright. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/albright.html>

<sup>27</sup> The Economist. October 14, 2006. "Who can stop him now?" "The nightmare comes to pass" "A regime as rickety as Kim Jong Il's own". The Economist Vol. 381, No. 8499.

be. As long as there is a rising demand in the nuclear market, a supplier such as Pyongyang cannot be weaned away from the hope of retailing its products for major benefits.

Additionally, Bremmer argues that Kim Jong Il can maintain control of North Korean people and keep them isolated from the outside world by maintaining his nuclear programme. According to his argument a country like North Korea is bound to crumble one day, yet it can make its life longer by isolating itself from the outside world's influence. Kim tries to do all he can to keep his country isolated from the rest of the world lest his own dictatorial power be destabilised. "North Korea will not give up its nuclear program....to maintain control over his country, Kim Jong Il must keep his people completely isolated. Allowing international inspectors to verify suspected nuclear sites is to give foreigners free access to the North Korean people. Kim Jong Il cannot allow that and hope to remain securely in power." (Bremmer, 2006: 40)

These explanations should suffice to underline the basic logic of how the North Korean government regards its nuclear weapons programme, and why that programme is unlikely to be abandoned voluntarily.

### **The North Korean regime**

One of the major causes for the long-lasting Korean crisis is the irrational behaviour of the North Koreans. There are three clear characteristics of the North Korean regime that contribute to the irrationality of its politics and diplomacy: the regime's

unpredictable nature and diplomatic track record; its resort to various criminal activities; and its highly oppressive internal conduct.

Firstly, North Korea is no stranger to breaking the assurances of a signed agreement or statement. After accepting the Agreed Framework of 1994, North Korea went on secretly developing its nuclear programme, thus breaching the agreement and directly leading to today's crisis. In September 2005 when a signed joint statement was produced by the Six Party Talks, North Korea announced its decision to withdraw from the statement just a day after the statement was signed by all parties, insisting that it should first receive light water nuclear reactors before accepting anything else.

This sudden U-turn decision was not really so surprising, given the unpredictable nature of North Korean diplomacy generally. Conducting diplomacy in such a unpredictable way has greatly hindered the building of diplomatic trust and confidence with other states. For example, in 1998 North Korea tested a long-range missile capable of penetrating Japan's air-space, demonstrating its readiness and capabilities to strike any part of Japan's territories. It again conducted similar missile tests in July 2006 into the Sea of Japan. Despite mounting international pressure and as mentioned above, Pyongyang went on to conduct a first-ever nuclear test in October 2006 that shocked the region and the wider world. "North Korea has resorted more often to military threats and confrontation than to seeking trust and assurance, a style of behaviour that runs counter to any durable, reciprocal peace and security

process.” (SIPRI & CSS Report, 2007: 22) In 2007, North Korea was also accused of helping Syria to build nuclear facilities.<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, North Korea conducts a variety of illegal activities such as narcotic producing and trading, money laundering, producing counterfeits etc. These underground criminal activities are sponsored by the North Korean government to finance its national budget. Given the international restrictions on trading with North Korea and the almost universal political hostility facing the country, these activities are believed to be still ongoing.

As regards links with terrorism, in the 1970s and 80s, the North Korean government kidnapped Japanese citizens and forced them to teach the North Korean spies how to disguise themselves as Japanese. In 1987, the North Korean government directly orchestrated the Korean Air flight bombing,<sup>29</sup> initially reported as an act of ‘Japanese citizens’ who were in fact North Korean agents that had been trained to disguise as Japanese. Not surprisingly, some members of the international community regard North Korea as a serious criminal state and insist that the regime should be held to account. “With the right political will, the world could quickly agree on remedies to disarm a criminal state clearly unable to feed its own population and which tries to holds its own people as hostages and to take its neighbours hostage with nuclear weapons. North Korea and Kim Jong Il, a rogue state and its leader, could and should be held to account” (Becker, 2005: 274)

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<sup>28</sup> The Washington Post. September 13, 2007. N. Korea, Syria May Be at Work on Nuclear Facility. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/12/AR2007091202430.html>

<sup>29</sup> The Washington Post. January 15, 1988. Woman Says She Sabotaged Plane on Orders from N. Korean Leader.

In addition and thirdly, North Korea's political regime is probably the harshest system in today's world. No freedoms or civil liberties are to be found in this country and ordinary North Koreans are oppressed and demoralised. Public executions and tortures take place and the secret police routinely imprison people without charge. People are denied access to even the basic needs for human existence such as food and clean water. Information flow within the country is strictly controlled by the government and propaganda news is the only information the population hears everyday. "North Korea is the most successful totalitarian regime ever constructed." (Donald Gregg. Former US ambassador to South Korea. 1989-1993)<sup>30</sup> Even if President Bush's description of North Korea as part of an 'axis of evil' in his State of Union Speech in 2002 was strategically not the smartest move, it is plain that the political system of the Kim Jong-il's country does nothing to help the construction of mature diplomatic relations based on mutual trust and confidence with democratic countries.

### **How does a nuclear North Korea matter?**

"North-East Asia faces a wide range of security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional. Compared with other regions, however, the risk of state-to-state conflict remain relatively high and perhaps most obvious on the Korean peninsula." (SIPRI &

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<sup>30</sup> Discovery Channel. January 20, 2006. Spotlight: North Korea Nuclear Documentary.  
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3787046457101273554&q=north+korea>



CSS Report, 2007: 3) If the rise of China may be perceived as a long-term threat to the region, the crisis on the Korean peninsula perhaps stands out as a specific and short-term, yet formidable and highly destabilising threat factor for Northeast Asia. There are three main disturbing implications flowing from a nuclear-armed North Korea.

**Figure 4. The Korean Demilitarised Zone**



Source: BBC News. July 22, 2003. The Korean War armistice. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2774931.stm>

First, the possibility of another outbreak of the Korean War does still exist across the Korean border. The Korean peninsula has been divided by “the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel” border<sup>31</sup> – technically a Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) – for more than half a century. The two Koreas are still technically at war, since the Korean War Armistice signed in 1953 was never followed by a complete peace process. This highly tense

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<sup>31</sup> “When Japan's colonial hold on Korea ended with its defeat in 1945, United States forces entered the South and the Soviet Army took over in the North by mutual agreement, dividing the country at the 38th parallel. When discussions on Korea's future broke down in May 1946, the division became frozen.” New York Times. June 11, 1988. Divided by Politics and the 38th Parallel. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DE5D91031F932A25755C0A96E948260>

and peculiar situation – a frozen war lasting half a century – on the peninsula is one of the greatest and severest threats to peace and security in the entire region. Today, North Korea possesses nuclear weapons while heavily armed North Korean armies continue to confront strong joint US-South Korean troop units across the DMZ border. Probably the most disturbing scenario one could imagine is another outbreak of the Korean War, which would cause catastrophic damage not just on the peninsula but throughout the region and even the wider world. In the worst-case scenario, nuclear devices might be involved in such a conflict.

The magnitude of another war on the Korean peninsula would simply be unimaginable. “The South’s capital, Seoul lay just 35 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Despite its name, this is the most militarized area in the world. By the early 1990s, Kim Jong Il had moved 700,000 troops, 8,000 artillery systems, and 2,000 tanks – 70 percent of his entire force – to within 90 miles of Seoul....A war would wreck not just Seoul but shake the global economy and disrupt the vast trade across the Pacific in which South Korea plays a crucial role. When the news of the strike broke, stock market across the globe would be certain to plummet in a wave of panic selling.” (Becker, 2005: 5-6) As argued in an earlier chapter, in today’s interdependent and globalised world, a local event does not necessarily remain ‘local’ but also has a ‘regional’ or even ‘global’ significance. It is entirely possible that a single event in one part of the world will have an immediate impact on all other parts.

As Becker notes, the possible consequences of another Korean War would not be confined merely to the peninsula or the region but it would have enormous

impact globally. As South Korea's capital city is host to such immense amounts of international investment, business and capital flows, such inter-state conflict would severely damage a significant part of the global economy – South Korea's economy is the third largest in Asia and the thirteenth largest by GDP.<sup>32</sup> China and South Korea would also be immediately affected by a massive flood of desperate North Korean refugees that would cause severe economic deterioration and social unrest. "This flow of refugees could, in turn, produce severe food shortages in neighbouring states, breed communicable disease, provoke environmental crisis, and create chaos in global financial markets. In other words, North Korea is important because of the wide range of threats it poses for the international community. Its instability is everybody's business." (Bremmer, 2006: 32)

Secondly, North Korea's nuclear programme matters because nuclear technology and materials might be sold to any third party, a country or group of individuals, that wishes to acquire unconventional weapons for its own purposes at any cost. As already noted, this potential nuclear proliferation has direct implications for the US's national security and has arguably become Washington's greatest concern. A country like North Korea, whose economy is on the brink of collapse, may be particularly tempted to sell its nuclear weapons and technology to any third party that is willing to pay high prices. As mentioned earlier, there is international speculation to the effect that North Korea has already sold nuclear technology to

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<sup>32</sup> World Bank. Gross domestic product 2007.  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf>

Syria<sup>33</sup>: something that raised serious concerns over North Korea's faithfulness to the February Agreement achieved by the Six Party process in early 2007.

Thirdly, if North Korea's nuclear standoff continues without a resolution, it will increase the risk of a nuclear arms race in the whole of Northeast Asia. Japan would reconsider the resurgence of national defence, while South Korea could also start a nuclear weapons programme to counterbalance the North. Furthermore, considering the amount of arms Taiwan purchases every year, the prospect of a nuclear-armed Taiwan confronting the mainland would not be entirely ruled out and would produce the highest military tensions yet across the Taiwan Strait. Although such arms races may not sound completely realistic today, neither would it be unrealistic to envision them should the North Korean nuclear standoff develop in a totally negative direction. If any one of those examples mentioned above should materialise in today's globalised environment, the damage to the region and the wider world will be beyond containing. Any regional progress towards peace and prosperity in an environment of coexistence would come to a forceful end.

### **Section conclusion**

"The most difficult question in Northeast Asia is how to solve the remaining traditional security issues that pose great danger to the region. I believe that the North

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<sup>33</sup> The Washington Post. September 13, 2007. N. Korea, Syria May Be at Work on Nuclear Facility. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/12/AR2007091202430.html>

Korean nuclear crisis and military tension across the Korean border have to be at the centre stage of the Northeast Asian peace process.” (Wada, 2003: 235)

Throughout the past half century, the North part of the Korean peninsula has developed in a significantly different direction, economically and politically, from the South. Today, North Korea possesses nuclear weapons, and this chapter has revealed the multiple rationales behind North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme and its defiance of the international community. North Korea is different in nature from the rest of the world. Seen against the past course of the Korean crisis and persistent behaviours of the North Korean regime, the long-lasting crisis today is less surprising than it might seem. One of the major causes of the whole decades-long impasse is the irrational and irresponsible conduct of the North Korean government.

The Korean crisis is one of the most volatile and potentially most explosive factors in the region. If the tension breaks out in new hostilities, the consequences would be catastrophic. Even if it remains static and unsolved for a longer period of time, it will inevitably increase the possibility of a nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia. It will also increase the likelihood of the spread of nuclear proliferation. No other way exists at present except to work through the Six-Party process to solve the crisis, and hopefully to start a momentum towards wider security progress in the region. The North Korean crisis is indeed “everybody’s business” (Bremmer, 2006: 32).

### **3. US Policy**

#### **The Bush administration's failed policy on North Korea**

The US and North Korea have seen each other as adversaries ever since the Korean War in the 1950s. Despite five decades of mutual hostility towards each other, however, there have been two bright moments in US-North Korea relations. The first was the Agreed Framework in 1994,<sup>34</sup> and the second was Madeleine Albright's visit to Pyongyang in 2000.<sup>35</sup>

Generally speaking, the Clinton administration saw some positive prospects of engaging North Korea. After the administration change from Clinton to Bush in 2001, however, the Bush administration refused from the outset to take the same course on North Korea as its predecessors, and Bush made it clear that he would follow a different path. The new President chose to contain North Korea and rejected the course of direct negotiation and engagement, arguing that North Korea could not be trusted. Furthermore, the Bush administration refused bilateral talks and any other concessions to the North, as the Washington neo-conservatives believed that offering such carrots would mean not only recognising terrorist sponsors, but also rewarding

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<sup>34</sup> The U.S. State Department. October 21, 1994. Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

<http://www.state.gov/t/ac/rls/or/2004/31009.htm>

<sup>35</sup> CNN. October 23, 2000. Albright in historic meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong Il.

<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/ASIANOW/east/10/23/albright.northkorea.ap/index.html>

the bad behaviour of a pariah state in a way that might encourage other 'rogue' states to follow the course of blackmail diplomacy.

