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PAPERS, ESSAYS AND REVIEWS

Yonsei Journal of International Studies
Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University

VOLUME V
ISSUE 1
SPRING/SUMMER
2013

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LETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

Thus far, 2013 has been an eventful year in North Korea, for both the regime itself and those who follow it. January saw the UN Security Council pass Resolution 2087, a response to a missile launch the previous month. In February, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, which resulted in the UN Security Council passing Resolution 2094 to condemn the test and apply further sanctions. In April, North Korea closed the jointly operated Kaesong Industrial Complex, an action which garnered much international attention. But in addition to the headline grabbing events, there have been other noteworthy developments in the discourse on the DPRK. Though the phenomenon itself is not new, coverage of marketization in the nominally communist country is both increasing and significantly affecting the discussion. By shifting the focus away from the regime and towards the people of North Korea, a whole new understanding of the North is developing.

From a bird's eye view, one can decipher two general narratives: one state-centered, the other people-oriented. Though there are merits and drawbacks to either perspective, it is clear that both are necessary to form a complete understanding of North Korea. This issue of the *Yonsei Journal of International Studies*, and its "Focus on North Korea," provides as complete a perspective as one can find. We have five papers, three essays, one interview and three reviews.

Even for the few non-North Korea specific pieces, the reader will find that each piece fits under one of the two broad narratives.

In the first paper, “Broadening the Picture: A Review of Chinese and English-Language Media Discourse on the DPRK,” James Pearson (University of Cambridge) appraises the English-language media discourse on North Korea. By looking at Chinese- and English-language media coverage of the Cheonan sinking and the Yeonpyeong Island shelling, Pearson finds that Chinese media coverage of North Korea can broaden the discourse and “plug some of the gaps in English-language coverage.” The second paper, co-authored by Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga (London School of Economics) and Jenny Jun (Georgetown University), covers the issue of United Nations sanctions on North Korea following the recent nuclear test (UNSCR 2087 and 2094). In “Getting China to Enforce Sanctions on North Korea,” the two authors argue that “many traditional roadblocks” are still preventing China from effectively enforcing UN Security Council-sponsored sanctions. They then identify ways that the Chinese government’s enforcement of sanctions can be improved, focusing on prudent statecraft and a rethinking of the way sanctions are perceived and implemented.

The third paper provides readers with an overview of the social structure of North Korea and focuses “upon the foundations of the society that we seek to understand.” In “Challenges to Reform: Structure, Agency and the Constitution of the Selectorate,” author James Burt (London School of Economics) makes good use of Anthony Giddens’ Structuration Theory to give ordinary citizens of the North something that often goes missing in the literature: agency. The fourth paper continues this approach. Shirley Lee (University of Oxford), in “Looking Past the Regime: a Revised Policy of ‘Engagement’ with North Korea,” maintains focus on giving agency to North Koreans. Taking a slightly different focus from Burt, Lee focuses on giving voice to North Koreans in exile, specifically those who have intimate knowledge about how North Korea functions—politically, socially and otherwise—and maintain connections inside the country. To her, “engagement” is about providing intellectual coherence for North Korean intellectuals writing about North Korea.

After whetting the reader’s appetite for alternative discourses, the fifth and final paper brings the focus back to the traditional statist understanding of North Korea. In “Why Does China Prevent North Korea From Collapsing,” Shawn Ho (Rajaratnam School of International Studies) revisits a common but always pertinent question: why does China continue to support North Korea and prevent its collapse? After giving the reader a thorough review of the contemporary literature on the issue, Ho concludes that “China’s North Korea policy is largely

driven by a pursuit of its own geopolitical interests and less so by its security and economics interests in North Korea.”

Though shorter in length and more focused in scope than the papers, the essays in this issue still provide the reader with unique insights and contentious claims. The first essay, written by Christopher Green (University of Cambridge), is a preview of a pioneering study in North Korean studies by the author. In “Marketization and Yuanization: Economic changes in the DPRK,” Green discusses, in the greatest detail permitted in an essay, North Korea’s marketization phenomenon. He focuses on the use of foreign currency in North Korea’s nascent but burgeoning market economy, especially Chinese yuan in the northern provinces. The second essay, “The Once Mighty Paradigm: a Critical Review of Modernization Theory,” is a theoretical overview and critique of stage theory, a subset of modernization theory. Professor Joel R. Campbell (Troy University) highlights the shortcomings of understanding economic, social and political development in stages—a patently Western way of viewing change. As such, Campbell’s essay nicely compliments the other pieces that focus on development in North Korea.

The final essay covers a crucial time period in China-Taiwan relations. In “Saving Face: China and Taiwan’s Bid for the United Nations Seat in the General Assembly and Security Council, 1950-1971,” Mycal L. Ford (Pacific Lutheran University) strips the veneer from over-romanticized views of policymaking and US-centric understandings of history. Through his exploration of the “array of back-alley talks and power struggles, Ford shows how the lead-up to Taiwan losing its seat at the UN to China was marked by waning US influence within the UN and a general balance of power shift in East Asia towards Beijing.

The interview for this issue is a stimulating conversation between Dr. Adam Cathcart, Lecturer of Asian History at Queen’s University Belfast (QUB), and Blaine Harden, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*. Appropriately titled “In Need of An Icon,” the interview highlights, among other things, the book’s success in raising international awareness of major human rights abuses in North Korea. The selling point: Shin Dong-hyuk (the protagonist) and his life story. Whether it is he or Harden who has become the “icon” is left for the reader to decide.

The issue’s three book reviews provide a broad coverage of recently published books. In “All the World’s a Stage, and All the Men and Women Merely Players,” Peter Ward (Korea University) sends of volley of criticism towards the authors of *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Heonik Kwon and Chung Byong-Ho). Though many in academia warmly received the book, Ward

finds the book far too discourse-heavy. He asks whether the authors would have done better leaving much of the academic theories out, instead using defector interviews to corroborate their claims.

Ryan D. Schomburg (Yonsei University) reviews one of Dambisa Moyo's latest books, *How the West Was Lost: Fifty Years of Economic Folly—and the Stark Choices Ahead*. In "From American Dominance to the Rise of the Rest," Schomburg gives an honest and critical overview of the book. Though he finds the overall thesis agreeable, Schomburg takes issue with Moyo's sweeping generalizations and sensational prose. The last review, written by Matthew Bates (School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London), considers how the legacy of Ronald Reagan is remembered and has manifested itself in the policies of contemporary leaders. Drawing on recent histories of the end of the Cold War and memoirs of three leading members of the George W. Bush administration (Bush himself, Dick Cheney and John Bolton), Bates finds that, overall, Reagan's most significant characteristic—empathy—has "been lost on those wishing to emulate him."

Along the lines of memoirs and self-reflection, I must note that the present issue of the *Yonsei Journal* will be my last as editor in chief. Serving in this post has been a learning experience beyond measure, and has enriched my MA experience at Yonsei University. The Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS) administration provided strong financial and institutional support over the last two years. Without them, this enterprise simply would not exist, and they deserve thanks. I also want to thank the professors in Seoul who have given their support and guidance over the same period, especially Professors Matthias Maass (Yonsei University), Jennifer Oh (Ewha Womens University), and Kim Jangho (Yonsei University). Finally, I would like to thank the Yonsei Journal staff: the hard work of each individual staff member is vital to the Journal's success. Happy reading!



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MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

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James Pearson, BA (London) M.Phil (Cantab), read for a bachelor's in Chinese and Korean at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, a master's of philosophy in Oriental Studies at the University of Cambridge and was a student at Beijing Normal University (BNU) in 2008-2009. At SOAS, he was awarded the YC Liu prize in Chinese Studies for research that detected replicable patterns in the rise and fall of contemporary Chinese nationalist sentiment. He is currently based in Seoul where he is the correspondent for *NK News*, a news website covering North Korean affairs. He is also founder and editor of *koreaBANG*, a popular website that translates posts from South Korean websites into English, and a manager at *chinaSMACK*, its Shanghai-based counterpart. Pearson is due to join *Reuters* as a Korea correspondent in 2014.

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Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga is currently a master's student at the London School of Economics on a dual-degree master's program in international affairs with Peking University. He recently completed his first master's degree at Peking University in Beijing last year focusing on Chinese foreign policy and China-North Korea relations. He wrote his first master's thesis on the bureaucratic politics of China's North Korea policy, based on over 40 interviews with US and Chinese government officials, military officers, academics and journalists, including ambassadors and foreign policy advisors from both countries.

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Jenny Jun graduated from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in International Politics and a certificate in Asian Studies. Since graduation, she has worked in the defense and security industry for The Chertoff Group, a consulting firm founded by the former US Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff. In that capacity, Jenny conducted research on a number of cybersecurity issues regarding cyber espionage and critical infrastructure protection. She is currently planning a research project with the Korea Chair for the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on the policy implications of North Korea's cyber warfare capabilities.

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James Burt holds an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a BA in International Relations and History. His MSc thesis investigated the absence of non-Western International Relations theories in academia and developed a preliminary theoretical framework for a constructivist analysis of North Korea. Throughout his undergraduate and post-graduate studies he focused on securitization, foreign policy, international society and regional security in East Asia.

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Shirley Lee holds a degree in Classics and Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford, where she studied the classical literatures of Rome, Greece and Persia, and the modern literature of Iran. Lee is a published writer and literary translator. She co-translated poems by the ten leading Chinese poets since the Cultural Revolution for the Asia Literary Review, and made the first translations of love poems by Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo. These were re-translated into fifteen languages and have been read at literary festivals across the world since 2011. Her translations of poems by ex-DPRK poet laureate Jang Jin-sung won the Rex Warner Literary Prize at the University of Oxford and have been published in the *Financial Times* and the National Library of Scotland. She is currently editor of the English version of the North Korean news site run by North Korean defectors, *New Focus*.

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Christopher Green is the Manager of International Affairs for North Korea news and analysis experts for the *Daily NK* in Seoul, co-editor of *Sino-NK* and a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. He is currently researching North Korean politics, economics and society, and is part of a funded research project investigating North Korean propaganda and foreign policy in the Kim Jong-un era.

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Joel R. Campbell is an Associate Professor of International Relations in the Pacific Region (Japan and Korea) in the Global Campus program of Troy University. He has taught at Tohoku University, Miyazaki International College and Kansai Gaidai University in Japan, as well as three universities in Korea. He has published extensively on his principal research interests, the politics and political economy of Northeast Asia, along with technology policy and international security.

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Mycal L. Ford is a Fulbright Fellow based in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. He is a recent Pacific Lutheran University graduate, having doubled majored in Chinese Studies and Political Science (emphasis in International Relations). Ford has contributed op-eds to the *Taipei Times* and *Kinmen Daily*. He has traveled to China, where he conducted ethnographic research on the Social Construction of Race in China via Public Policy. Ford is also is the Media Coordinator for *Sino-NK*.

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Adam Cathcart is presently based in Northern Ireland, where he is Lecturer in Asian history at QUB. Cathcart's research focuses on the Sino-Korean border region and relations between Beijing and Pyongyang; his related articles have appeared in the *Journal of Korean Studies*, *Korean Studies*, *Review of Korean Studies*, *Acta Koreana*, *North Korean Review*, and the *Journal of Cold War Studies*. Ongoing projects include North Korean ideology, DPRK musical diplomacy, and a book with Chuck Kraus about Sino-North Korean relations in the early Cold War. In September, Dr. Cathcart will be joining the University of Leeds, where he hopes to build on the foundations built by Owen Lattimore and Aidan Foster-Carter and recruit graduate students studying East Asia.

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Peter Ward is a student of Korean history at Korea University in Seoul. He previously studied history at the University of Nottingham before he arrived in Korea, 3 years ago. He studied Korean from 2010 until the end of 2011 and now is researching North Korean history for his graduate dissertation. When not doing his own research, he serves as research assistant to Andrei Lankov. In addition to writing for *Sino-NK*, Peter also writes for *NK News* and has contributed to *The Three Wise Monkeys* blog.

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Ryan D. Schomburg is a second-year master's candidate focusing on global finance at the Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University. He graduated from the Stetson School of Business and Economics, Mercer University (USA) with a bachelor's in Business Administration. While at Mercer University he studied abroad at the Baltic Business School in Sweden. Between degrees, Ryan spent a year performing service work in Thailand. He is currently the business manager of the *Yonsei Journal of International Studies* and is working towards becoming a Chartered Financial Analyst. Ryan plans on pursuing a career in banking in New York City after graduation.

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Matthew Bates is a qualified accountant and research analyst at Aminex PLC, and Economics and Trade Analyst at *Sino-NK*. He formerly held interpretation and secretarial responsibilities in negotiations with the North Korean national oil company when the company had an interest in this area. He studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, for an MA in Korean Studies, on a Korea Foundation scholarship, writing his Master's thesis on the intentions underlying North Korea's 2002 Economic Management Measures. At SOAS he also earned a BA in Korean and Comparative Religion, during which he spent one year at Korea University in Seoul for intensive Korean language training. He is currently completing a secretarial qualification and hopes to return to formal academic study soon.

PAPERS

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BROADENING THE PICTURE: A REVIEW OF CHINESE AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA DISCOURSE ON THE DPRK¹

James Pearson
University of Cambridge

Regardless of how much North Korea might frustrate China behind the scenes, the two states maintain the public impression of stable relations. Meanwhile, in the “Western” (Anglophone) community, North Korea is often portrayed in negative and potentially biased terms. If both houses of media cover North Korea using such one-dimensional viewpoints, what would happen if the two approaches were to be combined? This paper argues that using the Chinese media as a lens through which to view events on the Korean Peninsula broadens the picture of a complicated nation state. To do this, the paper is divided into two parts; Part One briefly outlines some of the academic and media discourse on North Korea and discusses the potential pitfalls of making normative statements in media coverage without reliable access to information. The author goes on to suggest that the predominantly unfavorable image of North Korea created by English-language media coverage threatens the ability of outside states and the DPRK to engage in constructive diplomacy. Part Two examines both Chinese and English media coverage of two significant events on the Korean Peninsula in order to show how viewing these incidents through a Chinese lens can, in fact, plug some of the gaps in English-language coverage. This paper thereby stimulates a discussion on the shortcomings of Western media representations of North Korea, plus offers insights on how paying careful attention to the Chinese media might broaden those same representations.

Introduction

Public opinion arguably has the potential to shape the foreign policy of the very states that, by diplomatically engaging in North Korea, could potentially

¹ Online media citations in this paper include the dates they were accessed. Though accessed dates are not always necessary, the focus and content of this paper makes them necessary. – Editor

encourage them to embrace change. As ordinary citizens neither have the time nor the expertise to fully monitor the complex nature of international relations, decision makers often “simplify the world” and create “cognitive shortcuts” to sell their policies to the public, as expertly argued by Thomas Christensen in *Useful Adversaries*. This leads decision makers to “sell expensive policies by stating them in easily digestible ways, shunning complicated logic about abstract or long-term threats,” Christensen posits.

Indeed, media representations of the DPRK are an important factor in creating the political environment within which that engagement can be instigated or “sold” to an easily influenced public. Although some policy makers or government institutions may have more access to information on the DPRK than media organizations do, the way North Korea is represented in the press has great potential to shape or even dictate the way North Korea is perceived. With little access to reliable information (thanks largely to the extraordinary lengths Pyongyang goes to in preventing outside information from reaching ordinary people) and little alternative to the more dominant perceived wisdom encouraging the view that the DPRK is an aggressive state and a threat to its neighbors, we run the risk of representing a very complex state of affairs as a one-dimensional problem.

Under the Kim Jong-il regime, much attention was given to colorful propaganda, goose-stepping soldiers and images of rockets or missiles relayed from within the bowels of KCTV archives. Recently, more formulaic reports might begin with Hilary Clinton or Barack Obama peering through a pair of binoculars at “freedom’s frontier,”² then end with analysis that explains why the state presents an existential threat and why Kim Jong-un is too young to keep things under control. Indeed, with a state that is so opaque at the highest levels, journalists and some academics are understandably prone to making educated guesses, and then a priori statements on those guesses.³

Such characterizations, however, are by no means unfounded. Pyongyang’s streets are peppered with Soviet-inspired, Cold War style socialist realist propaganda and the Korean People’s Army (KPA) still dress in a uniform design that gives away the army’s Soviet-sponsored roots. Newly-crowned “Marshall”

2 “Obama visits Korea’s Demilitarised Zone as tensions rise,” *BBC News*, March 25, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17502867> (accessed June 10, 2012).

3 Such an opaque society also gives way to rumors that quickly become fact. What can begin as a piece of leaked information from South Korean intelligence agencies to lawmakers can too often become front page news in some South Korean newspapers. This news then finds its way to the front pages of more influential papers in the West. The incident in July 2012 with the apparent attempted coup that the incorrectly claimed broke out after Pyongyang removed Ri Yong-ho from his position is case in point.

Kim Jong-un is renowned for wearing the same Chairman Mao-style suits as his grandfather and the parallels between the impressive military parades in Pyongyang and Moscow's Red Square are ever-evident. But all we actually know about Kim Jong-un is that he is young, married to a woman we know nothing about, famously overweight, remarkably similar in appearance to his Grandfather, Kim Il-sung and, it turns out, he likes basketball. But how we use these facts to ascertain what policy decisions he may or may not be about to make remains unclear.

Yet North Korea still dominates headlines. Speculation of possible reform is ripe—but based on little evidence—and rarely does an article reach publication without being prefaced in some way by the keywords of starvation, famine, or nuclear threat, no doubt because some of these stories are dictated by the demand of a market set by media chiefs in Washington and London. Stories of famine and starvation are popular reading; stories that suggest the more “normal” aspects of lives in the North are not. In any case, where there is even the slightest incentive to sensationalize a story for the publishing market, a selective truth may emerge and the more mundane aspects of normality may become overlooked, or worse still, important details that reveal more telling insights might be missed.⁴ This creates a journalistic free-for-all; no one can verify any facts and the “external” is free to portray the “internal” without the usual journalistic checks and balances that should hold authors accountable.

Recognizing the limitations of knowledge

A lot of the discourse on ordinary life for normal citizens in the DPRK, the majority of which is negative, is based on the accounts of defectors. Barbara Demick's *Nothing to Envy* promises to shed some light on “real lives in North Korea,” yet it is entirely based on “seven years of conversations with North Koreans”—all of whom had defected and had lived very grim lives.⁵ The book is a gripping read—a real page-turner, and it goes without saying that the stories of these people should not go untold. However, despite Demick's best attempts to bill the book as “primarily an oral history” and emphasize that most of it takes place during a catastrophic famine, the stories in *Nothing to Envy* are often used or quoted to suggest that this is what life for all North Koreans must be like. Such rhetoric therefore shapes our debate and affects our ability to engage with a reality that, in recent times, has become far more multi-dimensional and

4 James Pearson, “Real daily lives in North Korea,” *NK News*, May 31, 2012, <http://www.nknews.org/2012/05/real-daily-lives-in-north-korea/> (accessed July 28, 2012).

5 Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Real Daily Lives in North Korea* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

complicated following the advent of a rising middle class, the freer exchange of information and evidence of a slight economic liberalization. Written about the 1990s but released more than a decade later in 2010, we must be careful not to draw contemporary conclusions based on a previous era that is widely recognized, both within and outside North Korea, to be a dark and devastating period, plagued by starvation, and the death of millions.

As above, by no means does this go to suggest that the plight of defectors should be ignored. They provide those on the outside with a valuable insight into North Korean society and certainly help develop a significant understanding. However, painting a picture based solely on these accounts presents its problems. In 2010, Amnesty International produced a damning report⁶ on the state of North Korea's healthcare system based entirely on defector accounts, some of whom, like in *Nothing to Envy*, had left almost a decade before the report was compiled. Yet, in the same year, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Margaret Chan said the country's healthcare system was "something which most other developing countries would envy."⁷

So whom do we believe? Both organizations ultimately have the interests of the North Korean people at the center of their aims, but both organizations draw dramatically different conclusions. The point is not to disagree with the notion that the North Korean government regularly fails to provide for its people—in the majority of cases it clearly has—it is that it should be fundamental procedure of any analysis to recognize the limits of knowledge available and critically assess the source of information. But, when it comes to North Korea, we seem to excuse ourselves from the standards to which we would otherwise hold ourselves accountable.⁸ Ironically, those standards are the very standards North Korea is under so much pressure to embrace. Perhaps, therefore, our media (that is to say the Anglophone media of the "West") is fundamentally affected by a bias that is unwilling to accept a more complicated and multi-dimensional image of North Korea that could portray its actions as potentially rational and reasoned.

In order to address this issue, this study investigates whether or not this apparent gap in knowledge can be addressed by looking at North Korea through a Chinese "lens." It is a critical study of our own media representations of North

6 "The Crumbling State of Health Care in North Korea," Amnesty International, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA24/001/2010/en/13a097fc-4bda-4119-aae5-73e0dd446193/asa240012010en.pdf>, (accessed June 25, 2012).

7 "North Korea Has Plenty of Doctors: WHO," *Reuters*, April 30, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/30/us-korea-north-idUSTRE63T3TW20100430> (accessed July 23, 2012).

8 James Pearson, "How Failed is North Korea?," *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2012/01/31/how-failed-is-north-korea/> (accessed July 23rd, 2012).

Korea coupled with the added snapshot of Chinese reportage of the same events. China is widely believed to be North Korea's closest ally—but its media is also infamously censored. Nonetheless, this paper argues that, with more access to information and a closer relationship, news on North Korea from a Chinese perspective can significantly, and pragmatically, broaden the picture.

Chinese and Western coverage of events in North Korea

Although it is no secret that the Chinese government heavily censors and monitors its own media, this does not mean to say it is unreliable as a source. Provided that, as discussed above, the limitations of knowledge and access to information are recognized. That is to say, it is important to consider that: 1) information from North Korea is very difficult to verify; and 2) Chinese media comes with its own bias—one that is affected by its own government. Furthermore, some papers such as the *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend) have developed a reputation for often publishing a line quite distant from that of the Chinese government's more conservative or official stance echoed by more “mainstream” mainland newspapers such as the *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily). Thankfully, such once closed-off and hard-to-reach sources are now readily available online, providing Sinologists with a rich area of research.

John Gaddis argues that many social scientists suffer from what he dubbed physics envy, i.e., academics striving to adopt seemingly simple methodologies from “hard” science have detracted from their actual goal of explaining or forecasting social realities.⁹ And Gaddis is right: trying to apply broad theories or models to entire populations of self-aware peoples is undoubtedly problematic. However, this does not mean to say that the creativity and inquisitive playfulness scientists apply to the experimentation process cannot be applied elsewhere. This thesis is therefore presented as an experiment—its findings are designed merely to present a snapshot of the Chinese media reaction to a select few events and see to what extent they differ from voices in the West. Rather than explain the complex nature of Sino-DPRK relations, the findings of this thesis should instead be seen as a useful tool that can challenge some of our perceived wisdom on North Korea, or more likely, address and highlight some of the more pressing issues outlined in Part One.

For example, if China has indeed grown as distant from North Korea as some suggest, to what extent is a similar image being portrayed in Chinese media? The key questions are: by including Chinese sources in our media analy-

9 John Lewis Gaddis, “History, Science, and the Study of International Relations,” in *Explaining International Relations Since 1945*, ed. Ngaire Woods (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 32–48.

sis of key North Korean events, are we able to achieve a better understanding of a fundamentally misunderstood country? Or, does Chinese reportage on the subject merely reflect what is said in Western journalism? Furthermore, as alluded to in the introduction, the Western academic debate is full of important discoveries that could help us understand how North Korea functions. A lot of it is conflicting, but is nevertheless largely based on extensive research that, despite the lack of information, can offer a reasonably comprehensive view of the North Korean state. But, to what extent does media reportage reflect this, and through which “lens” does China view North Korea and therefore report it?

Methodology

In honor of the “physics envy” of Gaddis and to try to address these questions and test such theories, we need a test tube of sorts—a petri dish of information from within which some tentative conclusions can be drawn, or useful ideas can be suggested. Luckily, for the seasoned Pyongyangologist (as they do not like to be known), no other country seems to generate disproportionately more headlines and column inches than North Korea. From Kim Jong-un’s “mystery woman” to the sinking of the Cheonan battleship and the success of North Korean Olympic athletes in 2012, stories on the DPRK set the media’s gear to hyperdrive. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, two major events that have succeeded in capturing the world’s attention will form that test tube:

- The bombardment of Yeonpyong Island that saw what appeared to be an unexpected and “unprovoked” attack from a North Korean artillery battery on the South Korean-controlled island of Yeonpyong in the seas to the immediate West of the 38th parallel.
- The death of Kim Jong-il which, despite long-standing rumors of ill-health, still came as a shock and accelerated the transition to Kim Jong-un.

Each of these two events, or “catalysts,” were covered very closely by world media, generating thousands of lines of analysis and are therefore rich veins of research. Each incident triggered a similarly large tide of headlines but there is an important distinction in the nature of each event in that: 1) each was completely unexpected and happened “externally;” and 2) each was expected in all but the timing and happened “internally.” Theoretically at least, this might imply the particular style of media reaction might vary for each incident. To study

media reaction to each of these two catalysts in both China and the English-speaking “West,”¹⁰ in this case the UK and US, six sources from a measured but representative background are drawn upon throughout the study. In English, these are:

- The *Guardian*, a British newspaper that, although lacking the wide circulation of the center-right Times and Telegraph, has a wide readership in the United States thanks to a flourishing online edition. The *Guardian* also publishes a weekly edition, the *Guardian Weekly*, which has an international and trans-Atlantic appeal, making it an important addition to this study.
- The *New York Times*, like the *Guardian*, has a lower circulation than its larger US competitors, in this case the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. However, its online edition generates over 30 million page views per month, making it the most-viewed news resource in the US.¹¹
- The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a household name known well beyond its home soil that, although funded by the British government, is genuinely believed to be objective and impartial: an editorial line it generally maintains throughout its rich and diverse reportage.

In comparison, three Chinese sources were picked to mirror their English-language counterparts as much as is realistically feasible—even if differences in political systems and culture naturally make a complete match impossible. Taking into account distribution and reach, the Chinese sources cited are:

- The *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily), one of the largest of China’s newspapers and widely seen as the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) mouthpiece thanks to its direct control by the party. Although, like the DPRK, central Chinese leadership is almost completely opaque to outside interpretation, the editorial line of the *Renmin*

10 The “West” here refers to the dominant states of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Although the term is unfavorable, its use is reluctant in place of a more suitable alternative that does not require long and explanatory footnotes.

11 Russell Adams, “*New York Times* Readies Pay Wall,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704213404576100033883758352.html> (accessed June 27, 2012).

Ribao is largely in tune with the policy that the Chinese government projects to the rest of the world.

- *Xinhua Tongxunshu* (Xinhua News Agency), China's official news agency, which, as a wire service, feeds the majority of Chinese newspapers, including the *Renmin Ribao* with stories from its many mainland and overseas correspondents. Like the *Renmin Ribao*, its editorial line tends to reflect government policy and rhetoric.
- *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), a popular weekly newspaper that somewhat breaks the mold. Its editors are said to gain control of the paper via “a revolving door” to jail,¹² thanks to its more investigative, liberal and open approach that often counters the government line. The *Nanfang Zhoumo* is included based on the educated guess that it is less likely to reflect CCP rhetoric and, as a weekly publication, is also more likely to offer analysis on events, rather than simply report them in real-time and give way to speculation.

Case 1: The Bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island

On November 23, 2010, Korean People's Army (KPA) artillery guns opened fire on a military base on the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong, resulting in the deaths of two civilian construction workers, two South Korean marines and the injury of sixteen other soldiers. North Korea does not claim ownership over Yeonpyeong, which lies just 12.5km from its nearest coast, but the area around it is subject to dispute. The Northern Limit Line (NLL), an inter-Korean maritime border that extends from the Military Demarcation Line (MDL)—the land border between North and South—West into the Yellow sea, was never fully agreed upon following the end of the Korean War in 1953.

Although the Armistice stipulated that Yeonpyeong Island and neighboring Paengnyeong Island were to be administered by the South, the maritime border was not included in the agreement, and as the laws on the extension of land borders into maritime territory changed over the years, Pyongyang began to take issue with the border: rather than simply continuing from the MDL in

12 “China Media Guide: Southern Weekly,” *Danwei*, August 9, 2008, http://www.danwei.org/media_guide/newspapers/southern_weekly.php (accessed June 27, 2012).

the same direction, the border curves upwards towards the North Korean coast. Yeonpyeong Island is particularly sensitive: South Korea has built up a military presence there over time, including an artillery battery, well within range of Northern targets. North Korea had made its position on the NLL and the sensitive nature of the surrounding islands clear on several occasions, declaring that Yeonpyeong lies within what they claimed to be North Korean territorial waters and that the “safe passage of warships” within the area “cannot be guaranteed.”¹³ While this does not imply North Korea henceforth has free reign to indiscriminately open fire upon whomever it pleases, it should, at the very least, indicate that the territorial dispute surrounding the NLL is highly sensitive and caution—not the military—should therefore be exercised in that area. Nevertheless, when the guns eventually fell silent, South Korean media described the attack as being “completely out of the blue”¹⁴ and, in response to the attack, opened fire on North Korean artillery positions and deployed fighter jets in local airspace.

From a North Korean perspective, the argument would be that the DPRK opened fire in response to what was viewed as aggressive South Korean military exercises in nearby (and disputed) waters. Pyongyang requested days in advance that the South cancel its plans to carry out the exercises. The South refused and, despite further warnings on the day and a telephone message that morning, the exercises went ahead and the North opened fire, true to their conditional threat. Following what could be considered an overreaction from the North Korean side, the majority of foreign leaders across the world were quick to condemn Pyongyang for its actions: Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon characterized the attack as “one of the gravest incidents since the end of the Korean War”—a fairly bold statement considering the various other more damaging events that have occurred since fighting stopped in the 1950s.

Western media reaction was quick to begin live coverage of the events as they unfolded. The *Guardian* began with a regularly updated stream of South Korean reactions and the usual social media coverage before eventually filing a story on the attack later in the day.¹⁵ Two articles by the *Guardian*'s Beijing cor-

13 “KPA Panmunjom Mission Clarifies Revolutionary Armed Forces’ Principled Stand,” *KCNA*, May 27, 2009, <http://kcna.co.jp/calendar/2009/05/05-27/2009-0527-011.html> (accessed July 25, 2012).

14 “The best weapons are useless if strategy is inept,” *Chosun Ilbo*, December 1, 2010, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/12/01/2010120101069.html (accessed July 25, 2012).

15 This particular feature was largely based on minute-by-minute reactions and included very little analysis. It is therefore not considered stable enough a source for the purpose of this study, despite being the first piece to be posted on the *Guardian* website immediately after the barrage began.

respondent¹⁶ were published in the next day's print edition. The first described how events unfolded but moved on quickly to highlight that the attack happened within the context of "growing international concern over reports that North Korea has a new uranium enrichment facility,"¹⁷ a concern echoed in a *New York Times* leading article that referred to an American scientist who had "been shown a secret and modern nuclear enrichment facility"¹⁸ on a recent visit to the North. *BBC News* also stated that the North had recently "shown off"¹⁹ a similar apparatus. The *Guardian* quoted an "unofficial spokesman" for North Korea, Kim Myong-chol,²⁰ who "warned that nuclear war could follow 'at any point' unless the exercises stop."²¹

Despite a quote from a Chinese academic which stated that it was "too early to be sure what had happened," the *Guardian's* coverage speculated, based on his analysis, that the attack may have been meant to "send a message to a domestic audience" or designed to "get attention from the international community." The *New York Times* echoed the same line by speculating that the shelling may have been a "deliberate North Korean provocation"²² to try and gain food aid, and the *BBC News* noted that "Kim Jong-il is thought to be ill and trying to ensure the succession of his youngest son."²³ This was also a point that the *New York Times* had alluded to, but did not directly link to the attack. However, an article in the same edition entitled, "A pattern of aggression" speculated that the attack was most likely designed for Kim Jong-un to establish "leadership credentials within the military."²⁴

All three sources, the *Guardian*, *New York Times* and *BBC News* made it clear that the Northern Limit Line (NLL) was either "disputed" or had been the

16 The *Guardian* covers the Korean Peninsula from Tokyo (South) and Beijing (North) and has no local bureau. However, recent events in Korea have convinced its London chiefs to relocate their non-salaried stringer from Tokyo to Seoul.

17 Tania Branigan, "South Korea warns North of 'enormous retaliation' after attack," *Guardian*, November 24, 2010.

18 Mark McDonald, "'Crisis Status' in South Korea After North Shells Island," *New York Times*, November 23, 2010.

19 "North Korean artillery hits South Korean island," *BBC News*, November 23, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11818005> (accessed June 25, 2012).