US policy on North Korea under the Clinton administration, based on the 1994 Agreement, was indeed flawed as it did not have effective means to verify North Korea's fulfilment of its promises on its nuclear activities. As a consequence of this weakness, the North Koreans were secretly processing plutonium and developing their nuclear programme, breaching the 1994 Agreement while still receiving fuel aid from the US. This encouraged Bush to take a much harder stance on North Korea and put more pressure on the regime: believing that this could eventually lead to a natural collapse of the country. In 2002, Bush labelled North Korea together with two other 'rogue' states, Iran and the Saddam Hussein's Iraq, as an 'axis of evil' in his State of the Union speech, which will probably be remembered as one of the most typical Bush legacies. To quote that speech: "North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. States like these (North Korea, Iran and Saddam Hussein's Iraq) and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> CNN. January 29, 2002. Bush State of the Union Address.  
<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/>

There were two fundamental flaws in Bush's policy towards North Korea. One was that the Bush administration did not foresee that its hard-line policy on North Korea could not work efficiently without regional co-operation and a concerted effort by the major players of Northeast Asia. Strategic differences amongst the member states of the Six Party process will be discussed in the next chapter. "[As for] North Korea, the threat of an economic embargo also offered the best hope of success without resorting to force. The two neighbouring countries whose participation was necessary to make such a measure effective, South Korea and China, both declined to include such a threat in their negotiating strategies. Neither wanted to live next to a nuclear-armed North Korea but both had other, competing priorities as well."

(Mandelbaum, 2005: 221-222) Both China and South Korea have been and remain mostly concerned about a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime, fearing massive negative impacts on their countries if such event occurs. Regardless of any tougher sanctions the US and its ally Japan may impose upon North Korea in hopes of suffocating the North Korean administration and ultimately aiming at collapse of the North, China and South Korea will always support the survival of the North because keeping North Korea in existence and under control serves their interests. "Containment has no chance when North Korea's neighbours won't cooperate."

(Chang, 2005: xxi)

Another problem in the Bush administration's foreign policy towards North Korea was that powerful chief members of the Bush administration repeatedly used very harsh language on the issue, carrying an 'unfriendly' tone and connotation towards the nation and Kim personally, without realising that such a harsh posture



would bolster the misconception that the US sought regime change by force. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 strengthened the resonance of such rhetoric by neoconservative leaders. Bush himself undoubtedly saw Kim Jong Il, the North Korean leader, as a brutal dictator who repeatedly committed cruel crimes against his own people. Indeed, Bush told a Washington Post journalist “I loathe Kim Jong Il. — I’ve got a visceral reaction to this guy because he is starving his people. It appals me. — I feel passionate about this. — They tell me, well we may not need to move too fast, because the financial burdens on people will be so immense if this guy were to topple. — I just don’t buy that.” (George W. Bush)<sup>37</sup> To quote other examples: “I have been charged by the President with making sure that none of the tyrannies in the world are negotiated with. We don’t negotiate with evil. We defeat it.” (Dick Cheney)<sup>38</sup> “We are capable of fighting two major regional conflicts. We’re capable of winning decisively in one and swiftly defeating in the case of the other, and let there be no doubt about it.” (Donald Rumsfeld)<sup>39</sup>

The use of such strong terms by the top men of the US Administration, who might well be hinting at toppling the Kim Jong Il government by force, surely pleased other like-minded neo-conservative politicians in Washington. The problem is, however, that such ‘hawkish remarks’ not only constituted a diplomatic offence but were also read by the North Koreans as great threats to their national security. In reality, most security experts have analysed possibility of a US-pre-emptive strike on

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<sup>37</sup> CBS News 60 Minutes. November 17, 2002. A Rare Glimpse Inside Bush's Cabinet. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/11/17/60minutes/main529657.shtml>

<sup>38</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald. December 22, 2003. Cheney's tough talking derails negotiations with North Korea By Hamish McDonald. <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/12/21/1071941611806.html>

<sup>39</sup> The Guardian. December 24, 2002. Rumsfeld gets tough on North Korea by John Gittings and Suzanne Goldenberg. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/korea/article/0,,865094,00.html>

North Korea as being highly unlikely, even if the US has never ruled out a military option. Washington knows that the military option would cost millions of human lives as well as catastrophic financial damage. Although the Korean War is technically still being fought today, the military option is in fact very unrealistic. The Bush doctrine thus made the objectively unlikely military option sound more likely than it actually was then, or is now. “(The North Korean authorities) think that the U.S. wants to overthrow their regime, so for them it is a matter of survival. We tell the U.S. Government that it should concentrate on the problem of the denuclearization of North Korea and abandon its intention of regime change. Because the mix of these two objectives is explosive.” (Chung Dong-Yong, Former South Korean Minister for Unification)<sup>40</sup>

Endorsing Washington’s hard-line policy, the US and its allies went to invade Iraq – one of the three in Bush’s original ‘axis of evil’ – in 2003. The short term success of the Iraq War in toppling Saddam Hussein convinced Kim Jong Il that the US would be ready to do the same with the North Koreans. “The invasion of Iraq convinced Pyongyang that no expense should be spared in bolstering the DPRK’s capacity to deter a U.S. attack.” (Bremmer, 2006: 39) Consequently, Kim Jong Il became more defensive and hostile against the US, and this had counterproductive effects in boosting the North Koreans’ nuclear ambitions. As Kim believed, “Countries with WMD would achieve a degree of invulnerability vis-a-vis the United States – especially if they had nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them on

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<sup>40</sup> Global Research. October 20, 2005. A Turning Point in the North Korean Nuclear Dispute by Gregory Elich.  
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=ELI20051020&articleId=1118>

New York. That means that a part of the world, possibly a hostile one, would escape US control; and therein lie many dangers. Second, the wider such weapons spread the greater the chance of terrorist groups getting their hands on them.” (Cooper, 2004: 46)

In short, the North Korean leader knew how to deter a possible US attack: the answer was nuclear development and possession of nuclear weapons. North Korea accelerated its nuclear development after the 2003 Iraq War and conducted its first ever nuclear test in October 2006, demonstrating its nuclear capability to the world. As already discussed, however, this not only gave North Korea a means to deter a possible US attack but widened its options within the nuclear black-market as a potential retailer, the risk with which Washington is mostly concerned. As Cooper has noted, even the world superpower could be vulnerable in a nuclear context. Especially after the 9/11, the threat of nuclear technologies, materials or ammunition getting into the hands of terrorists or countries that are hostile to the US has been seen as a nightmare to be prevented at all costs. “The gravest danger going forward is proliferation to like-minded regimes, especially to Iran. Despite the lack of any common goal – one regime would like to see the world turn Islamic green, the other wants things Juche red – the two countries are closer to being an actual ‘axis’ than they were when Bush launched the phrase in January 2002.” (Hirsh, Melinda, & Wehrfritz, 2006: 30)

As has become clear since, nuclear diplomacy was a highly calculated strategic move made by Kim in fear of a possible US invasion. “The American policy

towards the DPRK – this is the main problem we are facing.”<sup>41</sup> (Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi) “I have no illusions about Kim. He’s charming but totally controlling. He is a leader who has left his people with no freedom, no choices, no food, no future. People are executed. There are labour camps. But the decision we have to make is whether to try to deal with him to open the country so that the people of North Korea do have freedom, do have choices, do have food. Do I think it would be preferable to not deal with him? Yes, but the consequences are horrible, so you have to deal with him.” (Wendy Sherman, Former adviser to President Bill Clinton and Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Warren Christopher)<sup>42</sup>

North Korea itself often claims that it was the US that drove the country to develop its nuclear weapon. It repeatedly accuses the US of being belligerent and antagonistic. It is important to note, however, that the Bush administration cannot be called responsible for such an offensive act of the North Koreans. What Bush is responsible for is introducing a US strategy towards North Korea that was not best designed for a positive outcome. “American unilateralism and willingness to use its military strength have made it far less likely that DPRK will want to give up its nuclear capability. This is not to defend or justify DPRK policy or the regime itself, but simply to point out the non-productive nature of American policy, and the reality that the North has pursued nuclear weapons as a way of ensuring its own survival.” (Kang, 2003) (Beeson, 2007: 90-91)

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<sup>41</sup> The Heritage Foundation. March 15, 2005. Does Beijing Approve of North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions? <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/bg1832.cfm>

<sup>42</sup> The New York Times Magazine. October 19, 2003. The Last Emperor by Peter Mass

In sum, the Bush policy produced the opposite outcome of what the Administration originally intended. It may not be wrong for many security experts – as they now do – to criticise Bush’s foreign policy as counterproductive. “With respect to the axis of evil, are you better off today than you were four years ago? . . . It’s clear that the answer is we’re worse off with respect to the nuclear proliferation problem in both North Korea and Iran than four to six years ago, and I would argue we’re worse off in our overall security because of the situation in Iraq.” (James B. Steinberg, President Bill Clinton’s deputy national security adviser)<sup>43</sup>

### **Recent Developments**

Bush’s policy towards North Korea is seen to have shifted from a hard-line to a more resolution-oriented approach in the past few years. Some have given credit for the change of tone, inter alia, to the persistent and prudent work of an experienced diplomat: Christopher Hill, the Chief US envoy to the Six Party Talks from 2005, who has shown noteworthy patience in dealing with the negotiations. At the same time as negotiating with the North Koreans, he also needed to persuade top members of the Bush administration to change their approach. It seems that Hill has indeed been able to convince US Secretary Rice to change the course, although she was a strong critic of the 1994 Agreement. President Bush, for his part, seems now to have

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<sup>43</sup> The Washington Post. October 10, 2006. Bush's 'Axis of Evil' Comes Back to Haunt United States By Glenn Kessler and Peter Baker. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/09/AR2006100901130.html>

also embraced the effort to push for a good result with North Korea that can be demonstrated towards the end of his term of office in 2009.

This helps to explain how the Six-Party Talks were able to produce a positive-looking outcome in February 2007, when all parties signed the latest agreement. In that joint statement, as already noted, North Korea agreed to shut down its Yongbyon nuclear reactor in return for emergency fuel aid from the other five countries in the negotiations. In March 2007, the US announced it would release the \$25 million belonging to the North Korean government in Banco Delta Asia at Macau, which had been frozen by the US Treasury Department in 2005 for alleged counterfeiting engagement and money laundering operations. Earlier, the US government had repeatedly insisted that the sanctions against the North's illegal financial activities were a separate issue from the nuclear talks.

In June 2008, North Korea handed over a data package that contains information on its nuclear programme and plutonium production process from 1986.<sup>44</sup> This action came 6 months late according to the 2007 February Agreement, and critics argue that the report does not include information on North Korea's suspected uranium enrichment programme or on nuclear weapons already produced. The report has also been criticised for failing to give an account of suspected North Korea's proliferation activities. In the following days, however, North Korea demolished the cooling tower at Yongbyon nuclear reactor in front of international

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<sup>44</sup> The White House. June 26, 2008. President Bush Discusses North Korea.  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/06/20080626-9.html>

inspectors and journalists to demonstrate its commitment towards the denuclearisation process.<sup>45</sup>

Bush lifted restrictions on North Korea that had been in place under the Trading with the Enemy Act in June 2008.<sup>46</sup> North Korea now insists that the US should take North Korea's name off the list of state sponsors of terrorism – an action which, the US's ally, Japan does not want to see taken until the abduction issue has been solved. The overall denuclearisation process seems to have made an advance relative to the 1994 Agreement, as Pyongyang has already shut down its nuclear reactor. "None of the steps North Korea has taken thus far are irreversible, but the destruction of this tower makes it harder to reconstitute their plutonium program."<sup>47</sup> Many critics see Bush's recent move on Pyongyang as having lowered the essential US criteria over the negotiations, just in order to get a success before leaving the White House. But this does not mean that Bush was not right in seeing the need for a course correction in terms of the North Korea case's own logic. True, against the history of North Korean diplomacy, the other players of the Six Party process have reasons to be very cautious in evaluating the developments. But whether it becomes Bush's lasting and positive legacy or not, this could still perhaps be, or at least aspire to be, a beginning of the end to the long-lasting Korean nuclear crisis.