20 Kim Myong-chol is the director of The Centre for Korean-American Peace. A Japanese-Korean, Kim is infamously pro-North Korean, and is a self-declared "unofficial" spokesperson for the regime. Nevertheless, media outlets regularly turn to him for comment and, despite underlining his unofficial status, often publish headlines based on his claims. His actual authority or influence with the DPRK is unknown beyond the same "unofficial" roles many pro-North Korean groups overseas perform.

21 Tania Branigan, "South Korea warns North of 'enormous retaliation' after attack," *Guardian*.

22 McDonald, "Crisis Status," *New York Times*.

23 "North Korean artillery hits South Korean island," *BBC News*.

24 Martin Fackler, "A Pattern of Aggression," *New York Times*, November 23, 2010.

scene of earlier incidents, but no source elaborated on the nature of that dispute. Instead, the *Guardian* linked the event to the sinking of the Cheonan²⁵ warship in nearby waters, as did the leading articles in the *New York Times*²⁶ and *BBC News*.²⁷ A more lengthy report in the same edition of the *Guardian* quoted Peter Beck, a research fellow with the Council of Foreign Relations, as claiming the event “brings us one step closer to the brink of war,”²⁸ a common phrase, and by no means unique to Beck, that became a feature of many of the early morning editions of the next day’s British newspapers.²⁹

Concomitantly, in China the *Remin Ribao* carried a simple statement in the next day’s edition from the *Xinhua* news agency that read:

Foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said on the 23rd that the Chinese government was “paying attention to reports of a shelling incident on the Korean Peninsula.” During a routine press conference, a journalist asked: “On the 23rd, North Korea launched an artillery attack on South Korea, and South Korea fired back. What is the Chinese government’s position on this?” Mr. Hong indicated that the Chinese government had noted the reports and is paying attention to the situation. Specific details of the situation are as yet unconfirmed and that China hopes all concerned parties can remain calm, restrained and work together to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.³⁰

While most front pages of major Western news sources were dominated by photographs of smoke towering over Yeonpyeong, the *Renmin Ribao* carried no images or stories about the attack, and the above statement was more or less buried on page four of that morning’s edition.³¹ The *Renmin Ribao* article was

25 On March 26, 2010, the South Korean Naval Corvette Cheonan split in half and sank in waters near Paengnyeong Island, one of the three islands that nestle the disputed maritime border. An international investigation concluded that the ship had sunk after being hit by a North Korean torpedo. The North Korean offer of assisting the investigation was rejected and the outcome was disputed by Chinese and North Korean officials alike. In an interview with the author, all North Koreans doubted that a North Korean submarine sunk the Cheonan. However, most agreed that Pyongyang was well within its right to launch the artillery attack on Yeonpyeong.

26 McDonald, “‘Crisis Status’ in South Korea After North Shells Island.”

27 “North Korean artillery hits South Korean island,” *BBC News*.

28 Tania Branigan, “North Korea: a deadly attack, a counter-attack—now Koreans hold their breath,” *Guardian*, November 24, 2010.

29 “Newspaper review: Papers voice fears over Korea tension,” *BBC News*, November 24, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11826395> (accessed June 25, 2012).

30 “Zhongfang guan zhu Chaoxian bandao paoji shijian (China is paying attention to the bombardment incident on the Korean Peninsula),” *Renmin Ribao*, November 23, 2010.

31 It should be noted, however, that the online edition of the *Renmin Ribao* and many other Chinese websites had special online features, including maps and locations of the artillery batteries. Print response,

in fact taken from a *Xinhua* wire release on the same day that elaborated more broadly on the attack, its precise location, and the conflicting statements from Seoul and Pyongyang. The article went into far more detail than anything in the *Renmin Ribao* and, in contrast to coverage in English sources, went into slightly more depth regarding the exact nature of the South Korean military exercises that were arguably at the center of the conflict:

According to reports, South Korea held its “Hoguk [National Defense] Exercise” with US forces and almost 70,000 officers and men of the Republic of Korea Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines taking part. The KCNA commented, saying the recent strengthening of the military alliance between South Korea and the US threatened to agitate the already tense situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Furthermore, although the *Guardian*, BBC and *New York Times* all indicated the Northern Limit Line (NLL) was disputed, only *Xinhua* elaborated on the nature of the dispute in its initial report that described why the NLL was sensitive:

North and South Korea have always differed as to where the dividing line through maritime waters on the Western side of the Korean Peninsula exists. South Korea unilaterally established the “Northern Limit Line” but North Korea has never recognized it: the North Korean maritime border they defined in 1999 runs further South than the South Korean “Northern Limit Line.”³²

Xinhua also conducted an interview with their bureau chiefs in Seoul and Pyongyang, which they published in full. Ji Xinlong, of the Seoul bureau,

echoed the more nuanced line in the main *Xinhua* piece and simply reported the reaction of people in Seoul.³³

however, was more muted.

32 Gao Haorong and Zhao Zhan, “Chaoxian junfang shuo Chaoxian caiqu junshi cuoshi fanji Hanguo de tiaoxin (North Korean military says military measures were adopted to counter-attack South Korean provocation),” *Xinhua Wang*, November 23, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-11/23/c_13619125.htm, (accessed June 25, 2010).

33 Lei Dongrui and Liu Xiaojun, “Lianxian Xinhuaawang zhu Shouer shouxi jizhe Ji Xinlong (Interview with *Xinhua*’s Seoul Bureau chief Ji Xinlong),” *Xinhua Wang*, November 23, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-11/23/c_12807594.htm (accessed June 25, 2012).

Xinhua: Are the people of Seoul showing any reaction?

Ji Xinlong: People in the city are paying more attention to what kind of situation it is and whether or not it will get worse. The South Korean military are saying they fired back over twenty shells and the presidential palace has stated that they believe the incident might be related to yesterday's war games. North Korea sent a telephone message to South Korea this morning expressing their protest, stating that undertaking [military] exercises in disputed waters is akin to a provocation.

And although *Xinhua* was able to communicate directly with its office in Pyongyang, the response was less than useful, but nevertheless included in the transcript:

Xinhua: Mr. Gao...can you tell us if the North Korean media has reported anything about the incident? Is the North Korean government communicating its position?

Gao Haorong: At present, North Korea hasn't reported anything, nor has it released any information.

The lack of information from the Pyongyang bureau is interesting. Where one might assume China's position on the ground in North Korea might offer it access to more information where it counts, such an empty response suggests that even North Korea's closest ally has difficulty obtaining useful local information or, at least in this case, recognizes the extent to which its knowledge is limited. Even if the Pyongyang chief was unable to report what North Korean state media was saying, the news that they had not said anything at all was nevertheless useful.

Nanfang Zhoumo, its weekly publication slot neatly landing just a few days after the attack, produced two front-page articles on the incident. The first was on the hardware capabilities of both North and South Korean artillery—a fairly long, military related piece of analysis that offered little relevant insight beyond comparing the circumferences of artillery barrels and their range.³⁴ The other, with the headline “When both sides get bombing, it's game over for the Six-party Talks,” was an equally lengthy piece including analysis from interviews with both Chinese and South Korean academics that suggested the incident could

34 Qing Yan, “Chaoxian dapao fa wei, Hanguo dapao fa dia (North Korean guns play it tough, South Korean guns play it coy),” *Nanfang Zhoumo*, November 25, 2010.

threaten the fragile future of the Six-Party Talks.³⁵ The article likened the situation on the Korean Peninsula to a tentatively balanced row of dominoes, with each new incident threatening to cause another.

Furthermore, like Western sources, *Nanfang Zhoumo* also linked the earlier sinking of the Cheonan to the leadership succession and the bombardment—although that was a conclusion based on the analysis of a South Korean academic. However, turning to a local Koreanist from Beijing's Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao (Central Party School), *Nanfang Zhoumo*, like *Xinhua*, suggested that South Korea's role in carrying out military exercises should not be discounted:

South Korea's own military exercises have the potential to exacerbate the North-South issue as both states are equally hard-line in their approach. In the midst of military exercises, it's hard for both sides to avoid accidentally firing their guns in the midst of polishing them.

Such analysis is interesting. China wants to resume the Six-party talks so normally remains critical of any pressure on North Korea. Yet here, the *Nanfang Zhoumo* was lightly criticizing both sides for potentially jeopardizing such a resumption, although that criticism appears slightly more directed towards the South. Like a *BBC News* report, "North Korea firing: Why now?"³⁶ and a "A Pattern of Aggression" in the *New York Times*, the *Nanfang Zhoumo* also mused over possible causes for the incident. As in the BBC article, the *Nanfang* piece agreed that military exercises, the leadership transition and North Korea's possible desire to re-enter negotiations with the South could have triggered the attack. However, the paper also argued that South Korean president Lee Myung-bak had, earlier that year in May, promised to make North Korea "pay" for the Cheonan incident and, at exactly the same time, the Pentagon had declared it would hold joint military exercises with the South. From that announcement onwards, the *Nanfang Zhoumo* argues, "South Korean warships almost never disappeared from inter-Korean disputed and sensitive territorial waters."³⁷

Understanding this point is essential, the Lee Myung-bak administration had taken a consistently tough stance on North Korea in both its rhetoric and buildup of such "National Defense" exercises. "Defense" here is the operable

35 Qin Xuan, "Liang fang paoji zheng han, Liufang Huitan xie cai (When both sides get bombing, it's game over for the Six-Party Talks)," *Nanfang Zhoumo*, November 26, 2010.

36 "North Korea firing: Why now?," *BBC News*, November 23, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/asia/pacific/11818729> (accessed June 26, 2012).

37 Qin, "Liang fang paoji zheng han," *Nanfang Zhoumo*.

word—a widely used term by militaries everywhere which is both euphemistic in its use and Orwellian in its nature. Large-scale joint operations with the US a few nautical miles offshore of the North Korean coast are certainly not viewed as defensive by Pyongyang for the same reason that a Sino-DPRK naval exercise within range of the South Korean coastline would probably be condemned as an aggressive action internationally—particularly if South Korea and the US had demanded the exercises immediately cease. Was the attack therefore unprovoked? Military exercises, using live ammunition, were taking place in a very sensitive area near a highly disputed border. As the *Xinhua* articles illustrate, North Korea gave timely warning that it would take action if the exercises went ahead, and as Asia specialist Tim Beal argues:

The South had been building up military capacity on the islands in recent years, and the plans for the live-fire exercise were well known. The North warned against them over a couple of months, and there was even a telephone call to the South on the morning of the incident. So there was nothing accidental about it. How we interpret it is, of course, another matter.³⁸

Only the *New York Times* seemed to offer more nuance in its interpretation, albeit in the next day's edition, after initial stories had already been published. Quoting John Delury of Seoul's Yonsei University, the article "Korea Analysts Puzzle Over Cause of Artillery Exchange" suggested that military exercises contributed to the "atmosphere of tension and conflict," especially the immediate announcement of additional military exercises later in the month led by a US aircraft carrier, a move which the article argued would "bolster the hardliners inside North Korea." The article headline perhaps failed to do justice to the more actively nuanced line the article sought to represent. On Kim Jong-il's role in ordering the attack, the author quoted Michael Breen, a Kim Jong-il biographer as saying:

"He's not a foolish man at all," Mr. Breen said. "He's not crazy, not at all. He's not nuts. That's very shallow analysis. If he was here on a conference call with us, he'd say, 'Look, if there's a war, my country will be finished within a week.' I know that. I'm not trying to start a war, I just don't like enemy states holding live-fire exercises within stone-throwing distance of my coast."³⁹

38 Tim Beal, an author, researcher and North Korea specialist, in discussion with the author in July 2012.

39 Mark McDonald, "Analysts Puzzle Over Cause of Flare-up," *New York Times*, November 24, 2010.

Breen's analysis was contrasted with a previous quote from the South Korean Ministry of Defense—a quote that had relayed a line from President Lee Myung-bak saying the bombardment was “a premeditated provocation and an indiscriminate attack against civilians,”⁴⁰ which was the more common perception in South Korea. Such welcomed nuanced analysis on the bombardment, however, was quickly shelved as media attention began to turn to China. The *Guardian* published two articles in the main paper, one entitled “US to press China to rein in North Korea after attack”⁴¹ and another under “North Korean attack on South Korea pushes China's patience.”⁴² The *New York Times* also published two articles on a similar theme: “China Addresses Rising Korean Tensions”⁴³ and two days later, “White House Seeks Chinese Help With N. Korea.”⁴⁴ The BBC also turned to China with a multitude of articles, the first of which argued that “while Western leaders and editorials have condemned North Korea's artillery barrage of its southern neighbor on Tuesday, in China the response has been more muted.”⁴⁵

The article argued that “Beijing almost never criticizes its neighbor, no matter how troublesome it proves [and] the state media has followed suit.” The author was presumably referring to the line given by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mentioned above,⁴⁶ that was relayed in the *Renmin Ribao* and *Xinhua*. However, whereas the BBC saw flaws in the lack of criticism for the North in Chinese media coverage, its own coverage seemed to lack more impartial criticism of South Korean military exercises that in themselves could have presented a more nuanced analysis contradicting the more widely-held belief that the attacks were indiscriminate and “out of the blue.”⁴⁷

China, in this case, did indeed remain “muted” as English-language sources suggested. But it also remained more balanced in its presentation of the facts. Although none of the Chinese sources produced articles that indicated China

40 The two “civilians” who died in the attack were construction workers contracted by the military and were killed by a shell that hit the marine base on which they were working.

41 Tania Branigan, “US to press China to rein in North Korea after attack,” *Guardian*, November 25, 2010.

42 Tania Branigan, “North Korean attack on South Korea pushes China's patience,” *Guardian*, November 25, 2010.

43 Ian Johnson and Martin Fackler, “China Addresses Rising Korean Tensions,” *New York Times*, November 26, 2010.

44 Helene Cooper and Martin Fackler, “White House Seeks Chinese Help With N. Korea,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2010.

45 Martin Patience, “China's muted response to North Korea attack,” *BBC News*, November 24, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11828846> (accessed July 25, 2012).

46 “Zhongfang guanzhu Chaoxian bandao paoji shijian (China is paying attention to the bombardment incident on the Korean Peninsula),” *Renmin Ribao*, November 23, 2010.

47 “The best weapons are useless if strategy is inept,” *Chosun Ilbo*, December 1, 2010.

should be under some sort of pressure to influence Pyongyang, they did however release regular summaries of the overseas coverage of China's role in the incident.⁴⁸ The shelling of Yeonpyeong is interestingly placed as it happened just days before the Wikileaks papers were released, fueling the growing suspicion that the Sino-DPRK relationship might be under considerable stress. Following the publication of the information, the *Guardian* released a front page article, "Wikileaks cables reveal China 'ready to abandon North Korea'" that suggested Chun Yung-woo, a vice-foreign minister at the time, had told a US ambassador that "the younger generation of Chinese Communist Party leaders no longer regarded North Korea as a useful or reliable ally."⁴⁹

Thus, without dwelling too much on North Korea and Wikileaks, what they can usefully indicate regarding the nature of Chinese and North Korean diplomatic relations is limited by the very nature of the informal and highly subjective nature of the cables. The potential pitfalls are plentiful, Beal argues:

- 1) Chun Yung-woo may have misinterpreted what the Chinese said;
- 2) Chun Yung-woo may have spoken to Chinese officials who were not in a position of sufficient authority to make such assurances;
- 3) the Chinese officials may have deliberately misled Chun Yung-woo for domestic political reasons;
- 4) Chun Yung-woo may have deliberately misled [US] Ambassador Stephens to garner US support for a takeover of the North;
- 5) [US] Ambassador Stephens may have misinterpreted what Minister Chun said.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, such questions are rarely asked and the revelations of the Wikileaks cables still support the general assumption that the relationship is strained. But until this position is somehow reflected in Chinese policy, we will never know—and therefore caution must be exercised when using Wikileaks to tackle this issue. The language used in Chinese media coverage does not seem to suggest any evidence of this strain, given that they remained so apparently "muted." In reality, while the rhetoric may fluctuate, North Korea has a very real and useful economic function as far as Beijing is concerned.

48 "Waimei: Chao-han paoji Mei-ri-han yupo Zhongguo dui Chaoxian shiya (Foreign Media: The US, Japan and South Korea force China to put pressure on North Korea for the North-South artillery bombardment), *Xinhua*, December 25, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-11/25/c_12813910.htm (accessed July 20, 2012).

49 Simon Tisdall, "Wikileaks cables reveal China 'ready to abandon North Korea,'" *Guardian*, November 29, 2012.

50 Tim Beal, *Crisis in Korea: America, China and the Risk of War* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 2.

Case 2: The Death of Kim Jong-il

On December 17, 2012, Kim Jong-il died. Much debate surrounding the deterioration of Kim's health had been in full swing since a French doctor, who had been to Pyongyang to treat Kim, confirmed rumors that the aging dictator had suffered a stroke in 2008, leading to much speculation at the time that Kim Jong-il may have already died.⁵¹ However, in December 2011, despite the DPRK's best efforts to suggest in their propaganda that Kim would "live on well into the 21st century," he did not. News of Kim's death did not become knowledge outside of his closest circles until the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) declared in a "special announcement" at noon on December 19 that Kim Jong-il had "passed away from a sudden illness" en-route to give on-the-spot guidance. Dressed in black, North Korean newsreader Ri Chun-hee, famous among Chinese netizens for her overly-dramatic delivery of the news,⁵² read the following official announcement, a copy of which was carried by all North Korean media outlets:

The Central Committee and the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea, the National Defense Commission of the DPRK, the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly and the Cabinet of the DPRK notify with bitterest grief to all the party members, servicepersons and people of the DPRK that Kim Jong-il, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, chairman of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, passed away of a sudden illness at 0830 on December 17, Juche 100 (2011) on his way to give field guidance.⁵³

Like the Yeonpyeong incident, English-language coverage began online before the transition to print media was made. But unlike Yeonpyeong, an "external" incident that generated a lot of information, news was slow to come out of North Korea and most media outlets quickly filed stories breaking the news. The *Guardian*, *New York Times* and BBC all reported that, in accordance to the KCNA announcement above, Kim had died en route to give field guidance. Ri,

51 Steven Erlanger, "Doctor Confirms Kim Jong-il Stroke," *New York Times*, December 11, 2008.

52 "North Korean Anchorwoman Ri Chun Hee Becomes Famous," *chinaSMACK*, November 28, 2010, <http://www.chinasmack.com/2010/stories/north-korean-anchorwoman-ri-chun-hee-becomes-famous.html> (accessed July 28, 2012).

53 "Kim Jong-il Tongji-kkeseo seogeohasiyotda (Comrade Kim Jong-il dies)," *KCNA*, December 19, 2011, <http://kcna.co.jp/calendar/2011/12/12-19/2011-1219-030.html> (accessed July 27, 2012).

the “tearful anchorwoman clad in black Korean traditional dress”⁵⁴ who delivered the television announcement, was also mentioned by most initial English-language articles.

After exhausting what little information had been released by Pyongyang, all three English-language sources began talking about the imminent leadership transition presenting an immediate threat to the Korean Peninsula and its neighbors. The *Guardian* said, “there will be widespread anxiety about potential instability and the implications of the change in leadership.”⁵⁵ The *New York Times* warned of an “unpredictable outcome of an abrupt leadership change in one of the most opaque and repressive countries”⁵⁶ and the BBC stated “with the process of transition from father to son incomplete, Mr Kim’s death could herald ‘very unstable times’ in North Korea.”⁵⁷ But just why Kim’s death would therefore lead to instability is unclear. Despite what North Korean propaganda may suggest, Kim Jong-il was not the sole figure behind Pyongyang’s power. Furthermore, the feasibility of North Korea launching an attack or destabilizing the entire region because of an internal event remains to be seen. Although, as discussed above, some analysts also interpreted Yeonpyeong as being linked to the succession, there is little reason to suggest that North Korea would try and “flex muscle” in the event of a destabilizing event, particularly when North Korea finds itself at the more unfavorable end of a significant military imbalance.

The North Korean military is regularly said to be one of the largest in the world, with roughly one in twenty five people enlisted in the armed forces. What is less promulgated is that this “standing army” is also one of the largest construction companies in the world—many of North Korea’s roads, buildings and structures are built by soldiers from a military that is as much about easily mobilizing and organizing a national workforce as it is about creating a readied fighting machine.⁵⁸ Under such a structure, new recruits probably have more experience of spades and pitchforks than they do of guns and grenades. One only need watch one of the KCNA’s many propaganda videos on construction work in Pyongyang to notice that the men in hard hats doing the manual labor are mainly soldiers and their foremen are mainly officers.⁵⁹

54 Tania Branigan, “Kim Jong-il, North Korean Leader, dies,” *Guardian*, December 19, 2011.

55 Ibid.

56 Choe Sang-hun and David E. Sanger, “Kim Jong-il, North Korean Dictator, Dies,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2011.

57 “North Korean leader Kim Jong-il dies of ‘heart attack,’” *BBC News*, December 19, 2011.

58 James Pearson, “A change in North Korean leadership,” *CESRAN*, December 21, 2011, <http://bit.ly/OWygrz> (accessed July 25, 2012).

59 Driving between North Korean towns and even in more rural areas in the northeast, soldiers are frequently spotted organized into work units that are plowing fields, transplanting rice, building tunnels or

Nevertheless, the implication in immediate coverage of Kim Jong-il's death suggested that a leadership struggle would ensue and spill over North Korea's borders. The BBC ran a front page article the next day, "North Korea: Neighbors on alert" that suggested "regional powers have voiced fears over the nuclear country's future course."⁶⁰ Apart from briefly mentioning the fact that Kim Jong-il had "carried out his father's policy of 'military first' building the world's fifth largest military force," the article made no relation to the fact that Kim Jong-il had died, nor did it implicitly argue that his death meant North Korea was a threat. However, although it was most likely an attempt to highlight just why its neighbors might perceive the DPRK as a threat, the BBC included three infographics about the North's military capabilities in the article: 1) an azimuthal map indicating the maximum range of North Korean missiles, including the Taepodong-2 that, although never successfully tested, is alleged to have a range of 6,000 kilometers; 2) a political map indicating all major military bases on the Korean Peninsula as well as nuclear and missile test sites in the North; and 3) a table charting the "regional military balance" based on expenditure, equipment procured and personnel.

The "regional military balance" table implied North Korea had a standing army of 1,106,000 compared to the South's 687,000—i.e., almost twice as many troops. Using a ten year old estimate from 2002,⁶¹ the chart cited the North Korean military budget as roughly \$5 billion compared to the South's \$24.5 billion. Although military spending rarely works on these terms, the amount of spending per soldier in North Korea would be approximately \$4,500 a year according to these figures. Based on the same data, Southern spending would be around \$37,000 per soldier—over 700 percent of what is spent in the North. According to the information, both North and South have an equal amount of the population functioning as reservists that can be called upon to fight. But a quick glance at the figures should indicate the North lacks the equipment, funding, and by implication, training and capability of the South. War is doubtlessly still a numbers game—but the numbers that are important in today's world are financially quantitative and have far less to do with overall manpower.

laying roads.

60 "North Korea: Neighbors on alert," *BBC News*, December 20, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16267467> (accessed July 28, 2012).

61 The budget estimate cited by the BBC is naturally problematic: not only is it ten years old, it was based on an estimate where little hard evidence of military spending other than satellite images and propaganda footage is available. Even when the DPRK does release economic figures, the data is often based on a percentage increase of the previous year, which in turn was also a percentage increase of the year before that, and so on.

Again, the article was not overtly stating that North Korea presented the only immediate military threat. It went to great lengths to indicate that the US “has its own military presence in South Korea” that “adds to the capabilities of other key countries in the region” and had “promised to defend regional allies.” However, the graphics seemingly suggested that it was the existence of North Korean missile technology and its allegedly oversized army that threatened to destabilize the region after Kim Jong-il’s death.

Furthermore, the context within which the data was produced supported analysis elsewhere on the BBC that was trying to predict what ramifications Kim’s death might present. One article, that focused on the US call for the DPRK to adopt the “path of peace,” reminded readers that North Korea has a “one million-strong army thought to be [the] world’s fifth largest”⁶² and another that looked to past experience surrounding the death of Kim Il-sung for insight:

While Kim Il Sung held absolute sway over his country, under Kim Jong Il it slid deeper into poverty and further towards military confrontation. In 2006 and 2009, it carried out nuclear tests. In March 2010, it sank a South Korean patrol boat. And in November 2010 it shelled an island near the disputed border.⁶³

Here, the author moves seamlessly from nuclear tests to the disputed sinking of the Cheonan to the bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island, suggesting all events were just another incident in a long line of North Korean provocations. As discussed earlier, the sinking of the Cheonan is fiercely denied by North Korea—and South Koreans remain skeptical with as many as three in ten people not trusting the results of the international inquiry into the incident.⁶⁴ The Yeonpyeong incident, however, is seen as justified action in North Korea. The bombardment is openly admitted by diplomats and officials as being “deliberate,” and more recently, appears to have been attributed to the KPA under Kim Jong-il himself as part of the KCNA’s “Kim Jong-il Patriotism” propaganda campaign.⁶⁵ For North Korea, therefore, the only thing that connects the two

62 “Kim Jong Il’s death: US urges ‘path of peace,’” *BBC News*, December 20, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16259786> (accessed July 28, 2011).

63 Humphrey Hawksley, “Lessons from the death of North Korea’s first leader,” *BBC News*, December 19, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16252540> (accessed July 28, 2012).

64 “Most S. Koreans Skeptical About Cheonan Findings, Survey Shows,” *Chosun Ilbo*, September 8, 2010, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/09/08/2010090800979.html (accessed July 28, 2012).

65 “KCNA Report on Kim Jong-il’s Journeys for Patriotic Devotion (3),” *KCNA*, August 9, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201208/news09/20120809-10ee.html> (accessed August 10, 2012).

events is the sensitive nature of the disputed area they took place—something which was rarely discussed when the event originally occurred.

Regardless, whether or not the two events are connected remains unclear. But the suggestion that the incidents were related to an internal struggle of some kind seems to be based on little thoughtful analysis or fact. Furthermore, the notion that the death of Kim Jong-il would pave the way for a similar incident seems even more improbable. While English-language media focused on the dangers, Chinese coverage initially mirrored the line of the KCNA report in both its content and tone. The front page of the *Renmin Ribao* carried two articles: 1) an official message of condolence from the CCP that reminded readers “Comrade Kim Jong-il was an intimate friend of the Chinese people” and will “never be forgotten,”⁶⁶ along with 2) an exact translation of the announcement from Pyongyang.⁶⁷ *Xinhua* carried almost identical versions of the article and, again, echoed North Korean official messages that were urging the North Korean people to “show loyalty to Kim Jong-un.”⁶⁸

Unlike Western coverage, Chinese reports were either dominated by party rhetoric (of both the CCP and KWP) or were from a more human perspective. Page three of the next day’s edition of the *Renmin Ribao* carried a more detailed report of the scene in North Korea from their Pyongyang correspondent that suggested things were fairly ordinary, off-camera:

The images broadcast by Korean Central Television (KCTV) show Pyongyang residents choked up with tears in interviews, unable to believe the news. But some everyday things carry on as normal: on a construction site in the central district of Mansutae, work is underway and road sweepers are out, sweeping the streets. The mood in Pyongyang is one of sadness, calm, and orderliness.⁶⁹

The *Nanfang Zhoumo*, its weekly edition falling three days after the event, also ran a story about the North Korean people’s reaction—the only story to discuss the death of Kim Jong-il in that issue. The piece was a lengthy news feature

66 “Zhonggongzhongyang diyan Jin Zhengri shishi (Official message of condolence from the CCP regarding the death of Kim Jong-il),” *Renmin Ribao*, December 19, 2011.

67 “Chaoxian zuigao lingdaoren Jin Zhengri shishi (North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-il, passes away),” *Renmin Ribao*, December 19, 2011.

68 Zhang Li and Zhao Zhan, “Jin Zhengri shishi Chaoxian yaoqiu renmin zhongyu Jin Zhenggen (Kim Jong-il passes away, North Korea demands the people be loyal to Kim Jong-un),” *Xinhua*, December 19, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/video/2011-12/19/c_122446199.htm (accessed July 28, 2012).

69 Zhou Zhiran, “Chaoxian renmin chentong aidao Jin Zhengri shishi ([North] Koreans mourn the passing away of Kim Jong-il),” *Renmin Ribao*, December 20, 2011.

about North Korea's "Sea of Blood Opera Company," a group of opera singers from Pyongyang, who were touring China at the time the news broke:

Upon hearing this news from the North Korean consulate, Ju Yong Il [the head of the opera company] fell to the ground, and the actors held their heads, crying. They changed into dark clothing, went to the first floor of the hotel, arranged themselves neatly in a line, and bowed their heads in silence, some of them covering their faces to mask the crying.⁷⁰

English sources also covered the reaction from North Koreans based on footage broadcast by KCTV and what little information the *Associated Press* (AP) was able to gather from its bureau in Pyongyang. The BBC spoke to psychiatrists to try and ascertain if the mass hysteria and crying was authentic in a *BBC News Magazine* article, "How genuine are the tears in North Korea?"⁷¹ The article made the useful comparison of the British reaction to the death of Princess Diana in 1997 and the similar hysteria that gripped the public at the time. But, quoting Demick's *Nothing to Envy*, the article also indicated that not crying in certain circumstances in North Korea could lead to imprisonment or death.⁷² Ultimately however, English language sources had nothing but the footage relayed by the KCTV to go by⁷³ and the occasional interview with an AP journalist at the scene in Pyongyang.

The more human-centered reportage by the Chinese media in this case is a good example of where China's apparent access to stories from within North Korea can be a useful mine of information when it comes to gauging the situa-

70 Li Yilan, "Jiangjun de yizuo: Jin Zhengri yu Chaoxian Xuehai Geju Tuan Zhongguo xunyan (The General's legacy: Kim Jong-il and [North] Korea's Sea of Blood Opera Company tour China)," *Nanfang Zhoumo*, December 23, 2011.

71 Tom Geoghegan, "How genuine are the tears in North Korea?," *BBC News*, December 20, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16262027> (accessed July 25, 2012).

72 Witnessing Kim Jong-un's first ever public speech, broadcast via a large TV screen in the main square of Rajin in April 2012, I found myself surrounded by weeping North Koreans from all walks of life reacting very emotionally to his "no more tightening of the belts speech." The reason for crying will have been subjective from person-to-person, but there is no doubt that it was spontaneous or genuine, and given that I was one of only six Westerners in the entire region at the time, there is little reason to believe it was fabricated for an external audience.

73 All KCNA or KCTV footage is highly orchestrated, regardless of how mundane or serious the news. "Vox pop" interviews with ordinary citizens on the streets are often scripted: follow the eyes of the interviewee closely and it's clear someone is holding up a script behind the camera. This probably has just as much to do with saving "face," by getting the footage perfect, as it does with making sure nobody speaks out of fashion. However, viewed from the outside, such methods make the validity of such footage appear highly suspicious or unreliable.

tion on the ground. For people within the NGO community, such stories matter, and provide a form of human “intelligence” that is not marred by political or strategic implications. In one interview, an NGO worker based in China said:

As someone “on the ground,” it’s the micro issues that I’m most interested in. Pundits, both Western and Chinese, are mainly just full of rhetoric. Human interest stories in Western media are either extremely naive in the eyes of people who do work in the DPRK or, more often, are only focused on defectors.⁷⁴

Furthermore, at times when North Korea is suddenly plunged into difficulties the first step ought to be an empathetic one if the goal is to engage with the regime and encourage it to adopt a softer approach itself. However, in the eyes of many North Koreans, the death of Kim Jong-il will have presented them with an equally pressing crisis. Ignoring this fact and instead adopting a defensive posture creates counter-productive distance between North Korea and the “outside.” Writing in the *Independent* at the time, former British charge d’affaires in Pyongyang Jim Hoare argued:

World leaders have said Kim’s death provides an opportunity for change, but they have hardly got off on the right track. Few have offered condolences. Others have concentrated on the problems and the dangers.⁷⁵

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Kevin Rudd was right at the time when he said, “It is at times like this that we cannot afford to have any wrong or ambiguous signaling,”⁷⁶ yet in the same statement, he called for North Korea to engage fully with the international community while talking of the need to “deal with the outstanding problem of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.” No word of condolence or sympathy for the fact that, for a lot of North Koreans at the time, they had lost someone whom they believed was their sole hope for success and “prosperity” in the future.

74 NGO worker in China in discussion with the author, April 2012. The interviewee wishes to remain anonymous.

75 Jim Hoare, “Reform would open the son to the charge of betrayal,” *Independent*, December 20, 2011.

76 “Kevin Rudd: new opportunities as North Korea mourns,” *ABC News*, December 19, 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2011/s3394257.htm> (accessed July 26, 2012).