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<sup>45</sup>The Korea Times. June 13, 2008. N. Korea Destroys Reactor Cooling Tower.  
[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2008/06/120\\_26668.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2008/06/120_26668.html)

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of State. June 26, 2008. North Korea: Presidential Action on State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) and the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA)  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/jun/106281.htm>

<sup>47</sup> Council On Foreign Relations. June 27, 2008. Jon Wolfsthal commented on the latest development on North Korea's nuclear disarmament process.  
[http://www.cfr.org/publication/16657/pyongyangs\\_deal.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/16657/pyongyangs_deal.html)

“To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.” (Winston Churchill)

### **Future US involvement in Northeast Asia**

At present, according to the report by SIPRI's Zdzislaw Lachowski, approximately 70,000 US troops are stationed in the Northeast Asian region – 35,000 in Japan and 29,000 in South Korea. The US is often seen as unenthusiastic about multilateral approaches to security coordination as it believes that bilateral engagement serves its security interests better. “In Northeast Asia's security spectrum, according to realist theory, US's bilateral-basis involvement in the region with Japan and South Korea will serve peace and stability based on balance of power.” (Buzan, 2003: 165-171) The US chooses bilateral security engagement over the multilateral way of security building in order to: 1. “support greater operational flexibility”; 2. “maximize the freedom of US forces”; 3. “avoid international legal constraints by means of bilateral agreements with host countries to secure an exemption from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court” (Lachowski, 2007: 13-14)

As Buzan argues, US bilateral basis military engagement in Northeast Asia is crucially important to secure the region and maintain the power balance of states. It is however very important for US policy makers to recognise that, for a long-term vision in Northeast Asia, the US needs increasingly to be involved in multilateral security co-operation. The US preference for bilateral military engagement in



Northeast Asia has been based on notions of the Cold War style balance of power. The question needs to be answered whether such a US-led Cold War security structure is adequate to meet the needs of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Stability depends on states reducing both the opportunity to use force and the desire to use force. A balance of power can contribute to the first but is inherently incapable of creating the second.” (Dickens, 1998: 1) “Henry Kissinger reminds us that the formation of stability requires states to reduce both ‘the opportunities for using force’ and ‘the desire to use force’. A balance of power based on, in this case US-centered military alliance, can contribute to the first goal but is inherently incapable of creating the second. In other words, a balance of power system based on military alliance creates negative peace while multilateral security regime constructs positive peace.” (Zhang, 2005: 12-13)

If the balance of power, and status quo, has been kept in Northeast Asia over past decades because of a US military presence, a major power shift is bound to occur in coming years due to the rise of Chinese power. The first major move will be the economic power shift between Japan and China within the next decade. The second will be an absolute or relative decline of the US hegemony and emergence of China as a political, military and economic power that might establish regional hegemony in its turn. The bilateral basis for US security engagement is increasingly becoming irrelevant today. In order for the US to keep such Chinese power manageable in peaceful manner, the US should be involved in a regional security framework that also includes (and thus guides and restrains) China itself.

OuYang has given an account of the commonalities and differences in strategic interests between the US and China. Common interests between the two countries are:

1. Peace and stability in the region benefits them both. When and if co-operation and mutual support are established with each other, both countries will probably find the current of international relations much smoother than otherwise;
2. China and the US are the biggest trading partners of each other today. Economic dependency between the two seems set to keep growing for the next decade or more. Unnecessary conflicts should be avoided as long as the two countries wish to keep this positive momentum going.

On the other hand, great differences in the Sino-US relations are:

1. Tension across the Taiwan Strait. The US is the biggest weapons exporter to Taiwan<sup>48</sup>. It is still not clear how the Taiwan issue can be resolved in the future;
2. Both China and the US need energy resources now more than ever before to sustain their economic growth. China's exploration for energy resources around the world may be described as aggressive and formidable as it has no qualms about doing business with states like Iran, Sudan and Venezuela as long as they guarantee energy supply. This type of energy diplomacy is troublesome to the US as great amounts of Chinese money are floating into states that are unfriendly, or hostile, to the US;

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/03/20/news/taiwan.php>

3. Other issues like intellectual property rights and trade frictions;
4. Different political systems and value conflicts for instance over human rights, freedom of expression and democracy. (OuYang, 2007)

Against the background of these analyses, the degree of practical interdependence between the two superpowers is rapidly increasing while the rise of China is already gradually replacing US influence in the region. Any such major power shift from one to another needs to be managed properly, especially at a stage when China's intentions are still not clear, despite its claim of peaceful and harmonious development. The US presence in a single regional security framework within which China also plays an important role could perhaps help ensure that China behaves in a more 'democratic' and 'respectable' manner.

Japan is the strongest ally of the US in the region, and is also still the second largest trading partner of the US after China. Thus the US has two of its largest trading partners in this region. Economic interaction between the three countries is increasing, hence the importance of regional peace and stability. "For the future prospects of peace and stability in Northeast Asia, it is imperative for the three countries, Japan, China and the US to develop and manage an advanced degree of interdependency in their trilateral relationship and to create a balanced political mechanism through regular talks between the leaders of the three countries. Peace, stability and coexistence of states in Northeast Asia will more likely be viable and promising when those three powerful countries work together than in the possible scenario where nation states struggle for narrow self-interests in terms of natural

resources, power and political prestige in the same way as has been repeated time and again throughout human history.” (Morikawa, 2008: 22)

It might be argued that, in the short term, US’s influence and security balancing role in the region could also be maintained through the bilateral way of US military engagement in Japan and South Korea, while encouraging Japan steadily to become more active in its own defence. Considering the larger changes in geopolitical and economic power balances in the region, however, such a bilateral-based military solution cannot be enough to transform the long-term security prospects. Furthermore, it is not entirely impossible, in such scenario, that Japan will be led to a wrong direction in terms of military resurgence. Only through multilateral co-operation, not only in the economic field but also political terms, does there seem to be any guarantee of ensuring and maintaining the US’s strong presence and influence in Northeast Asia. For the sake of long-term prospects in the region, managing the power shift and dealing with the rise of China, US involvement and participation in regional security co-operation will a far better option for both the US and Northeast Asia as a whole. Fukuyama argues that a forward-looking US policy is crucial not only to manage the current crisis but also to ‘shape the context for future policy choice through the creation of international institutions.’ (Fukuyama, 2005: 75-87)

For the long-term vision of peaceful co-existence and stability, the world’s strongest power should now take a positive initiative towards a regional security regime in Northeast Asia. “Failure to act in the near future could well mean that long-term U.S. influence in Northeast Asia will erode – politically, economically, and

militarily – in comparison with the legitimate rise of China, the maturing of South Korea's foreign policy, and the inevitable increase in Japanese nationalism. Trying to create such an ad hoc security meeting among Northeast Asian nations on a case-by-case basis is an inefficient way to address serious concerns that offers no prospect for generating the appropriate level of attention.” (Pritchard, 2007: 184)

The US's positive involvement and participation in such regional security regime is necessary rather than optional, should it wishes to see a true sense of peace and stability in Northeast Asia in the near future. “The U.S. presence (political, economic, cultural and military) is a reality that no country in the region can deny and everyone has to accept. The U.S. might not be included in genuine East Asian regional community building, but its interests have to be taken care of in any forms of regional cooperation. Furthermore, there should also be special arrangements with which the U.S. involves in East Asia multilateral cooperation, especially in security areas.” (Zhang, 2007: 14-15)

### **Section Conclusion**

The Bush Administration's initial policy, along with the forthright rhetoric of top members of the Administration that implied the intention of a regime change, was counterproductive and brought a radical reaction from the North. “America may need to make sacrifices too. It was not Mr Bush who sent North Korea and Iran on their nuclear trajectories: both started their programmes decades ago. But such regimes

need to believe that they can desist and still be safe....Mr Bush has already told both governments he has no desire to remove them. If they need stronger guarantee he should give them – in return for a verifiable end to their weapons programmes. It will not be easy for a president who wanted to spread democracy to do this. But that, in an imperfect world, may be the price of preventing dictators from controlling the weapons that could kill millions.”<sup>49</sup>

In the light of latest developments in the negotiations over North Korea’s nuclear programme, Washington seems to have conceded key points in the talks for the last months of Bush’s term in office. The Bush administration is seen as ‘desperate’ for some tangible achievement in its foreign policy considering the disastrous failure in Iraq. Whether the outcome in North Korea becomes a successful legacy for Bush or not, what is already clear at this stage is that the US and the other regional partners have an opportunity to make this seemingly positive momentum the beginning of the end for North Korea’s nuclear crisis. The US cannot afford to fail this time.

Taking advantage of the current of the Six Party process, the US should reconsider its reluctance towards multilateral security co-operation in Northeast Asia. Hitherto, the US chose to insert its influence directly into the region through the US-Japan and US-South Korean alliances, not through the means of a multilateral security approach that might regulate or limit its own hegemonic military power in the region. Such a bilateral-based security mechanism may not, however, be

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<sup>49</sup> The Economist. October 14, 2006. Who can stop him now?

functional or compatible with the challenging and turbulent current of regional affairs in years to come.

A possible regional security co-operation system, if it ever comes into being for Northeast Asia, would simply not be meaningful without US positive involvement. “At this point, the question is not whether there will be a multilateral security forum in East Asia but whether the United States has been too slow in assuming a leadership role in the development of an organization that will meet its needs as well as the needs of the major players in Northeast Asia” (Pritchard, 2007: 183)

#### **4. Regional Players of the Six-Party Talks**

*(For the facts on the origin and course of the talks, see Appendix: The Six Party Talks Timeline and major developments)*

The Six Party Talks is a multilateral framework that is aimed at breaking the impasse over North Korea's nuclear standoff. The Six Party process consists of the two Koreas, China, Russia, Japan and the US. China took the initiative to hold the negotiations in a Six Party framework and has been hosting the meetings in Beijing. This chapter discusses the different strategic interests of the respective participants regarding the talks.

The common goal of the process is the “peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.” There have been six rounds of the negotiations since their inception in August 2003. The current multilateral format replaced the earlier attempt at the Three Party Talks (China, the DPRK and the US), as North Korea insisted on bilateral negotiations with the US while the US refused official direct contact with the North. The Three Party Talks ended in failure as the political gap between Washington and Pyongyang could not be bridged.

Immediately after their collapse, however, the Six Party Talks drawing in three other countries of the region started in August 2003. One of the most significant achievements of the Six Party process's history was reached when the negotiations came to a first agreement in the fourth round of talks in September 2005. Or at least, so it seemed until North Korea demanded, only a day after the agreement, two light



water nuclear reactors. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the North insisted that it would not abandon its nuclear programmes until it was given such reactors for what it called the ‘peaceful use of nuclear energy.’ Not only did Pyongyang thereby renege against the other participants of the talks but also it exposed the unpredictable nature of North Korean diplomacy.

In October 2006, North Korea conducted its first-ever nuclear test. In December 2006, after over a year of absence, North Korea returned to the Six Party Talks as a proudly self-claimed nuclear state. In February 2007, the Six Party Talks ended again in a positive result when all the parties signed what has become known as the February Agreement<sup>50</sup>. According to this, North Korea agreed to close down its main nuclear reactor in return for fuel aid from the other member states of the Talks. Following the agreement and North Korea’s strong demands, the US announced that the full amount of 25 million US dollars belonging to the North Korean government in Banco Delta Asia<sup>51</sup> in Macau, which had been frozen by the US Treasury Department on a money-laundering charge, would be released and this did occur (with Russian mediation) a few months later. In July 2007, IAEA inspectors (the UN’s nuclear watchdog) confirmed the shutdown of North Korea’s Yongbyon nuclear reactor and thereby, the international negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear programme achieved their most advanced result ever since the crisis began in the early 1990s. In June 2008, US Secretary of State Rice gave in public a fairly positive

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<sup>50</sup> The U.S. State Department. February 13, 2007. North Korea - Denuclearization Action Plan. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/february/80479.htm>

<sup>51</sup> The International Herald Tribune. February 28, 2007. Macao bank set to lift its freeze on North Korea. <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/02/28/news/north.php>

outlook on the latest developments in the North Korea nuclear negotiation.<sup>52</sup> The latest 6<sup>th</sup> round of Six Party talks held in July 2008 issued a communiqué in which all the parties agreed upon next steps to verify North Korea's nuclear dismantlement process.<sup>53</sup> The international negotiations are still ongoing at the time of writing.

## **China**

China, the most influential actor in the negotiations, is widely expected to play a main role in the negotiations and could execute great influence on North Korea. China has been the chief host of the Six Party framework from its inception in 2003 and it has become a convention that the Six Party negotiations always take place in the Chinese capital city. China's chairmanship and moderation in the negotiations are seen as a positive sign that it recognises its international responsibility and is trying to present its foreign policy potential in a co-operative light.

For itself, China wants, like all other member states, the peaceful denuclearisation of North Korea. China also "seems interested in the long-term conversion of the Six-Party Talks into a regional security forum that would both enhance Beijing's arbiter role and tie the hands of the USA." (SIPRI and CSS Report, 2007: 26) China uses this opportunity to demonstrate its international responsibility

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<sup>52</sup> CNN. June 18, 2008. Rice: N. Korea to declare nuclear past.  
[http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/06/18/rice.nkorea/index.html?eref=rss\\_topstories](http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/06/18/rice.nkorea/index.html?eref=rss_topstories)

<sup>53</sup> China Daily. July 12, 2008. Full text: press communiqué of the 6th round of the six-party talks.  
[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2008-07/12/content\\_6842197.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2008-07/12/content_6842197.htm)

as a big power and tries to soften the notion of ‘the rise of China is a threat to the region.’