Offering condolences to one of the world's most infamous dictatorships does not automatically mean you are aligning yourself to that country, its leadership or its policies. The international community was most likely right when world leaders indicated that the death of Kim Jong-il presented a good opportunity for engagement. But that engagement has to be two-way engagement to be effective; ordinary North Koreans were presented with a time of political uncertainty and vulnerability, and the opportunity to reach out and engage needed to come from the outside, not the inside.

Among Western states, the UK has so far led the way in demonstrating this pragmatic policy of “critical engagement”⁷⁷ since the establishment of an embassy in Pyongyang in 2001 with the DPRK following suit in London shortly afterwards. This seems to have led to more exchange, both politically and academically, thereby allowing London to view the regime from the inside and propagate certain clever engagement initiatives such as allowing North Korean scholars to study at prestigious British educational institutions such as the University of Cambridge—an approach that has arguably led to closer diplomatic ties and forced both parties to be more measured in their approach.⁷⁸

Conclusion

From the cases above, it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions that Chinese media coverage on North Korea can, on occasion, be clearer, more factual and more nuanced in its analysis than some of its Western counterparts, and therefore, when combined with the picture painted in Western reportage, might possibly broaden our understanding of North Korea. The quotes highlighted are representative to an extent, but should not be used to assume a similar pattern might emerge in the future. As alluded to in Part Two, this thesis was an experiment and is therefore reluctant to draw more solid conclusions beyond the findings of the above two critical case studies. Evidently, more sources are needed—not to mention events.

77 “Working with DPRK,” *UK in DPRK*, <http://ukindprk.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/working-with-dprk/> (accessed July 26, 2012).

78 According to some North Koreans, references to “British and American imperialism” rarely include “British” anymore and following the death of Kim Jong-il, Foreign Secretary William Hague’s statement was one of the only ones to recognize that, for the people of North Korea “we understand this is a difficult time for them.” By no means explicit condolences, but nonetheless signaling that at least some members of the international community can recognize that there are still people behind the unpopular face of the regime, a factor that this paper seeks to encourage.

Nevertheless, in looking at some cases such as the Yeonpyeong bombardment, *Xinhua* and especially the *Nanfang Zhoumo* go to great lengths to contextualize the attacks within the background of South Korean military exercises near the heavily disputed NLL. Although these points are touched upon in English-language sources, focus is largely on North Korea and its actions are reported within the context of a discussion on Pyongyang's apparent history of aggression. Meanwhile, South Korean policy towards North Korea and its role in staging military exercises is largely ignored.

While it is undeniable that the Chinese media engaged in the same kind of speculation that English sources did, coverage was on the whole less inclined to suggest war or conflict might be imminent. To an extent, this is reflected by the *Renmin Ribao*'s fairly active down-playing of the incident, choosing only to relay the official line of the party on page four of the next day's edition, rather than feature the story on the front page. This was most likely in part to protect Sino-DPRK diplomatic interests, yet in the process created an incidentally far more nuanced presentation of the situation. This nuance, however, is broadly non-existent in the reporting of Kim Jong-il's death, a much more sensitive subject that seems to become hijacked by the rhetoric of the party—a very separate body. However, scratching beneath the surface, stories that promote a more human perspective are published alongside these easily-dismissed political articles and potentially offer a useful insight that Western coverage lacks.

In the Chinese articles studied, it could be posited that there is more emphasis on the facts, rather than analysis; an approach that, although unsatisfactory for those pursuing answers, nevertheless minimizes the opportunity to speculate on or inflame the situation unnecessarily. Following the political formalities on the death of Kim Jong-il, for example, articles in China seemed mainly to be focused on the North Korean people themselves, rather than the geopolitical dangers many in the West focused on.

As some allude to, these micro stories help people trying to work with North Korea to develop a better understanding and possibly help break through the more established presumptions discussed in part one that ordinarily paint the state in such unfavorable terms. However, the suggestion is not that that Chinese sources should become a replacement for English sources, nor is to suggest using a Chinese lens solves the issues discussed at the beginning of this paper. One must certainly be able to read between the lines of Chinese media coverage and be prepared to look beyond the more overtly political nature of some coverage. Nevertheless, by including such coverage in our existing understanding of North Korea, this study argues that, taking into account the limitations of using only two cases, Chinese media reportage may well be able to broaden our pre-

existing picture of events in North Korea and, better still, equip us with a tool with which our own media coverage can be checked and balanced—something that, if events surrounding the Korean “crisis” in March 2013 is anything to go by, is very much required. **Y**

GETTING CHINA TO ENFORCE SANCTIONS ON NORTH KOREA

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The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2087 and 2094 again raises the question on whether China's enforcement will provide the resolutions the teeth they need to bite. After analyzing China's reactions to North Korea's three nuclear tests and subsequent policy decisions, we argue that while Chinese incentives for implementing sanctions on North Korea have increased, many traditional roadblocks still persist as salient variables. This is likely to result in more lukewarm sanctions enforcement than what is expected from current media hype. We then identify three ways that the Chinese government's level of sanctions enforcement could be improved: viewing sanctions as raising barriers of entry rather than compelling policy change, the United States striking a balance between cooperative and coercive measures to diffuse Chinese fears of instability, and creating expectations of additional unilateral sanctions that threaten Chinese interests.

Introduction

Giving teeth to sanctions on North Korea has been traditionally difficult due to a mismatch in incentives between the legislator and the enforcer. The United States and South Korea, perceiving North Korea's missile launches and nuclear test as a dire threat to security and nonproliferation, are more motivated to impose harsh sanctions to curve North Korea's nuclear program. China has not entirely empathized with such security concerns, and holds a lukewarm attitude toward the utility of sanctions, stemming from its historical distaste for interference in foreign governments, fear of regime collapse in North Korea, and com-

plicated bureaucratic politics. Yet, due to its geographic proximity and sheer volume of transactions with North Korea, China has become a more pivotal actor in the enforcement of sanctions than the United States and South Korea, chief drivers in the drafting of such resolutions. As a result, the successful adoption of a sanctions resolution on North Korea needs to be viewed separately from the successful enforcement of its provisions.

Another Test, Another Round of Sanctions

The sanctions arrived in response to North Korea's third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, which Pyongyang claimed was a miniaturized nuclear device.¹ Coupled with the North's largely successful December 2012 so-called "satellite launch," suspected of covertly testing ballistic missile technology, these two events suggest progress on developing the capabilities necessary to attack the United States with a nuclear-tipped missile, as well as increased risk of nuclear and ballistic missile technology and material transfers.² This growing threat to US security interests, emphasized by North Korea's explicit threat to conduct a "preemptive nuclear strike" on the United States, further motivated the US government to push through a new round of targeted sanctions against the Kim Jong-un regime.³

The North Korean regime's third nuclear test followed the established pattern of increasingly bombastic rhetoric and a missile test, culminating in a nuclear test followed by sanctions, repeating events in 2006 and 2009. The most important development from this nuclear test is growing suspicion that North Korea tested a uranium-based bomb, which would indicate the North has another avenue towards proliferation that is easier to conceal and easier to mobilize. Moreover, it adds to the suspicion that the North has access to more uranium, unlike its fixed supply of plutonium, enabling them to make more nuclear warheads.⁴ However, attempts to collect an air sample soon after the test reportedly

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- 1 David E. Sanger and Choe Sang-hun, "North Korea Confirms It Conducted 3rd Nuclear Test," *New York Times*, February 11, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/12/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-test.html?_r=0.
 - 2 Choe Sang-hun and David E. Sanger, "North Koreans Launch Rocket in Defiant Act," *New York Times*, December 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/12/world/asia/north-korea-launches-rocket-defying-likely-sanctions.html?pagewanted=all>.
 - 3 Rick Gladstone and David E. Sanger, "New Sanctions on North Korea Pass in Unified U.N. Vote," *New York Times*, March 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/08/world/asia/north-korea-warns-of-preemptive-nuclear-attack.html?pagewanted=all>.
 - 4 Max Fisher, "Why uranium would make a North Korean nuclear test especially scary," *Washington Post*, February 8, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/02/08/why-uranium-would-make-a-north-korean-nuclear-test-especially-scary/>.

failed, as they did in 2009, leaving policy makers and scholars without definitive evidence that this test was uranium-based.⁵

According to US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, these sanctions are “some of the toughest sanctions imposed by the United Nations.”⁶ Indeed, the sanctions include a provision requiring states to inspect any North Korean cargo suspected of transporting items prohibited by all four rounds of sanctions against the North, a marked shift from Beijing’s previous opposition to mandatory inspections.⁷ They also further inhibit North Korea’s access to cash, blacklist several North Korean diplomats and officials with connections to the North’s nuclear and missile programs or money laundering activities, as well as explicitly ban several luxury items.

China and UNSCR 2094: Third Time’s a Charm?

China’s support for sanctions against North Korea on paper have yet to be matched by substantial actions on enforcement, but there is growing hope that China’s support for UNSCR 2094 is a breakthrough for China’s support of the sanctions regime. In 2006, despite strongly opposing the North’s nuclear test and President Hu Jintao’s personal involvement in declaring it “flagrant” (*han-ran*), a term usually reserved for China’s enemies, China rejected the first US draft of sanctions against the North, forcing a bargaining process that spanned five days until China approved UNSCR 1718.⁸ In 2009, China again “diluted” the sanctions by crafting “loopholes,” such as allowing Chinese companies to continue selling small arms to North Korea.⁹ The new round of sanctions in

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- 5 Joby Warrick, “North Korean secrecy on bomb test fuels speculation on nuclear advances,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/north-korean-secrecy-on-bomb-test-fuels-speculation-on-nuclear-advances/2013/03/31/f46bda44-98ae-11e2-b68f-dc5c4b47e519_story.html.
- 6 US Mission to the United Nations, Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, New York: US Department of State, March 5, 2013.
- 7 Beijing did allow optional inspections under UNSCR 1874. See: United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test By Democratic People’s Republic Of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1718 (2006)*, New York: United Nations, October 14, 2006; US Mission to the United Nation, *FACT SHEET: UN Security Council Resolution 2094 on North Korea*, New York: US Department of State, March 7, 2013; and Bureau of Public Affairs, *North Korea Sanctions: Resolution 1718 Versus Resolution 1874*, Washington, DC: US Department of State, June 12, 2009.
- 8 For a discussion of Hu Jintao’s personal involvement in writing the statement, see: Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, *New Actors in Chinese Foreign Policy*, report for the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2010, 5; and “UN slaps sanctions on North Korea,” *BBC*, October 14, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6051704.stm>.
- 9 Neil MacFarquhar, “U.N. Security Council Pushes North Korea by Passing Sanctions,” *New York Times*, June 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/13/world/asia/13nations.html>.

2013 saw China's greatest cooperation yet with the United States on drafting sanctions.

Compared with past sanctions, this round took the longest to draft, but patience and horse-trading during the drafting process appears to have paid off, since the draft resolution was adopted the quickest.¹⁰ Moreover, the United States went to great lengths to emphasize its cooperation with China on drafting the sanctions, even introducing the draft resolution as "US-China agreed," which is in stark contrast with conflict over drafting between China and the United States in 2006.¹¹ Given questions surrounding Xi Jinping and his reshuffled foreign policy team's willingness to compromise with the United States on any front, US-China explicit cooperation on the North Korean sanctions front needs to be noted and commended as a welcome change from even late last year.¹²

China's support of the new sanctions was accompanied by the fiercest Chinese academic commentary yet against North Korea. Most notably, Fudan University professor Shen Dingli wrote in *Foreign Policy* that "China has reached a point where it needs to cut its losses and cut North Korea loose," and Deng Yuwen of the Central Party School wrote in *Financial Times* that "China should consider abandoning North Korea [and] take the initiative to facilitate North Korea's unification with South Korea."¹³ Xie Tao of the Beijing Foreign Studies University asserted that China's policy was an "utter failure" that went "against the tide of history" and concluded that "it is time for China to let go of North Korea."¹⁴ Surveying such commentary, Peking University professor Jia Qingguo noted "the debate in China has changed from one about whether China

10 Sanctions were drafted and introduced 21 days from the day of the test in 2013, compared with 16 days in 2009 and the same day in 2006, but passed one day after being introduced in 2013 compared with two days in 2009 and five days in 2006.

11 US Mission to the United Nations. Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, At a Security Council Stakeout, March 5, 2013. New York: US Department of State, March 5, 2013. See also: "UN slaps sanctions on North Korea."

12 There also seems to be some implicit agreement between the United States, China, Russia and South Korea to avoid unnecessary tensions on the Korean Peninsula. UNSCR 2094 was only approved after Russia took over the rotating chair from South Korea, as allowing sanctions to be passed while Seoul chaired the Security Council was much more likely to draw a strong reaction from Pyongyang. Colum Lynch, "Rice's new Chinese sparring partner," *Foreign Policy*, December 12, 2012, http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/12/12/rice_s_new_chinese_sparring_partner.

13 Shen Dingli, "Lips and Teeth," *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/02/13/lips_and_teeth_china_north_korea. See also: Deng Yuwen, "China should abandon North Korea," *Financial Times*, February 27, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9e2f68b2-7c5c-11e2-99f0-00144feabdc0.html>.

14 Xie Tao, "What's Wrong with China's North Korea Policy?," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 26, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/03/26/what-s-wrong-with-china-s-north-korea-policy/ftjw>.

should work with other countries to impose sanctions against North Korea to one about the kind of sanctions China should endorse.”¹⁵ Although these arguments are part of a wider academic debate that likely reveals varying schools of thought within the Chinese government, Chinese scholars are likely voicing their own opinions and not the opinions of specific policy makers, limiting the value of monitoring the debate for signs of future shifts in policy.

While Western observers are obviously drawn to the bold assertions by Shen, Deng and Xie, the reality is that the Chinese state-run media is likely to reflect the views of China’s decision-makers more accurately than outspoken critics of North Korea publishing in the Western media. The state-run media has also been unusually critical of North Korea following the test, but reflects the underlying sentiment of the Chinese government with its refusal to endorse abandoning North Korea. The *Global Times* repeated its January 25 pre-test call for China to reduce aid to North Korea, writing, “since Pyongyang’s nuclear test has damaged China’s interests, it’s necessary for China to give Pyongyang a certain ‘punishment.’”¹⁶ Nevertheless, the *Global Times* still carried skeptical undertones of US intentions, as the newspaper claimed that the United States, South Korea and Japan’s underlying motive is to turn Beijing into “North Korea’s top enemy” and recommended a proportional response that does not ultimately undermine the relationship or China’s strategy and interests in the region.

The Chinese government’s response to the 2013 nuclear test was restrained in comparison to the academic response. While the wording coming from Beijing was strong, the Chinese government again did not use “flagrant” to describe the latest test, establishing that its response to the 2006 test was a special case. The Chinese government’s strongest criticism of North Korea’s ongoing provocations were issued by none other than President Xi Jinping, who said that “No one should be allowed to throw a region and even the whole world into chaos for selfish gain,” and the general assumption was that his comments were directed at Pyongyang, although some believe they were also directed at Washington.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Xi’s statement and other similar admonitions of North

15 Jia Qingguo, “Shifting emphasis: Beijing’s reactions to North Korea nuclear test,” *East Asia Forum*, March 3, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/03/03/shifting-emphasis-beijings-reactions-to-north-korea-nuclear-test/>.

16 “Not all Peninsula issues China’s problem,” *Global Times*, January 25, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/758130.shtml>. See also: “China needs to find right way to punish NK,” *Global Times*, February 17, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/762090/China-needs-to-find-right-way-to-punish-NK.aspx>.

17 Jane Perlez and Choe Sang-hun, “China Hints at Limits to North Korea Actions,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/world/asia/from-china-a-call-to-avoid-chaos-for>

Korea have yet to be matched by successful Chinese action to end the warlike stance in North Korea, especially since there have been no high level meetings since last November when Politburo member Li Jianguo traveled to Pyongyang in a failed attempt to dissuade the North from its December missile test.

The chasm between the academic debate and government rhetoric carries over into sanctions policy. The *Global Times*' original denunciation of North Korea's test threats reflects China's conflicting views on the role sanctions should play in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. The *Global Times*' January 25th editorial warned that "if the US, Japan and South Korea promote extreme UN sanctions on North Korea, China will resolutely stop them and force them to amend these draft resolutions," adding that China should "just let the US, Japan and South Korea grumble about China. We have no obligation to soothe their feelings."¹⁸ Despite calls, both inside and outside of China, for greater sanctions, China remains reticent to endorse strong sanctions or fully enforce existing sanctions.

Implications of UNSCR 2094: Increasing Incentives for Enforcement?

China's support for UNSCR 2094 raises hopes of an evolution in Beijing's North Korea policy following the Kim regime's third nuclear test and the recent leadership transition from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. Christopher Hill, US envoy to the Six Party Talks under President Bush, claimed that China's support "suggests that after many years, the screws are beginning to turn," echoing similar statements by Jon Huntsman, Kurt Campbell and even President Obama.¹⁹ Yet, the question remains that if indeed the screws are finally turning, who is doing the turning, how tight will they go and how will the outside world know the screws have been tightened?

Since the first Korean nuclear crisis in 1994, China has had two discernible shifts in policy. Following the North's second withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003 and increased international pressure on Pyongyang, China took its first truly active role in the diplomatic arena by hosting the six-party talks aimed at denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.²⁰ This also followed closely after Hu Jintao's ascension to Chairman of the CCP, replacing Jiang

selfish-gain.html?pagewanted=all. See also: Paul Eckert, "Analysis: In bitter irony for China, North Korea furthers US strategic goals," *Reuters*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/10/us-korea-usa-china-idUSBRE93903U20130410>.

18 "Not all Peninsula issues China's problem."

19 Gladstone and Sanger, "New Sanctions on North Korea Pass in Unified U.N. Vote."

20 Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2003: 22.

Zemin, who had largely ignored North Korea since establishing diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1992. This shift towards a policy more favorable to the United States lasted through the DPRK's first nuclear test in 2006, marked by Hu Jintao's strong condemnation, but faded when the risky and untraditional policy failed to pay a dividend of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

China's second policy shift was in 2009, driven by the failure of China's more aggressive approach to the North Korea nuclear issue, revelations of Kim Jong-il's failing health and the imminent hereditary succession as well as the US "Pivot to Asia," which increased North Korea's strategic value to Beijing. As the Global Financial Crisis emboldened China to capitalize on the perceived weakness of the US-led Western order and shift towards a more aggressive foreign policy in Asia, North Korea was facing a rushed transition to a young and untested Western-educated heir with a frail tyrant seeking to steer his country through failed currency reform and dire economic conditions. The Chinese leadership under Hu Jintao responded to the 2009 test with a thorough review of its policy and even an informal vote in the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest arbiter of foreign policy.²¹ The vote was 5-4 in favor of continuing to support the North, and Premier Wen Jiabao was dispatched to Pyongyang in October 2009, the first visit by a Chinese premier in nearly 20 years in a sign of goodwill to get the China-DPRK relationship back on track.

Now in 2013, there are expectations that Beijing may be re-examining this relationship under the new leadership of Xi Jinping. The active academic debate within China appears the most animated since 2009, but is unlikely to lead to a wholesale reappraisal of Chinese policy towards its neighbor. Despite the *Global Times*' nationalistic slant in its editorials and oft-forward leaning criticism of North Korea, the fact that Shen, Deng and Xie published outside China in a foreign language, combined with Zhu Feng's censorship, demonstrates the unwillingness of the Chinese government to engage in real conversations about policy change.²² This unwillingness was highlighted by revelations that Deng Yuwen was suspended from his post at the Central Party School explicitly because of his *Financial Times* article.²³ The chasm between Chinese policy mak-

21 Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "The 18th Party Congress Crosses the Yalu: Implications for China's North Korea Policy," *38North*, November 27, 2012, <http://38north.org/2012/11/nbmustafaga112712/>.

22 Zhu Feng's critical article was originally published in Singapore's *Lianhe Zaobao* but republished in the *Global Times* with substantial and obvious censorship. For a translation and comparison of the two versions, see Adam Cathcart, "Incinerated Fantasy: Kim Jong-un, Zhu Feng, and a Censored Article in Beijing," *Sino-NK*, February 9, 2013, <http://sinonk.com/2013/02/09/incinerated-fantasy-kim-jong-un-zhu-feng-and-a-censored-article-in-beijing/>.

23 Jane Perlez, "Chinese Editor Suspended for Article on North Korea," *New York Times*, April 1, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/02/world/asia/chinese-suspend-editor-who-questioned-north-korea->

ers and popular academic sentiment is evident in the lack of tangible action on Beijing's part.²⁴ Despite the *Global Times*' published survey of 20 Chinese experts following the DPRK's 2009 test that split evenly between support for harsher sanctions and lesser sanctions than UNSCR 1718, there has been little forward progress on improved sanctions or enforcement so far.

Despite the increasingly open debate within China that may suggest China's rethinking of North Korea policy, China's fundamental interests have not changed as a result of the test. China's policy is driven by a combination of political, economic and most importantly strategic factors, yet the impact of the test on China's policy drivers has been insufficient to force a fundamental change in policy. The impact to China's external environment has not differed dramatically from that of the 2006 and 2009 tests, despite worries of nuclear proliferation in Asia and increased US military presence; and Chinese businesses are still able to invest and trade with the North, despite new UN sanctions, leaving political factors as the only reason China would change its policy. Although political motivations do exist, such as Xi's push for better relations with the United States as he starts his term, the relative benefit is unlikely to alter China's strategic calculus in the near future.²⁵

This lack of fundamental movement does not preclude Beijing adopting a tougher stance on North Korea's illegal activities, as suggested by its support for Resolution 2094. Among the many possible indicators of a changing stance in Beijing, one easy item to watch is if China finally creates a luxury items list for its customs enforcement. Resolution 1718 banned countries from exporting luxury goods to North Korea but left it up to individual countries to determine what are considered luxury goods, and so far China has yet to release a list of banned luxury items. While Resolution 2094 does explicitly ban some goods as luxury items—notably yachts, racing cars, and jewelry with pearls and precious metals—it still does not present a comprehensive list for countries, again leaving most of the responsibility up to individual countries.

China's lack of a luxury goods list led the Congressional Research Service to conclude: "clearly, China has not been enforcing the sanctions on luxury goods," as China exported over \$50 million of banned goods in one month

alliance.html.

24 A. Greer Meisels, "Is Enough Finally Enough for China and North Korea?," *China Brief* 13, no. 6, March 15, 2013.

25 Adam Cathcart, Roger Cavazos and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "The View From Beijing: North Korea as a Path for US-China Cooperation," *Sino-NK*, January 27, 2013, <http://sinonk.com/2013/01/27/the-view-from-beijing-north-korea-as-a-path-for-u-s-china-cooperation/>. See also: Jane Perlez, "North Korea Draws New China Scrutiny," *New York Times*, February 11, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/12/world/asia/north-korea-draws-new-china-scrutiny.html?_r=0.

alone, December 2008.²⁶ China could easily make a high-profile arrest of Chinese businessmen involved in the luxury goods trade with North Korea as an example of stepped-up enforcement while leaving the larger trade network unaffected. Other possible signals that China is enforcing sanction may be the seizure of a North Korean vessel, China simply announcing increased surveillance of Air Koryo flights from the Beijing airport, arresting people for smuggling goods to Iran or even making suspicious North Korean aircraft fly around Chinese airspace when flying to Iran.

China's support for UNSCR 2094 provides potential insights into Beijing's views of the stability of the North Korean regime and the succession process to Kim Jong-un. Beijing's support for incrementally harsher sanctions suggests Beijing believes the transition to Kim Jong-un is progressing well and the Kim regime can now handle external pressure from the international community and China. While the Chinese media has been quick to note that sanctions should not lead to regime change or damage Chinese interests, implicitly linking those concepts together, the Chinese government appears to believe Kim Jong-un has successfully consolidated enough power at the top of the North Korean system to absorb the impact of greater sanctions and some subsequent level of enforcement, as well as greater use of Chinese leverage. Coupled with the shift in the language of the official response to the February test, Beijing may be considering a more proactive enforcement policy.

UNSCR 2094 may also suggest Xi's administration sees North Korea as a possible avenue toward increased cooperation with the United States moving forward. Some Chinese scholars view North Korea as the most feasible stepping stone for better US-China relations and believe this round of sanctions represents a "strong signal of bilateral cooperation" between the two countries."²⁷ Echoing this Chinese view, one prominent US scholar asserted that "this may represent a bold new step forward by Party General Secretary Xi Jinping and China's new leadership in signaling the US that China is now interested in finding new areas of convergence."²⁸ However, China's traditional view of North

26 Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 28, 2010, 20.

27 Sun Ru, "A Strong Signal of China-US Cooperation on North Korea," *China-US Focus*, March 12, 2013, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/a-strong-signal-of-china-us-cooperation-on-north-korean/>. See also: Adam Cathcart, Roger Cavazos and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "The View From Beijing: North Korea as a Path for US-China Cooperation," *Sino-NK*, January 27, 2013 <http://sinonk.com/2013/01/27/the-view-from-beijing-north-korea-as-a-path-for-u-s-china-cooperation/>.

28 "Can the North Korea Challenge Bring China and the US Together?," *The Atlantic*, March 7, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/03/can-the-north-korea-challenge-bring-china-and-the-us-together/273777/>.

Korea as a counterweight to US influence in the region challenges this new-found optimism.

Roadblocks to Full Enforcement

China's resistance to fully enforce sanctions against North Korea, despite its international legal obligation, is due to a combination of principled opposition, fear of North Korea's collapse linked to its strategic value in US-China relations and Chinese bureaucratic politics. Despite China's nominal support for sanctions against the North, Beijing's agreement has come only haltingly and has not included full enforcement of sanctions. China has voted in favor of increasingly harsh sanctions on North Korea after all three nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and now in 2013, but started from a low point.

China's past enforcement of sanctions has ranged from apparent incompetence to willful ignorance. Despite the Chinese government's best attempts to inhibit reporting by the UN Panel of Experts on North Korea, created by UNSCR 1874 to "monitor, promote and facilitate the implementation of measures imposed" against North Korea, evidence abounds at China's failure to enforce sanctions.²⁹ The panel released its most recent report publicly in June 2012, as China blocked publication of the 2011 report and still delayed the 2012 report's publication by a month.³⁰ The report found that China was linked to 21 of 38 reported sanctions violations and that China was a popular trans-shipping port for North Korean proliferation of ballistic missile-related parts and a source for North Korean imports of banned luxury items, including cars and tobacco.³¹ Among the most notable violations, the panel's report confirmed that Dalian port was used as a trans-shipping spot for North Korea's export of SCUD-related materials in October 2007, and Wikileaks revealed that China failed to act on US-provided evidence to stop North Korean proliferation of more ballistic missile parts transited through the Beijing Airport at around the same time in 2007.³² China has also limited the number of North Korean entities the UN Pan-

29 UN Panel of Experts on North Korea, *Panel Of Experts Established Pursuant To Resolution 1874 (2009)* (New York, 2009).

30 "China repeatedly violated economic sanctions against North Korea," *Asahi Shimbun*, June 22, 2012, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201206220038>. See also: Louis Charbonneau, "U.N. publishes report on North Korea sanctions violations," *Reuters*, June 29, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/29/us-korea-north-sanctions-idUSBRE85S16Q20120629>; and "China to block UN report on North Korean nuclear capability," *Guardian*, February 18, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/18/china-north-korea-nuclear-capability>.

31 UN Panel of Experts on North Korea, *Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009)* (New York, June 29, 2012).

32 Ibid. See also: Kathrin Hille, "WikiLeaks: China drags feet on N Korea," *Financial Times*, November

el has been allowed to list as violators of sanctions, most recently for UNSCR 2087, whittling a US and Japan-produced list from 40 entities down to three.³³ This lack of enforcement through some of China's biggest ports raises questions over China's sincerity to stop North Korean proliferation and deter violations of UN sanctions.

China has historically resisted sanctions as a principle of its foreign policy. The guiding tenets of traditional Chinese foreign policy, the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence, include "mutual noninterference in each other's internal affairs."³⁴ China has generally interpreted this principle as resisting influencing the affairs of foreign countries through the United Nations or other means, including sanctions. China's varied record on upholding this principle of non-interference reveals that China's foreign policy is guided more by interest than principle.³⁵ Most recently, in 2011 China abstained from voting on UNSCR 1973, which created a no-fly zone and ultimately led to intervention in Libya, but vetoed resolutions in 2012 intended to stop bloodshed in Syria.³⁶ This reinforces arguments that China's principle of non-interference is not a strict policy proscription but a flexible framework to justify actions in the international diplomatic arena.

China's overall North Korea policy, including resistance on sanctions, is driven in large part by a fear of the collapse of the North Korean state. The predominant view amongst Chinese officials and scholars is that a collapse of the North Korean state would lead to a possibly catastrophic cascade of negative

30, 2010, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/f3b2edda-fbc7-11df-b79a-00144feab49a.html>.

- 33 Bonnie S. Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, "The UN Prepares to Impose New Sanctions on North Korea," *Center for International and Strategic Studies*, March 4, 2013, <http://csis.org/publication/un-prepares-impose-new-sanctions-north-korea>.
- 34 Russell H. Fifield, "The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence," *The American Journal of International Law* 52, no. 3 (1958): 504.
- 35 China supported the Soviet Union's 1956 intervention in Hungary but opposed the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia after the Sino-Soviet split, and directly supported anti-colonial movements in the third world through military and economic means throughout the Mao years. Likewise, China supported sanctions against the apartheid South African regime for human rights violations but opposed the UN's criticism of China's human rights abuses against Tibetans, calling it "an eager conspiracy of intervention." See: Jerome Alan Cohen, "China and Intervention: Theory and Practice," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 121, no. 3 (1973): 491, 493.
- 36 Zhong Sheng, "China: No interference in Syria's internal affairs," *People's Daily*, October 13, 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90780/7616513.html>. See also: Rick Gladstone, "Friction at the U.N. as Russia and China Veto Another Resolution on Syria Sanctions," *New York Times*, July 19, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/world/middleeast/russia-and-china-veto-un-sanctions-against-syria.html>; and United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Approves 'No-Fly Zone' Over Libya, Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, By Vote Of 10 in Favour With 5 Abstentions*, New York: United Nations, March 17, 2011.

consequences for China's security environment, economy and social stability.³⁷ China views North Korea as a buffer against the United States and strategic asset for bargaining in the US-China relationship, so the continued existence of a pro-China North Korean state is a matter of vital national interest.³⁸ Strategic thinkers in Beijing are most concerned with the idea that a collapse would lead to a reunification of the Korean Peninsula under the US-allied South on China's border, with the possibility of US troops above the 38th parallel.³⁹ China also uses North Korea as a bargaining chip with the United States, so North Korea's strategic value rises as US-China relations worsen, exemplified by the fact that the US "Pivot to Asia" raised the strategic value of North Korea to China.⁴⁰ North Korea also distracts US and allied military resources away from China and could also possibly be used as leverage in a crisis over Taiwan, as the North and Taiwan have been linked from China's perspective since President Truman dispatched the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits at the start of the Korean War.⁴¹ North Korea's strategic value to China in military and political terms will remain a powerful factor in Beijing's policy decision-making and is a large impediment to China's willingness to fully enforce sanctions.

China fears that a collapse would lead to an influx of refugees across the border and challenge its control of social stability in the region. Experts estimate that a "significant" number of the possible three million overall refugees will head to China, since the border with South Korea is nearly impassable and there is a large ethnic Korean minority along the Chinese side of the border that includes many familial ties.⁴² This refugee influx would add stress to an already poor minority region and threaten social stability with the associated increase of illegal activities, including gangs, drug smuggling and possible irredentism.⁴³ Beyond collapse, China fears that sanctions alone may exacerbate its current

37 US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "China's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Players," testimony by Victor Cha, 2011, 102.

38 Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, "Beijing Is No One's Ally in the Effort to Pressure and Disarm North Korea," *South China Morning Post*, January 5, 2012, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/north-east-asia/china/beijing-is-no-ones-ally-in-the-effort-to-pressure-and-disarm-north-korea.aspx>.

39 Zhu Feng, "Flawed Mediation and a Compelling Mission: Chinese Diplomacy in the Six-Party Talks to Denuclearise North Korea," *East Asia* (2011): 198.

40 Mark E. Manyin, *Kim Jong-il's Death: Implications for North Korea's Stability and US Policy*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012, 8.

41 Shen Dingli, "North Korea's Strategic Significance to China," *China Security* (Autumn 2006): 21.

42 Carla Freeman and Drew Thompson, "Flood Across the Border: China's Disaster Relief Operations and Potential Response to a North Korean Refugee Crisis," *US-Korea Institute*, 2009, 17.

43 Ibid. See also: John Pomfret, "Why China Won't Do More With North Korea," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2009.

refugee problem and “invite a larger influx of illegal border crossers and the economic and social burden that they would bring.”⁴⁴

The collapse of a “pro-China” North Korea would also disrupt China’s privileged access to natural resources, business opportunities and normal trade that helps support China’s poor northeast economy. China’s position as North Korea’s lone ally and largest economic partner enables China to gain relatively unchallenged access to North Korea’s estimated \$6 trillion worth of natural resources, including rare earths and coal.⁴⁵ Chinese companies have capitalized on this access, as 41 percent of Chinese investment has focused on natural resource extraction and at least 72 percent of China’s imports from North Korea in 2011 were natural resources.⁴⁶ China’s trade and investment with its neighbor flow primarily through China’s border provinces, Jilin and Liaoning. Based on hopeful expectations of future North Korean economic reform, these provinces have incorporated North Korea into their future economic growth strategy and are thus unwilling to sacrifice this opportunity for international sanctions.⁴⁷ As Jilin and Liaoning account for a combined 62 percent of Chinese investment in North Korea and at least 60 percent of cross-border trade, their provincial governments have a strong incentive to resist sanctions.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the rise of Zhang Dejiang to the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) affords local governments access via personal connections to a favorable advocate of their interests at the highest levels of policy making.⁴⁹ Thus, China’s economic ties to the North act as another roadblock to sanctions enforcement, especially when related to the economic growth of the border provinces.

This powerful fear of collapse underlies China’s belief in a paradox that inhibits China’s willingness to enforce sanctions. From China’s perspective, the paradox of Chinese leverage is that the more China pressures North Korea, the less influence China has over North Korea and the more likely Kim Jong-un is to court President Obama, if only the US government returned the senti-

44 Anne Wu, “What China Whispers to North Korea,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2005): 43.

45 Scott Thomas Bruce, “North Korea’s Six Trillion Dollar Question,” *The Diplomat*, August 30, 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/08/30/north-koreas-six-trillion-dollar-question/>.

46 Drew Thompson, *Silent Partners: Chinese Joint Ventures in North Korea* (Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, February 2011): 4. See also: “Bilateral trade between China and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 2011,” *TradeMap*, <http://www.trademap.org>.

47 Thompson, *Silent Partners*, 73.

48 *Ibid.*, 4. See also: Ce Liu, “Dandong’s Expanding Trade with North Korea, Hopes to Become an Economic Hub,” *China Daily*, March 9, 2011.

49 Zhang Dejiang previously served as party secretary of Jilin province and has long-standing ties to North Korea. For more on the potential impact of Zhang’s ascension to the PSC, see: Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, “The 18th Party Congress Crosses the Yalu: Implications for China’s North Korea Policy,” *38North*, November 27, 2012, <http://www.38north.org/2012/11/nbmustafaga112712/>.

ment. Within this context, China views sanctions as an international expectation, largely from Western countries, that China pressure North Korea to alter its behavior at the risk of sacrificing its own interests in the process. Although Wikileaks and other sources have suggested China is increasingly realizing the inevitability of North Korea's collapse and reunification under the South, the Chinese leadership nonetheless seeks to postpone such a reunification as long as possible.⁵⁰ Therefore, China's desire for the continued existence of a pro-China North Korean state is an obstacle to full enforcement, as long as China views full enforcement as a threat to the North Korean state.

Another factor in China's lack of enforcement is Chinese bureaucratic politics.⁵¹ Although often overlooked, China's North Korea policy is shaped to a large extent by the contours of bureaucratic politics that play out at every level of policy decision-making and implementation from central authorities in Beijing to the local prefecture government in Yanbian.⁵² China's management of its policy towards the North is increasingly bifurcated—centralized policy formulation with diffused implementation. China's North Korea policy is formulated at the highest level of the Chinese government, namely the PSC based on recommendations by the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG).⁵³ However, China's policy is implemented by a diverse group of foreign policy actors who each hold their own interests as they implement the policy as outlined by President Xi Jinping and his fellow Standing Committee members. These actors include the bureaucracies the wield the greatest influence over policy, namely the International Liaison Department (ILD), People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and also include organizations that have secondary influence over policy, including the Jilin and Liaoning provincial governments and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM).

50 Simon Tisdall, "Wikileaks cables reveal China 'ready to abandon North Korea,'" *Guardian*, November 29, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/29/wikileaks-cables-china-reunified-korea>.

51 This discussion of the bureaucratic politics of China's North Korea policy is based on conversations by Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga with over 60 high-level government officials, military officers, scholars and journalists from both the United States and China, including ambassadors and foreign policy advisors for both countries.

52 For the three best discussions of the bureaucratic politics of China's policy, see: Bates Gill, *China's North Korea Policy*, 283, United States Institute of Peace, 2011. See also: *Shades of Red: China's Debate Over North Korea*, 129, International Crisis Group, 2009; and US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *China's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Players*, testimony by Victor Cha, 2011.

53 For a summary of Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga's master's thesis, "Chinese Bureaucratic Politics and Sino-North Korean Relations: Dynamics and Implications," see: Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "Chinese Bureaucratic Politics and Sino-North Korean Relations: Dynamics and Implications," *Sino-NK*, August 5, 2012, <http://sinonk.com/2012/08/05/chinese-bureaucratic-politics-north-korea-mplications/>.

China's enforcement of sanctions reflects the wider issues of bifurcated policy management within China's North Korea policy. Although China's support of UN sanctions on North Korea is conditional on approval by the PSC, the MFA's International Organizations and Conferences Department is responsible for negotiating sanctions in the UN Security Council. After the PSC, through the MFA, agrees to a new round of sanctions, several different ministries are responsible for implementation. The General Administration of Customs China (GACC) is responsible for enforcement at the border, while MOFCOM's Department of Mechanic, Electronic and Hi-Tech Industry is responsible for export controls on dual-use and weapons of mass destruction-related items and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's (MIIT) State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND) is responsible for export controls on arms, and the Ministry of Finance is responsible for financial restrictions. This fractured responsibility for sanctions enforcement is compounded by intra-bureaucratic conflicts of interests on adhering to China's legal obligations.

The intended targets of monitoring for enforcement include foreign policy actors with access and influence over the Chinese foreign policy decision-making process, leading to at best a conflict of interest for those responsible for enforcement and at worse a lack of institutional power to stop and punish violations. This conflict of interest is highlighted by state-owned enterprises (SOE) and the Ministry of Commerce. SOEs have recently gained a profit-making interest in pursuing foreign policy goals, thereby creating possible conflicts of interest for enforcement as one government bureaucracy is responsible for enforcing the sanctions that another dodges in an attempt to turn a profit.⁵⁴ The significant investment by the Jilin and Liaoning provincial governments' SOEs in the North, estimated at 62 percent of total Chinese investment, creates a conflict of interest when enforcing sanctions against its own companies and thus tensions with the central government in Beijing, and this extends to regional banks earning upwards of 20 percent commission on illegal banking for North Korea.⁵⁵ The Ministry of Commerce, which is responsible for overseeing the growth of Chinese trade abroad and increasing employment across the country, is also responsible for sanctions enforcement on dual-use items, among others. This creates a direct conflict of interest within the Ministry, and with the

54 Richard Weitz, "China's Proliferation Problem," *The Diplomat*, May 24, 2011, <http://thediplomat.com/2011/05/24/china%E2%80%99s-proliferation-problem/>.

55 Drew Thompson, *Silent Partners: Chinese Joint Ventures in North Korea* (Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, February 2011), 4. See also: Leon V. Sigal, "How North Korea Evades Financial Sanctions," *38North*, May 3, 2013, <http://38north.org/2013/05/lsigal050313/>.

sensitivity the Chinese government affords to North Korea, most bureaucrats likely avoid the diplomatic incident by approving or ignoring dual-use exports to North Korea that should be prohibited under UN sanctions.

The export of the transport-erector-launcher (TEL) that was used to debut North Korea's newest inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) in April 2012 exemplifies a possible subversion of higher-level policy in pursuit of profit and is a useful example of Beijing's lack of export controls. The TEL, which appeared at a military parade in Pyongyang following Kim Jong-un's failed April 2012 missile test, was produced by a subsidiary of the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, which maintains close ties to the PLA to such an extent that previously the largest customer for the vehicle, and possibly only customer, was the PLA itself.⁵⁶ While some have argued it was exported as a forestry product, the non-civilian features of the TEL led one expert to conclude that "the Chinese executing the contract certainly knew who they were dealing with and why."⁵⁷ Another expert asserted that the sale "would require approval from the highest levels of the Chinese government and the People's Liberation Army."⁵⁸ This dual-use nature, if not outright military use, of the vehicle should have brought it under the export control of MOFCOM.⁵⁹ A possible scenario is that the state-owned company sold vehicle to North Korea without the knowledge of MOFCOM's enforcement officials, or that the enforcement officials did not have enough power within the Chinese system to stop the sale. The PLA has long been suspected of having business interests in North Korea, and the TEL company's links to the PLA open the possibility that there was Chinese military involvement in the sale. As an influential actor in the Chinese system, the PLA would likely have the power to override any attempts to block the sale of the TELs by enforcement officials. Whether this potential PLA involvement in the sale and export of the vehicle was driven by motivations of profit or strategic covert military assistance to Pyongyang is unknown. In order to avoid further

56 Mark Hibbs, "China and the POE DPRK Report," *Arms Control Wonk*, July 2, 2012, <http://hibbs.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/879/china-and-the-poe-dprk-report>. See also: Jeffrey Lewis, "More on DPRK TELs," *Arms Control Wonk*, April 23, 2012, <http://lewis.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/5162/more-on-dprk-tels>.

57 Lewis, "More on DPRK TELs."

58 S. Smithson, "Analysts: China broke sanctions if N. Korea using its missile launcher," *Washington Times*, April 16, 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/apr/16/experts-china-likely-gave-n-korea-illegal-missile-/>.

59 "China denies exporting North Korean missile launch vehicles," *Associated Press*, June 13, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/13/china-north-korea-missile-vehicles>.

embarrassment, China's representative to the UN POE, a Ministry of Defense official, blocked the Panel from reporting the TELs coming from China.⁶⁰

The luxury items list is another example of domestic interest groups possibly shaping China's enforcement of sanctions. Despite the MFA signing China up to ban exports of luxury goods to North Korea, China has yet to establish a list of luxury goods. This failure to follow the spirit of the sanctions may be due to pressure from Chinese companies, either state-owned or private, to avoid sanctions that would affect their bottom-line. They can pressure the government by exploiting their connections to the decision-making process or by citing the potential unemployment arising from their loss of business due to sanctions enforcement, or simply through bribery.⁶¹ Reports of unabated China-DPRK trade in blatant luxury items in the weeks after approving UNSCR 2094, such as LCD TVs, near the North Korean Embassy in Beijing, located a half mile from the MFA's headquarters, and being transported through Beijing airport, which falls under the enforcement of the GACC, reveals either a willful ignorance of the sanctions violations occurring at its doorstep or an inability to enforce sanctions due to bureaucratic incompetence or impotence.⁶² This again highlights the numerous challenges bureaucratic politics plays in full enforcement.

Chinese roadblocks to sanctions enforcement present many obstacles that central authorities in Beijing and foreign countries must overcome in order to see substantial changes in China's stance on North Korea sanctions. Nevertheless, the underlying factors driving China's North Korea policy—namely fear of collapse, strategic value in US-China relations and bureaucratic politics—ultimately remain unchanged and thus China's fundamental strategic calculus on North Korea will remain unchanged for the foreseeable future. Xi and Obama's possible reconciliation in their new administrations also allows China to reassess the value of North Korea in terms of US-China relations, but this process will be slow and not significantly impact China's North Korea policy in the

60 Jeffrey Lewis, "Assessing the DPRK Panel of Experts," *38North*, July 12, 2012, <http://38north.org/2012/07/jlewis071712/>.

61 A prime of example of a Chinese business injecting its own interests into China's policy towards North Korea was when the Wanxiang Group had Premier Wen Jiabao personally intervene in its dispute with the North Korean government, reportedly in return for a \$10,000 payment. See: Peter Lee, "Dear Leader's designs on Uncle Sam," *Asia Times*, December 4, 2010, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/LL04Ad01.html>. According to one report, "a bribe of between £40,000-£60,000 is paid to a customs official to send each 40ft container filled with illegal missile components through Dalian;" Julian Ryall, "Chinese firms breaking UN embargo on North Korea," *Telegraph*, June 8, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/9320339/Chinese-firms-breaking-UN-embargo-on-North-Korea.html>.

62 Megha Rajagopalan, "North Korean elite beating sanctions, one plasma TV at a time," *Reuters*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/19/us-korea-north-china-idUSBRE92116720130319>.

short-term due to the pragmatic and conservative path-dependency nature of the Chinese government, further compounded by the uncertainty of the transition period to Xi Jinping. In the end, China's enforcement of sanctions will likely run to the middle ground that appeases the international community but remain short of full enforcement to avoid any consequences that would directly affect the stability of the Kim regime, and thus China's interests in the region.

Three Tools to Improve Chinese Enforcement

This likely middle ground approach raises questions over the utility of "casual sanctions" in achieving its initial objective of halting North Korea's nuclear program. While the United States and the international community welcome the Xi administration's symbolic efforts to get tougher on North Korea, sanctions will not be ultimately successful if not enforced to the full spirit of the law, not simply China's version of the letter of the law. The TEL export suggests that China's past efforts have not been vigilant enough to inhibit North Korea's procurement of equipment for its military. This leaves US and other countries' policy makers searching for ways to increase Chinese cooperation on sanctions enforcement. Policy-makers can turn to three tools depending on how they balance desires for better enforcement of sanctions and positive relations with Beijing: viewing sanctions as raising barriers of entry rather than compelling policy change, striking a balance between cooperative and coercive measures to diffuse Chinese fears of instability, and creating expectations of additional unilateral sanctions.

First, regional stakeholders should work to debunk the myth in China that tightly enforced sanctions will lead to the destabilization of the North Korean regime by improving understanding of UNSCR 2094's policy objectives. Rather than the traditional objective of sanctions as pressure tactics to squeeze policy concessions from the target country, a more fitting description of targeted sanctions such as UNSCR 2094 would be sanctions to stunt an ongoing development. Whereas sanctions to compel policy change require heavy pressure on the key stakeholders of the target country, producing negative externalities such as regime instability, sanctions to delay development of a program targets program components instead of the regime.

Key provisions of past UN resolutions on North Korea's nuclear program, such as a ban on luxury goods, targeting of individuals and companies involved in nuclear and missile program development, and freezing of key financial assets, are typical of targeted sanctions, sometimes dubbed as "smart sanctions." The idea of targeted sanctions developed specifically out of a need to amelio-

rate the grave negative externalities of preexisting comprehensive trade sanctions, the biggest example being the UN's comprehensive trade embargo on Iraq throughout the 1990s.⁶³ Though it is generally agreed that the sanctions were effective in preventing Saddam Hussein from acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), it is also acknowledged that sanctions created excessive humanitarian and security problems.⁶⁴ UNSCR 2094, which contains provisions such as inspecting North Korean vessels on the high seas, tightening customs inspections, and preventing bulk cash flows, is hardly designed to have such nationwide economic and humanitarian impacts, even if it were to be fully enforced. It is unrealistic for China to assume that the full enforcement of UNSCR 2094 will serve as a critical blow to the North Korean regime.

Rather, UNSCR 2094 should be viewed as one of many efforts to mitigate risk on the Korean Peninsula, especially as a key tool in raising barriers of entry for North Korea's nuclear program. The aim of the latest round of sanctions is quite focused—to render the completion of Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal as difficult and costly as possible for the leadership.⁶⁵ Perhaps when UNSCR 1718 and 1874 were passed, China was hopeful that the threat of sanctions, rather than the enforcement of sanctions, was enough to induce Pyongyang to reconsider its nuclear program. However, targeted sanctions differ from traditional economic sanctions precisely in that the estimated cost to the regime is less, and therefore less threatening. Any hope that China held for North Korea to stop its nuclear program simply from threats alone should now be long gone. Expectations for policy change have proved unrealistic, with demonstrated proof that North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities have improved significantly. Whereas China regarded adoption of UN resolutions in the past as a useful tool

63 Daniel W. Drezner, "Sanctions Sometimes Smart: Targeted Sanctions in Theory and Practice," *International Studies Review*, 2011. See also: David Rose, "North Korea's Dollar Store," *Vanity Fair*, August 5, 2009, <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2009/09/office-39-200909>; and Paul Rexton Kan, Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr. And Robert M. Collins, *Criminal Sovereignty: Understanding North Korea's Illicit International Activities*. Strategic Studies Institute, March 2010.

64 It was estimated that the Iraq sanctions caused up to 227,000 excess deaths among young children, and cut Iraq's GDP to roughly half. Such trade embargoes also increased black markets, organized crime syndicates, and transnational smuggling networks that persisted long after sanctions ended in Iraq. See: Daniel W. Drezner, "Sanctions Sometimes Smart: Targeted Sanctions in Theory and Practice," *International Studies Review*, 2011. For a discussion of North Korea's own illegal money-making activities, see: Paul Rexton Kan, Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr. and Robert M. Collins, *Criminal Sovereignty: Understanding North Korea's Illicit International Activities*, Strategic Studies Institute, 2010. See also: Rose, "North Korea's Dollar Store."

65 For an analysis of UNSCR 2094's intent compared to its endowed capabilities, see: Benjamin Habib, "Deconstructing UNSC Resolution 2094: The Response To North Korea's Third Nuclear Test," *Dr. Benjamin Habib*, March 9, 2013, <http://drbenjaminhabib.wordpress.com/2013/03/09/deconstructing-unscc-resolution-2094/>.

to send warning signals, China must view UNSCR 2094 as a practical tool to manage the speed of North Korea's nuclear program, one that requires actual enforcement.

Second, the United States should strike a balance between cooperative and coercive measures when inducing China to enforce sanctions. While conveying the increasing security costs of allowing a nuclear North Korea has been effective, the method also inherently creates a fear of real conflict in the peninsula through miscalculation and increased uncertainty over US intentions.

Following North Korea's third nuclear test in February, the United States has been quick to turn the Korean Peninsula into a weapons exhibition show, with nuclear-capable B-52, stealth B-2, and fifth generation F-22 flyovers, as well as the deployment of nuclear powered Cheyenne submarine and the SBX-1 radar system.⁶⁶ The US government sees ballistic missile defense cooperation with South Korea and Japan as another lever to pressure Beijing to shift its North Korea policy. The Chinese MFA expressed its displeasure with this increased cooperation but has not acknowledged the link to its North Korea policy.⁶⁷ North Korea's missile tests provide a convenient excuse for enhanced cooperation, since missile defense systems could also be used against China and thus affect its second-strike capability.⁶⁸ While the US government has asserted that the increased deployment of missile defense systems is not targeted at China or Beijing's policy, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Aston Carter said "If the Chinese find them the kinds of things they don't like to see, there's an easy way to address that, which is to talk to the North Koreans about stopping these provocations."⁶⁹ The US government has also used joint military exercises with South Korea as a way to express dissatisfaction with China's North Korea policy and temporarily raise the security cost of Beijing's support in a dramatic fashion. The B-2 flyover can also be interpreted as a warning to China.⁷⁰

66 David Chance and Phil Stewart, "North Korea readies missiles after US stealth bombers fly over South," *Reuters*, March 29, 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/03/29/uk-korea-north-idUKBR-E92R13Q20130329>.

67 Chris Buckley, "China Cites Risk of New Tension as US Bolsters Missile Defenses," *New York Times*, March 18, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/19/world/asia/china-cites-risk-of-tension-as-us-bolsters-missile-defenses.html>.

68 Neil MacFarquhar and Jane Perlez, "China Looms Over Response To Nuclear Test By North Korea," *New York Times*, February 12, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/13/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-test.html?pagewanted=all>.

69 Eckert, "Analysis: In bitter irony for China, North Korea furthers US strategic goals."

70 The B-2 was the aircraft responsible for bombing the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia, which some analysts believe will serve as a signal to Beijing that the United States is serious about North Korea. See: Anna Mulrine, "US stealth bomber as messenger: what it says to China, North Korea," *Christian*

Another example is the use of the George Washington aircraft carrier during November 2010 in waters between South Korea and China, despite strong Chinese protests that the exercise should be conducted on the other side of South Korea.⁷¹ Following Beijing's defense of North Korea's attack on the Cheonan in March 2010, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said, "though [these exercises] are not directed at China, the exercises are a direct result of China's support for North Korea and unwillingness to denounce their aggression."⁷² The most blatant security threat from the United States to China over North Korea to be publicly acknowledged was former US President Bush's statement to former Chinese President Jiang Zemin in February 2003 that "if we could not solve the problem [of denuclearization] diplomatically, then [Bush] would have to consider a military strike against North Korea."⁷³ The fact that China started the Six Party Talks as host six months later suggests this approach may have had some influence over China's North Korea policy.

Yet the apparent success of coercive measures should not dictate that the US government should abandon dialogue and cooperation going forward. Dealing with miscalculations and misperceptions arising out of these military demonstrations is also an integral part in assuring China that sanctions enforcements will not trigger any Chinese fears about instability in the peninsula into becoming a reality. Since part of China's resistance to fully enforcing sanctions is a fear of collapse linked to suspicions of US intentions in the region, increased dialogue between the US and Chinese governments on the crucial issues of "re-balancing," US military posture in the region and post-collapse scenarios would go a long way to decrease Chinese suspicions, and in turn reduce the strategic value of North Korea, finally leading to increased enforcement. US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey's April visit to Beijing was one effort to clarify US intentions in the region against the backdrop of the Korean crisis after Secretary of State John Kerry had just visited to urge China

Science Monitor, March 28, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2013/0328/US-stealth-bomber-as-messenger-what-it-says-to-China-North-Korea>. The B-2 deployment also harks back to the atomic bomber diplomacy under President Harry Truman during the Berlin Crisis of 1949-1950 and at the outset of the Korean War. See: Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War," *International Security* 13, no. 3 (1988-1989): 50-91.

71 John Pomfret, "US aircraft carrier's arrival off Korean Peninsula also sends a message to China," *Washington Post*, November 25, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/24/AR2010112407028.html>.

72 Gertz, "New Details Point to Sinking by N. Korean Torpedo."

73 George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, New York: Crown, 2010: 424.

to press North Korea. In return for US dialogue, General Dempsey received his hosts' "assurance that they are working on it."⁷⁴

While the results of coordination may appear to be less tangible, the rhetoric is crucial in mitigating the negative externalities of coercive tactics. The United States took a good step in this direction when Ambassador Rice introduced of the US draft resolution as jointly drafted with China, which sent a strong signal that US-China cooperation over North Korea sanctions was at a high point. Though some were disheartened at the results of the China visit by David Cohen, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence at the US Department of Treasury, it is important for such dialogues to occur frequently and candidly at the working level as well as in high diplomatic exchanges.⁷⁵

Third, recent history suggests the most effective way to compel Beijing to enforce sanctions on North Korea is to enact unilateral sanctions against North Korea that threaten Chinese economic interests and access to the US market. While Beijing is vehemently opposed to unilateral sanctions, the one instance of true hard-hitting sanctions on North Korea with Chinese cooperation was the US unilateral sanctions on Banco Delta Asia in 2005 for money laundering.⁷⁶ Following shortly after the 2005 Joint Statement, in what is widely considered to be a diplomatic bluster resulting from a lack of coordination between Washington bureaucracies, the sanctions scuttled a breakthrough in denuclearization negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program. Nevertheless, the unilateral sanctions immediately drove China to action. According to David Asher, former head of the North Korea Activities Group at the National Security Council, the unilateral sanctions were also directed at China; "Banco Delta was a symbolic target. We were trying to kill the chicken to scare the monkeys. And the monkeys were big Chinese banks doing business in North Korea."⁷⁷ Beijing enforced the Bush administration's unilateral sanctions, despite no legal obliga-

74 Jane Perlez, "US General Sees Hope for Chinese Help on Korea," *New York Times*, April 24, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/25/world/asia/us-hopeful-after-talks-with-china.html?gwh=7AA93D19CF9FB4750257252F9E54D0EE>.

75 Terri Yue Jones, "US hopeful of strong Chinese action on North Korea," *Reuters*, March 22, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/22/us-korea-north-usa-idUSBRE92L02E20130322>. See also: Andrew Browne, "US Believes China to Toe Line on North Korea Sanctions," *New York Times*, March 22, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324373204578376022445978456.html>.

76 Timothy Gardner and Arshad Mohammed, "US grants Iran sanctions exceptions to China," *Reuters*, June 28, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/28/us-usa-iran-sanctions-china-idUSBR-E85R16L20120628>. See also: David Lague and Donald Greenlees, "Squeeze on Banco Delta Asia Hit North Korea Where It Hurt," *New York Times*, January 18, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/18/world/asia/18iht-north.4255039.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

77 Peter Lee, "China in America's sanctions crosshairs," *Asia Times*, June 24, 2010, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/LF24Ad03.html>.

tion to do so, and froze North Korean assets for fear of losing access to the US banking system.

A similar set of unilateral sanctions would likely temporarily strain the US-China relationship, but may be a necessary step to motivate China to reconsider its approach in line with its international obligations under UN sanctions. Indeed, the US government unilaterally sanctioned the DPRK's Foreign Trade Bank in March, the main foreign exchange bank for the country, after China opposed sanctioning the bank in UNSCR 2094.⁷⁸ To the surprise of many but in following its track record, the Bank of China announced it would cut ties with the bank, reflecting the effectiveness of US unilateral sanctions when they threaten China's interests.⁷⁹ The US government could levy unilateral sanctions against Pyongyang that would hit Chinese companies if they fail to enforce them. The United States could also sanction Chinese companies caught selling goods the United States deems in violation of UN sanctions, according to the US list of banned luxury goods, by banning those Chinese companies from the US market. The US government could also propose sending US customs officials to Dalian port and Beijing airport, the two most popular places for North Korea trafficking through China, similar to US-China cooperation on food security with US Food and Drug Administration officials working in China.

Another sanctions action outside of the UN would be to follow actions against Iran and work with the European Union to have North Korea removed from SWIFT, the international electronic financial settlement system.⁸⁰ Since North Korea is not as involved in the international financial system, this would not impact Pyongyang as much as Tehran, but the image of US and European Union pressure would lend credibility to the seriousness of purpose the international community holds against the North's nuclear program, especially if China publicly supported such a move. One scholar suggested "the Treasury Department should declare the entire North Korean government a primary money laundering concern" and sanction Chinese banks if they violate sanctions.⁸¹

78 Stephan Haggard, "The Foreign Trade Bank Sanctions," *North Korea: Witness to Transformation*, March 22, 2013, <http://www.piie.com/blogs/nk/?p=9790>. See also: Antoni Slodkowski and Warren Strobel, "Japan, Australia to sanction North Korean bank as part of US-led crackdown," *Reuters*, March 26, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/26/us-korea-north-bank-idUSBRE92P04T20130326>; and Leon V. Sigal, "How North Korea Evades Financial Sanctions," *38North*, May 3, 2013, <http://38north.org/2013/05/lsigal050313/>.

79 Keith Bradsher and Nick Cumming-Bruce, "China Cuts Ties With Key North Korean Bank," *New York Times*, May 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/08/world/asia/china-cuts-ties-with-north-korean-bank.html?gwh=725EF0E1FC00CC7E258F24AF7B282B43>.

80 "Payments system SWIFT to expel Iranian banks Saturday," *Reuters*, March 15, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/15/us-nuclear-iran-idUSBRE82E15M20120315>.

81 Rachel Oswald, "US Should Sanction Chinese Banks Laundering North Korean Money: Experts,"

While these measures may induce a fast Chinese response, there is no guarantee that this response would be favorable and the undoubtedly high cost to US-China relations would be worth an uncertain and possibly intangible benefit to the US's denuclearization efforts.⁸²

The three aforementioned tools are by no means a panacea in getting China to consistently and effectively enforce targeted sanctions on North Korea. However, they suggest tangible ways that regional stakeholders can shape China's decision-making framework by increasing incentives for enforcement and mitigating roadblocks on its path. Working to close the incentive gap between the legislator and the enforcer is an important step for regional cooperative in managing heightened risk on the Korean Peninsula.

Conclusion: Tempered Expectations Necessary

The adoption of UNSCR 2094 may be the first evidence that the United States' cooperative approach is paying dividends, but the true test will be China's willingness to fully implement the new round of sanctions to the spirit of the law and not simply the letter of the law over the long-term. On this matter, it is important not to take the recent media hype about a Chinese "recalculation" of North Korea policy at face value, but to carefully gauge where China stands in its incentives in and aversions to enforcing sanctions.

Recent reporting paints a conflicting picture of China's enforcement of UNSCR 2094. North Korea reportedly pulled its money from Chinese banks before the test to avoid any repercussions, and China has reportedly followed through on North Korean fears by warning North Korean banks to not violate sanctions.⁸³ Furthermore, the Ministry of Transport "said it expected all government departments to follow sanctions and ensure no transport of banned goods."⁸⁴

Global Security Newswire, March 5, 2013, <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/us-should-sanction-chinese-banks-launder-north-korean-money-experts/>. See also: Joshua Stanton and Sung-Yoon Lee, "Don't Engage Kim Jong Un—Bankrupt Him," *Foreign Policy*, January 9, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/09/dont_engage_kim_jong_un_bankrupt_him.

82 For more possible sanctions, see: Colum Lynch, "Is there anything left to sanction in North Korea," *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2013, http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/02/13/is_there_anything_left_to_sanction_in_north_korea.

83 Mike Richman, "Analysts: China Likely to Support New Sanctions Against N. Korea," *Voice of America*, February 9, 2013, <http://www.voanews.com/content/china-likely-to-support-new-sanctions-against-north-korea/1600524.html>. See: Jack Kim and Ju-min Park, "China fires warning shot at North Korea banks: report," *Reuters*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/19/us-korea-north-china-idUSBRE92I09P20130319>; and Koichiro Ishida, "Fearing sanctions, N. Korean merchants pull their cash from Chinese banks," *Asahi Shimbun*, March 14, 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201303140093.

84 Ben Blanchard, "China steps up customs checks, but North Korea trade robust," *Reuters*, April

At the same time, the Ministry of Finance began to crack down on illegal financial transactions by North Korean banks, which beforehand went largely unenforced.⁸⁵ Despite reportedly higher scrutiny of Chinese exports to North Korea at the border, trade remains unaffected and violations are still occurring and Chinese diplomats themselves said that sanctions enforcement will “not go as far as the Obama administration wanted.”⁸⁶ While US officials initially applauded Chinese enforcement, highlighted by David Cohen’s comments, US officials are now reportedly already frustrated by China’s lack of enforcement, as evidenced by the continued luxury goods trade in Beijing.⁸⁷ This suggests that only time will tell where China’s priorities lie and how far the Xi administration is willing to enforce sanctions.

The official refrain remains: China is facing limited options with less influence than previously thought and must prioritize stability over another Korean War and subsequent refugee crisis. Yet the ground situation continues to worsen: North Korea demonstrated that it is making significant inroads into becoming a full blown nuclear state with the capability to launch nuclear attack on countries including the United States, Beijing’s diplomatic leverage on Pyongyang consistently continues to deteriorate, and South Korea, Japan, and the United States are increasing military activity in the region. The “muddle through” strategy is generating increasing diplomatic and strategic costs, and it is up to China to decide when the costs are high enough to outweigh the benefits. A good start would be to deliberate on whether some of the existing roadblocks to enforcement stem from old misconceptions and inefficient structural problems. North Korea has always been a land of lousy options, but some options are less lousy than others. **Y**

30, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/30/us-korea-north-sanctions-china-idUSBRE93T15E20130430>.

85 Jenny Jun, “Dealing with a Sore Lip: Parsing China’s “Recalculation” of North Korea Policy,” *38North*, March 29, 2013, <http://www.38north.org/2013/03/jjun032913/>. See: Shaun Waterman, “China doing ‘quite well’ enforcing U.N. sanctions on North Korea, South says,” *Washington Times*, April 15, 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/apr/15/china-doing-quite-well-enforcing-un-sanctions-nort/>.

86 Ben Blanchard, “China steps up customs checks, but North Korea trade robust,” *Reuters*, April 30, 2013. See also: Malcolm Moore, “China breaking UN sanctions to support North Korea,” *Telegraph*, April 13, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/9991907/China-breaking-UN-sanctions-to-support-North-Korea.html>; and Mark Landler, “Detecting Shift, US Makes Case to China on North Korea,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/06/world/asia/us-sees-china-as-lever-to-press-north-korea.html?pagewanted=all&gwh=5CFA58A3D7F4FD8C0845499852E265C0>.