China is Pyongyang’s closest ally as well as its long-term communist friend. Beijing provides food and energy to the regime and it is believed that without China’s support, North Korea would not be able to sustain its statehood. Not surprisingly, China is regarded by Kim Jong Il as ‘the best friend.’ Yet China strongly condemned the regime immediately after it had conducted the nuclear test: “[North Korea] has ignored the widespread opposition of the international community and conducted a nuclear test brazenly on 9 October... The Chinese government is firmly opposed to this... The Chinese side strongly demands the North Korean side abide by its pledges on denuclearisation and to stop any action that would worsen the situation” (Chinese Foreign Minister)<sup>54</sup>

China also joined the other permanent members of the UN Security Council in passing Resolution 1718 that condemned North Korea’s nuclear tests. For China, North Korea’s nuclear test was a diplomatic ‘slap on its face’ as it had been working hard for success in the Six Party process for denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. However, despite its strong condemnation on the nuclear test and its decision to pass UN SC Resolution 1718<sup>55</sup>, Beijing would never agree on any UN resolution that contained any possibility of a military response to North Korea. Beijing is also very

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<sup>54</sup> BBC News. October 9, 2006. In quotes: Reaction to N Korea's test. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6032577.stm>

<sup>55</sup> UN SECURITY COUNCIL. October 14, 2007. SECURITY COUNCIL. CONDEMNS NUCLEAR TEST BY DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8853.doc.htm>

reluctant to join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)<sup>56</sup> led by the US which could legitimise action on the high seas against North Korean vessels suspected of carrying strategically sensitive goods. The spirit of the PSI would also conflict with the fact that China does not hesitate to continue to export war materials to countries like Iran, Sudan and other 'non-transparent states'.

Beijing does not want to see Pyongyang to be nuclear-armed, nor does it want Pyongyang to come under higher constraint, politically, economically and militarily. China would do everything possible to prevent possible military conflict on the Korean peninsula from happening as it fears the first consequence would be hundreds of thousands of North Korean refugees flooding across the Chinese border, which would catastrophically destabilise the Chinese economy. But China's fears are not limited to this. Beyond the North Korean issue, China fears Japan's possible military resurgence and the start of a wider nuclear arms race in the region, which an unsolved or aggravated North Korean problem might provoke. China does not want to see its neighbours, particularly Japan and Taiwan, to become nuclear armed. "The long-term consequences of failure to resolve the nuclear issue could conceivably move the issue to a higher position on Beijing's list of vital national interests. For example, if it appeared that Pyongyang intended to maintain its nuclear weapons program indefinitely, causing Tokyo to reconsider its decision not to develop a nuclear weapons program, Beijing might adjust its own approach to North Korea and begin to exert a level of pressure on Pyongyang that it is currently unwilling to exert. If the

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<sup>56</sup> The US Department of State. June 2004. What is the Proliferation Security Initiative?  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/proliferation/>

situation in North Korea led to Taiwan's entry into the nuclear weapons field, Beijing would most certainly act to prevent it by taking measures to quickly end Pyongyang's nuclear program – and extension, Taiwan's consideration of a nuclear weapons program.” (Pritchard, 2007: 90)

Considering Japan's advanced nuclear technologies, China believes that Japan could develop nuclear weapons within a year. “Japan would not have material or technological difficulties in making nuclear weapons. Japan has the raw materials, technology, and capital for developing nuclear weapons. Japan could possibly produce functional nuclear weapons in as little as a year's time.”<sup>57</sup>

Also very importantly, China does not want any US military presence near its own borders, especially so long as the US still carefully watches on the tension between China and Taiwan. Currently, North Korea serves as a buffer zone for China's national security against the US military presence in South Korea and Japan. “Beijing has a vital interest in maintaining the DPRK's sovereign control of its territory for as long as possible to stave off the vision of a unified Korea under US dominance.” (SIPRI and CSS Report, 2007: 26)

China's influence is in fact the greatest among the other parties of the Six Party process. Some experts even believe that, if only the Chinese wanted, they could make the Pyongyang regime crumble fast. “By cutting off all aid, by welcoming every refugee, or by sending in the People's Liberation Army, Beijing can put an end to Kimist rule. China, however, will not do any of these things now. Hu Jintao, for

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<sup>57</sup> Federation of American Scientists. April 16, 2000. Nuclear Weapons Program. <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/japan/nuke/>

one thing, finds Kim useful for complicating the life of George W. Bush.....Most important, there is no consensus in the Chinese capital that it's in the nation's interest to destroy an ally, the DPRK, as a favour to an adversary, the United States.” (Chang, 2005: 135)

Regardless of whether China sees North Korea as a friend or a trouble-making little communist brother, China's support to the regime will likely continue as long as it sees its own national interests in keeping Kim's state alive. China wants to see North Korea's gradual economic transformation, following its own and the Vietnamese experience, without a sudden change of government rule. China has therefore valid reasons to keep the North Korean regime alive, and sees an approach based on the status quo with North Korea as being in its best national interest for now. To sum up, Beijing's strategic interests over the Six Party Talks are:

1. Peaceful denuclearisation of the North Korean regime. China is concerned about the long-term consequences of North Korea's nuclear programme that might lead to a nuclear arms race in the region, and above all about the scenario of this race including Japan and Taiwan.
2. To preserve the status quo on the Korean peninsula. It is vital for China's national interest to prevent a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime that would cause massive numbers of refugees flooding into the Chinese territory. Beijing also wants to preserve North Korea as a 'buffer' zone against the US military presence in Northeast Asia.

3. To show the world China's diplomatic capability in its foreign policy as a responsible large power and to minimise the notion that the rise of China is a threat to the region.
4. Apparently, to explore also the possible development of the Six Party Talks into a wider regional security scheme.

### **South Korea**

In February 2008, Lee Myung-bak was inaugurated as the new president of South Korea. As he was sworn in, Lee Myung-bak promised to revitalise the country's economy and improve its relations with the US. He also promised to take a tougher line towards North Korea than his predecessor President Roh Moo-hyun. At the time of writing there have, indeed, been signs of a rapid deterioration in inter-Korean relations starting with the North Korean government's expulsion of South Korean managers from a joint Korean industrial complex in March 2008. Furthermore, in July 2008, the North expelled South Korean workers from a mountain resort used as a special tourist site followed by a shooting incident where a South Korean tourist was shot dead by a Northern officer. These developments show how fragile the status quo in North-South relations can be and reinforce the case for a prudent approach from the South; what conclusions President Lee will draw remains to be seen. At any rate his harsher tone is somewhat untypical of the way Seoul has played its hand in the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far.

In terms of policy basics, the South Koreans want peaceful and eventual reunification with their Northern siblings as a long-term goal beyond the nuclear disarmament of the North. Constitutionally, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) does not acknowledge the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea): Article 3 of the national constitution stipulates that the territory of the Republic of Korea consists of the Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands.<sup>58</sup> Vice versa, the DPRK also denies the sovereignty of the ROK.

Seoul also hopes for a gradual economic recovery in North Korea. Kim Dae Jung, the former president of South Korea from 1998-2003, first introduced the Sunshine Policy aiming at peaceful and diplomatic long-run engagement with North Korea. He set the reunification of the peninsula and gradual recovery of the North's economy as long-term objectives. In spite of the peaceful goals of the Sunshine initiative, Seoul's approach towards the North has been heavily criticised from several quarters. On the positive side, the Sunshine initiative has indeed softened the tension between the two Koreas and opened up opportunities for economic interaction such as the special administrative district of the Kaesong Industrial Complex<sup>59</sup> where thousands of North Korean workers are employed by the South Korean companies. On the down-side, it is clear that top North Korean officials took advantage of the new flow of Southern capital for their own purposes rather than the good of the country's economy: thus the South's donations have been misused by the North

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<sup>58</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission - Asian Charter. November 9, 2001. Current Human Rights Situation in Korea by Prof. Byung-Sun Oh. <http://material.ahrchk.net/charter/mainfile.php/east/10/>

<sup>59</sup> Federation of American Scientists. Congressional Research Service. February 14, 2008. CRS Report for Congress. The Kaesong North-South Korean Industrial Complex. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34093.pdf>



Korean authorities. Critics of the policy also accuse the South Korean government of failing to build an effective foreign policy based on reality, and turning a blind eye to the appalling human rights violations in the North. Critics have further pointed out, ever since the Sunshine policy was implemented, that it seems to show a loss of will by the South Korean government to persist in trying to extend the South's democratic values over the whole peninsula.

The US has often been the biggest critic of a policy that it sees as appeasing the rogue state in the North. The Bush administration has repeatedly made accusations against the Sunshine policy along these lines. “(In Kim Dae Jung’s first telephone call to US President George W. Bush in February, 2001) When President Kim began telling the President (Bush) about the need to engage North Korea, the President put his hand over the mouthpiece of the telephone and said, ‘Who is this guy? I can’t believe how naïve he is!’” (Pritchard, 2007: 52) After North Korea’s nuclear test in October 2006, despite the strong condemnation it issued of the nuclear test, Seoul was unwilling to support stronger international measures – as suggested by the US and Japan – for fears of increasing tensions with Pyongyang. Understandably enough, South Korea does not want military conflict on the peninsula, with consequences that could – as already noted – include the deaths of some millions of people in the first five days of the war and complete destruction of Seoul. South Koreans also worry about a mass southward exodus of North Korean refugees in the event of sudden political changes or regime collapse. “Hence if sanctions are tough enough to have a serious effect, they might either provoke a war or an internal collapse, and neither is in South Korea’s interest. So in all probability, we will see

Seoul joining the sanction game for a while, only to withdraw at the first opportunity.”<sup>60</sup>

For South Korea, a fresh outbreak of the Korean War must be avoided at any cost. “If a war breaks out, Seoul will be turned into a sea of fire...the (estimated) consequence of full-scale war on the peninsula would run to a million casualties and cost the United States more than \$ 100 billion, plus an extra trillion dollars in economic damages and lost business. The Pentagon warned that such war could leave 52,000 Americans dead or wounded in the first 90 days. In all-out, there would be 80,000-100,000 American fatalities.” (Becker, 2005: 166) In sum: in the interests of avoiding a security debacle, South Korea will not join in any move that might undermine the status quo with Pyongyang, but will continue (despite possible variations in emphasis and presentation) to prioritise maintaining stability and seeking gradual economic recovery in the North.

Furthermore, in recent years, anti-US feelings among the South Korean populations have been growing – i.e. in the context of difficult negotiations about restructuring of the US military presence (a process also going on in Japan). South Korea has repeatedly refused to join Washington’s new anti-proliferation measure, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) introduced in 2003, which aims at interrupting weaponry transfers from North Korea, Iran and other ‘rogue’ states. As of November 2006 the PSI had 15 founding members and 60 further states subscribing to it. South Korea has not signed the PSI agreement because it fears

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<sup>60</sup> The International Herald Tribune. October 25, 2006. Why South Korea isn’t keen on sanctions Dealing with North Korea II by Andrei Lankov.  
<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2006/10/25/opinion/edlankov.php>

possible clashes with the North's navy at sea when and if inspections of North Korean ship were carried out that might trigger actual fighting. China's position and concerns are the same. Unless there are major policy changes in their governments, China and South Korea will continue trying to protect the North Korean regime from a sudden collapse regardless of how strong measures the US takes.

Given the history of Korean affairs, which has been greatly affected by the major regional powers, South Korea is the most active supporter for creating a regional security scheme in Northeast Asia. "South Korea is generally an ardent supporter of confidence and security building. It will certainly be the most active proponent of developing a rich network of measures and mechanisms or institutions aimed at promoting peace and security on the peninsula." (SIPRI and CSS Report, 2007: 24) To sum up, South Korea's primary interests over the Six Party Talks are:

1. Denuclearisation of the North Korean regime, while maintaining the aim of peaceful and gradual reunification of the two Koreas in the long term.
2. Economic recovery of the North, so as to soften the burden on the South should reunification ever take place in future.
3. To maintain peace and stability on the peninsula and prevent any outburst of tensions.
4. Development of the Six Party Talks into a possible permanent regional security scheme.

## **Russia**

Russia also supports the peaceful denuclearisation of North Korea through the Six Party negotiations. Despite its status as an old benefactor of North Korea and its history of friendship during the Cold War, Moscow's influence over the Talks is rather limited. It seeks, however, to maintain its prestige so far as it can in Northeast Asia by taking part in the Six Party process. "Moscow is interested in preserving as many of its former prerogatives as possible; being left out is not an attractive option." (Pritchard, 2007: 95) Like Beijing, Moscow is not too much in favour of pressuring Pyongyang. Russia sees some business opportunities with the North: "It is interested in developing economic relations and investment with both Korean states...Russia strives to limit the USA's influence and politico-military posture in Northeast Asia and it might thus have some marginal interest in seeing US forces brought under a system of 'soft' constraints." (SIPRI and CSS Report, 2007: 29)

Like China, Russia strongly opposes any military action against North Korea. Experts in East Asia believe that Russia's influence in the region may be on the increase because of its abundant natural resources, which are of interest both to China and Japan. To sum up, Russia's strategic interests over the Six Party process are:

1. Denuclearisation of North Korea.
2. To insert its influence in Northeast Asia region through the Six Party negotiations.
3. To explore possible business opportunities in North Korea.