87 Browne, “US Believes China To Toe Line On North Korea Sanctions.” See: Perlez, “Chinese Editor Suspended for Article on North Korea;” and Rajagopalan, “North Korean elite beating sanctions, one plasma TV at a time.”

CHALLENGES TO REFORM IN NORTH KOREA: STRUCTURE, AGENCY AND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SELECTORATE

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Discussions concerning reform in North Korea have generally spent little time considering the impact of the social structures that underpin North Korean society. Instead, material factors—such as economic restructuring, foreign aid, or subversive new media—have taken precedence in discussions concerning change. Yet predictions of impending reform or collapse in North Korea that have drawn from material cues have, evidently, fallen short of their marks. In light of these failures, this paper seeks to refocus our collective lens upon the foundations of the society that we seek to understand. It asks why and how North Koreans reproduce and sustain a social order that, from the outside at least, appears highly imbalanced. In doing so, North Korean society's enduring ideas and norms, its accepted rules and beliefs, and its collective knowledge and language are all seen to inform how transformative power is employed. This duality between North Korea's social structure and its agency serves as more than an abstract imagining; rather, it is crucial to understanding how reform in North Korean society may materialize. While not denying the impact that material changes have brought to North Korean society—for example, the collapse of the Public Distribution System—this paper places a greater emphasis on understanding society's foundations and the stability of its institutions and power relations. Using Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory, the social institution of ideology in North Korean society serves to illustrate this approach. The paper concludes by arguing that an understanding of North Korea's social world will be vital to future discussions concerning stability on the Korean Peninsula.

Introduction

Since Kim Jong-un came to power in 2011, the longstanding dichotomy in North Korean analyst circles between “collapsists” and reformists has seemingly swung in favor of the reformists. From the agricultural reforms of the “June 28 New Economic Management Measures” to the development of Spe-

cial Economic Zones, suggestions of change have not gone unnoticed by the more optimistic observer. But what if Kim Jong-un and North Korea's ruling elite at-large are not as free to choose a different path for their country as we may think? What if they are as constrained by its rules, its institutions and its conventions as the North Korean populace? Prevailing physical conditions still matter as impediments to reform in North Korea but more fundamental still is an element that few have held aloft to scrutiny: North Korea's social structures.

Easily misunderstood, North Korea's social structures have endured relative anonymity in academia alongside studies of the country's economic, political and military drivers. Admittedly, minor reforms such as the proliferation of mobile phones or the rise of *jangmadang*¹ offer more immediate and noticeable glimpses of change. Yet these reforms rarely prompt the key question: have these or similar elements, either individually or collectively, rebalanced North Korea's state or society in the last decade? An objective evaluation suggests they have not.

Structure and Agency in North Korea

Rather than getting caught up with microscopic indications of social change, social reform requires an analysis of North Korea's unique social structures and their interaction with human agency. One tool for doing so is Structuration Theory. Developed by Anthony Giddens in the late 1970s, Structuration Theory moved away from the longstanding sociological debate concerning the primacy of either structure or agency in social life and, much like Pierre Bourdieu, saw the relationship between the two as equal in society's constitution.² Placing both structure and agent at his theory's axis, Giddens saw the fabric of society—notably its institutions, such as language and government—as the causes and effects of human agency. This interplay, Giddens argued, gradually normalized and created expectations for accepted modes of conduct within society, which then led to the patterning and routinization of social behavior, the legitimization of social institutions and the reproduction of social practices across time and space. To understand why enduring behaviors and institutions within North Korea persist, and how they enable and constrain North Koreans, Structuration Theory offers us a well-placed lens.

At the core of Structuration Theory lie social structures. As the temporal principles that guide social life, structures enable and constrain social interac-

1 For a detailed definition of *jangmadang*, see "Jangmadang," *Daily NK*, http://www.dailynk.com/english/db_info.php?db_name=jangmadang.

2 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

tions through their existence in “the memory traces... of knowledgeable human agents.”³ Binding time and space, structures make “it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist” across society and forge a sense of togetherness that provides individuals with a shared understanding of what to do and why to do it.⁴ Described by Ludwig Wittgenstein as the “things that cannot be put into words... [but] make themselves manifest,”⁵ Giddens terms this human understanding of structure “knowledgeability.”⁶ Importantly, knowledgeability of how one should and should not act is not innate—it is experienced, learned, and informed by structural rules and resources. These rules may be implicit, such as linguistic norms, or more explicit, like codified laws; while resources, such as influence or control over material capabilities, act merely as the conduits through which power and knowledge is exercised and structures are actualized. In this sense, structural rules and resources do not exist independently from society. Instead, they exist through, and are given meaning by, the agents of society themselves.

Since structures exist solely through human agents and are “temporally ‘present’ only in their instantiation,” agency—that is, the capacity of an individual to affect an outcome—is as central to Giddens’ theory as structure.⁷ In essence, every human is an agent and all agents draw upon knowledge gained from their social environment to perform day-to-day acts. As an agent is invariably pre-existed by social structures and institutions, their choices will inevitably be bounded by the knowledge they have acquired from society.⁸ Acting within their known boundaries, agents unavoidably monitor their actions to adhere to social rules and norms, which in turn reproduce, legitimize and reinforce structures. This interplay between structure and agency is, Giddens contends, the “duality of structure.”⁹

The most important and deeply embedded social structures within any society are its institutions. Defined by Giddens as “the more enduring features of social life,” institutions embody structure, agency and power relations within

3 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 17.

4 Ibid.

5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus” (First published in *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, 1921), quoted in Stephen P. Schwartz, *A Brief History of Analytic Philosophy: From Russell to Rawls* (Chichester, Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2012), 57.

6 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 21.

7 Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 64.

8 Furthermore, agents will inevitably be constrained by their physical capabilities.

9 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 19.

society.¹⁰ They reinforce structure and are realized through agency. Visible in formal arenas, such as government, and in less perceptible arenas, like ideology, institutions will compel and imitate the dynamism of human society.

As Giddens' notion of duality suggests, social structures and institutions are not as deterministic for human agency as many Structuralists, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, would insist. For while structures and institutions may indeed be compelling, Giddens contends that human agents can always exercise at least a modicum of power. Termed the "dialectic of control," power may simply be an agent's choice between living and dying, or for agents with greater social capital, power may be exercised to "regulate the overall conditions of system reproduction either to keep things as they are or to change them."¹¹ Power is, therefore, both enabling and constraining for agents.

The strength of Structuration Theory for studies of North Korea is twofold. Firstly, Structuration Theory moves the debate on reform away from the reductionism of micro and macro theories that seek to explain North Koreans *or* North Korea. Just as domestic and international politics cannot be separated, North Korea's social structures and human agents are similarly indivisible. Secondly, Giddens' notion that agency and structure are inherently relational, not just in theory but also in praxis, ensures that our scope of analysis can be concentrated on the *processes* of social interaction that will either enable or constrain reform on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's One Percent

When we look at the potential for reform, we look for the agents in society who hold truly transformative power. As a totalitarian state, power in North Korea—in both its allocative and authoritative forms¹²—is highly concentrated within the various political, military and economic institutions that are dominated by individuals from the three "rings of power"—the Kim family, the Korean People's Army and the Korean Workers' Party (KWP).¹³ However, true transformative power—that is the ability of individuals to alter embedded social structures—is held by an even smaller group of North Korean agents.

10 Ibid., 24.

11 Ibid., 28.

12 Allocative resources refer to material entities while authoritative resources refer to the tools that enable control over other agents.

13 Ken Gause, "The Role and Influence of the Party Apparatus," in *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park and Scott Snyder (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 30.

Known as the “selectorate,”¹⁴ this group has long fulfilled the role of “system *Guardians*.”¹⁵ Comprised of “between 200 and 5,000 people”¹⁶ who occupy the most influential seats in North Korea’s principal institutions—such as the National Defense Commission and the KWP—as per Michel Foucault’s power-knowledge nexus, the selectorate’s preponderance of social capital has granted it the ability, and the legitimacy, to construct a “regime of truth” in society and to “intervene...with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs” through institutional rules and resources.¹⁷

Yet power has not been limitlessly enabling, it has simultaneously restricted space for autonomy. Given meaning by the social system and thus subject to society’s rules and norms, power is a means rather than an end. In this vein, power has not simply been a resource for elite self-interest in the halls of Pyongyang. Instead, power has been given meaning by structure and agency—and it is this interplay that merits further analysis in any discussion of reform on the Korean Peninsula. Following this outline of Structuration Theory, a brief exploratory impression of the interplay between structure and agency within one of North Korea’s principal institutions—ideology—is offered.

Ideology

What makes North Korea’s system so sustainable is its ideology. To be sure, such a status is difficult to achieve and therefore highly valuable. It takes a long time to be built and for its sustainability needs symbols and rituals that are replicated and performed again and again. Importantly, there is little room for flexibility: in order to turn a process into a ritual and an image into an icon, *stability* and *consistency* are key strategies.¹⁸

Charles Armstrong has commented that “in no country in the world is political ideology more visible than in North Korea.”¹⁹ Yet—structurally speaking—ideology is a virtual institution. It exists within the memory traces of knowledgeable agents and unlike other institutions, such as government, ideology is

14 Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind, “Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy: Tools of Authoritarian Control in North Korea,” *International Security* 35, no. 1 (2010): 60.

15 Nicolas Levi, “A Big Day for the Elite Clans,” *Daily NK*, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk03600&num=9051>.

16 Byman and Lind, “Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy,” 60.

17 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 14.

18 Ruediger Frank, “North Korea’s Ideology after April 2012: Continuity or Disruption?,” *38North*, <http://38north.org/2012/05/rfrank050912/>. [emphasis added]

19 Charles Armstrong, “The Role and Influence of Ideology,” in *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park and Scott Snyder (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 3.

not easily materialized or codified. Indeed, ideology may only be instantiated through its reproduction in the behavior of agents. For this reason the *visibility* of ideology within North Korea is not only indicative of its embeddedness as a social institution, but it also hints at the power that North Korea's selectorate have invested in its subsistence.

Existing as a virtual structure, ideology, Giddens argues, becomes embedded and institutionalized by way of "signification."²⁰ Referring explicitly to the *communication* of ideology through modes of language, discourse and symbolic orders, ideology conveys a set of rules—language, beliefs and norms—and sanctions a set of resources—knowledge, authority and education—for agents to interpret and draw upon in everyday life. As agents utilize these rules and resources, ideology will increasingly mirror their social reality and provide agents with a very real "ontological security."²¹ Once these structured social practices are embedded across time and space, ideology can then be said to have become the "medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes."²²

In affording society with an understanding of its social reality, ideology can be utilized by those agents who hold authoritative power to justify an existing social hierarchy, to enact some form of social-good, or, conversely, to protect a set of unequal power relations. In this regard, Giddens' observation that domination, power, and ideology are coterminous²³ is not dissimilar to Antonio Gramsci's notion of a hegemonic political bloc that manufactures consent through its control of knowledge. Still, ideology will not always be enabling for those who wield power. Ideological structures also impose normative constraints upon agency and the use of power—and this is no more evident than in North Korea's selectorate.

Juche

Inside North Korea, Juche ideology functions as the sole "legitimate Weltanschauung."²⁴ Signifying a distinctive philosophy of social life, Juche is communicated through a set of implicit and explicit rules that help to constitute meaning and sanction social conduct in day-to-day life. In Giddens' terminology, Juche ideology is one of North Korea's "more enduring features of social

20 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 29-33.

21 *Ibid.*, xxiii.

22 *Ibid.*, 374.

23 Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 582-583.

24 Han S. Park, "Military-First (Songun) Politics: Implications for External Policies," in *New Challenges of North Korean Foreign Policy*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 96-97.

life.”²⁵ Open to a plethora of translations, Juche can broadly be defined as the “essence of self-determination” (from the Chinese character *ju*, meaning rule, and *che*, meaning essence).²⁶ Whether Juche stems from, or even masquerades as, the Confucian logics of self-defense and sovereignty, Marxism-Leninism, anti-colonialism, Korean race-based nationalism, or even Kim Il-sung’s understanding of Woodrow Wilson’s concept of self-rule is debatable. One certainty, however, is that Juche’s durability owes much to the ongoing interplay between institution and agent.

Evidently, the failures in the practical application of Juche are glaring—but we must always bear in mind that ideology exists in the “memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents.”²⁷ Hence, structures will exist both within and apart from the material world. For this reason, the application of Juche in North Korean policies should be seen as distinct from the application of Juche within the practical consciousnesses of North Korea’s agents. In this vein, the restrictions that Juche imposes upon the selectorate can be viewed as “more ‘internal’ than exterior,” and rather than being limited by material factors, are born from a tacit knowledgeability of structural constraints and negative sanctions.²⁸ Here, structural constraints refer to the limits that an agent’s knowledgeability imposes upon their perceived choices for action; while negative sanctions refer to the limitations placed upon choice and action by other agents that exercise power, which may range from “the mild expression of disapproval” to “the direct application of force or violence.”²⁹

Considering these constraints upon autonomy, are North Korea’s selectorate able to reform the meaning of Juche? Despite enabling the selectorate’s domination within society, no North Korean agent—from Kim Jong-un down—is immune from the cognitive pushes and structural pulls of their social—and in this case, ideological—environment. Even those who are frequently exposed to competing narratives and philosophies—such as Jang Seong-taek, Kim Yong-nam, or Choe Thae-bok—cannot retreat fully from their knowledge, their identities and their learned ideological bounds. Theories of cognitive consistency demonstrate that agents will, more often than not, discount dissonant information that runs contrary to their beliefs.³⁰ This intrinsic human preference for

25 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 24.

26 Kenneth Quinones, “Juche’s Role in North Korea’s Foreign Policy,” in *North Korea’s Foreign Policy Under Kim Jong Il: New Perspectives*, ed. Tae-hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 18.

27 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 17.

28 *Ibid.*, 25.

29 *Ibid.*, 175.

30 Craig A. Anderson, Mark R. Lepper and Lee Ross, “Perseverance of Social Theories: The Role of Ex-

consistency not only buttresses belief, it also results in the hardening of belief. As such, no amount of foreign travel, material goods, access to media,³¹ or inflowing capital is likely to induce a mass ideological-rethinking within North Korea's selectorate.

Correspondingly, the participation of the selectorate in the application of negative sanctions—such as the removal of Pak Nam-gi, Kim Yong-sam and Ri Je-gang—evidences not just factional wrangling, but the upholding of tacit established social practices in the memory traces of agents. As Armstrong has rightly observed, “behavior [in North Korea]—both at the individual and the collective level—refers back to ideology and is justified by it.”³²

Structuration Theory does not imply that change within one of North Korea's most enduring and powerful institutions is unachievable. Instead, it puts reform into context. Even though individual agency and the dialectic of control may have afforded North Korea's selectorate with the *capability* to act outside of their learned ideological bounds, Juche's structural constraints and existing sanctions have, on balance, proved to be far more compelling. Faith in Juche does not imply a blind obedience or an unadulterated fideism on behalf of the selectorate—instead it demonstrates how structure interacts with agency to become an essential part of cognitive reasoning, practical and discursive consciousness, self-legitimation and social knowledge. As Giddens notes, “the knowledge they [agents] possess is not incidental to the persistent patterning of social life but is integral to it.”³³

Conclusion: Refocusing our lens on reform

This paper has argued for a third method to study reform in North Korea.³⁴ In this approach, the false dichotomy between structure and agency is rejected and replaced by a more equitable and interpretive analysis of the social structures and human agency that govern action. This third way finds that social change is not dependent upon the material world, but rests upon transformations in the agency and the structures that constitute society. Free from determinism and objectivism, social transformation will always be possible. While this approach

planation in the Persistence of Discredited Information,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39, no. 6 (1980): 1037-1049.

31 See for example: Nat Kretchun and Jane Kim, “A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment,” http://audiencescapes.org/sites/default/files/A_Quiet_Opening_FINAL_InterMedia.pdf.

32 Armstrong, *Influence of Ideology*, 4.

33 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 26.

34 Not to be confused with Giddens' advocacy of a political “Third Way” that sought to reconcile diverging politico-economic policies. Still, this essay's intent to move beyond bifurcated theoretical standpoints is not dissimilar in its underlying objective.

does not deny the value of micro-transformations to society's inhabitants, it does point to certain factors—such as meanings, beliefs, language, norms and institutions—as the crucial drivers for transformative social change.

If reform in North Korea is possible, what conditions are required for the transformation of society? Significantly, societal reform will—almost certainly—be unintentionally constructed, for as Giddens argues, social happenings are “everyone's doing and no one's.”³⁵ Bearing this in mind, the scores of social processes and daily interactions that constitute North Korean society suggest that changes to its social ordering are likely to be the consequences of complex, constantly evolving and multifaceted alterations to the relationship between the selectorate and the institutions that they dominate. However, if ideology can act as an approximate benchmark in North Korea, the routinized reproduction of rules and resources appear relatively stable, as does the social reality it generates. Juche's reification and accompanying power structure has left little room for competing norms, discourses, or agents to challenge its institutional underpinnings, implying that the social practices that support Juche will, for the time being, remain relatively fixed. **Y**

35 Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 10.

LOOKING PAST THE REGIME: A REVISED POLICY OF “ENGAGEMENT” WITH NORTH KOREA

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In our shrinking world, cross-linguistic and intercultural collaborations have become increasingly important. This is especially true for North Korea, a country so often misunderstood and relatively distant in Western discourse. Nevertheless, western commentators on North Korea traditionally lack engagement with a group that has much to offer on the subject: North Koreans in exile, particularly those who not only have first-hand experience of the country, but base their studies of North Korea on this experience and/or continue to maintain ties with those inside the country. We should learn from and build on the lessons of the Orientalist and post-colonial eras by working through the clashes of frameworks that accompany one culture’s study of another.

Entry Points into a Closed Society Undergoing Change

The North Korean regime continues to enforce a closed society and prohibits organic information-flow on multiple fronts. There is no independent media, every kind of art must be approved before publication, and North Koreans cannot communicate freely with outsiders. Those who do pass through these informational borders are either part of a political elite that exists to enforce the regime’s communications blockade,¹ or are members of the business classes. While examining those who work in business may provide interesting

¹ See, for example: Jang Jin-Sung, “The Propaganda Officers’ Latest Coup: South Koreans Mourn The Death of Kim Jong-Il,” *New Focus International*, August 2, 2012, <http://newfocusintl.com/the-propaganda-officers-latest-coup-south-koreans-mourn-the-death-of-kim-jong-il/>.

perspectives,² they are an exclusive group set apart from the rest of North Korean society.³ Moreover, they work for companies that come under the auspices of the regime's institutions, such as the military or domestic security, and their interests are necessarily vested in support of the political elite.⁴

Most significantly, however, if we wish to study a North Korea undergoing change, they are not the driving force behind change; rather, they are people who rely on the changes to gain advantage for themselves.⁵ We need the wider context of the behavior. In fact, if we talk to these people of the business class, we will realize that there is a group of traders—mainly Chinese—who really dominate the North Korean economy in a way that is relevant for changes that affect the rest of the country. This is crucially linked, in an interesting relationship, to the increasing number of channels of communication in and out of the country that fall outside the authorities' control. This is the *jangmadang*: the unauthorized markets comprised not solely of traders, but also of consumers across the vast majority of the country.⁶ Through this porous border of illicit trade, goods are entering North Korea,⁷ as well as a new mindset and informational awareness is entering into North Korean society.

These openings have not yet been given sufficient coverage either by mainstream media or by academic studies of North Korea. With regard to media, although there is said to be “excessive” coverage of North Korea on the security issues and even on human rights issues, the angles of entry into a holistic view of change as is happening in North Korea remain grossly underreported. In academic studies, there are also particular entry points into North Korea regarded as standard, such as sources stemming from within the sanctioned framework of state media. Moreover, there are polarizations and assumptions that are particularly striking. What follows is not a comprehensive survey, but rather an assessment of the main areas on which commentary on North Korea appears to focus.

Participatory Understanding

2 Felix Abt, *A Capitalist in North Korea* (Amazon Digital Services, 2013).

3 This is detailed in John Everard, *Only Beautiful Please* (Stanford: Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2012).

4 “The New North Korean Elite: the 10% and the 1%,” *New Focus International*, March 1, 2013, <http://newfocusintl.com/the-new-north-korean-elite-the-10-and-the-1/>.

5 “The ‘Money Makers’ of North Korea,” *New Focus International*, March 6, 2013, <http://newfocusintl.com/the-money-makers-of-north-korea/>.

6 *Jangmadang* in Korean means, literally, “street/ground market.”

7 See: Max Fisher, “Along the Chinese Border, defectors say North Korean province is quietly liberalizing,” *Washington Post*, December 28, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2012/12/28/along-the-chinese-border-defectors-say-north-korean-province-is-quietly-liberalizing/>.

There is a large community of people whose work with North Koreans takes place out of the public eye. The secretive world of Korean-Chinese migrants with links to border crossings and the dangerous work of South Korean missionaries and human rights activists fall into this category, along with those who maintain business ties to North Korean agents of the state, both directly and indirectly.

This spectrum of activities is not normally used as material to be dealt with in mainstream or academic discourse. With regard to the humanitarian efforts, there are two general reasons. First, it is necessary to keep off the radar; and second, perhaps this material is too closely associated with advocacy. Stories and information that deserve an audience are sometimes filtered through the lens of the activist, whose views may not be shared by all.⁸ Sometimes, the language barrier exacerbates the situation; at other times, cultural barriers prove to be further obstacles.⁹ This is especially clear even in South Korea, where there is no linguistic barrier. The indifference in South Korean mainstream attitudes on issues pertaining to North Korea is perhaps more insidious than the ignorance of the western audience. This phenomenon is in part intertwined with the history of “progressives” being seen as apologists for North Korea in the context of their opposition to authoritarian rule in South Korea.¹⁰ Although it should not be the case, these polarizing presentational barriers appear to get in the way of proper academic treatment of these subjects.

With regard to illicit North Korea-related business activities, there is also the necessity of keeping a low profile. Commentary in this field is historically plagued with a lack of rigor, and this, unsurprisingly, leads to a mixed reaction from the public: generally, either people are already aware of these activities and do not want to hear more, or they find them to be bizarre to believe. Unfortunately, a middle ground between these two reactions is probably required for constructive discourse.

As for other types of understanding about North Korea gained through participation, we may mention initiatives that base their activities on taking full advantage of “sanctioned” channels of engagement to enter into a section of North Korea. Tourism falls into this category, as well as academic exchanges, such as those undertaken by Cambridge University, the Pyongyang Project and

8 Adam Cathcart, “Red State, Blue State, Slave State: Reviewing Melanie Kirkpatrick’s ‘Escape from North Korea,’” *Sino-NK*, November 6, 2012, <http://sinok.com/2012/11/06/red-state-blue-state-slave-state-reviewing-melanie-kirkpatrick-escape-from-north-korea-part-i/>.

9 The work done by Rimjjang falls into these categories.

10 Interestingly, North Korean psychological warfare officers cultivated this tendency. See: Jang, “The Propaganda Officers’ Latest Coup.”

Choson Exchange. There is nothing wrong these kinds of activities *per se*; but as with engagement in the business sphere, we must remember not only that these are limited in scope, but also, that there are other openings. The “Engage Korea” conference held at Oxford University in 2013, for example, states that our understanding and engagement with North Korea must be based on deep study and experience. Yet the statement seems to be compromised by the lack of participation of any North Korean exiles or those who engage in channels outside those that are sanctioned by the regime.¹¹

This leads us to the crux of the problem: the polarization of agents in North Korean studies. Those who engage in North Korean studies outside the regime’s framework are left out in the cold, according to the current rigid and static dichotomy of “engagement or isolation,” which effectively means “engagement with or isolation of the regime.”

Part of this can be attributed, of course, to short-term practical circumstances—collaborating with those who fall outside the regime’s sanctioned framework may jeopardize one’s chances of engaging with the regime through officially permitted channels. However, the point is missed that the regime is not the entirety of North Korea. There is a growing, underreported, and understudied fissure, not only between the regime of North Korea and the society of North Korea, but also between our presentation of North Korea and the reality of North Korea. In this changing context, pursuing engagement solely within the regime’s framework—and ignoring the holistic framework of continued transformation—carries with it repercussions: isolating the general population of North Korea from the world. We should realize that participatory understanding as achieved within the regime’s sanctioned framework is a limited understanding. We have to deconstruct the harmful and polarizing dichotomy of “engagement or isolation” with the regime and increase our horizons to a North Korea beyond the state.

Observational Understanding

In academic debate, the dichotomy functions in an insidious way. Security analysis, by nature, examines the harmful possibilities of the North Korean regime. Political analysis, in contrast, tends to look at the positive possibilities of political engagement. There is nothing wrong with either approach, yet, if we are trying to understand more about North Korea than the regime’s actions with regard to foreign relations, our outlook may perhaps be too narrow.

11 See the Engage Korea’s conference homepage, www.engagekorea.org.

For example, arguments about North Korea’s July 1, 2002, measures generally conclude that they were made in a reformist spirit.¹² In particular, a belief in the (assumed) existence of “hawks and doves” within the North Korean state is associated with this view. At its essence, this kind of study is based on, and reinforces, the notion that engagement occurs within the regime’s framework in order to drive positive change. This may be characterized as “engagement within the sanctioned framework.” Yet this type of approach ignores the large and relevant subject of what is really driving change in North Korea. According to reports coming out North Korea (through unofficial, and “unsanctioned” channels), there is overwhelming evidence that the regime is not truly in control of North Korean society. With the collapse of the Public Distribution System and increased reliance of the people on the illegal markets (*jangmadang*), market forces appear to be transforming North Korea in fundamental ways and affecting the regime’s decisions.¹³

Moreover, in addition to the fact that change in North Korea may be driven by agents other than the leadership, what if the North Korean leadership does not, in fact, wish for these changes to occur? There is evidence to suggest that reformist attitudes have never been held by the decision-makers of North Korea. There are two ways of approaching this: first, to ask whether reform is in the interest of the decision-makers, (putting aside, for the moment, the composition of this group); second, to ask in whose interest it would be to pursue reform.

With regard to the first question, the current research is problematic in that it focuses on the decision makers, ignoring the larger context of change in North Korea that may be motivating these decision makers. We cannot, of course, blindly assume that these agents are behaving out of altruistic, and not self-interested, motives. Moreover, we can pursue this question in the following context: how is it in their interest to improve the state economy, if the vast majority of North Koreans have ceased to rely on that state economy? It may be an intent to seize control over the economy, rather than to reform it—as has often been suggested.

With regard to the second question, we need to ask which factions would benefit from reform. Yet in my experience of dealing with elite North Korean defectors, there has not been a single one who adheres to the theory of the existence of political factions in North Korea in the sense of “hawks and doves.”

12 See: Robert Carlin and Joel Wit, *North Korean Reform* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

13 Essay by Jang Jin-sung in “Tumen Triangle Project.” See: “The Tumen Triangle Documentation Project: Sourcing the Chinese-North Korean Border,” Issue 1, Adam Cathcart and Christopher Green, eds., *Sino-NK*, <http://sinonk.com/2013/04/15/the-tumen-triangle-documentation-project-sourcing-the-chinese-north-korean-border-issue-1/>.

Although there are “factions,” they appear to be based on the authority of individual ringleaders rather than on shared motives. For example, the increased focus on light industry in North Korea on various occasions could be interpreted not as an increased emphasis on the development of light industry in North Korea by “reformists,” but as Kim Kyong-hui (responsible for light industry) reinforcing the basis of her authority.

This leads us to another problematic area, which is our excessive dependence on insecure sources, such as North Korea’s state press. Although scholars such as Carlin and Wit have attempted to draw out the existence of factions using state press to voice their viewpoints by relying on a close reading of North Korea’s state press, we cannot dismiss the notion that all stances taken in the state press were first ratified by Kim Jong-il.¹⁴

Similar contradictions arise when we depend on trying to read Kim Jong-il’s intentions through his wish to engage in dialogue. Madeleine Albright apparently heard Kim Jong-il say that he wished to reform North Korea but could not, because of the resistance of “hardliners.”¹⁵ If we examine this statement in light of what is purported to have been Kim Jong-il’s three tenets of diplomacy, in which his orders for dealings with the US were “Ply them with lies, and make sure they are logical lies,”¹⁶ we may reach a different interpretation.

Scholars such as Noland and Haggard have attempted to focus attention on the larger context, basing their studies on data from interviews with North Koreans in exile from all levels of society.¹⁷ Kwon and Chung have also based their studies on conversations with North Koreans in exile, and as a result, have given readers a glimpse into that other framework of thought that exists in North Korea.¹⁸ The former work rests on a quantitative study and the latter on a theoretical study; more comprehensive work in this vein in the qualitative fields would be welcome.

Ultimately, if we miss the larger context of change in North Korea and ignore the fact that looking and engaging within the sanctioned framework is limited, it is likely that we will continue to be confined to a myopic view of North Korea.

14 Christopher Green, “Red Box, Blue Box, Green Box: Arguing against Institutional Pluralism,” *Sino-NK*, February 8, 2013, <http://sinonk.com/2013/02/08/red-box-arguing-against-institutional-pluralism/>.

15 Carlin and Wit, *North Korean Reform*.

16 Jang Jin-sung, “The market shall set North Korea free,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/27/opinion/global/The-Market-Shall-Set-North-Korea-Free.html?pagewanted=all>.

17 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Witness to Transformation* (Washington DC: Peterson Institute, 2011).

18 Heonik Kwon and Byung-ho Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

A Policy of “Engagement” with the North Korea Beyond the Regime

The concern here is not to present a single perception of North Korea as “correct,” but rather, to scrutinize our current methodology and sources when studying North Korea. Aside from our inability to enter the country freely, there appears to be an intellectual bias in how we are failing to use the resources to which we do have access.

There is certainly value in seeing what can be gleaned from exposure to a limited range of the country’s facets, these comprising what the regime chooses to show or promote, and in some cases, what they unwittingly reveal. It seems, however, that a disproportionate amount of energy and resources is given to studies that represent this kind of narrow context. Such studies on North Korea perhaps appeal to that part of the Western mindset that still seeks to study an exotic Other—despite the hindsight of Orientalism.

Take the world’s obsession with commenting on and trying to understand the North Korean tears that fell after Kim Jong-il’s death. The process of understanding could be taken much further than what is offered by journalistic interviews, which formed the majority of our commentary. For Westerners to understand even their own emotional reactions requires specialist work and much reflection, and it is surely a much more difficult task to grasp the psychological workings of a poorly understood people under a regime as alien as that of North Korea.

One remedy is to conduct more psychological studies with North Koreans in exile in order to understand the nature of their worldviews in greater objective depth. Another related solution is not only to study, but to also work with, North Koreans in exile. At present, engagement in this way is perhaps stunted not only because of a perceived “bias” on the part of those in exile,¹⁹ but also due to our reliance on shared literature as a basis for discussion. This poses some difficulty in making the North Koreans’ shared experience the start of our discourse about North Korea.

Arguably, the problem is not limited to the field of North Korean studies. The dichotomy that exists between the writings of agents and that of observers, or of writing that is based on a subjective impulse versus an objective one, appears analogous to features of post-colonialist thought in the humanities.

Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism argues that Western studies of the East largely reflected those qualities the West wished to think were contrary to their

19 The vast majority of North Korean exiles are not “defectors” in the political sense. They may perhaps be more accurately described as “exiles”—those who would prefer to remain in their home country, if only they had not been forced out by harsh circumstances.

nature, rather than reflecting the reality of the subject or people being studied. In the sphere of Classics, arguably the cradle of Western civilization and therefore a rich field of application for Said's theory, scholars such as E. Hall have applied Orientalism's lessons to untangle our distorted view of the (artificial) divide between "West" and "East," while writers like Tom Holland have done the same for a popular readership with books such as "Persian Fire."

The philosopher Thomas McEvilley has put forward a similar argument in his book, "The Shape of Ancient Thought." This takes the form of a comparative examination of the scholarly traditions of Eastern and Western philosophies. His discussion of the post-colonial dilemmas within the academic field of Indian studies makes the following points. India gained independence from Britain in the mid-twentieth century but this event did not necessarily lead to intellectual liberation. Many Indian scholars perceived that inaccurate or selective narratives were being used to describe their history and present identity. Understandably frustrated at not being in control of the ways in which their identities were being characterized, a number of oppositional works were produced by Asian writers which were, predictably, dismissed by the West as politically motivated (the subtext of this critique being that the Western perspective was not). Neither could it be assumed that the West was objective in its stance. In fact, the initial judgment of Easterners as less intellectually rigorous than Westerners had arisen from a prejudiced and subjective study of Eastern scholarly traditions.