4. To reduce strong US influence in the region through the development of more inclusive international groupings.

## **Japan**

Japan also sees itself as the key player in the region and even in the world at large. In that broader context, it could be assumed that one of the main reasons for Japan's participation in the Six Party negotiations is to resist China's claims to a lone leading role in regional affairs.

Tokyo considers Pyongyang as the most immediate threat to Japan itself. North Korea has repeatedly tested its long-range missiles by firing into the Japanese sea. North Korea's long-range missile test – of the Taepodong missile – in 1998 penetrated Japan's air space. Japan is also strongest ally of the US in Asia. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the Japanese dominated the whole of Asia during the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century in very aggressive and brutal style. Japan's neighbours, especially China and the two Koreas, still resent what the Japanese did in previous wartimes. The mass anti-Japan demonstration rally in China in 2005 was a reminder of how the diplomatic relations between Japan and its neighbouring countries could deteriorate. The tension and cross-currents in Japan's relations with its neighbouring countries sometime obstruct regional co-operation. Whether Japan has learned a lesson from the Koizumi era or not, it would not be unwise for Japan to begin seriously contemplating some correction of the historical understandings of its past.

In this way, Japan may perhaps be able to establish more reliable and stable relations with its neighbours, which in turn would contribute to regional peace and stability.

Tokyo maintains the same general tough line as Washington against Pyongyang. Japan regards North Korea as ‘one of the closest neighbours in terms of physical proximity, yet the furthest country in terms of political distance.’ In general and despite the changes brought by the February Agreement, the two countries Japan and North Korea still remain fundamentally divided in their policies towards each other. Pyongyang in turn sees Tokyo as the US-attached enemy. “North Korean diplomats privately say that their country needs only four nukes – one for each of Japan’s islands. Whether they are joking or not, they revealed that Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons doctrine contemplates the destruction of the Japanese homeland.” (Chang, 2005: 154)

Tokyo has another major issue with Pyongyang beside the nuclear problem. There are an estimated seventy Japanese citizens kidnapped by the North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s, some of whom are still believed to live in North Korea. North Korea has admitted kidnapping thirteen Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s to train its spies. Five have been allowed to return following Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s historic visit to Pyongyang in 2002 and 2004. Japan has demanded proof of the whereabouts of the others. Despite North Korea’s claim that the other abductees died, Japan rejects this claim and demands a comprehensive investigation and the return of all its remaining citizens held in North Korea. For Japan, thus, the abduction issue is unsolved and must be kept on the table: Japanese

officials insist that the abduction issue should be addressed in the Six-Party talks – a demand that Pyongyang has repeatedly rejected.

This abduction issue is very important to Japan not least because of the strong resentment felt about it in the Japanese public. The vast majority of Japanese people perceive North Korea as their greatest enemy, as well as a ‘criminal’ rogue terrorist state, above all because of the abduction issue and there is no sign of such public resentment calming down. “Tokyo’s almost total focus on the abduction issue that has marginalized it (Japan) in the six-party process.” (Pritchard, 2007: 86)

Accordingly, Tokyo wants Washington to keep North Korea listed on its list of those engaging in state-sponsored terrorism, at least until the abduction issue is solved.

Removal of North Korea from that list would mean that Japan would lose much of its leverage in resolving the abduction issue. For Washington, the abduction issue is not a high priority in its own policy towards North Korea; but because of the very good bilateral relationship between Japan and the US including a warm friendship between Koizumi and Bush, it has not taken North Korea off the state terrorist list yet. In June 2008, the US announced its readiness to take the next steps in the Six-Party plan – which would include removing North Korea from the state sponsored terrorism list – when and if North Korea had handed over a report on its past plutonium related activity and nuclear development.

According to the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration of 2002,<sup>61</sup> both Japan and the DPRK seek a gradual normalisation in their diplomatic relations with each

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<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. September 17, 2002. Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html)

other. However, mistrust, hostility and volatility between the two countries are probably the deepest in any such relationship in Northeast Asia. A possible Japanese military expansion aimed at deterring North Korea would cause additional tensions with China and South Korea. On a very recent note, in June 2008, Japan decided to partially lift sanctions against North Korea – imposed after the nuclear test in October 2006 – despite a seemingly small positive result from bilateral talks on the abduction issue. “The on-again, off-again nature of Japan’s talks with North Korea and its usefulness in the six-party talks are tied specifically to how well Tokyo believes Pyongyang is responding to its primary domestic concern – resolution of the abduction issue.” (Pritchard, 2007: 89) To sum up, Japan’s strategic interests over the Six Party Talks are:

1. Denuclearisation of North Korea, especially since many experts believe Japan could be the first and most immediate country to be endangered by North Korea’s nuclear weapons.
2. To seek an earlier resolution of the abduction issue.
3. To avoid letting China take on an apparent leading role in regional affairs, where Japan still considers itself as the key player.

## **North Korea**

Some analysts argue that the nuclear test in October 2006 gave North Korea significant leverage over the international negotiations. Following the February



Agreement in 2007, Pyongyang has been receiving fuel aid from the other parties of the talks. Pyongyang also managed to get the US to release its frozen money (frozen on money laundering charges) deposited in the Banco Delta Asia in Macau.

When the Six Party Talks first started in August 2003 after the failure of the preceding Three Party Talks (US-China-North Korea), Pyongyang was reluctant to proceed to a multilateral negotiation as it insisted on bilateral talks with the US. North Korea's gamble over the nuclear test attracted international condemnation temporarily, even from China, but it did bring apparently stronger leverage over the negotiations. North Korea was fully aware that in the long term, China and South Korea would have motives to resume sending aid despite of their strong condemnation of the nuclear test.

In the most recent stage of negotiations, Pyongyang is insisting on having its name taken off the US's state sponsored terrorism list. The North Koreans now see the Six Party Talks as a legitimate channel to obtain security assurances from the international community, especially from the US, and to try to gain as much aid and economic benefit as possible in return for concessions on the nuclear programme. "North Korea wants to hear from the United States that we will guarantee the security and the survival of their regime and they don't think anybody but the world's last remaining superpower can give North Korea that assurance." (Wendy Sherman, Former adviser to President Bill Clinton and Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Warren Christopher)<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Australian Broadcasting Corporation. May 23, 2003. Bush govt in danger of Nth Korea policy vacuum. <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2003/s862775.htm>

As things stand, it does not seem that the North Korean elites are considering a move towards ‘Chinese-Vietnamese style’ economic transformation – i.e. because corruption within the North Korean government is very pervasive. Pyongyang’s approach may be seen as a manipulative player and it has sometimes been able to play one side against the other: usually the US and Japan on the one side and South Korea, China and Russia on the other. In sum, through the Six Party process North Korea tries to achieve:

1. Security assurances, guarantees, and acceptance of bilateral talks from the US.
2. More aid and economic benefit from the other parties.
3. A way of manoeuvring China and South Korea into dealing with the US in a way that also serves North Korean interests.

## **The US**

The US is the most powerful and influential player, with the potential to shape the whole course of the Six Party process in either direction, positive or negative. Experts on the Korean disarmament process believe that the recent positive development of the Six Party Talks is mainly due to the US’s change of course, which involved making considerable concessions to the North Koreans’ demands. Earlier, having refused the North’s demand for bilateral talks, “(T)he Six Party Talks were long treated by the USA as a crisis-management (or ‘containment’) mechanism rather than a vehicle to for substantive negotiations and confidence building, a position in stark

contrast to the hopes of other participants.” (SIPRI and CSS report, 2007: 24)

Washington recognises the Six Party Talks as the only way to deal with Pyongyang.

A hopeful sign is that the US has specifically reiterated the aim of a wider regional security process in the context of bilateral relations with South Korea. During consultations in 2005, “President Roh and President Bush agreed to make common efforts to develop a regional multilateral security dialogue and a cooperation mechanism, so as to jointly respond to regional security issues. In this regard, both leaders noted that the participants in the Six-Party Talks agreed through the Joint Statement to look for ways and means to promote security co-operation in Northeast Asia and that there was a common understanding among the participants that the Six-Party Talks could develop into such a regional multilateral security consultative mechanism once the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved.”<sup>63</sup>

First and foremost, elimination of North Korea’s nuclear programme is the priority agenda for Washington. In the broader regional security context of Northeast Asia, the US wants to keep the rapid emergence of China manageable. Having said that, the US is carefully observing the international role played by China through its leadership and moderation in the Six Party Talks. Against the background of its unsuccessful foreign policy on Iraq, the George W. Bush Administration has been under pressure to minimise other risks and burdens and has started to see the North Korean nuclear crisis as one issue for which President Bush may be able to take credit as a foreign policy success. Critics argue that Bush is now ‘desperate’ to score some

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<sup>63</sup> The White House. November 17, 2005. Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051117-6.html>

tangible achievement in his foreign policy before he leaves the White House in 2009.<sup>64</sup> Generally speaking, the US's strategic interests over the Six Party Talks lie in:

1. Eliminating North Korea's nuclear programme through CVID (Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Disarmament). The US wants to prevent North Korea from becoming a nuclear proliferator, and to prevent a possible nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia.
2. Observing the rapid rise of China as a superpower, the US wants to see China develop its role in a responsible and peaceful manner. Moderating the Six Party process gives China an opportunity to behave in a co-operative way with respect for other parties' interests and international norms.

## **Section Conclusion**

While all the parties agree upon the main goal of the peaceful denuclearisation of North Korea, each party has its own strategic interests regarding the negotiations. The process has faltered and come across setbacks from time to time. From the February Agreement of 2007 up to the present, although the outcome remains far from certain, there seems to be positive momentum in the denuclearisation process of North Korea and in the overall assessment of the negotiations.

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<sup>64</sup> Foreign Policy In Focus. July 7, 2008. World Beat by JOHN FEFER. Bush Gets One Right? <http://www.fpiif.org/fpifzines/wb/5352>

Differences in strategic interests and agenda among the respective players have in the past sometimes hindered coherent action on the common problem and gave North Korea more time to develop its nuclear programme. Nevertheless, not only do the Six Party Talks offer the most pragmatic way of solving the Korean nuclear crisis, but they also hold the most realistic chance of developing into a regional security mechanism for Northeast Asia that would facilitate the promotion of regional peace and stability. Whatever strategic interests each party holds, all parties wish for peace and stability in the region. Despite the uncertainty still persisting over the Six-Party process, all the parties must recognise that the positive momentum is already there and the opportunity can be seized. It would be a mistake for them to fail to see the wider common security objective beyond the denuclearisation of North Korea, and to block that greater prospect by pursuing their own specific strategic interests through the Talks.

A multilateral framework could, and should, work. The region faces common threats from a nuclear North Korea, but positive opportunities can sometime be made out of such threats. Sceptics on the six-party process might criticise the lack of concerted action and disparity among the players, but different and complementary motives might also be found among them for making the multilateral process a success (see Chapter 5 below). Meantime, the consolidation of a set framework that consists of six nations including the region's most powerful countries is an important fact in itself. It needs to be seen clearly as a unique opportunity to approach the creation of regional security co-operation in Northeast Asia region.

## **5. Towards security co-operation in Northeast Asia**

### **East Asian regional groupings**

According to Thomson's account, the existence of a regional grouping can be defined in the following terms (Thompson, 1973: 101):

1. Regularity and intensity of interaction so that change at one point affects other points;
2. The actors are generally proximate;
3. Internal and external actors recognise the subsystem as a distinctive area;
4. The subsystem consists of two or probably more actors.

East Asia has established regular and recognised regional groupings in this sense, such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Plus Three, APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation), ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) and EAS (East Asian Summit). The two major international players within the region, Russia and China, are also co-operating through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which however has its strategic focus aimed more at Central Asia.<sup>65</sup>

The SCO consists of China, Russia and four other central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The organisation includes 'politically hot spot' countries such as India, Pakistan and even Iran as observer states. It is however noteworthy that the US's application to become an observer state to the organisation was rejected in 2005. In recent years, the importance of the SCO has

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<sup>65</sup> Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00026.html>

been rapidly increasing in terms of mutual economic, energy and security co-operation. China offers other members access to its growing market for trade while in return, China gets energy resources for its growing economy from those countries. One of the most notable aspects of this body is that, in contrast to organisations such as NATO or EU, democracy and human rights are no part of its business. It also, very importantly, holds ‘the principle of non-interference’ in internal affairs of member states. “All basic SCO documents, including the organization’s charter, stress the principle of non-interference by any member in other members’ internal affairs.” (SIPRI Policy Paper No.17, 2007: 37) Despite or because of this, the organisation seems to be performing very well in terms of benefits for all its member states. It may sometimes be seen as an anti-US grouping, considering the participation of a country like Iran and the existing political rivalry between Moscow and Washington, and Beijing and Washington.