To my view, this shared experience appears to stem not so much from inherent friction between East and West, but rather from the tension that arises between those traditionally describing and those traditionally being described. There appears to be an element of power play, of a desire to speak louder than those whose world and lives are being described—although it is their world and lives that we are describing. **Y**

WHY DOES CHINA PREVENT NORTH KOREA FROM COLLAPSING?

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Why does China continue to support North Korea and prevent its collapse? Much research has been done on China's pursuit of its various security and economic interests in North Korea. Less research has been conducted on China's geopolitical interests in North Korea (defined here as how China uses North Korea as a tool to enhance its own political position relative to other states in Northeast Asia). Most importantly, there has been no study done on which of these three independent variables—China's geo-political, economic or security interests in North Korea—is the key variable that makes China do its best to prevent North Korea from collapsing. This paper aims to fill that academic gap. Through a critical analysis of the research done thus far by scholars in this field, and through an examination of the latest open-source materials, I arrive at the conclusion that China's North Korea policy is largely driven by a pursuit of its own geo-political interests and less so by its security and economic interests in North Korea.

Introduction

This paper aims to answer a question which remains a puzzle in international relations: why does China continue to support North Korea and prevent its collapse?¹

¹ For this paper, China's policy decisions towards North Korea are those made by the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG) and not those made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) International Liaison Department or the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The apex of Chinese foreign policy-making is in the FALSG which is the primary consultative body of the CCP for foreign policy. Ning Lu, "The Central Leadership, Supraministry Coordinating Bodies, State Council Ministries, and Party Departments," in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform*, ed. David M. Lampton (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 45-49; and Gregory Moore, "Less Beautiful, Still Somewhat Imperialist: Beijing Eyes Sino-US Relations," in *Handbook of China's International Relations*, ed. Shaun Breslin (London: Routledge, 2010), 135.

In recent years, North Korea's third nuclear test and its attacks on South Korea's Cheonan warship and artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island were provocations that were widely condemned by the international community. Despite these condemnations, China continued to maintain an overall policy of supporting North Korea despite knowing that this would result in high costs to China in the form of tremendous damage to both its bilateral relationships with other states and to its international image as a responsible rising power.²

Some scholars have attributed China's continued support for North Korea to the "special" relationship between the two states that had first begun during the Korean War when "hundreds of thousands" of Chinese soldiers died fighting alongside North Korean soldiers.³ However, over the decades, this "special" bilateral relationship has deteriorated significantly and "the ideological fabrics that bound the two together have eroded beyond recognition."⁴ China's establishment of diplomatic ties with South Korea in 1992 started China's "Two Koreas" policy and confirmed that "the bond once touted as that of teeth and lips" was "no longer as special."⁵ As there is "no altruism in international relations, including those between China and North Korea," it is clear that China has its own interests in mind when it continues to support North Korea.⁶ Numerous studies have concluded that China's greatest interest with regard to North Korea is in ensuring that the regime does not collapse.⁷

2 For more details on the impact that China's responses to the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents had on its bilateral relationships with the US and South Korea, see: Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: the Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations," *Rusi Journal* 156, no. 2 (April/May 2011): 74-81.

3 In October 2009, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao referred to the "hundreds of thousands" of Chinese casualties and 130,000 Chinese soldiers buried in North Korea. "Wen Jiabao paid visit to People's Volunteer Army Cemetery," *Phoenix*, October 5, 2009, http://news.ifeng.com/mainland/special/wenjiabao/200910/1005_8202_1376953.shtml.

4 Chong-wook Chung, "The Korean Peninsula in China's Grand Strategy," RSIS Working Paper, no. 192, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, March 8, 2010, <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP192.pdf>.

5 Samuel Kim, "The Future of China and Sino-ROK Relations," in *The Future of China and Northeast Asia*, eds. Tae-hwan Kwak and Melvin Gurtov (Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 1997), 271; and Chong-wook Chung, "The Rise of China and the Security Dynamics in the Korean Peninsula," in *China and East Asian Strategic Dynamics: the Shaping of a New Regional Order*, eds. Ming-Jiang Li and Dong-min Lee (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 97.

6 Ding-Li Shen, "North Korea's Strategic Significance to China," *China Security* 2, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 20. In addition, in his survey of Chinese scholars, Sunny Lee also found that the majority of the scholars he surveyed (at 47 percent) felt that the current relationship between China and North Korea is one which is best described as "ban xin ban yi di peng you" (half trusting, half suspicious friend) and it is no longer one of true friendship or one that reflects a true alliance. Sunny Lee, "Chinese Perspectives on North Korea and Reunification," Korea Economic Institute of America, January 24, 2012, <http://www.keia.org/event/chinese-perspectives-north-korea-and-reunification-0>.

7 Numerous studies have concluded that China's highest priority in North Korea is the prevention of

Much research has been done on China's pursuit of its various military-strategic interests (defined here as an interest in avoiding situations that will adversely affect China's military and strategic calculus in its Northeastern region, should North Korea collapse) and economic interests in North Korea. Less research has been conducted on China's geopolitical interests in North Korea (defined here as how China uses North Korea as a tool to enhance its own political position/standing relative to other states in Northeast Asia). Most importantly, there has been no study done on which of these three independent variables—China's geopolitical, economic or military-strategic interests in North Korea⁸—is the key variable that causes China to proceed with its policy of preventing North Korea from collapsing. This paper aims to fill that academic gap.

My hypothesis is that China's decision to continue to support North Korea and prevent its collapse is driven more by the pursuit of geopolitical interests and less so by military-strategic and economic interests in North Korea. The starting point of this paper is that China's North Korea policy is guided by its grand strategy which seeks to "engineer China's rise to great power status" by making the best use of a "20 years' period of strategic opportunity."⁹ From the Chinese perspective, this 20-year period (until 2022) is a rare window of opportunity for China to rise rapidly to become a "great power" and, should it not make the best use of this opportunity, a similar opportunity may not come for a very long time.

regime collapse: "Shades of Red," *International Crisis Group Asia Report* no. 179; "China and North Korea: Comrades Forever?," *International Crisis Group Asia Report* no. 112, February 2006, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/north-east-asia/northkorea/112_china_and_north_korea_comrades_forever.pdf; David Shambaugh, "China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term," *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 43-56; Jae-cheol Kim, "The Political Economy of Chinese Investment in North Korea: A Preliminary Assessment," *Asian Survey* 46, no. 6 (2006): 898-916; Andrew Scobell, *China and North Korea: From Comrades-in-Arms to Allies at Arm's Length* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2004); Jin-moo Kim, "North Korea's Reliance on China and China's Influence on North Korea," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 23, no. 2 (June 2011): 257-271; David Kang, "USC Director Reflects on Kim Jong Il's 'Great Successor,'" December 19, 2011, http://uscnews.usc.edu/global/usc_director_reflects_on_kim_jong_ii_s_great_successor.html; Bates Gill, "China's North Korea Policy-Assessing Interests and Influences," (USIP Special Report, no. 283, US Institute of Peace, July 2011); and Gilbert Rozman, "Why Beijing-Seoul Ties So Fraught," *The Diplomat*, January 28, 2012, <http://the-diplomat.com/2012/01/28/why-beijing-seoul-ties-so-fraught/?all=true>; Congressional Research Service, "China-North Korea Relations," January 22, 2010, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/138774.pdf>.

- 8 A key difference between the categories of China's "military-strategic interests" and "geopolitical interests" is that the former concerns/affects China's Northeastern region whereas the latter concerns the status/strength of China's political position vis-à-vis other states in Northeast Asia (including the US).
- 9 For more about China's grand strategy, see: Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); the phrase "20 years' period of strategic opportunity" was coined by Jiang Zemin in 2002 and quoted in: Ji-Si Wang, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no.2 (March/April 2011): 68-79.

There are three sections in this paper. The first section will cover the main military-strategic and economic interests that China supposedly has in North Korea and offer a critique of both these often-cited interests and an explanation on why neither of them is the main reason behind China's continued support of North Korea. The second section contains my research on the geopolitical benefits that China gains via North Korea and in relation to the US and South Korea as well as an evaluation of the significance of these geopolitical interests to China. The third and final section will sum up the key arguments and findings of this paper.

Critique of China's Military-Strategic and Economic Interests in North Korea

This section will focus on a critical analysis of the military-strategic and economic interests that China is often assumed to have in North Korea. I will first briefly mention what these supposed interests are and then proceed to explain why neither of these factors can be the main reason behind China's interest in preventing North Korea's collapse.

China's Military-Strategic Interests in North Korea

There are three often-cited military-strategic interests that China has in North Korea, all of which are related to scenarios that might unfold and adversely affect China's Northeastern region should North Korea collapse: 1) the loss of a buffer zone against US troops; 2) a refugee crisis; and 3) loose nuclear weapons/materials.¹⁰

Firstly, the mainstream argument goes that China does not want North Korea to collapse as this will mean the loss of a buffer zone against US troops currently stationed in South Korea. In the immediate aftermath of North Korea's collapse, US troops might cross the 38th parallel to "provide relief, enhance

10 Andrei Lankov, "Why Beijing Props Up Pyongyang," *New York Times*, June 11, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/12/opinion/12iht-edlankov.html>; Feng Zhu, "China's North Korean Contradictions," Project Syndicate, December 2, 2010, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/zhu1/English>; Bonnie Glaser and Brad Glosserman, "China's Cheonan Problem;" Bonnie Glaser and Scott Snyder, "Preparations Needed for North Korean Collapse," *PacNet*, no. 27, May 20, 2010, <http://csis.org/files/publication/pac1027.pdf>; Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder and John S. Park, "Chinese Debates on North Korea," *PacNet*, no.11, February 8, 2008, <http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/pac0811.pdf>; Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder and John S. Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor-Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," (USIP Working Paper, US Institute of Peace, January 3, 2008), http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/071227_wp_china_northkorea.pdf; and You Ji, "China and North Korea: A Fragile Relationship of Strategic Convenience," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, no.28 (2001): 387-398.

stability, or increase their influence.”¹¹ In the longer run, the US may also reach an agreement with its South Korean ally (since a collapse of the North Korean state would lead to the emergence of a reunified Korea led from Seoul) to base US troops and military facilities in the Northern part of the Korean Peninsula. This is of greater concern to China in an era of increasing security competition between China and the US and China does not want US troops to be based even closer to Chinese territory.

Secondly, should North Korea collapse, it is expected that a large number of North Korean refugees will cross into the northeastern provinces of China. China would then have to provide the necessary humanitarian resources in terms of food and shelter to a very large number of North Koreans. In such a scenario, unlike current instances of North Korean refugees being labeled as “illegal economic migrants” and repatriated back to North Korea,¹² China will not be able to give the same rationale for refusing these North Koreans, especially if armed conflict breaks out on the Korean Peninsula.

Thirdly, with regard to North Korean nuclear weapons/materials, there is a possibility of these weapons/materials getting into China as it would be impossible to fully secure all of the approximate 100 sites in North Korea that are related to its nuclear program immediately after North Korea’s collapse.¹³ The presence of nuclear weapons/materials in China would pose a direct threat to the safety of its people and could also be sold to rogue individuals and groups.

Critique of China’s Military-Strategic Interests in North Korea

In this section, I will explain why these often-cited military-strategic concerns cannot be the main variable that determines China’s North Korea policy. This is because there is no certainty that these problems will definitely unfold in the manner that is often assumed. Besides, even if some of these problems will unfold in the way that is often assumed, China certainly has the resources and capabilities to deal with them.

11 M. Taylor Fravel, “International Relations Theory and China’s Rise: Assessing China’s Potential for Territorial Expansion,” *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (2010): 518.

12 US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, “China’s Forced Repatriation of North Korean Refugees Violates International Law,” March 23, 2012, http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press_display.asp?id=2272.

13 “Seoul Suspects about 100 Sites in N.K. Linked to Nuclear Program,” *Korea Times*, October 5, 2009, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/10/113_52920.html; and Bonnie S. Glaser and Scott Snyder, with See-Won Byun and David J. Szerlip, “Responding to Change on the Korean Peninsula: Impediments to US-South Korea-China Coordination,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, May 2010: 13-19, http://csis.org/files/publication/100506_Glaser_RespondingtoChange_Web.pdf.

With regard to the possibility of US troops being based north the 38th parallel should North Korea collapse, this may be an unfounded fear for China. Christopher Hill had publicly stated that China and the US could come to an agreement that US troops cannot be stationed north of the 38th parallel in a reunified Korea. Moreover, Hill added that given the current political mood in the US and given the disappearance of the North Korean threat following its collapse, “it might be difficult... to continue to station any US troops on the peninsula at all.”¹⁴ Steve Tsang was also of the view that, should North Korea collapse, the “US rationale for keeping its own military forces in South Korea would disappear” and “if the US wished to maintain bases in Korea in the longer term, it would have to secure permission from a proud and newly united Korean nation” which is “hardly a foregone conclusion.”¹⁵

From the Chinese perspective, its senior leaders also do not appear to be too concerned about the loss of this buffer zone. Former Vice Foreign Minister Chun Young-woo had said that senior Chinese leaders increasingly felt that North Korea was of little value to China as a buffer.¹⁶ This is especially so in the post-Cold War era where China no longer views Seoul or Washington as a “direct military threat.”¹⁷

With regard to the possible refugee crisis China might face in the event of North Korea’s collapse, it could also be untrue that that there will definitely be hundreds of thousands (or even millions) of North Koreans who will cross over into and remain indefinitely in Chinese territory. North Korea’s collapse could unfold in many different ways. For instance, if there is no outbreak of armed conflict and if foreign countries are able to provide food to the North Korean people following the regime’s collapse, some of them may choose not to leave their home/ancestral land where they have lived all their lives. Even if there is an armed conflict which would result in a desperate rush for survival away from the conflict zones, the option of going to China would probably be limited mostly to people who live above the peninsula’s “narrow neck” and especially

14 Christopher Hill, “After Kim Jong-Il,” *Project Syndicate*, December 20, 2011, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/hill14/English>.

15 Steve Tsang, “China Without North Korea,” *Project Syndicate*, February 14, 2013, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/why-a-north-korean-collapse-would-not-threaten-china-by-steve-tsang>.

16 A senior researcher interviewed by Bonnie Glaser had added separately that keeping a buffer zone had declined in importance with the end of the Cold War and “won’t be important unless there is a new Cold War.” He also said that “the Chinese military doesn’t have special interests in preserving a buffer zone.” Glaser, Snyder and Park, “Chinese Debates on North Korea.” This *PacNet* commentary is based on a report that covers Chinese views of North Korea in more detail: Glaser, Snyder and Park, “Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor:” “US Embassy Cables: China ‘Would Accept’ Korean Reunification,” *Guardian*, December 1, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/249870>.

17 Scobell, *China and North Korea*, 17.

those who live close to the China-North Korea border.¹⁸ The people based in Pyongyang might find it difficult to venture northwards even if they wanted to due to difficult and rough mountain terrain.¹⁹

In addition, for those North Koreans who choose (and are able) to leave North Korea, they might adopt other options such as leaving en masse to South Korea,²⁰ or even go to other parts of China or Japan via sea routes seeing that the majority of North Koreans live along coastal areas and in the greater Pyongyang area. As such, this fear of an influx of refugees to China may be unfounded or exaggerated.

Even if one of the worse scenarios happens, Chinese officials had assessed that it could cope with an influx of 300,000 North Koreans without outside help although they might need to use the military to seal the border should the refugees arrive “all at once.”²¹ China’s PLA has also reportedly developed contingency plans for such humanitarian missions.²² Given its massive troop presence of approximately 430,000 troops stationed in the Shenyang Great Military Region that borders North Korea,²³ China certainly has the manpower to handle this problem. Moreover, Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Lind have estimated that it would require China only about 24,000 troops to “assume border control responsibilities” along the border.²⁴

With regard to the issue of loose nuclear materials following North Korea’s collapse, China’s PLA has also reportedly developed contingency plans

18 Moreover, in the view of Steve Tsang, such a refugee crisis for China would be “short-lived” and “international assistance would be readily available.” Tsang, “China Without North Korea.”

19 Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, “The Collapse of North Korea: Military Missions and Requirements,” *International Security* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 97.

20 In the event of North Korea’s collapse (and depending on the nature of its collapse), there is a possibility that North Koreans might be granted access by the South Korean government to enter South Korean territory (either through sea travel or via roads such as those leading from the Kaesong Industrial Complex to South Korea). The point I am trying to make is that it is too simplistic to assume that, should North Korea collapse, the one and only place North Koreans are likely to flee to (even if they choose to and are able to) is across the Sino-North Korean border into China. As such, the often-cited refugee crisis that China will face in the event of North Korea’s collapse may be unfounded.

21 “Wikileaks Cables Reveal China ‘Ready to Abandon North Korea,’” *Guardian*, November 29, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/29/wikileaks-cables-china-reunifiedkorea>.

22 Glaser, Snyder and Park, “Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor,” 19; Drew Thompson, “Border Burdens: China’s Response to the Myanmar Refugee Crisis,” *China Security* 5, no. 3 (2009) 16; and Chang-Hee Park, “North Korean Contingency and Prospects of China’s Military Intervention,” (IIIR Working Paper, no. 5, Ilmin International Relations Institute, October 2010).

23 Of China’s seven Great Military Regions (GMR), the Shenyang GMR is the one bordering North Korea. It has a 430,000-strong army. Cheong Ching, “China will not let North Korea collapse,” *Straits Times*, December 29, 2011, A2.

24 Bennet and Lind, “The Collapse of North Korea,” 119.

for counter-WMD-related missions in North Korea, especially since most of North Korea's critical WMD facilities are located closer to the Chinese border.²⁵

While it would not be possible to secure all the known nuclear sites (let alone the unknown ones that China may not even know about) immediately after North Korea's collapse, fortunately for China, Korea is a peninsula and given China's enormous military resources in the Shenyang Great Military Region bordering North Korea, it could technically "contain weapons, fissile material and WMD personnel by sealing off North Korea's coastline and its borders" in cooperation with other states.²⁶

China's Economic Interests in North Korea

There are two often-cited economic interests that China has in North Korea: 1) access to Rajin-Sonbong Special Economic Zone (Rason SEZ) and its ports; and 2) access to untapped minerals in North Korea.²⁷

Firstly, by having access to the Rason ports which are located in the northeastern part of North Korea, China can significantly reduce the transport time required for shipments from its Northeastern regions to its southern or to Japan and South Korea. For instance, it takes three days to ship goods from Hunchun in China to the Shanghai port (via Rason) instead of the usual 11 days by train. The use of cargo ships requires also just about one third of the money spent for inland train transport. From Hunchun to Japan's Niigata port, it would take just over 10 hours through Rason port instead of the three or four days it would take via the ports in Liaoning province.²⁸ Gaining access to the Rason ports is part

25 Bennet and Lind, "The Collapse of North Korea," 101; Glaser, Snyder and Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor," 19; Thompson, "Border Burdens," 15-18; and Chang-hee Park, "North Korean Contingency and Prospects of China's Military Intervention," (IIRI Working Paper, no. 5, Ilmin International Relations Institute, October 2010).

26 A detailed proposal on how this can be done is contained in: Bennet and Lind, "The Collapse of North Korea," 100-104.

27 Yeon-ho Lee and Jeong-shim Kang, "The Changjitu Project and China-North Korea Economic Cooperation: Beijing's and Pyongyang's intentions," (paper presented at the British International Studies Association (BISA) Annual Conference, Manchester, April 27, 2011), http://www.bisa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_bisa&task=view_public_papers_author_char_search&char_search=K; Daniel Gearin, "Chinese Infrastructure and Natural Resources Investments in North Korea," (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Backgrounder, October 20, 2010), <http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/ChineseInfrastructureandNaturalResourcesInvestmentsinNorthKorea.pdf>; and "China Secures Right to Use 3 Piers to be Built on N. Korean Port for 50 years," *Yonhap News*, February 15, 2012, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/02/15/88/0401000000AEN20120215007600315F.HTML>.

28 Andray Abrahamian, "A Convergence of Interests: Prospects for Rason Special Economic Zone," (KEI Academic Paper Series, Korea Economic Institute, February 24, 2012), http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/rason_sez_paper.pdf; "Hunchun Sees New Benefits of Location on the Border," *China Daily*, February 22, 2011, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/usa/business/2011-02/22/>

of a larger plan that China has which is known as the “Changjitu Project” (an abbreviation for Changchun City, Jilin City and Tumen River area) which aims to develop China’s landlocked northeastern region.²⁹

Secondly, China views North Korea as a good source of high quality anthracite coals that can be obtained at a lower cost (at an average of around \$101 per ton as compared to the international average of around \$200 per ton).³⁰ From January to September 2011, out of the 8.42 million tons of minerals that China imported from North Korea, 8.19 million tons (or 97.3 percent) were anthracite coals.³¹ China also views North Korea as a good source of other minerals since North Korea hosts sizable deposits of more than 200 different minerals and it has among the top 10 largest reserves of magnesite, tungsten ore, graphite, gold ore and molybdenum in the world.³²

Critique of China’s Often-Cited Economic Interests in North Korea

In this section, I will explain why these often-cited economic interests cannot be the main variable that affects China’s North Korea policy. Should North Korea collapse in the near future, it is certain that a reunified Korea (led from Seoul)

content_12055979.htm; “China Poised to Secure East Sea Shipping Route,” *Chosun Ilbo*, May 23, 2011, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/05/23/2011052300645.html; “Chinese People’s Daily on Operation of Rajin Port,” *NK News*, June 1, 2011, <http://nknews.org/2011/06/chinese-people%E2%80%B2s-daily-on-operation-of-rajin-port/>; and “China Gains Sea of Japan Trade Access,” *Global Times*, March 10, 2010, http://china.globaltimes.cn/diplomacy/2010-03/511351_2.html.

- 29 Rason comprises of three ports of which the primary one is Rajin port which has three piers. Chinese companies have leased the use of the first and second piers while a Russian company has leased the use of the third pier. Andray Abrahamian, “A Convergence of Interests;” “Report on Rason SEZ,” *Choson Exchange*, September 2011, <http://chosonexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Choson-Exchange-Rason-Report-August.pdf>; Yeon-ho Lee and Jeong-shim Kang, “The Changjitu Project and China-North Korea Economic Cooperation;” and Scott Snyder, “Rajin-Sonbong: A Strategic Choice for China in Its Relations with Pyongyang,” Jamestown Foundation China Brief 10, no. 7 (April 1, 2010), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36215&cHash=b8c79b916c](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36215&cHash=b8c79b916c).
- 30 North Korea had an estimated production capacity in 2007 of 25 million tons per year and it has approximately 20.5 billion tons of coal reserves. Drew Thompson, “Silent Partners: Chinese Joint Ventures in North Korea,” US-Korea Institute, February 2011: 22, http://uskoreainstitute.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/02/USKI_Report_SilentPartners_DrewThompson_020311.pdf.
- 31 These 8.42 million tons of minerals were worth \$852 million which is triple the amount compared to the previous year. “North Korea’s Mineral Exports to China Tripled from Last Year,” *Yonhap*, November 6, 2011, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2011/11/06/0200000000AEN20111106000300315.HTML>.
- 32 A large percentage of Chinese companies in North Korea are engaged in its minerals industry. Of the 138 Chinese companies registered as doing business in North Korea in 2010, 41 percent were involved in extracting coal, iron, zinc, nickel, gold and other minerals. Kyung-soo Choi, “The Mining Industry of North Korea,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 23, no. 2 (June 2011): 211-230; “North Korea, New Land of Opportunity?;” and John C. Wu, “The Mineral Industry of North Korea,” (US Geological Survey 2005 Minerals Yearbook, June 2007).

will emerge as a pro-US state that borders China.³³ This will mean that China will lose economic benefits it currently gains in or via North Korea.³⁴ However, this should not be a major concern for China, (and thus should not be the main factor behind China's continued support of North Korea) because China does have alternatives it can look to for similar benefits.

With regard to China's loss of access to the Rason ports should North Korea collapse, China does not have to be overly concerned about this as it has alternative ports in Liaoning province. China has in fact put aside 220 billion RMB (\$35 billion) in infrastructure investment into a new coastal economy development strategy whereby 59 port projects are scheduled for early development in Liaoning province.³⁵ For instance, China has been developing its Donggang Economic Development Zone (Donggang EDZ) with the aim of making it the "sea gate, logistics center and manufacturing base for Northeast China."³⁶ Located close to the Donggang EDZ is the Dandong ice-free port which is also in the process of being expanded to handle more cargo.³⁷ As such, the multiple ports in this entire development area of Liaoning Province coastal route could serve as an effective alternative to the Rason ports in enabling China to accelerate the development of these provinces.

Secondly, the minerals that China will lose access to in the event of North Korea's collapse do not represent significant losses for China. China's main mineral interest in North Korea is its coal—from January to September 2011, 8.19 million tons (i.e., 97.3 percent) of the 8.42 million tons of minerals that China had imported from North Korea were anthracite coals. If China were to

33 Christopher Hill himself said that, should North Korea collapse, "The successor state on the Korean Peninsula would be South Korea, a treaty ally of the US." Hill, "After Kim Jong-Il."

34 Given the extremely high financial costs of reunification, a reunified Korea led from Seoul will definitely need to use these ports and minerals in Northern Korea for its own reunification efforts. The amount of money required for reunification varies according to different studies and is impossible to determine. Estimates are around \$1 trillion if reunification were to take place between 2020-2029. The costs of reunification will only increase if it happens at a later time. Chang-min Shin, "Costs, Gains and Taxes," Publication by the Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, Unification and Law 3, November 2010; and "South Korean President Calls for Reunification Tax," *Reuters*, August 15, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/08/15/us-korea-north-tax-idUSTRE67E08K20100815>.

35 "Donggang District," *China Daily*, http://liaoning.chinadaily.com.cn/dandong/2011-01/13/content_12498842.htm; "Donggang Economic Development Zone," *China Daily*, http://liaoning.chinadaily.com.cn/dandong/2010-09/15/content_12498772.htm.

36 *Ibid.*

37 There are plans to invest 45 billion yuan (approximately \$7.07 billion) between 2011 and 2015 to boost Dandong port's annual handling capacity from its current 60 million tons of cargo to above 100 million tons. The aim is to make the port the largest along the Yellow Sea coast in China and to "cement its role as a transport hub in Northeast Asia that connects the Korean Peninsula with Eurasia." "China Expands Hub Port that Connects Korean Peninsula to Eurasia," *Xinhua*, October 25, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/business/2011-10/25/c_131211901.htm.

lose access to this approximate 11.2 million tons of annual coal shipments (this figure is obtained by extrapolating the figure above to obtain an annual import figure), it would not be a big loss for China as it would only be a loss of about six percent of its total coal imports of 182.4 million tons for 2011.³⁸ China can quite easily replace these lost amounts of coal by either increasing its own domestic production or by importing more from its current top two suppliers of Indonesia and Australia.³⁹

For China's import of non-coal minerals from North Korea, China also has alternative markets it can look to for these minerals. For minerals such as magnesite and tungsten which North Korea has an abundance of, Russia also has massive amounts and thus China need not be solely reliant on North Korea.⁴⁰ Given that China-Russia relations "are now at their best in history" according to the Chinese Ambassador to Russia,⁴¹ and given that Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin just visited Beijing in October 2011 to sign off on trade deals worth \$7 billion,⁴² Russia is likely to be open to the idea of giving China increased access to more of its resources in exchange for other benefits from China.

China's Geopolitical Interests in North Korea

Having offered a critical analysis of why China's often-cited military-strategic and economic interests in North Korea cannot be the main reasons behind China's continued support of North Korea (given the high costs involved for China),⁴³ I shall now focus on evaluating whether China's geopolitical benefits gained via North Korea—defined here as how China uses North Korea as a tool to enhance its own political position or standing relative to other states in North-

38 For 2011, China's total coal imports were 182.4 million tons. "China Overtakes Japan as World's Top Coal Importer," *Reuters*, January 26, 2012, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/01/26/coal-china-japan-idINDEE80P02720120126>.

39 "Understanding China's Rising Coal Imports," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 16, 2012, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/china_coal.pdf.

40 Deborah A. Kramer, "Magnesium, its Alloys and Compounds," US Geological Survey Open-File Report 01-341, 2001, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2001/of01-341/of01-341.pdf>; and Kim B. Shedd, "Tungsten World Mine Production, Reserves, and Reserve Base," US Geological Survey, January 2005, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/tungsten/tungsmcs05.pdf>.

41 Remarks made by Chinese Ambassador to Russia Hui Li. "China-Russia relations at their Best: Ambassador," *Xinhua*, September 26, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-09/26/c_13530762.htm.

42 Iain Mills, "A New Era in China-Russian Relations?," *World Politics Review*, October 18, 2011, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/10369/a-new-era-in-china-russia-relations>.

43 As mentioned earlier, China's continued support of North Korea has resulted in high costs to China in the form of tremendous damage to both its bilateral relationships with other states and to its international image as a responsible rising power.

east Asia—is the main reason behind China’s North Korea policy. Particular reference will be made to the geopolitical benefits that China gains in relation to the US and South Korea which are two key states that are inseparable from any analysis on China’s foreign policy approach towards North Korea.⁴⁴

China’s Geopolitical Gains in Relation to the US

As Andrew Scobell said, “China’s North Korea policy is more about Beijing’s view of Washington than their view of Pyongyang.”⁴⁵ Sunny Lee added that “when Chinese scholars, experts, government officials talk about Korea... their eyes are in Washington.”⁴⁶ As such, in light of the above statements, coupled with the importance of the China-US relationship to China and the US’ efforts to contain China’s rise,⁴⁷ I would argue that China’s main geopolitical benefits (gained via North Korea’s continued existence and relatively high dependence on China’s support for its survival) are gained against the US. These geopolitical benefits to China include: 1) a reduced amount of resources that the US can devote to the Taiwan issue; 2) an increased ability to obtain concessions from the US; and 3) maintenance of status quo in the regional balance of power.

Firstly, China wants North Korea to continue to distract the US in the region and prevent it from devoting more of its resources to Taiwan. From China’s strategic perspective, “Taiwan and North Korea are intrinsically linked” and “China’s relations with the DPRK are largely subject to its strategic calculus vis-à-vis the US, and with Taiwan in the background.”⁴⁸ With a continued threat

44 You Ji wrote that: “Under the current international situation... North Korea is an indispensable chip in China’s dealing with the US, the Republic of Korea.” Ji, “China and North Korea: A Fragile Relationship,” 391.

45 Official Korea Economic Institute Twitter page: Andrew Scobell, “China’s North Korea policy is more about Beijing’s view of Washington than their view of Pyongyang,” March 16, 2012, 8.47pm. Tweet, <https://twitter.com/KoreaEconInst>.

46 Lee, “Chinese Perspectives on North Korea and Reunification.”

47 There is ample evidence to suggest that at least in a military sense, the US has already been attempting to contain China in recent years: US technology transfer restrictions on trade with China, US pressure on the European Union and Israel not to sell weapons to China, the upgrading of US military capabilities in Guam, the offer of advanced weaponry to Taiwan, increased defense coordination and consultation with Taiwan, and the push for a more active Japanese role in the US-Japan alliance. Thomas J. Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and US Policy Towards East Asia,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 109. US efforts to contain China’s rise were arguably confirmed by US President Obama’s announcement in late 2011 that the US government is going to “pivot” to Asia. This is seen in some circles as a euphemism for a broader US containment strategy of China which is a theory that I subscribe to. “Obama Tells Asia: US ‘Here to Stay’ as a Pacific Power,” *Guardian*, November 17, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/17/obama-asia-pacific-address-australia-parliament>.

48 You Ji, “Dealing with the ‘North Korea Dilemma:’ China’s Strategic Choices,” (RSIS Working Paper, no. 229, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, June 21, 2011): 12; and Shen, “North Korea’s

from North Korea, the US will be forced to have a significant amount of diplomatic resources and troops “tied down on the Korean Peninsula and looking north toward the DPRK” rather than looking south toward Taiwan.⁴⁹ As reunification with Taiwan remains China’s core national interest, China does not want the US to interfere too much in what it considers to be an internal matter.

Secondly, China wants to use its influence over North Korea to increase its own bargaining power and to get more concessions from the US. Being the only major state in the world that has a relatively higher influence over and access to the top North Korean leadership, China can use this as a bargaining chip against the US which does not have diplomatic relations with North Korea.⁵⁰ China’s influence over North Korea was acknowledged when both the US State Department spokesman Philip Crowley and the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen said that China does have unique influence with North Korea.⁵¹ In addition, China is also the only major state that has “eyes on the ground” in North Korea.⁵² Kurt Campbell added that the US had “asked China to share information on developments” in North Korea following Kim Jong-il’s death.⁵³ Even the CIA seems to lack intelligence about North Korea as a former CIA official pointed out that US intelligence has a “failure to penetrate deep into the existing leadership.”⁵⁴ This unique (and relatively higher level of) influence that China has over North Korea, coupled with the insider information that China has, strengthens China’s position to seek concessions from the US on a broad range of bilateral issues.