ASEAN plus Three is a regional co-operation inaugurated in 1997 aimed at deepening further economic and political co-operation. It is composed of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Burma and Cambodia as members, plus the three Northeast Asian countries of China, Japan and South Korea. This has been the most developed East Asian grouping thus far, has provided a backdrop to some security-relevant co-operation agreements especially between China and ASEAN members, “and provides a useful insight into the prospect for East Asian regional initiatives more generally.” (Beeson, 2007: 233) APEC, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, as its name implies, is a regional grouping that includes

Asian countries plus the US, Russia, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (inter alia) to discuss and strengthen economic co-operation. It is aimed at boosting mutual economic growth and enhancing trade and investment and does not have military goals, although it has adopted some common policies on functional issues like terrorism.

Compared to these last two organisations, the ASEAN Regional Forum has some rather distinctive differences in terms of the nature of the forum. The ARF consists of ASEAN members plus Three and countries like the US, Russia, Canada, Australia and New Zealand with the explicit idea of discussing security issues. The ARF has been seeking to develop its role through three different stages: “Stage 1. Promotional-Confidence Building Measures Stage 2. Development of Preventive Diplomacy and Stage 3. Elaboration of Approaches to Conflicts”<sup>66</sup> “Indeed, the ARF has contributed to trust-building among its member states. Particularly, China’s positive participation and involvement in the forum has promoted ARF’s high international recognition. Today many regional experts believe that the ARF is in progress towards Stage 2 of the development of preventive diplomacy.” (Morikawa, 2008: 22)

The East Asian Summit – the newest of these frameworks – is a annual forum of East Asian nations that includes the ten members of ASEAN and three Northeast Asian countries plus India, Australia and New Zealand. One of the important features of the forum is that it ‘intentionally’ does not include the US. “The inaugural meeting of the East Asian Summit (EAS) was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005, but

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<sup>66</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum. <http://www.aseansec.org/3571.htm>



produced little of substance. However, it was noteworthy for the fact that it contained a number of ‘outsiders’ including Australia, New Zealand and India, but not the United States, which was conspicuous by its absence.” (Beeson, 2007: 232)

All these regional organisations have surely contributed to regional progress in terms of economic co-operation, and of creating multilateral channels for regional dialogue which in turn may have eased some bilateral or neighbourhood relations. Yet, none of them has in practice been qualified or willing to deal with the major security problems of Northeast Asia, for the following reasons:

1. Both ASEAN plus Three and ARF are ASEAN-led institutions, but Northeast Asian security issues do not directly involve the states of ASEAN. It is reasonable to doubt whether, especially in terms of traditional security issues, ASEAN-led groupings will ever be determined and courageous enough to tackle security crisis and emergencies caused by the Northeast Asian major powers. Aside from obvious limits of power and geostrategic placing, it has been argued that ASEAN-led institutions have structural difficulties in dealing with security matters. “ASEAN is not really a conflict avoidance organization. It is rather an issue avoidance organization. In other words, ASEAN is primarily a mechanism for sidelining problems regional leaders consider politically too difficult or sensitive.” (Beeson, 2007: 88) In short, the central actors for solving major Northeast Asian problems should be the Northeast Asian players themselves.

2. Despite its considerable contribution to confidence building in the region, the ARF has been criticised as merely a ‘talk shop’ that has no real power. (Zhang, 2005)
3. By not including the US, some suggest that East Asian Summit tries to lessen US influence in the region. As discussed earlier, the US itself so far prefers bilaterally-based security engagement to a multilateral approach. But without the US’s positive participation, a regional security regime will never be effective or meaningful. “The USA’s lack of enthusiasm about, and support for, the ARF has contributed to the marginalization in the management of regional security relations.” (Goh, 2004: 63) This logic rules out the SCO, as well as the EAS, as a basis for inclusive, balanced and effective solutions.
4. Economic co-operations is at the centre of the agendas of APEC and ASEAN Plus Three. “Asian regionalism is defined foremost in market terms. But Asian markets do not consist of myriads of private individual transactions. Markets express instead institutional and political relationships that in their operations implicate deeply both business and governments.” (Katzenstein, 1996: 135)

In sum, all these regional institutions have undoubtedly played very important roles in the regional progress of East Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific. Yet, none of the institutions is adapted or capable enough to deal with the major security problems of Northeast Asia.

## **The Six Party process and further security co-operation**

The Six Party Talks process has distinctive characteristics that give it the most realistic chance of developing into a wider regional security co-operation system. The advantages of the Six Party Process are:

1. Major regional powers are already set in one framework. The common goal of denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula unites these powerful players, who may or may not like each other. The North Korean nuclear crisis is so serious and poses such immediate dangers to the whole region that it gives an opportunity to unite all the major players in the region, who otherwise might never come together for a common security purpose. China, Russia and the US have their distinctive 'colours' and are hardly 'good friends' to each other: and while a US-led Cold War styled security mechanism still prevails in the region, it is remarkable to find players like China and Russia working at the same negotiation table where the US and its allies sit. This may perhaps offer the best opportunity for transforming Northeast Asia's security prospects that this region has ever come across. "The Six-Party process is not only beginning to show some results in the issue of denuclearization; we're also showing results in the issue of bringing the countries closer together...we have a long way to go, but I do believe that the Six-Party mechanism has put all six

countries in the same boat, has kind of created a situation where we can all move together.”<sup>67</sup> (US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill)

2. The Six Party process is not a ‘discussion group’ but is rather a purpose-orientated framework that tries to find a way to a resolution of the specific matter. Six members of the negotiations come to the table not only to talk but to find a resolution and further to implement it. They have also been willing to input considerable, concrete resources and efforts of their own for the purpose (such as energy aid and financial measures).
3. The process has managed to build up a rather positive momentum despite some setbacks in the past. In the latest development, in June 2008, North Korea handed over a report that describes its past plutonium related activities and demolished its Yongbyon nuclear cooling tower in a present of international observers and the media. In July 2008, the latest round of the Six Party negotiations agreed upon next steps to verify the North’s nuclear dismantlement process. The completion of disablement of Pyongyang’s nuclear facility is now expected by the end of October 2008. If the negotiations prove to be successful in this, it will give further credibility to the Six Party framework and will help build a solid foundation for a wider regional security co-operation.
4. Considering the unique characteristics of the region, a Northeast Asian community should be based upon a political and security concept. (Wada,

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<sup>67</sup> US Department of State. July 2, 2008. Six-Party Talks Setting Stage for New Diplomacy in Northeast Asia America’s envoy offers insider’s view of Korean Peninsula’s path to peace. <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/July/20080702160638idybeekcm0.9695246.html>

2003) The Six Party Process is the only international grouping in the region that discusses very 'hard' security issues. While economic co-operation in East Asia has benefited from other institutions such as ASEAN plus Three, APEC etc. security co-operation is merely discussed in ARF meeting without any effective measures. Thus, the Six Party process is the only forum discussing 'politically difficult and sensitive issues' with real implementing measures. It has thereby already paved a way and cultivated the basic ground for expansion of the wider security dimension. Some scholars also argue that security issues should be the basis of any multi-dimensional regionalisation, whilst economic co-operation could be seen more as a contributing force for such a process. (Hettne, 2005)

5. China's moderating role through the Six Party process shows China behaving in an internationally responsible manner while the rise of its power is occurring. Whether such a regional security scheme comes into being or not, there is no doubt that China's state behaviour will determine and shape the state of 21st century Asia. (Arai, 2007)
6. The US's positive involvement in the process is a further plus. "Multilateral diplomacy is the best way to peacefully solve the nuclear issue with North Korea. Today's developments show that tough multilateral diplomacy can yield promising results. Yet the diplomatic process is not an end in itself. Our ultimate goal remains clear: a stable and peaceful Korean Peninsula, where people are free from oppression, free from hunger and disease, and free from nuclear weapons. The journey toward that goal remains long, but today we

have taken an important step in the right direction.”<sup>68</sup> (US President George W. Bush) Despite his earlier hard-line stance, the US is now pushing a way forward towards the denuclearisation of North Korea through the Six Party process. Without positive involvement by the US, which contributes approximately 70,000 troops to the region and is the main pillar of the regional power balance, no security initiative will produce a practical result.

7. The Six Party Talks grouping has established five working groups to discuss North Korean related issues within the framework of the talks, thus creating wider opportunities and flexibility for progress. Currently the five working groups are dealing with: 1. Denuclearisation, 2. North Korea-US relations, 3. North Korea-Japan relations, 4. Economic, energy co-operation and 5. Wider security mechanism in Northeast Asia.<sup>69</sup> These five groups each have a different important agenda. The working group for regional security mechanism should not wait for the complete nuclear dismantlement of North Korea, as the negotiating development is still uncertain. “I initially believed that it was best for a prospective Northeast Asia security organization to be based on the successful resolution of the six-party process. While in the theory that would be desirable, I no longer believe it is essential. Events of 2006 suggested that the six-party process could have been headed in the wrong direction.” (Pritchard, 2007: 179)

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<sup>68</sup> The White House. June 26, 2008. President Bush Discusses North Korea.  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/06/20080626-9.html>

<sup>69</sup> The U.S. State Department. North Korea - Denuclearization Action Plan. February 13, 2007  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/february/80479.htm>

8. The official statement endorses the creation of a regional security forum.

“The Six Parties committed to joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum. The Six Parties agreed to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.”<sup>70</sup> (Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks Beijing, September 19, 2005) As noted before, President Roh of South Korea and President Bush adopted a separate statement committing themselves to “look for ways and means to promote security cooperation in Northeast Asia” and noted “the common understanding among the participants that the Six-Party Talks could develop into such a regional multilateral security consultative mechanism once the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved.”<sup>71</sup> (Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula. November 17, 2005)

9. Success in the process would bring substantive gains for the each respective state. This will be discussed in a later section.

All these points underline why the development of the Six Party process into a Northeast Asian security co-operation regime is so important and why it is truly the most promising venue for such a security regime. North Korea’s nuclear problem, an immediate crisis that poses grave threats to the region, gives an opportunity for the region to be united and to proceed further into a broader security scheme.

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<sup>70</sup> The U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/53490.htm>

<sup>71</sup> The White House. November 17, 2005. Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051117-6.html>

“In the Kanji characters used in both Chinese and Japanese, ‘crisis’ is written with two symbols, the first meaning ‘danger,’ the second ‘opportunity.’” (Al Gore at the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2007)<sup>72</sup>

### **Security co-operation in Northeast Asia and its objectives**

As discussed in previous chapters, Northeast Asia faces various security challenges. All of them require, over time, a transformative change in the nature of the chiefly self-centred foreign policy of nation states, moving towards co-operation and peaceful and sustainable regional development. This is the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, when a local event in one region will have immediate impact on another. The problems the world faces cannot be efficiently dealt with under the old system of ad hoc crisis management. The importance of and necessity for creating regional security co-operation in Northeast Asia is therefore growing. Furthermore, Northeast Asia’s regional vitality and potential within a global order would be enhanced by such co-operation. “Regionalism can unquestionably influence the nature of globalisation. Stronger regions would, for example, shape the form and content of the global order in different ways, depending on political trends in the respective regions, trends that may shift direction, thus altering the preconditions for constructing world order.” (Hettne, 2005: 39)

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<sup>72</sup> The Nobel Peace Prize. December 10, 2007. The Nobel Lecture given by The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2007, Al Gore. [http://nobelpeaceprize.org/eng\\_lect\\_2007c.html](http://nobelpeaceprize.org/eng_lect_2007c.html)



Besides the denuclearisation of North Korea, the specific objectives of such a security mechanism should include the following two-fold approach to deal with remaining wider security issues of both a traditional and non-traditional nature. As regards ‘hard’ security and conflict prevention, Northeast Asia’s security co-operation should:

- Provide a comprehensive security mechanism and reach an early agreement moving from an armistice to a peace treaty across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel border to end the Korean War. The comprehensive security mechanism should be provided by the regional players and most importantly the US.
- Create a systematic mechanism that benefits all its member states. Solid analysis of what each party gains from such co-operation is therefore vital.
- Take an initiative to discuss the regulation and control of ballistic missiles.
- Promote transparency regarding states’ military exercises. It should “Encourage transparency and early notification of military or security related actions among members.” (Pritchard, 2007: 181)

To deal with non-traditional threats, the regional security co-operation should:

- Promote joint energy exploration between the states of the region in areas of respective interest, e.g. between Japan and China, Japan and Russia, Japan and South Korea, thus also promoting an earlier resolution of the related territorial disputes.
- Promote a multi-level (governmental and academic) dialogue and discussions between the respective states to resolve historical problems and remove

mistrust and mutual hostility. In doing so, it should aim at building political confidence and trust between states.

- Create a common strategy for energy security as well as transport security.
- Create a common system for food security.
- Establish a common disaster management system.
- Build a common mechanism to prevent the spread of pandemic diseases.
- Find a common approach to tackle transnational crimes such as smuggling and piracy.

It would, of course, be naïve to claim that such security co-operation could or should replace US-led security influence in the region. Its progress should, however, supplement and ease the transition away from a US-led Cold War styled security structure which is not sufficient to deal with all the security problems, traditional and non-traditional, of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century underpinned by strong forces of globalisation.

### **What does each party gain from security co-operation?**

One must be very careful not to make false promises about such co-operation as the national interests of nation states will always be a main driver in state behaviours. Loading too many expectations on such co-operation, which is merely “nascent” (Acharya, 2001: 208) at best, would lead to a failure. In the most realistic view, such regional security co-operation will probably never become “a NATO-like commitment to mutual defence.” (Pritchard, 2007: 181) Therefore spreading

democracy or common democratic values should not perhaps be an initial part of the agenda, although it is highly desirable. The approach should primarily focus on security agendas covering both traditional and non-traditional security issues. The guiding principle should be based upon peaceful co-existence, stability and regional progress in prosperity.

Having said that, there is a concern about how the next US leadership will determine its policy on Northeast Asia. If neo-con policy makers, who strongly believe in spread of legal democracy and human rights around the world, gain the political upper hand in decision making processes in Washington, the Six Party Process is unlikely to become a venue for future regional security co-operation. As the Shanghai Cooperation, which holds “explicit focus on non-interference in domestic issues”<sup>73</sup> (SIPRI Policy Paper No.17, 2007: 6) and no attachment to democracy and human rights and yet benefits all its member states, has been performing successfully, the future operation of the Northeast Asia security co-operation system may have to learn such a ‘non-western’ way of working together. To say this is not to claim that the ‘spread of legal democracy and human rights’ is a wrong way of approaching international affairs: it may, however, be argued that such a ‘western-valued’ approach may sometimes not be compatible with efficient management of regional security. Moreover, such an apparently ‘non-western’ approach to regional co-operation may well be able to indirectly influence the

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<sup>73</sup> White, A., ‘Guiding the “near abroad”: Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’, CEF Quarterly, July 2005, p. 31.

‘undemocratic’ countries involved towards more ‘democratic’ behaviours that allow nation states to co-exist in a more peaceful and stable manner.

One of the main reasons why the SCO performs successfully is that there is a high degree of coincidence or balance of interests allowing it to benefit all its member states. When the creation of Northeast Asia’s Security co-operation is discussed, it is very important to analyse what each party gains from it and what the substantive benefits are for all its member states. The benefits and gains each state is entitled to receive from the co-operation may be one of the main driving forces, or the ‘glue’ helping all the members of such co-operation to stick together.

Initial membership of the security regime may be granted to the five states of the Six Party process, China, South Korea, Russia, Japan and the US. North Korea should be granted an observer status membership until its nuclear disarmament is completed. Later the process could also include Mongolia and other states or organisations such as the EU or the UN whose participation is desirable. The process must be led and organised by the original five members of the Six Party Talks and regular consultations should be held, preferably in the three capital cities of Northeast Asia – Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul – on a rotation basis.

## **China**

Through a Northeast Asian security co-operation structure including all the other major powers in the region, China would find itself better off in dealing with its international affairs despite remaining controversies such as Tibet and human rights

issues. China could also restrain the growing concerns over its rapid power emergence and show the world it is acting in peaceful and harmonious manner. China also wants to see US military influence lessened in the region and to maintain a properly restrained Japan. The regional security framework should be able to create a political 'buffering' space in this regard between the major powers. Establishing joint energy exploration and a regional energy security mechanism would also reduce chance of clashing with neighbouring countries over diminishing natural resources, as has happened in past history. Through the regional security co-operation, China could also hope to see the gradual transformation of North Korea's Stalinist political system into a more self-sustainable way of government that would prevent the North Korean regime from sudden disintegration.

### **South Korea**

In Korea's history, its internal affairs have always been affected or distorted by the major powers of the region. South Korea has always been a great supporter for Northeast Asian regionalism. It would like to see real sense of peace and stability in the region generally, but also wants an end to the Korean War and to promote an eventual reunification of the peninsula. A Northeast Asian security mechanism could be made to facilitate and support the long-term goal of the reunification of the Korean peninsula, which otherwise would hardly be achieved in peace and with lasting

success. Such a framework should also help in maturing South Korea's foreign policy and lessening the country's dependency on a US military presence.

## **Russia**

Russia wants to exert its influence in the region and also wants to see reduced US military influence. Russia also wants and needs China to behave in a predictable and systematic way with its emerging power. Through the multilateral framework of regional security regime in Northeast Asia, Russia will have a legitimate platform and access to the region. Besides the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, such a system will also serve as an additional international legitimation and underpinning for Sino-Russian relations. Russia's territorial disputes with Japan and joint energy exploration could be discussed under the framework of the security regime.

The Cold War was over in the early 1990s, yet Russia and the US still disagree over many issues especially in the hard security spectrum – such as the US plan to build a missile defence system in Eastern Europe; the recent Russian behaviour against Georgia; Russia's strong opposition to Kosovo's independence from Serbia backed by the US and the EU, and so forth. Russia and the US often exchange strong criticism towards each other, in a 'War of Words' that reached a new pitch when Russia sent its troops to South Ossetia and even further into Georgian territory to 'defend' its citizens and fought against the Georgian armies in August

2008.<sup>74</sup> Neither Russia nor the US sees each other as a ‘true friend’ in fact. It is therefore desirable for Russia to be included in Northeast Asia’s regional security framework where the US is also present, as a way of giving these major powers a new legitimate channel to express their mutual security concerns among other issues.

## **Japan**

Through a regional security regime, Japan would be able to manage its declining position and reduce the degree of national security threats posed by its neighbouring countries. For Japan, there can be no doubt that its continued military alliance with the US is vital: yet it is also very important to reduce the degree of its security reliance on a US-nuclear umbrella given the power shift taking place in Northeast Asia. As discussed earlier, Japan perceived North Korea as an immediate threat to its national security while it perceives China as a long-term threat. “Japan’s pre-eminent interest lies in working to extend and strengthen the rules-based international order to draw in China and other rising powers. More than anything else, this part of the world needs a robust mutual security system.” (Stephens, 2008)<sup>75</sup> At the same time, for both China and Japan, the still-existing latent threats between the two countries cannot be properly handled without a regional co-operation that also includes the US.

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<sup>74</sup> France24. Russian, Georgian Forces Battle in South Ossetia. 8 August 2008. <http://www.france24.com/en/20080808-georgian-troops-surround-breakaway-region-capital-south-ossetia&navi=MONDE>

<sup>75</sup> The Financial Times. July 3, 2008. Japan goes missing: invisible host at the summit By Philip Stephens. [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/15ac9456-48fe-11dd-9a5f-000077b07658.html?nclink\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/15ac9456-48fe-11dd-9a5f-000077b07658.html?nclink_check=1)

Notwithstanding the recent improvement of the bilateral relations between China and Japan following the visit of Chinese President Hu to Japan in May 2008 – agreement on joint gas-field exploration<sup>76</sup>, Japanese naval visits to China and Japanese relief supplies for the Sichuan earthquake victims,<sup>77</sup> which involved some of the first-ever military contacts since the Second World War – it is still not very clear how the future of Sino-Japanese relations will be managed in the long term. In fact, economic interaction between China and Japan accounts for more than three-quarters of the whole Asian intra-regional trade today. In a short word, the two countries truly do need each other, yet they do not trust each other.

It would not be entirely mistaken, even though the case is different, to draw a basic analogy between Franco-German relations after the Second World War and Sino-Japanese relations today. It would be unimaginable to envision the state of today's European co-operation without the decision to create the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Today, neither France nor Germany regards each other as an enemy and the likelihood of another Franco-German war is almost nonexistent. Similarly, if both of the two old enemies, China and Japan, wish real sustainable development and prosperity in peace and stability, they would need to create a co-operative mechanism and framework that would reduce both the 'opportunity to resort to a war' and the 'desire to use military forces.' (Dickens, 1998) This is all the more desirable as the likelihood of another inter-state

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<sup>76</sup> The Guardian. June 18, 2008. China and Japan agree on joint gas exploration of East China Sea. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/18/china.japan>

<sup>77</sup> Bloomberg. June 24, 2008. Japan Naval Ship Arrives in China Amid Warmer Ties. <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=aWu1i2YpnR30&refer=japan>



war is still relatively higher, though rather unlikely, in Northeast Asia today than in most other regions. “It is insufficient to have mere bilateral frameworks to deal with the regional problems. The Sino-Japanese relations in particular need badly a multilateral setting to tackle with, since at present...A multilateral setting like the EAC (East Asian Community) could serve as a ‘mediating environment’ in which both countries feel comfort and commonness.” (Zhang, 2007: 14)

### **North Korea**

North Korea’s main agenda of state survival is more likely to be ensured when there is a security mechanism for the whole region. An end to the Korean War and a peaceful reunification of the peninsula may not sound so unrealistic within the next half century or an even shorter period of time, should a Northeast Asia’s security co-operation be in a place. Regional security co-operation is, of course, not a magic solution to all the problems, yet peace and stability are more likely to grow when a security co-operation is in a place and substantive gains in security interests of each state can also be delivered through a cohesive regional deal. Such a deal based on the Six Party process should also bring greater trade opportunities between North Korea and its neighbours, which would perhaps lessen the effect of the Stalinist economic system of the country but also be of interest and profit to Beijing and Seoul.

## **The US**

By joining the Northeast Asian security regime, the US should be able to increase the odds on a 'responsible' China while its fast emergence as a superpower remains of concern to Washington. "Now, to be sure the six-party framework has not caused these breakthroughs, but it has contributed. It has helped. Our decision to support China as the Chair of the six-party talks has also been a strong incentive for Beijing to conduct itself responsibly on the North Korean issue. In time, the six parties have talked about formalizing these patterns of cooperation and creating a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism."<sup>78</sup> (US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice)

As discussed earlier, a major power shift is going to take place within a decade or two in the region and the US must be able to manage it in a peaceful manner. US bilateral military engagement in Northeast Asia has been based on the Cold War structure of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and will not work efficiently in the new order emerging in the region. On the other hand, a multilateral security approach need not imply abandonment of the US military presence in the region. US military engagement in Japan and South Korea should continue and be compatible with the development of multilateral security framework, though this would perhaps be facilitated by reducing the numbers of US troops.

For its part, though it has preferred a bilateral-based engagement in the region, the US does not want to be obviously excluded from the formation of a Northeast Asian regional system. "Referring to an East Asian summit (EAS), excluding the

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<sup>78</sup> The US Embassy in London, UK. June 18, 2008. <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/forpo1441.html>

United States, to be held in December in Malaysia at the initiative of China, he said he does not agree with it if it is an attempt by China to pry U.S. hands off Asia.”<sup>79</sup> (Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage) It is not optional but rather imperative for the US and its security interests to take part in the creation of any Northeast Asian security co-operation.

### **Obstacles, challenges and uncertainties**

Having argued that there is a strong basis to the growing desire for Northeast Asian security co-operation, it is also very important to recognise how difficult and complicated it will be to actualise such co-operation in the region. The obstacles and challenges often seem formidable, and are of a truly profound and politically demanding kind that will require both radical action to institutionalise a security co-operation, and a long-term strategy to sustain it. Examples of the stumbling blocks are:

- The Taiwan issue – It is certain that China will not allow the Taiwan issue to be included in the agenda of Northeast Asia’s security co-operation as it regards it as an ‘internal matter’, nor would it tolerate Taiwan as a participant.
- Despite today’s seemingly good progress in the Six Party process, it is important to remember that the denuclearisation process of North Korea could falter again. There is always the possibility that something may go wrong, and

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<sup>79</sup> Kyodo News Agency. September 19, 2005. Japan, U.S. should cope with ascent of China: Armitage. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0WDO/is\\_2005\\_Sept\\_19/ai\\_n15403929/pg\\_1?tag=artBody;coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDO/is_2005_Sept_19/ai_n15403929/pg_1?tag=artBody;coll)

if that happens, will the Six Party grouping even in its present form still be able to stick together?