Thirdly, China wants to prevent North Korea’s collapse because it wants to maintain the status quo in the regional balance of power. Should North Korea

Strategic Significance to China,” 19.

49 Congressional Research Service, “China-North Korea Relations,” 8.

50 While there is constant debate and uncertainty over the amount of absolute influence that China has over North Korea (i.e., will North Korea actually obey China’s instructions?), China undoubtedly has relatively higher influence over North Korea (and relatively higher level of access to its top leadership) compared to any other major state in the world. This relatively higher level of influence and access is the source of China’s bargaining strength vis-à-vis the other states in Northeast Asia (including the US).

51 “Obama Dispatches Aircraft Carrier to Yellow Sea After North Korean Attack,” *Bloomberg News*, November 25, 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-11-23/obama-to-callsouth-korea-s-lee-after-attack-by-north-kills-two-soldiers.html>; and “Admiral Mike Mullen’s Speech in Seoul,” US Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 8, 2010, <http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?id=1502>.

52 Victor Cha, “North Korea: What Not To Do,” *PacNet*, no. 1, January 9, 2012, <http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1.pdf>.

53 “Assistant Secretary Campbell’s Remarks to Media in Tokyo,” US State Department, January 9, 2012, <http://translations.state.gov/st/english/texttrans/2012/01/20120109104517su0.901527.html#axzz1mtqzal00>.

54 “Veil of Secrecy Keeps Foreign Intelligence Agencies in the Dark,” *Straits Times*, December 22, 2011, A8.

collapse in the near future, a pro-US reunified Korea (that is run from Seoul) would emerge on China's border. China would rather "maintain the geopolitical status quo rather than face the possibility of a peninsula unified in South Korea's image" which would greatly tilt the regional balance of power in favor of the US since China would be flanked by US allies (i.e., reunified Korea, Japan, Taiwan) all along its eastern coast and border.⁵⁵ Moreover, should China cease to support North Korea with the result of it to be on the brink of collapse, a desperate North Korea might reach out to the US to ensure its survival.⁵⁶ In the worst case scenario from China's perspective, North Korea might rapidly improve relations with the US and might cease to be a clear pro-China state.⁵⁷ In addition, China also wants to prevent North Korea's collapse as it is concerned that a reunified Korea would emerge as a much stronger nation in the long run—a Goldman Sachs study reported that a reunified Korea's GDP could exceed that of France, Germany and Japan in 30 to 40 years.⁵⁸ This would also affect the regional balance of power especially if this economically powerful and reunified Korea is a pro-US state.

China's Geopolitical Gains in Relation to South Korea

China can also use its influence over and access to North Korea as a bargaining chip to strengthen its political position against other Northeast Asian states. For this paper, I shall focus on the geopolitical benefits that China gains vis-à-vis South Korea.⁵⁹ China's main geopolitical benefits gained vis-à-vis South Korea include: 1) China is able to obtain more concessions from South Korea; and 2) China buys more time to attract South Korea into its sphere of influence.

Firstly, China can use its relatively higher levels of influence over and access to North Korea to get more concessions from South Korea. Since the ef-

55 Thompson, "Silent Partners," 76; and Shen, "North Korea's Strategic Significance to China," 21-22; Victor Cha has a similar view and he said that "China does not want to see a unified Korea." Cha, "North Korea: What Not To Do," and Glaser, Snyder and Park, "Chinese Debates on North Korea."

56 This ability of North Korea to look to the US for assistance was again shown in early 2012 when North Korea struck a deal with the US to suspend its nuclear program in return for 240,000 tons of food aid. "North Korea Agrees to Halt Nuclear Activities for Food," *CNN*, March 1, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/29/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-deal/index.html>.

57 This is one of the four "intense debates" surrounding China-North Korea relations that Chinese analysts have had and which is documented in: Glaser, Snyder and Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor."

58 Goo-hoon Kwon, "A United Korea? Reassessing North Korea Risks (Part 1)," Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper, no. 188, September 21, 2009, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/29410664/Goldman-Sachs-Global-Economics-Paper-a-United-Korea-Reassessing-North-Korea-Risks>.

59 It must be added that China can also gain similar benefits in relation to Japan since Japan does not have diplomatic relations with North Korea.

fective management of inter-Korean relations is always very high on South Korea's diplomatic agenda and since inter-Korean relations/dialogues remain at a low point at this moment,⁶⁰ China can use its close links to the top North Korean leadership to convey messages to North Korea and also help South Korea defuse the tensions that it has with North Korea. Given that, following Kim Jong-il's death, South Korea is "desperate for information about the situation in North Korea," China can discreetly offer to supply South Korea with the information it needs (since it is the state that knows most about what is going on in North Korea's elite circles) in exchange for other concessions from South Korea on a broad range of bilateral issues.⁶¹

Secondly, by preventing North Korea's collapse, China can buy time to attract South Korea into its sphere of influence and away from the US sphere of influence. Should North Korea collapse in the near future, it is certain that a pro-US reunified Korea led from Seoul will emerge which would be detrimental to China's interests in maintaining the status quo in the regional balance of power. By preventing North Korea's collapse, China can continue to work on attracting South Korea into its sphere of influence in the hope that when Korean reunification (led from Seoul) does eventually happen—a view even held by senior Chinese officials but under certain conditions⁶²—it will at least be a neutral state that is neither pro-China nor pro-US. This was also the view expressed by the majority (at 43 percent) of the 46 top Chinese scholars surveyed by Sunny Lee when they were asked for the circumstances under which they would support Korean reunification.⁶³ Since China is becoming an increasing important and attractive trade partner for South Korea, given more time, China hopes to lure South Korea away from the US.⁶⁴

60 South Korea drastically reduced its bilateral dealings with North Korea following its 2010 attacks. Seoul suspended inter-Korean trade and suspended most of its humanitarian aid. South Korean economic aid to North Korea was slashed from about \$370 million in 2007 to \$45 million in 2008 and \$1.9 million in 2010 and the number of inter-Korean talks dropped from an average of 19 per year between 1993 and 2007 to a total of 20 for 2008-10. "Seoul Keeps an Open Mind on North Korea," IISS Strategic Comments, March 9, 2012, <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic%20comments/sections/2012-bb59/seoul-keeps-an-open-mind-on-north-korea-5e0c>; and Snyder and Byun, "Cheonan and Yeonpyeong."

61 Cha, "North Korea: What Not To Do."

62 "US Embassy Cables: China 'Would Accept' Korean Reunification," *Guardian*, December 1, 2010; and "Wikileaks Cables Reveal China 'Ready to Abandon North Korea,'" *Guardian*, November 29, 2010.

63 Lee, "Chinese Perspectives on North Korea and Reunification."

64 In January 2012, during an official state visit to China, then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak took part in a business forum that was co-hosted by the Korea Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade. He remarked on the phenomenal results of the bilateral relations in all areas over the past two decades and acknowledged the realization of the bilateral trade target of \$200 billion at an earlier date than targeted. He added that: "I believe

The Significance of China's Geopolitical Interests in North Korea

In this section, I will argue that China's geopolitical interests obtained via North Korea represent the key variable and consideration behind its decision to continue supporting North Korea and to prevent its collapse. China is aware of and keen to hold on to the geopolitical benefits that it currently attains from North Korea's continued existence.⁶⁵ Should North Korea collapse, China's power position in Northeast Asia will be significantly weakened, especially since China cannot obtain similar geopolitical benefits via any other state in Northeast Asia. I shall elaborate more on why North Korea is so geopolitically significant to China to the point that this is the main reason why China does its best to prevent North Korea's collapse.

Firstly, North Korea is the only clear anti-US state in Northeast Asia that China can get to be on its side. Given that Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are clearly on the US side and since Mongolia is not a significant political actor in the region, the only other states in Northeast Asia that China could look to in order to help it maintain the balance of power in the region are Russia and North Korea. Given that Russia wants to be neutral (as far as possible) between China and the US in this post-Cold War era and "does not wish for an alliance with either country even if one were on offer,"⁶⁶ North Korea is China's only option left. Should North Korea collapse, the resulting regional balance of power would be tilted in favor of the US and China would be left without an ally in Northeast Asia.

Secondly, North Korea is the only state in Northeast Asia that is directly and openly hostile to the US. Given that Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are all pro-US at the moment (and for the foreseeable future), coupled with the fact that Russia no longer possesses the same level of threat to the US as it once did during the Cold War, North Korea poses the most serious direct threat to the

that the two countries will reach the trade goal of \$300 billion by 2015 without difficulty." South Korean Presidential Website, "The President Brings Consolidated Partnership from Beijing," January 13, 2012, http://english.president.go.kr/pre_activity/summit/diplomacy_view.php?uno=6207&board_no=E05&search_key=&search_value=&search_cate_code=&cur_page_no=1&code=13. In addition, in a commentary written by Sunny Lee, he discussed whether China is trying to (and whether it will be able to) "pull" South Korea away from US influence. Sunny Lee, "Will China's Soft-Power Strategy on South Korea Succeed?," *PacNet*, no. 23, April 8, 2013, <http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1323.pdf>.

65 Moreover, the geopolitical benefits that China attains via North Korea are multi-dimensional in the sense that China can use their influence over and information about North Korea to gain concessions from any state in the world that has certain interests in North Korea. For this paper, I shall just focus on the geopolitical benefits that China gains in relation to the US and South Korea.

66 Anatol Lieven, "US-Russian Relations and the Rise of China," *New America Foundation*, July 11, 2011, http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/us_russian_relations_and_the_rise_of_china.

US. North Korea's continued existence means that it will continue to command a large amount of attention and resources from the US. Should North Korea collapse, there is no direct threat to the US on the same scale as North Korea in Northeast Asia and this would enable the US to channel more resources (having had them freed up from the Korean Peninsula) to the Taiwan issue.

Thirdly, as North Korea is highly dependent on China for its survival, China is the only major state in the world that has relatively higher levels of influence over, access to and insider information about North Korea's leaders.⁶⁷ North Korea is still highly dependent on Chinese economic support for its own survival—up to 90 percent of its energy supply, 80 percent of its consumer products and 40-45 percent of its food supply comes from China⁶⁸—therefore it is still subject to certain demands from China in return for continued assistance. No other state in Northeast Asia is as dependent on China for its own survival and thus subject to such a degree of external influence from China. Should North Korea collapse, China would be left without an alternative state that it could “use” as a bargaining chip to strengthen its negotiating position against states such as the US and South Korea.

Conclusion

Robert Jervis said that “only rarely does a single factor determine the way politics will work out” in the post-Cold War future of world politics.⁶⁹ In the case of China's North Korea policy, its geopolitical, military-strategic and economic interests all play some part (but to different degrees) in its decision to support North Korea and to prevent its collapse. Following a critical analysis of the research done thus far by scholars in this field and through an examination of open-source materials, I arrive at the conclusion that China's North Korea policy is largely driven by a pursuit of its own geopolitical interests and less so by its military-strategic and economic interests in North Korea.

In this paper, I have shown that the often-cited military-strategic concerns China has (with regard to North Korea's collapse) are largely unfounded. There is no strong evidence to suggest that the US actually has concrete plans to station its troops for the long haul north of the 38th parallel following North Ko-

67 “Obama Dispatches Aircraft Carrier to Yellow Sea After North Korean Attack,” *Bloomberg News*; “Admiral Mike Mullen's Speech in Seoul,” U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 8, 2010; and Cha, “North Korea: What Not To Do;” US State Department, “Assistant Secretary Campbell's Remarks to Media in Tokyo.”

68 Lee, “Chinese Perspectives on North Korea and Reunification.”

69 Robert Jervis, “The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past?” *International Security* 16, no.3 (Winter 1991/1992): 4.

rea's collapse. Even if some of the other problems such as the influx of refugees into China's northeastern region and the problem of loose nuclear weapons/materials do arise, these are problems that China has the resources and capabilities to manage, especially since it has already formulated contingency plans to deal with these scenarios.

Regarding the economic interests that China has in North Korea, I have also shown that, should North Korea collapse, the loss of economic benefits in North Korea will not represent significant losses for China as it does have alternatives it can look to. In the case of the loss of access to the Rason ports, China has alternative ports in Liaoning Province that can do just as effective a job in guaranteeing sea access for shipments out of northeastern China that are aimed at accelerating the development of China's landlocked Northeastern provinces. In the case of the loss of access to the minerals that China currently obtains from North Korea, China is also not overly concerned about this issue as its coal imports from North Korea do not represent a large percentage of China's total coal imports and the non-coal minerals that China wants are also attainable in other parts of the world.

Most importantly, I have shown that China's key interest in preventing North Korea's collapse is actually the geopolitical benefits that it is currently gaining via North Korea. These geopolitical benefits include: getting the US tied down on the Korean Peninsula so that they can devote less resources to Taiwan; China using its influence over and access to North Korea as a bargaining chip to obtain more concessions from the US and South Korea over a broad range of bilateral issues; and the use of North Korea to maintain the status quo in the regional balance of power. China cannot afford to lose these geopolitical benefits which are highly significant to it especially in a period of increasing China-US competition. Moreover, there is no other state in Northeast Asia that China can "use" to obtain similar geopolitical benefits to what North Korea can provide it with.

In sum, in an era where the US is still the dominant superpower in the world and when it is trying to contain China's rise, if China wants to make full use of what Jiang Zemin termed the "20 years' period of strategic opportunity" to rise to become a great power, it will definitely need to continue to support North Korea and to prevent its collapse for the foreseeable future. Y

ESSAYS

**MARKETIZATION AND YUANIZATION:
ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE DPRK**

Christopher Green

**THE ONCE MIGHTY PARADIGM: A
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MARKETIZATION AND YUANIZATION: ECONOMIC CHANGES IN THE DPRK

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Introduction

Implemented without prior warning on November 30, 2009, the DPRK currency redenomination confirmed something that had been increasingly apparent since 2002: that one of the most pressing issues facing the mass of DPRK citizens in the modern era is ensuring access to sources of value in which to securely store their assets. This is a crucial issue not only because inflationary pressures are putting the North Korean won under constant strain; it is also the case because the government of the DPRK has demonstrated an apparent readiness when necessary to expropriate the assets of the majority for the benefit of a minority, making economic policy an issue of class struggle rather than fiscal rebalancing.¹

Policies of the type exemplified by the currency redenomination are not without global precedent; history is littered with economic policies that had serious ramifications for specific groups in the target society. One example, the December 1979 “demonetization” of Zaire, is described at length in this essay. In countries like the DPRK (and Zaire), which are typified by undemocratic systems of governance, non-existent property rights, banking systems wholly subordinate to official fiat, and state ambivalence or hostility to free markets, such policies are a particularly acute threat to human security, as they leave citizens at risk of livelihood shocks and with a circumscribed choice of value storage mediums.

Some of the DPRK government’s tools of expropriation are impossible to restrict: the extraction of non-tax payments from the civilian by a state representative of one sort or another, for example. But in other areas civilians are able to insulate themselves. One way in which they can do so is to store their liquid

1 The *Daily NK* provides North Korean Won-US Dollar exchange rate data: <http://www.dailynk.com/korean/market.php> [in Korean].

assets in foreign currency, and this is an increasingly popular choice. Although other currencies are also used for the same purpose, the prevalence of the phenomenon in towns and cities along the border with China has led me to label the process *Yuanization*.

State Forfeits Control of Livelihoods

In order to understand the critical importance of *Yuanization*, it is necessary to look back into the history of DPRK marketization itself. For the purpose of this article, that history is taken to begin in 1994 and continue through the present day. It should be noted, however, that small farmers' markets and a handful of other low-impact private commercial activities have actually existed in some form or another throughout much of the DPRK's 60-year history.²

Nevertheless, widespread market activities only firmly took hold in the mid-1990s. This was due to the creation of a space, both political and physical, into which private commerce could be inserted. The most commonly cited catalysts for this process of governmental regression and simultaneous space creation were the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990-91 and the death of national founder Kim Il-sung on July 8, 1994. These are also generally seen as the primary causes of a famine that killed anywhere from 600,000 to three million people over the course of three to five years, mostly, but far from exclusively, in the rural north of the country (Jagang, Ryanggang and Hamgyeong provinces).³⁴

This history must be put into broader context, however. High-level sources demonstrate that the DPRK leadership was aware that their command economic model was failing much earlier than this. Most notably, former Korean Workers' Party International Secretary Hwang Jang-yop notes in his 1998 memoirs, "I didn't have all that much interest in statistics, but it was impossible not to notice that the North Korean economy was constantly recording minus figures."⁵

"It was no coincidence," Hwang goes on to say, "that the time when Kim Jong-il came to power and the time when the North Korean economy went into decline occurred simultaneously." Kim assumed a critical mass of political power in September 1973 when he took over the party departments in control of personnel and propaganda via the seventh plenary session of the Fifth Central Committee of the Workers' Party, and was certainly in unassailable control by

2 Hak-sun Baek, *Bukhan gwonnyeokui yeoksa* (The history of power in North Korea), (Seoul: Hanul Books, 2011).

3 Baek, *Bukhan gwonnyeokui yeoksa*.

4 Ministry of Unification, *Bukhan thae 2011* (North Korea 2011), (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2011).

5 Jang-yop Hwang, *Naneun yeoksaiu jinnireul boatda* (I saw the truth of history) (Seoul: Zeitgeist, 1998), 276.

the time of the Sixth Workers' Party Congress in 1980.⁶ Therefore, Hwang's claim is that Kim Jong-il knew in the 1970s that the DPRK economy was faltering badly. Hwang also records that "after 1986" the situation began to take an even more desperate turn, another data point that falls years prior to either the death of Kim Il-sung or the collapse of the USSR.⁷

However, no economic policy of significance was implemented by the government of Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il in response to this state of affairs, or to clear reform signals emanating from Beijing and Moscow. This implies, at best, that political stability was seen as more important than economic development. As a result, by the time events on the ground had begun to reach a head in 1994-1995, millions of people had already stopped receiving the rations that had hitherto met their minimum daily needs under the state-run Public Distribution System. According to refugee interviews cited by Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard in *Witness to Transformation*, state distribution had by and large ceased to provide for most people by 1993.⁸

In response, citizens adopted a range of coping strategies. These included compressed household consumption; direct, unofficial barter between individuals and entities; foraging on hills and mountainsides; defection; and soliciting remittances from relatively more affluent family members.⁹ Moreover, many people also entered the rapidly developing unofficial economy. Mr. Lee is one such person; a study in what coping with famine conditions through the unofficial economy meant in practice. A resident of Hyesan, the largest city in northern Ryanggang Province, his career remained on an unremarkable trajectory through the 1980s and into the 1990s. This meant graduating from high school and entering the military. There he rose through the ranks, and upon being discharged, went to and subsequently graduated from the Korean Workers' Party college. At that time, a party card was a guarantee of the desirable benefits that only accrued to officials. A newly minted party cadre, Mr. Lee soon found himself dispatched to oversee the work of a public utility in Hyesan.

However, the Public Distribution System had already begun to show signs of faltering badly, and events soon started to spiral out of control. Over a relatively brief period of months, Mr. Lee found himself isolated: the manager of 28 workers but without the support of a rationing system through which to meet

6 Ministry of Unification, *Bukhan ihae 2011*, 51.

7 Sung-chull Kim, *DPRK under Kim Jong Il: From Consolidation to Systemic Dissonance* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

8 Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Witness to Transformation: Refugee Insights into North Korea* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011).

9 Ibid.

their daily needs. Therefore, knowing that many of the medicinal herbs growing wild in hilly northern areas of the DPRK were popular in China, he organized his men to abandon their work and gather them. In the dead of night he would then float bags of the herbs across the Tumen River on an inner tube, and a Chinese partner on the other side would float back bags of wheat flour. By distributing this bartered income among his subordinates and their families, Mr. Lee and his team survived the so-called “Arduous March.”¹⁰

For the sake of brevity, I will not add further description of the way the unofficial marketization phenomenon moved forward in the post-famine era. Suffice to say that markets took firm root thanks to the hard work of individuals, trading entities and loose coalitions, who created a system of not only markets but also transport and logistics. The resultant system came to supply an overwhelming majority of the food and other necessities that helped 95 percent of civilians survive the complete loss of state support.¹¹

Pyongyang Bounces Back

While the state forfeited much of its control over the livelihoods of the population during the famine, it never ceded its ruling legitimacy as defined by the right to promulgate legislation. Thus, the administrative apparatus survived, and by around 2000 had recovered sufficiently to try and wrestle back control of the marketization phenomenon.

While constitutional amendments made in 1998 can be said to mark the opening gambit in this plan to return to preeminence, it is the *Economic Management Improvement Measure* of July 1, 2002 that was the greatest and best known. Under the measure, existing markets were legalized, and prices and wages elevated dramatically in what is widely described as an attempt to better reflect costs of production; modest autonomy was also subsequently granted to enterprises, and a debate is said have begun as to how far the liberalization movement should be allowed to go.¹²

However, there was another element to the changes when seen from the ground. This was a confiscatory element, one that directly targeted those indi-

10 Mr. Lee gave testimony to this effect at a conference organized by the US Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington, DC, in October 2010.

11 Haggard and Noland, *Witness to Transformation*. Evidence from South Korean intelligence sources suggest that there are still approximately 2.5 million DPRK citizens in “strategic sectors” that receive reliable rations from the state. However, this is done through a completely different ration system to the PDS, one that uses alternative funding sources (source withheld).

12 Robert Carlin and Joel Wit, “The debate in bloom” in *The Adelphi Papers* 46, no. 382 (2006): 35-52; and Bernhard Seliger, “The July 2002 Reforms in DPRK: Leiberman-Style Reforms or Road to Transformation?” *North Korean Review* (2005): 22-37.

viduals who had accumulated capital during the famine. This was because by raising prices and wages dramatically, without warning and without countermeasures to support losses incurred, the policy automatically and unavoidably eroded the value of liquid assets. This, then, was seen by holders of such assets as a confiscatory attack on their livelihoods. It also marked the birth of Yuanization: the time when those few persons who held domestic currency in significant quantities were first shown evidence that their nascent middle class status was at risk of expropriation or devaluation by the forces of state.

Any debate about the true intent of the DPRK government in making these economic changes remains fierce, but is ultimately irrelevant. *It was what it was*, and those few people with money lost much of it. Ms. Jang, a female refugee from Wonsan in Gangwon Province, and someone who, like Mr. Lee, had parlayed a military career into fiscal stability during and after the famine era, put it this way, “People around me learned right then in 2002 that you had to have foreign currency to be safe.”

Five Days of Pain: Mobutu’s Zaire in 1979

Debate over the intent behind the 2009 currency redenomination continues to this day. Either it was an honest but foolhardy and extremely unsophisticated attempt to rein in inflation, or a full frontal assault on the market economy. A few, drawing the link between 2002 and 2009 extremely tight, believe that the currency redenomination had actually been planned since 2002, and cite the dates of production on some of the new currency as evidence of this.¹³

The details of the policy are not subject to debate, however. It began without prior warning on the morning of November 30, 2009. Under it, the North Korean won was exchanged at a rate of 100:1, but with a limit on per person exchanges. Initially this limit was set at 100,000 won, but was later raised to 150,000 won following public protest. Families could exchange a certain sum per family member, while a further 300,000 won could also be exchanged, but only if it was put into a state-run bank. The state was to announce new prices for goods, and the entire exchange process had to be completed within seven days.

In line with the “inflation control” hypothesis, one official from the DPRK central bank told the pro-DPRK newspaper *Choson Sinbo* some days after the redenomination took place that it had been done because inflation was undermining the state’s policy to cope with natural disasters and the collapse of the

13 Gwang-min Jung, “Currency Reforms: Rationales and Reasons,” *Daily NK*, December 17, 2009, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?catId=nk01100&num=5789>.

Soviet Union. Under such an interpretation, the currency reform was a key plank in efforts to right the listing North Korean economic ship.¹⁴

However, as in the case of 2002, the appearance of the policy to people on the ground was one of outright expropriation of assets by the state, supporting the second view: namely, that Pyongyang intended to undermine, rather than improve, the market economic system. This perspective was shared by some international observers, among them economist Marcus Noland and political scientist Stephan Haggard, who wrote in a policy brief in January 2010:

Confiscatory currency reforms are a form of asset redistribution, or more accurately, asset levelling. Such conversions either tax those with excess cash balances (if they can be deposited in bank accounts on unfavourable terms and subsequently withdrawn) or destroy ‘excess’ cash wealth altogether. In the North Korean case, this last motive appears central: Currency reform was designed to target groups engaged in market activities that not only generate cash earnings but also require cash balances given the underdevelopment of the North Korean financial system, while at the same time providing compensatory allocations to favoured groups closely connected to the state.¹⁵

If, as Haggard and Noland claim, the redenomination was a tool used to wipe out private wealth held by certain groups, it has strong parallels with the “demonetization” policy of the government of Zaire. Implemented in December 1979 and led by another authoritarian dictator in the shape of President Mobutu Sese Seko, demonetization also had a time limit and strict limits on amounts that could be exchanged.

In the Zairian case the time limit was five days, though a number of these were weekend days on which banks, the location for all exchanges, were to be closed. Due to the geography, poverty, poor infrastructure and largely rural population of Zaire, this was tantamount to a guarantee that many citizens could not reach a bank in time to exchange their assets.¹⁶ Again, just as in North Korea, there were also strict limits on amounts of old currency that could be exchanged

14 I-ruk Kang, “‘Currency Exchange Measure: Purpose Is to Protect Working People’s Interests, to Stabilize, Improve Their Living’—We Hear From Cho Seong-hyeon, Senior Staff Member of the Central Bank—‘Material Ground Laid for Fighting Off Inflation,’” *Choson Sinbo*, December 4, 2009 [in Korean].

15 Stephen Haggard and Marcus Noland, “The Winter of Their Discontent; Pyongyang Attacks the Market,” PIE Policy Brief PB10-1 (2010).

16 Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

for new. Individual citizens were allowed to exchange just 3,000 units of the old currency. Small businesses were allowed to exchange 5,000 units, while larger companies were limited to 20,000 units. In a statement that echoes that carried by *Choson Sinbo*, President Mobutu subsequently indicated that his government had intended the policy to encourage people to use banks, and that through it the Zairian authorities had hoped to rein in inflation and create a stronger currency by recovering sums stored by speculators in the unofficial economy.¹⁷

However, a number of anecdotes from the era support the belief of Janet MacGaffey and others that the policy was not driven by these motivations. Most notably, there was the case of a number of cooperatives organized to overcome credit difficulties: despite a membership said to be around 32,000 and funds totalling more than 5 million units of old currency, the Zairian central bank branded these entities illegal and refused to allow them to change any money at all. At the other end of the spectrum, it is estimated that state employees in banks and other privileged positions appropriated between 20 percent and 40 percent of the total new money supply. In the words of Dr. Emizet Kisangani:

The big winners were bank managers and high-ranking officials who had no limit in exchanging their banknotes to new ones. The losers were the majority of farmers who lost their life savings, usually kept in pillows, mattresses or jars.¹⁸

Of course, it remains possible that President Mobutu was speaking honestly when he said he had desired to strengthen the banking system through the demonetization. However, even if this were in fact true, intent would still be far less pertinent than on-the-ground reality. Thus, in Zaire as in the DPRK, in demonetization as in redenomination, all resulted in the de facto expropriation of a nascent trading middle class. For those thus attacked, one inevitable response was to move toward storing value in a foreign currency that could not easily fall prey to the vagaries of state economic policy.

Yuanization: An Inevitable Response to a Man-made Problem

For the broad mass of DPRK citizens who were living hand to mouth in 2002 the message may have been indistinct, but by 2009, when economic conditions had improved somewhat and more people had small amounts of savings, it

17 Janet MacGaffey, *Entrepreneurs and Parasites*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

18 Emizet Kisangani, "Confronting Leaders at the Apex of the State: The Growth of the Unofficial Economy in Congo," *African Studies Review* (1998): 99-137.

was impossible to ignore. Through the redenomination, the DPRK government, whether wittingly or not, incited movement toward the holding of foreign currency.

My research reveals that a majority of market transactions in most parts of the DPRK now involve foreign currency on some level. I spoke personally with one civilian who recently made a video of market transactions taking place in Chinese currency in Hyesan, and learned that 90 percent of today's market transactions in that city employ foreign currency. Meanwhile, the figure has been put at 80 percent in Hoeryeong, a border city further along the border in North Hamgyeong Province, and as much as 60 percent in port cities further from the Sino-North Korean border such as Nampo and Wonsan.¹⁹

The key to this is a network of nodes: individuals, many of Chinese-Korean ancestry, whose sole business is exchanging currency. Indicative of the interrelation of the nominally official and unofficial economies, these people are politically well connected, and avoid periodic crackdowns on their activities through their links, frequently familial, to the Ministry of Public Security, State Security Department, and/or Korean Workers' Party. Their reach even extends to rural areas.

This does not mean that people are bypassing the North Korean won and using foreign currency directly with traders at all times, since there are limitations that act to preclude this. Notably, there is an absence of low-denomination Chinese yuan and US dollar banknotes and coins, and the use of foreign currency is illegal and periodically enforced. As a result, in a lot of cases local currency is still used for market trading, whereas value is stored for periods longer than 24 hours in one foreign currency or another.

Conclusion

There is rising demand for foreign currency in the DPRK today, and as the Zairian case shows, this is a phenomenon directly linked to DPRK economic policy. There is a network of currency traders operating nationwide to meet this growing demand, exchanging currency in urban and, to a lesser extent, rural areas. This phenomenon makes a positive contribution to human security in the country. As such, it is worthy of careful consideration by all those who strive to build a better future for the people of the DPRK. Y

19 "Border Cities Love Chinese Yuan," *Daily NK*, April 17, 2013, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?num=10496&catId=nk03200>.

THE ONCE MIGHTY PARADIGM: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF MODERNIZATION THEORY

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Introduction: Modernization and Diffusion

Every era spawns new ideologies, or variations on old ones. Attention during the early postwar era focused on three new realities: 1) the creation of numerous new nations out of European colonies in Asia and Africa; 2) the bipolar division of world politics between the US and Soviet Union; and 3) the hegemonic leadership of much of the world by the US. Reflecting the ascendant liberalism, the most popular theory of economic development up to the mid-1960s, both in academia and government, was the modernization or “diffusionist” theory. It fit well with American foreign policy objectives during the period: US planners needed a vision of the future, by which America could identify with the aspirations of developing nations, as well as a blueprint for economic and political development to blunt the appeal of Marxism.

Modernization theory posited that poor countries are undeveloped or underdeveloped because of their archaic traditional social, political and economic structures. In order to develop, these countries have to industrialize, and so must also urbanize. Before they can industrialize, though, they must overcome their traditional structures by shifting from traditional values to ones more congenial to industrialization. Second, importantly, the Western advanced industrial countries (AICs) serve as the essential models of development. The notion of a dual society is one of the most powerful concepts. It suggests that there are two sectors within any society, a modernizing industrial sector orienting itself to Western values (“islands of development”), and a backward traditional agricultural sector that takes time to catch up. Third, the condition of un-development is the product of forces within the country and has little to do with the international

political economy. Fourth, political and economic developments are closely linked. There are common political requirements for developing countries, and political progress implies democratization.¹

This article outlines the most important features of the influential stage theory, a subset of modernization theory. It discusses strengths and weaknesses, and shows how the weaknesses in the modernization approach led to the rise of the rival dependency theory, which became the most popular theory of economic and political development during the late 1960s and 1970s.

The Demigods of Modernization

Early modernizationists approach development as a sociopolitical problem, but do not suggest any immutable laws governing the process. Stage theorists W.W. Rostow and A.F.K. Organski see development as a discrete step-by-step process by which nations proceed from agricultural underdevelopment to mature industrialization. Rostow, in *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), is the more influential of the two.² He asserts that any developing society reaches a point of dramatic socio-economic change, and this transforms the nature of the economy. Put forth as an alternative to Marxist economics, Rostow's work posits five general economic stages through which all Western economies passed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. 1) They begin with a "traditional society," which is primarily agricultural and static. 2) A critical phase follows, the "Preconditions for Take-Off," containing the beginnings of scientific inquiry, increased agricultural productivity, and infant industrialization. Rostow stresses the importance of "islands" of modernity, i.e., vanguard economic sectors leading the developmental process. 3) In the "Take-Off," a "surge of technological development" and accumulation of internal investment brings both economic growth and the development of "social overhead capital," e.g., transportation infrastructure. 4) There follows the "Drive to Maturity," when the economy surges automatically because investment and growth have become permanent components of the economic structure, and industry turns from primary production such as textiles, coal and iron to secondary industries such as chemicals, electrical equipment and machine tools. 5) Finally, in the "Age of High Mass

1 See: David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1965; Lucian W. Pye, "The Non-Western Political Process," *Journal of Politics* 20 (August, 1958): 468-486; and Fred W. Riggs, "The Dialectics of Developmental Conflict," *Comparative Political Studies* 1 (July, 1968): 197-226.