- As discussed earlier, a possible deterioration in bilateral relations between other countries of the region could kill the political willingness and momentum for co-operation. An example would be the severe deterioration in the Sino-Japanese relations in 2005.
- It is important how the US will act in such moves towards a multilaterally-based security arrangement. “The US does not want to encourage a balancing coalition against its dominant position, it is not clear that it has a strategic interest in the full resolution of differences between, say, Japan and China or Russia and China. Some level of tension among these states reinforces their individual need for special relationships with the United States.” (Mastanduno, 2002: 200)
- Experts in East Asia warn about the historically deep-rooted nature of rivalry in the region. “Seen in the long-term development of a region famous for its heterogeneity, its privileging of national sovereignty, and its mutual distrust and hostility, to say nothing of several of the bloodiest confrontations of the twentieth century, the bland-sounding (sometimes eye-glazing) efforts of regional officials to facilitate economic cooperation should not be underestimated.” (Beeson, 2007: 238) “Conventional wisdom has consistently argued against the establishment of any type of unifying security mechanism in Northeast Asia, insisting that the differences separating the major players in

the region are simply too extensive and difficult to overcome.” (Pritchard, 2007:169)

### **Realism in the interdependent world**

If realism proves to be the very nature of state behaviour, as suggested by the past of human history, another power clash in the near future of Northeast Asia is inevitable. (Mearsheimer, 2001) Furthermore, the resurgence of a nuclear-armed Japan cannot be entirely ruled out. The nation states of Northeast Asia still live in old-style political rivalry with each other and in the half century since the Second World War, Europe and Northeast Asia have moved into different political dimensions. Although the nation state and its sovereignty remains the dominant entity, European countries have developed a new way to co-operate with each other economically and politically. It was no accident that European countries stopped fighting each other as a result of such co-operative development. “They may or may not like each other, but they do belong to the same organization and work together and make deals together over a wide and wonderful range of subjects.” (Cooper, 2004: 36) On the other hand, Northeast Asian nations still live today in a style where national sovereignty plays an absolute role and deep-rooted mistrust, antagonism, fear, insecurity and misunderstandings remain unresolved.

It is fair to say that the behaviour of a nation state working for its own economic prosperity and greater political prestige is absolutely normal. What

becomes a problem is the contention that occurs when one tries to gain more at the expense of the others. The realist analysis of state behaviour emphasises relative gains of power, material wealth and political prestige. In struggling for such relative gains, the sense of insecurity and instability will inevitably rise. “The neurobiological predilections of human nature, indeed, indicate that the well-being of human beings depends on the possession of a positive identity and a sense of belonging. They also tell us that cultural arrogance and exceptionalism, which taken together may increase insecurity and the likelihood of conflict, are equally possible.” (Al-Rodhan, 2007: 13)

Considering China’s heavy missile deployment against Taiwan, the heavily armed Korean border, and the tension between North Korea and Japan, it is still a fact in Northeast Asia – unlike Europe – that a resort to inter-state conflict is very possible. The Cold War style US bilateral military engagement still provides the dominant security architecture of the region.

The realist style of behaviour has proved to be overwhelmingly prevalent throughout the past century and still today. In the past, Japan acted upon the aggressive pursuit of its national interests, powers and resources, thereby causing catastrophic damage to the whole region of Asia. “Witnessing the fast emergence of China as a superpower, should China follow the same path as Japan did during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the damage to the region and even to the wider world would be far beyond our imagination.” (Morikawa, 2008: 8) This is the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, when nation states need to challenge such fundamental realist behaviours. “One state’s security now depends on cooperation with other states, rather than an individual state’s strategies for accruing power.” (Al-Rodhan, 2007: 11)

“What is really happening is that nations – even the most great – are realising that they cannot pursue their narrow national interests without invoking broader global values. They are obliged to recognise that interdependence is the defining characteristic of the early 21st century world.”<sup>80</sup> (Tony Blair)

Nation states have always wished for more of its prosperity and wealth. They will continue to do so in the future. The challenge is whether they pursue narrow self-interest, which can only be attained by playing off their interests against other parties, or will pursue a broader self-interest that could also attribute to communal interests in which relative gain is not an agenda. This is a formidable challenge and obligation confronting the very nature of the nation state. Northeast Asia may perhaps be able to learn how the Europeans stopped fighting each other after the long-lasting bloodshed of past centuries. The logic of European co-operation and integration may not directly apply to the Northeast Asia as those two are, of course, very different places.

(Katzenstein, 2005) “the Asians (co-operation) emphasize more of differences and complementarity, while the Europeans stress more of common standards.” (Zhang, 2007: 15) However, the possibility of creating a tailor-made Northeast Asian security co-operation should not be ruled out, if only because such co-operation has never been seriously tested or materialised before. The decision on the region’s future lies in hands of the policy makers of those respective nation states today. They are facing serious theoretical as well as practical challenges that require a solemn commitment to the common future.

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<sup>80</sup> World Economic Forum. SPEECH BY THE RT HON TONY BLAIR MP TO THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, DAVOS, 27 JANUARY 2007.  
[http://www.weforum.org/pdf/AM\\_2007/blair.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/pdf/AM_2007/blair.pdf)

## **Section Conclusion**

“Given the scale of the challenges the region faces, it [an attempt at co-operation] is an investment that ought to be made, even if the short-term results are uncertain and contentious. Without such institutions, the chance of resolving major tensions over energy security and environmental sustainability are reduced, and threaten to undermine some of the very real gains the region as a whole has made over the past 50 years or so.” (Beeson, 2007: 254)

Having considered the advantages of the Six Party process, developing the process into a regional security co-operation is the most possible and realistic option. Although such security co-operation will never be a magic solution to all the problems, it will pragmatically facilitate the handling of both traditional and non-traditional security issues. Each member of the Northeast Asian security co-operation system will also gain benefits for some strategic interests that may well provide one of the main driving forces of the co-operation. The obstacles and challenges, in both theory and practice, should, however, not be underestimated.

Policymakers of the regional states have been granted this opportunity now to make decisions for a better future. The immediate question to be answered for the long-term prospects of the region is whether nation states are ready to challenge and moderate the fundamentally persistent realist nature of state behaviours that have been repeated over time throughout all of human history. The deal should be reached now. There will indeed be long-term benefits, not just to the region but to the wider



world in creating a security co-operation system in Northeast Asia. However, nation states need to be courageous enough to act upon their common purpose.

“If the human race wishes to have a prolonged and indefinite period of material prosperity, they have only got to behave in a peaceful and helpful way toward one another.” (Winston Churchill)

## **Summary and Dissertation Conclusion**

Throughout this dissertation, it has been argued that the necessity for a possible regional security co-operation system in Northeast Asia is becoming greater and more urgent. This region has never enjoyed a real sense of peace or stability in its modern history.

The first chapter above discussed the complex and difficult characteristics of Northeast Asia: historic problems mainly attributed to Japan's past militarism and imperialism, the rise of China, traditional and non-traditional security problems; and the predominant conventional realist behaviours of nation states, which shattered hopes of the peaceful co-existence of states in the past.

One of the biggest hindrances to regional peace and security is North Korea's nuclear crisis and the technically still ongoing Korean War. The second chapter examined the unique history and development of North Korea and the North's irrational state behaviours. The longer the Korean crisis stays unsolved, the higher the instability in the region. The Korean nuclear crisis unites the regional players in one framework as it is indeed 'everybody's business.' The present opportunity to resolve it cannot be missed.

The third chapter highlighted how the US foreign policy has failed to deal with the North Korean crisis. It also hinted that US's participation in a regional multilateralism in Northeast Asia would increase chances of achieving its own foreign policy goals. A purely bilateral-based military engagement, hitherto seen by

the US as the most effective way of inserting its influence in the region, is becoming increasingly irrelevant in today's fast changing environment.

The fourth chapter discussed strategic interests of regional players of the Six-Party process and how the disparities and differences in strategic interests among the respective players have hindered a concentrated effort to resolve the crisis. Even so, the Six-Party process may be the most viable opportunity granted to the region for developing a wider regional co-operation.

The final chapter spelled out the reasons why, considering all the common threats facing Northeast Asia today, regional players should be driven towards the creation of a new security co-operation framework. It argued that the Six Party process should provide the most possible and realistic basis for evolving into a more comprehensive institution of regional security. Today, the notion that forces of globalisation affect every corner of the planet and create a growing degree of interdependence cannot be disputed and presents a reality for every nation state, regardless of its strong sovereign powers. Having seen the bloody history of Northeast Asia, the region cannot afford to see its history repeated. However, Northeast Asian nations face a serious challenge in modernising the traditional realist basis of their foreign policy. Given its special advantages, the Six-Party Talks process not only provides the most realistic chance of resolving the Korean crisis but also holds out the higher possibility of developing into a wider security regime for the region that would institutionalise peace and stability. If such security co-operation among the regional players becomes a reality in the near future, it will not only decrease the 'opportunity to resort to a war' and 'desire to use military forces'

(Dickens, 1998) (Zhang, 2005) between states, but will also facilitate dealing with other common issues.

Very intellectual and challenging decisions are in hands of the regional players today. It is still not too late for all the respective states of the Six Party process to start a serious reflection on the next phase of the Six-Party process in terms of a wider regional security regime, should they wish to live in peaceful co-existence and stability for the years to come.

“The world is undergoing tumultuous change. Globalization, underpinned by technology, is driving much of it, breaking down boundaries, altering the composition of whole communities, even countries and creating circumstances in which new challenges arise that can only be met effectively together. Interdependence is now the recognised human condition. So, the characteristic of today’s world is change. The consequence is a world opening up, and becoming interdependent. The conclusion is that we make sense of this interdependence through peaceful co-existence and working together to resolve common challenges. In turn, this requires an attitude, a state of mind, an emotional as well as an intellectual response consistent with this conclusion. A sentiment that we are members of a global community as well as individual nations means we must be global citizens as well as citizens of our own country. All this sounds impossibly idealistic. But if the analysis of the nature of the

world is as I set out, then it is in fact the only practical way to organise our affairs.

Idealism becomes the new realism.”<sup>81</sup> (Tony Blair)

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<sup>81</sup> The Tony Blair Faith Foundation. May31, 2008. <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/2008/05/tony-blairs-speech-to-launch-t.html>

## **Appendix: The Six Party Talks Timeline and major developments**

<b>The 1<sup>st</sup> round in August 2003 to the 4<sup>th</sup> round in July 2005</b>
The Six-Party Talks officially began in August 2003. The talks merely managed to announce few official statements and agreed to hold a further session of the negotiations. No major breakthrough was seen during those years.
<b>The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the 4<sup>th</sup> round in September 2005</b>
Agreement on a Joint Statement reached. <sup>82</sup> This is considered to be the most successful outcome of the Six Party Process. According to the agreement, North Korea will abandon its nuclear programme and rejoin the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. In return, North Korea will be given aid from the other parties of the negotiations. The text also opens the possibility for normalisation of diplomatic relations between North Korea and both Japan and the US. Very importantly, it also explored the possibility towards a peace agreement for the Korean peninsula. One day after the breakthrough, North Korea announced it would not give up its nuclear programme until it is given a nuclear reactor for what they call peaceful purposes of civilian use. In November 2005, the US accused North Korea of money laundering operations and the US Treasury Department placed a freeze order on Banco Delta Asia in Macau where \$25 million of North Korean funds was kept.
<b>The 5<sup>th</sup> round in November 2005 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the 5<sup>th</sup> round in December 2006</b>
After a long-term absence of the talks, North Korea tested long-range ballistic missiles in July 2006, followed by its first ever nuclear test in October 2006. Beijing persuaded Pyongyang to come back to the negotiation table. Pyongyang returned to the negotiations in December 2006, which ended with no sign of positive progress.
<b>The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of 5<sup>th</sup> round in February 2007</b>
Agreement on a Joint Statement reached. <sup>83</sup> As part of a deal, North Korea agreed to take the first steps towards the denuclearisation in return fuel aid among with economic and humanitarian assistance. This was seen as the first real progress since the beginning of the crisis.
<b>The 6<sup>th</sup> round in March 2007</b>
Discussed progress on the February Agreement. The US announced it would release the frozen \$ 25 million North Korean funds in Macau.
<b>Resumption of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the 6<sup>th</sup> round in July 2007</b>
In July 2007, Pyongyang shut down its nuclear plant following the February Agreement. IAEA inspectors arrived for a monitoring visit and verified the process. Pyongyang received the first fuel aid in accordance with the February Agreement.
<b>The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the 6<sup>th</sup> round in September 2007 to the latest round in July 2008</b>

<sup>82</sup> September 19, 2005. Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks Beijing, September 19, 2005. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/53490.htm>

<sup>83</sup> US Department of State. February 13, 2007. North Korea - Denuclearization Action Plan. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/february/80479.htm>

In accordance with the February Agreement, although delayed by 6 months, North Korea handed over a report detailing its plutonium production process in May 2008 followed by a symbolic destruction of its nuclear cooling tower in June 2008. All the parties agreed to establish a verification mechanism for denuclearisation in July 2008. The Talks issued a press communiqué.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> China Daily. July 12, 2008. Full text: press communiqué of the 6th round of the six-party talks. [http://chinadaily.com.cn/world/2008-07/12/content\\_6842197.htm](http://chinadaily.com.cn/world/2008-07/12/content_6842197.htm)

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