2 W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

Consumption,” the economy turns increasingly toward mass production of consumer goods and services.

Rostow presents his scheme almost as if writing a cookbook. Working backward, he uses the experience of the AICs to generalize about development anywhere. The West succeeded this way, and now so can the developing world. To get going, developing countries need outside help in the form of investment and political support for regimes oriented toward capitalist modernization—key to his subsequent policy prescriptions. But, once they enter the take-off stage, they are on their own. The process becomes self-generating through the idea of “compound interest:” advancing economies fuel their own growth. Rostow’s stage four sounds like John Kenneth Galbraith’s “affluent society;” the AICs have arrived and, aside from minor adjustments, nothing more needs to be done. Instead, they should concentrate on helping nations currently in stage two.

Numerous criticisms have been leveled at Rostow’s scheme. First, it is deterministic; Rostow believes that every society must pass through these stages on the road to economic development. What he really describes is the peculiar case of economic development during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, centered on the Western nations of Europe and North America. There have been various departures from this scheme in the postwar era, such as the swift re-development of Japan and Germany following devastation in World War II, state-led development in the Soviet Union, China and other communist nations, retrograde development in Argentina, the resource-based development of Persian Gulf countries. The special case of the East Asian Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs), which depended on heavy US foreign aid and access to Western markets, as well as unique socio-economic factors, to quickly leap from agricultural to takeoff stages. Even the early developers (Britain, France and the US) developed at different rates.

Also, the process of development in postwar Asia, Africa and Latin America has proven to be anything but simple. Many nations that seemed to be doing fairly well in the 1950s-1960s slid backward during the 1970s-1990s due to falling commodity prices, increasing external debt and macroeconomic mismanagement. Conditions became so bad for many countries that such interdependence theorists as Stephen Krasner spoke of a permanent “gap” between rich and poor nations.

Second, the book is a victim of its own ambitions. Hoping to present an ideological alternative to Communism, it pursues a non-empirical dogma. Aspiring to provide a theoretical explanation of the developmental process, it is more like a blend of nineteenth century materialistic history and Ricardian economics. Despite its pretensions to grand new theory, Rostow’s work is a rather

pale conventional tract. The real problem is that rummaging through history for evidence to support an ideological position is a game that anyone can play. For example, Emmanuel Wallerstein's "Modern World System" concept uses the history of Western development to set forth a contrary point, i.e., that the structure of the world economy, dominated as it is by the early developers of Europe and North America, precludes current developers from going through the same stages experienced by the "core" capitalist countries.³

Stage theory might make sense if the terminology employed were not so imprecise. The notion of a "traditional" society is not easy to pin down. The term "takeoff" may have different connotations for economists, sociologists and political scientists. Rostow does not define these terms, except in the most general way.

Third, there was an easy and not always fortuitous spillover from Rostow's theory to policymaking.⁴ One could easily conclude that government should do little beyond encouraging investment and research, since investment is the key to economic development-cum-growth. This sounds very much like the neo-classical Washington consensus of the 1980s-1990s. The most unfortunate case of translation of theory to policy came during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the heyday of diffusionism. Rostow and others suggested that the South Vietnam was a test case of modernization. Rostow argued at one point that South Vietnam was entering the takeoff phase, even though Saigon's economy was increasingly being propped up by massive US aid and was able to maintain a semblance of stability only through massive official corruption. Failing to perceive that North and South Vietnam were not two separate nations, but two sides in a civil war emanating from the anti-French colonial war, American policymakers persisted well into the Nixon administration with the hope that something could grow out of the shambles of the southern economy.

To his credit, Rostow appends enough caveats that he can possibly wiggle out of the charge of determinism. He may also be seen as visionary in suggesting that the US and Soviet Union could work toward common ends in the developing world. Rostow is brave in conceptualization and broad in scope, and the work is a useful heuristic guide to the historical process of development, though perhaps not to postwar development.

Organski, in *The Stages of Political Development*, posits a similar conceptualization of development stages, though he concentrates more on political

3 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

4 See: W.W. Rostow, *The United States in the World Arena: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).

factors:⁵ 1) “primitive unification,” in which a government establishes authority over a territory, such as through monarchy, military government or bureaucratic government; 2) industrialization, brought about by bourgeois, Stalinist or fascist means; 3) “national welfare,” wherein the government responds to demands for protection against the conditions created in the second stage and 4) “national abundance,” when large economic organizations tend to organize the economy, and unemployment becomes a problem. He sees a kind of convergence between Western capitalism and bureaucratic communism. The West has averted revolution by boosting living standards for the working class, while the communists made things generally better for workers as a group. In the future, managers, planners and skilled workers would control both kinds of states.

While these latter points are interesting, his focus on large corporations may be off the mark of recent political economic development in both the West and communist world. He misses many of the economic trends of the last forty years, e.g., economic stagnation, the decline of various mature industries and “deindustrialization” of large areas of America and the purchase of American firms by foreign companies. Alvin Toffler’s nearly contemporary notion of a “Third Wave” of information technology as the organizer of society may be more correct. Moreover, Organski’s work has even less relevance to the developing world than it does to the developed world, unless one expects newly developed countries to resemble the AICs of the mid-1960s. More likely, they will move to industrial and social patterns closer to those current in the AICs. Thus, Organski’s book is not as useful as Rostow’s as a guide to development.

A key failure of the stage approach is its focus on economic factors to the exclusion of politics. Modernizationists who stress the importance of political development are on firmer ground. Huntington asserts three criteria for modernization: 1) structural differentiation within the society; 2) subsystem autonomy and; 3) secularization of the culture. This suggests an Apterian change of values must precede development. Samuel Huntington’s *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) is one of the clearest statements of the political vein of the modernizationist thought.⁶

For Huntington, the key goal of any government is political stability. Determining a nation’s stability is the relationship between the rate of institutionalization and organization in the political system and the rate of social mobilization. Development with political stability is possible only when institutional

5 A.F.K. Organski, *The Stages of Political Development* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Publishers, 1966).

6 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

and organizational growth are compatible with social mobilization, and with the newer social forces and higher levels of political participation unleashed by the development process. On the one hand, if social mobilization greatly exceeds institutionalization, political “decay” occurs, i.e., socio-political demands such as distribution of wealth preoccupy the system. Where social mobilization proceeds too fast, nations can either tip over into revolution or end up with politics in which various interests fight it out without the mediation of effective institutions. Political parties are the most important institutions for both mobilization and organization of the society, thereby institutionalizing politics.

On the other hand, should social mobilization fall far behind institutionalization, the process of modernization will be slow. Huntington also notes the trap into which traditional power structures often fall: lack of modernization goes hand-in-hand with concentration of power, but this makes it difficult for modernization to proceed. The problem for reformers is to go against traditional resistance to change while moderating demands for change from newer social forces. Since Huntington’s chief goal is stability, any government that achieves it seems acceptable to him. He rejects traditional notions of public interest, either as abstract ideas such as natural law, as societal interests such as Marxian class interests or as liberal notions of the competitive forces of society. Instead, he suggests that public interest is served by whatever strengthens governmental institutions. Even communist governments “provide authority.”

Huntington uses the balance of institutionalization and mobilization to compare American and European politics. Throughout its history, the US has been less politically developed than most of Western Europe, and as a result its politics have a marked pre-colonial English quality.

Huntington’s work is provocative, but contains major theoretical handicaps. He tosses out a number of interesting ideas that are never developed, and the book is little more than a string of hypotheses. As useful as his insights may be for subsequent scholars, they do not constitute a theory. First, why is stability the sine qua non of all political systems? Various other goals have been advanced by political movements and governments; stability is usually listed as a top goal by only the most conservative governments and is but one of their major goals. If a party ran on a slogan of “We promise you stability,” it might not get many votes, unless the country was in turmoil. For a developing country, surely economic development and growth are the top goals. To be sure, stability is a basic condition for any society, yet, while undergoing development, nations are usually willing to trade a bit of instability for a lot of development. That has been China’s case over the past three decades: how much liberalization does one allow before cracking down on political dissent? Chinese leader

Deng Xiaoping suggested that when one opens a window, a few flies come in, yet he agreed to the bloody crackdown in Beijing, because he felt the protests threatened the political stability of the nation.

Second, Huntington's explication of key concepts, such as mobilization and decay, is unconvincing. Mobilization is something that may be easy to measure where it is massive and where there is strong participation. Major twentieth century revolutions fit this category, such as those in China, Cuba and Vietnam. It is less easy to observe in calmer waters. In the US, for example, survey research has been struggling with measurement of participation for decades. Political decay may not be a problem outside of failing states. If a political system is being overwhelmed by popular political demands, and it is unable to address them, this indicates a need for reform. The nation may need better institutions and parties that can more effectively deal with such demands. To staunch the flow of demands at that point would either cause an immediate reaction or postpone the ultimate explosion. Perhaps one person's political decay is another's dawn of a new political era. Huntington is probably thinking of politically troubled cases in the developing world, such as Argentina, which have been overwhelmed by populist demands. Other developing countries, such as Taiwan, South Korea and India, have managed popular pressures much better. When examining developing countries, it is also important to be mindful of the reality of constant flux. After all, nineteenth century developing countries in Europe and North America were also in a state of flux. Britain, for example, barely avoided revolution in the 1830s, and France experienced three revolutions. To his credit, Huntington acknowledges in his article, "The Change to Change," that the question of modernization is bound to Western culture, and that it is difficult to define development.⁷

Later, Huntington and Nelson expand his thesis in *No Easy Choice* (1976).⁸ The book suggests that a key to development is the behavior of elites. Mobilization is not a response to socioeconomic change, but the "group context" that motivates people to follow elites. They reduce the process of development to two essential stages; in each stage, elites face critical choices about development. In the first stage, the question is whether to grant the benefits of economic development only to the middle class, the "bourgeois" approach, or to include the lower class, the "autocratic" approach. In the second stage, the choices are between high investment with greater inequality and low participation, the

7 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics," *Comparative Politics* 3 (April, 1971).

8 Samuel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson, *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

“technocratic” way, or equality with economic stagnation, the “populist” political system.

Here, one gets back to the kind of determinism seen in Rostow and Organski. Huntington and Nelson have particular examples in mind for these four approaches. The early nineteenth century developers applied the “bourgeois” approach, the Soviet Union and China the “autocratic,” Japan and the East Asian NICs the “technocratic” and the Latin American NICs (Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina) the “populist.” There may in fact be a rough fit for these cases, but what about the rest of the developing world that may not fit?

Conclusion: Return to Yesterday

Huntington’s study of political stability in the developing world may have been the last great work of the modernizationist project. The year 1968 saw both the onset of decline of modernization theory and demonstration of the limits of American power. Observers noted the high price of American-style development, as it meant the wholesale destruction of countries deemed backward, the uprooting and killing of millions. Actually, modernization never had a unified theoretical approach. Scholars questioned whether developing countries should modernize and if the AICs, especially the US, are appropriate models to emulate. Important issues in developing countries, especially poverty, are beyond modernization diagnosis, and modernization lacks any clearly specified model for the political economy of developing country. Modernization theory misses a number of key aspects of developing economies. Most notable is the “dual economy,” which is quite different than the modernization notion of islands of development as the vanguard of development. Modernization theory condemns traditional institutions without seeing their worth, fails to acknowledge indigenous patterns of development and does not understand that the problems of development in Asia, Africa or Latin America today differ greatly from those of Europe and North America a century ago. Modernization theory becomes merely an “ideological smokescreen” for Western neo-imperialism. Scholars soon moved beyond attacking modernization to formulating competing theories. **Y**

SAVING FACE: CHINA AND TAIWAN'S BID FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SEAT IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND SECURITY COUNCIL, 1950-1971

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Introduction

In the cascade of the Chinese Civil War, Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), was poised to quell the remnants of the lingering Capitalists led by Chiang Kai-shek, whose tongue was ripe with bitterness and failure in maintaining his unified China.¹ Moreover, Chiang rebuffed any notion that hinted at Taiwan as a permanent space for his Nationalists' government (KMT).² As tensions flared, Mao and Chiang became sidetracked when the Korean War, initiated by Kim Il-sung, brought Americans knocking on China's front door. Mao was called to aid his comrade, which exacerbated the international status of the CCP controlled Mainland, as it was pitched in direct warfare against the United States between 1950 and 1953. US President Harry Truman, in an effort to draw the People's Republic of China (PRC) forces from the northeast to hinder more troops from moving to reinforce the ones in the north, and to maintain the Republic of China (ROC), ordered the US Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait.³ The CCP intervention on the Korean Peninsula coupled with US efforts to secure the perilous Strait spared Chiang Kai-shek and his regime on Taiwan.

It would not, however, nix the disagreement between the KMT and CCP respective interpretations of a singular China. In fact, the disputed interpreta-

1 To maintain consistency with United Nation and United States' documents, this discussion will utilize Taiwanese Romanization, while all other forms shall maintain the Pinyin System.

2 Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 9.

3 *Ibid.*, 13.

tion of which government would legitimately represent China would pose as an obstruction to cross-Strait relations for the next two decades—that is, until the PRC ousted the ROC in the United Nations in 1971.

Due to new membership in the UN, a shift in policy preferences on the part of the United States, the ROC could not maintain its UN seat in the Security Council and General Assembly. In what follows, this discussion will trace the points leading up to the expulsion of the Republic of China while also focusing on Washington's efforts and its shift in policy preference from Taipei to Beijing.

Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Campaign Begins

Before the CCP was halted dead in their tracks in their attempt to muffle the little noise of resistance trumpeting from the island in 1950, Mao pursued a soft-line approach that would seriously bludgeon the KMT government on Taiwan. His strategy: international diplomacy. China's new Premier and Foreign Minister—Zhou Enlai—wrote to the Secretary-General of the UN to consider the PRC as the one and only legitimate governing party of China.⁴ He repudiated the legal status of China by the Nationalists. Because, in the view of Foreign Minister Zhou, an acknowledged CCP-administered Mainland would restore the true inheritors to the throne of China, which was robbed after the forthwith fall of the Qing dynasty.

Since Zhou was limited in his freedom to advocate for PRC inclusion, Yakov Malik, Representative to the UN of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), came to his aid. USSR Representative Malik, a proponent of PRC admission, advocated for communist China with the support of Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukraine SSR) and Yugoslavia:

At the fourth session of the General Assembly, the delegation of the Soviet Union informed the United Nations that it supported the communication of the Government of the People's Republic of China.⁵

Representative T.S. Tsiang of the ROC, deplored the USSR motion, “the statements just made by the representatives of the USSR and of the Ukrainian SSR strike a blow at the very legal and moral foundations of the Security Council

4 United Nations Security Council, 4th year, “Statements Regarding Representation in the Security Council,” No. 54, Official Record 29 December, 1949, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL4/906/43/PDF/NL490643.pdf?OpenElement>.

5 Ibid.

and of the United Nations.”⁶ However, chiding from the ROC did not curtail their opponents from insisting a vote after the General Assembly president ruling over the matter for further consideration. Malik insists:

I must therefore insist upon a vote being taken on my proposal.... I wish to state, furthermore, that the delegation of the USSR does not consider it possible that further meetings should be called under the presidency of a representative who does not represent China and the Chinese people and whose presence in the Security Council is illegal.⁷

The conclusion of the first episode of the beginning of a long series ended with ROC represented-China, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the US in favor of the ruling; USSR, Yugoslavia against; and India abstaining.⁸ The UN, at this juncture of the international relations of power, was four years in the making and the US had just emerged from the ashes of World War II nearly unscathed. Influence within the inchoate multilateral institution was by-and-large wielded by the US, as most other countries were occupied with nation building. In short, Moscow, Beijing and other Washington opponents would still have to begrudgingly allow China to be represented in the UN by Taipei.

Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai remained steadfast; he continued his diplomatic efforts by rebranding the PRC image—most notably, at the Asian-African Conference in 1955.⁹ There, he advocated for regional cooperation. He also emphasized US aggression in the Third World. This was especially important as many early members in the UN viewed the PRC as an illegitimate government. Yet, Zhou’s diplomatic campaign invariably failed to penetrate the US bulwark preventing PRC membership. As soon as representatives of the USSR pushed to include Chinese representation into the agenda, US efforts to undermine their attempts championed again. However, that would soon change.

6 Ibid.

7 United Nations Security Council, 5th Year, “Statements Regarding Representation in the Security Council (continued),” No. 1, Official Record, January 10, 1950, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/N50/033/54/PDF/N5003354.pdf?OpenElement>.

8 Ibid. For more information see: United Nations Affairs Document, June 3, 1952, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume III, Document 403.

9 “Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference), 1955,” United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/BandungConf>.

Tectonic Plates of the United Nations Shift

As memories of the Korean War began to fade, and as membership into the UN began to increase, tectonic forces within the multilateral institution began to shift. More countries, who were historically victims of western colonialism, matriculated into the UN. They began strategically aligning themselves with the CCP-administered Mainland. As such, securing the KMT-seat as the legitimate governing authority of China became increasingly difficult. By 1960, UN membership nearly doubled, from the original 51 members to 99.¹⁰ US influence in the maturing institution waned. The extent to which the US could urge other countries to vote favorably towards Taipei abated. Since the US represented a symbol of Western colonialism, among other factors, it was met with opposition from many of the Third World countries. When the US propounded a vote to block PRC representation, it passed by merely eight votes (which would have passed much easier in the past).¹¹ Emerging from under the brutal legacies of Western domination and into the UN (a palpable sense of power and influence), Third World countries could stand united. In 1961, the UN officially included representation of China as a part of its agenda, “[in] accordance with Article 18 of the Charter of the United Nations, that any proposal to change the representation of China is an important question”—a major breakthrough since Zhou Enlai embarked on this journey of restoring the PRC (in what he deemed to be true) as the rightful heir to the throne since the outbreak of the Korean War and conclusion to the Chinese Civil War on the Mainland.¹² Zhou Enlai still had one obstacle to overcome. An “important question” still required two-thirds vote from all General Assembly members. In other words, an increasingly timorous US earned some borrowed time.¹³

Every year, in what evolved into a stale tradition, the UN considered the issue of Chinese representation between 1961 and 1969; and every year the PRC could not obtain the aforementioned two-thirds vote—thus failing to expel the ROC government.¹⁴ However, this all changed when Henry Kissinger, National

10 “Growth in United Nations membership, 1945-present,” United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/members/growth.shtml>.

11 United Nations General Assembly, Fifteenth Session, General Committee, Resolution 1493 Representation of China in the United Nations, October 8, 1960 (A/4474).

12 United Nations General Assembly, Sixteenth Session, General Committee, Representation of China in the United Nations, December 15, 1961 (A/5033).

13 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, October 24, 1945, 1 UNTS XVI, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter4.shtml>.

14 “Struggle to restore China’s lawful seat in the United Nations,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/ziliao/3602/3604/t18013.htm>. In 1962, USSR drafted a resolution to replace the Republic of China in the General Assembly and the Security Council

Security Advisor to President Richard Nixon, conducted a National Security Study regarding US policy towards “China,” including costs and risks.¹⁵ China was the key to unlocking a redefined approach to foreign policy, considering the debacle in Vietnam. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to demonstrate that, even while in war-time, US potency could simultaneously influence the long-term peace processes on the international stage. Nixon is noted as telling Kissinger, “Well, Henry, the thing is the story change is going to take place, it has to take place, it better take place...”¹⁶ Indeed, no better position to be at than to be the authors of this “story” when the “story change” takes place. Therefore, the yielded conclusion was to develop a bifurcated policy directed towards both Taiwan and Mainland China, respectively, as ROC expulsion in the UN appeared imminent.

Bifurcated Foreign Policy in the Making

In December 1969, the US Ambassador to Poland—Walter Stroessel—made one of the first trips to the PRC. Through the furtive and critical passage of Pakistan, Ambassador Stroessel would pave an expedient path towards rapprochement with the CCP-administered Mainland for the US.¹⁷ Henry Kissinger in his memoirs writes, “the People’s Republic seemed to be saying two things [vis-a-vis Stroessel]: it was ready for contact... [and that] both our general interest [is] in improving relations.”¹⁸ All the while, US Secretary of State William P. Rogers was occupied discussing the burgeoning Latin-American bloc in the UN and its implications on the future of Chinese (ROC) representation with Taipei.¹⁹ His conclusion (eight months later) was that the prospects of China as represented by the ROC were bleak; and, the PRC was slated to very soon supplant their communist counterpart.

Roger... strongly implies that we continue our present policy even though eventually it will fail, and China will be represented

by the People’s Republic of China, yet failed to pass on October 30, 1962. Albania, in a similar resolution, was also rejected in October 1963. See: Foreign Relations, 1961–1963, volume XXV, Documents 230 and 274.

15 National Security Memorandum 14 to Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Director of Central Intelligence Agency, February 5, 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1972, Volume V, Document 273.

16 Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years: the First Steps Towards China* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company), 255.

17 *Ibid.*, 188.

18 *Ibid.*, 191.

19 Telegram from Secretary of State Rogers to the Department of State, October 11, 1969, FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. V, Doc. 279.

by the People's Republic of China (PRC), or by nobody... [and] we could move to one of the "two-China" variants....²⁰

In the above memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, Rogers proposed the US maintain their UN policy regarding Chinese representation, in spite of the reality that their abysmal efforts to maintain a ROC-seated China would fail. The US should go down fighting.²¹ The US plan: to propound a two-China and dual representation formula as a means by which Taipei can maintain its presence in the UN.

But, Nixon and Kissinger were not particularly keen to Roger's recommendation. The notion of "two-Chinas" explicitly contradicts how "China" on both sides of the Taiwan Strait perceive their historical narrative. The two-China representation formula conflicts with how the PRC and ROC, respectively, perceive China as a singular entity with one governing authority. Additionally, Nixon and Kissinger had just opened the Pakistani channel to the CCP-administered Mainland; pursuing a two-China representation plan would obviate the normalization process between the US and PRC. However, a two-China representation formula would indicate, at least to Taiwan sympathizers in the US, that Washington was still fervidly committed to Taipei. The US would not be a "sellout."²²

Perhaps the recommendation propounded by Roger was intended to be a political gesture to placate ROC-sympathizers. For, one might opine that it is quite inconvenient for a country, which espoused the democratic virtues of human rights and labeled the communist bloc as aggressors, to engage with a communist personality cult that was pitched in forthright warfare with its own citizens. Indeed, a bifurcated policy preference would be most appropriate, considering the above.

From late 1970 onward, the US concluded to not only surreptitiously normalize relations with Beijing, but also garner support from Taipei for dual-representation.²³ In a message delivered to Zhou Enlai (through the Pakistani backchannel), Richard Nixon organized a clandestine trip for Henry Kissinger to China to discuss the prospects of rapprochement in the summer of 1971.²⁴

20 Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, July 11, 1970, FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. V, Doc. 290.

21 Letter From the Representative to the United Nations (Bush) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), April 17, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. V, Doc. 346.

22 Ibid.

23 Report Prepared in the Department of State, September 1973, FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. V, Doc. 455.

24 Letter from Henry Kissinger to Pakistan Ambassador Hilaly, May 10, 1971, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 70, Box 1031, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-23.pdf>.

Simultaneously, Robert D. Murphy, an interlocutor on behalf of the Nixon administration, in a conversation with Chiang Kai-shek, discussed the possible defeat of the "Important Question" initiative, which required three-fourth votes and meant the expulsion of the ROC in the UN. Specifically in the aforementioned conversation, Ambassador Murphy advocated for dual-representation.²⁵

A Botched Attempt to Save Face

In July 1971, Kissinger embarked on his trip to the PRC via Pakistan.²⁶ Following his sojourn in East Asia, Nixon announced his ambition to travel to Beijing. From that point forward, the issue of Chinese representation in the UN degenerated to a countdown. As mentioned heretofore, the Nixon administration had long concluded that the ROC would eventually lose its seat. As such, US Secretary of State Rogers advocated on behalf of the ROC up until the final moment, only to fail. On October 25, 1971, the Important Question was defeated and the Albanian Resolution was adopted which replaced the PRC in the seat of the ROC as China.²⁷ The United Nations General Assembly decided:

... to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it.²⁸

The conclusion to the 20-year competition to unseat Taipei ended with the ROC delegation walking out. Chow Shu-kai, en route to Taipei from the botched attempt to secure the ROC seat in New York, contacted Washington. He shared his gratitude to the US for their "support" on the issue of ROC-representation and hoped for ROC participation in other specialized international organizations in the future.²⁹ While Washington expressed their "contriteness" for the

25 Record of Conversation between President Chiang Kai-shek and Ambassador Robert D. Murphy, April 23, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. V, Doc. 349.

26 Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, July 14, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. E-13, Documents on China, Doc. 9.

27 Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 50. Tucker makes the observation that one potential reason why Taiwan lost its seat is because the UN, as a collective whole, wanted to kick Uncle Sam. This is to say that Taiwan symbolized US influence and, as the UN membership began to diversify, the interests of those new members were to weaken that influence by eliminating Taiwan.

28 United Nations General Assembly, Twenty Sixth Session, Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, October 25, 1971 (A/L.630).

29 Memorandum of Conversation, October 29, 1971, FRUS, 1969-1971, Vol. V, Doc. 433.

UN debacle, it was evident well before 1971 that Taipei representation in the Security Council and General Assembly was bleak. In other words, the foregoing exchanges of condolences were mere formalities as to gear up for the next conflict between Beijing and Taipei—the debate over eventual reunification.

Beijing and Taipei's competition for the UN seat in the Security Council and General Assembly included an array of back-alley talks, strategic planning and a shift in policy on the part of the US. Initially, the prospects of a PRC-administered China seemed unlikely; however, as the rest of the world began to trickle into the United Nations, the tectonic forces within the multilateral institution began to shift as well. US influence within the UN waned, and the PRC bid for the UN generated more patronage from third-world actors whom could relate with the struggles of the PRC. While the Important Question borrowed some time for the declining trajectory on which the ROC found themselves, it failed to curtail the aforementioned Albanian Resolution—the adopted framework that ousted the ROC from the UN. Washington, for undisclosed reasons, reassessed their China policy and essentially jettisoned its liabilities. Now, in a seemingly final bout, Taipei must face the issue of reunification with the now legitimate governing authority of China—Beijing, their arch enemy of the past. **Y**

INTERVIEW

IN NEED OF AN ICON

Interview with Blaine Harden,
Author of *Escape from Camp 14*

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Interview with Blaine Harden, Author of *Escape from Camp 14*

*For an issue like “North Korean human rights” to enter the mainstream, it needs a genre, an icon, and an audience. In her New York Times essay, “The Story of ‘Night,’” journalist Rachel Donadio frames Elie Wiesel’s rise to fame as “a case study in how a book helped created a genre, how a writer became an icon and how the Holocaust was absorbed into the American experience.” Similar phenomena seem to be unfolding for former foreign correspondent for the Washington Post Blaine Harden’s re-telling of Shin Dong-hyuk’s escape from a political prison camp. *Escape from Camp 14*¹ has maintained a sustained spot on the New York Times best-seller list and is being slated for inclusion in some high school college curricula.*

Though it has a long way to reach Night-level status, it is safe to say that Camp 14 is increasingly being grouped into the canon of the concentration camp/Holocaust genre, that Harden and Shin are becoming icons of sorts, and that Shin’s story is being absorbed into the American experience. Indicative of Shin’s stature is the fact that he needs no introduction, and his personal history requires little more than bullet points: 1) born in a North Korean prison camp; 2) betrayed family members and saw them killed; 3) miraculously escaped camp; and 4) resettled in South Korea. But we must now also add to that: 5) went on to become the subject of a best-selling book. Shin’s story, encapsulated in the book is one of a short but growing list of essential touchstones in a tragic new cultural genre: “North Korean defector-refugee media.”

It is worth recalling, however, that only very, very rarely do the heroes of these pieces plough their furrows alone. In Shin’s case, the foil was decorated journalist and author Blaine Harden, and here, in a fascinating interview with Lecturer of Asian History at Queen’s University Belfast and Sino-NK Editor-in-Chief Dr. Adam Cathcart, Harden discusses the global impact of his book.

–Editor

Adam Cathcart: *Can you talk about the global impact of the book, in translation and beyond the US?*

Blaine Harden: Right now there are 24 languages. So that is virtually all of Europe, every major country in Europe and the smaller countries. In Brazil it

¹ Blaine Harden, *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*, (London, Penguin Group, 2012).

did very well. In Asia: the Korean version came out in late April and in late February in Chinese. It came out in Japanese in the fall, and the Russian edition is coming out early next year. So it is in every language except Spanish for some reason.

So that is the global component and the sales abroad in Europe have been extraordinarily good compared to what we expected. It has been a bestseller in parts of Europe, particularly in northern Europe. It was the best-selling book in Finland for about a month and a half and has sold well in Germany. So this is very unexpected.

Cathcart: *And to what do you attribute that success? Is it anything in particular or just the newness?*

Harden: It's the power of the story. Who is this young man who until he was 23 years old did not know right from wrong, and who didn't know the world was round, and who, when he was 13, betrayed his mother? He watched her die without any emotion and was glad to see her die. What kind of man can he become outside barbed wire? That's the power of the story. The relationship of North Korea to the West, and the relationship between North Korea and China, and who is the leader in North Korea: All that is subordinate to the power of his story.

When I heard about him and first wrote up his life in the *Washington Post*, I underestimated the power of the story to catch people and make them gasp. But the reaction to that story that ran in the *Post* four years ago was so great that I recalculated and I went back to Shin and I said, "if you would tell me your story I could do what I was sent to Asia to do: to tell readers how North Korea works in a new, fresh and compelling way." It's his story that does it. There's really not much information in that book that can't be had elsewhere, except for his story. He came to South Korea and his sense of self-preservation was so acute that he knew he had to lie about his betrayal of his family. He knew that if he told the truth—that he was the one who sold out his mother and brother so he could get more rice and an easier job and follow camp rules—that he would be seen as a monster. He might be imprisoned. His sense of self-survival was so acute and he kept with that lie very consistently until he told me in southern California in 2010 that he had lied to protect himself. By 2010, he felt there were enough people who trusted him and loved him, who weren't asking anything of him. He felt that he owed them the truth.

Cathcart: *To combine those two threads, Shin's narrative with the European reaction: You write with a very clear purpose in evoking, occasionally, the Holocaust experience; Anne Frank, for example, and Elie Wiesel is another. At other times you cite literature on trauma and how people operate in a camp situation. My sense is that we are at a moment in Europe where there's a logical question about what the next step is: You keep remembering the Holocaust, but there is a question about what the application is today. Is *Escape from Camp 14* speaking to that need?*

Harden: I think that's exactly it. I used the references to Elie Wiesel and Anne Frank and other survivors of the Nazi death camps as a way of giving context to readers, giving them a way to understand Shin's story. But the way the book was read, particularly in Europe, was as an existential lesson about what kind of man can be born and bred in a place like Camp 14.

And then also [we can see] the lesson of the Holocaust, and [that the pattern is] actually being repeated in a certain way in North Korea. These gross human rights violations are a pattern that the world tends to ignore. It's not the same as Nazi Germany, but there are enough echoes of it and the Europeans saw that immediately and reacted to it.

There is an extensive human rights infrastructure in Europe and in the US. And Shin's story gives that infrastructure something to mobilize around. Also his story is not ancient history: Camp 14 continues to operate. There are very good satellite images of it and the other camps. The same life is lived in those camps now as when Shin escaped in 2005. I've talked to three generations of camp survivors and they say the camps have not changed in any real way in the way that they're operated. It's this classic Stalinist model of limited food, punishing work, limited sleep, brainwashing and early death. So I think [those parallels are] part of the appeal in Europe.

Cathcart: *To move the human rights conversation to the US, looking particularly at the role of Korean Americans: Melanie Kirkpatrick, in her book *Escape from North Korea*, sees kind of a rising wave of Korean-American involvement and consciousness in North Korean human rights issues, especially among students. But often Korean-Americans do not want to be associated in any way with North Korean issues: "It may as well be in Africa," as one of my Korean-American students put it. Could you speak to this notion of Korean-Americans having conflicting impulses when they read your book or consider getting involved in this issue?*

Harden: Well I think one of the great organizing mechanisms for Korean-Americans is the church in the United States. The churches have been very successful and they are very important parts of the lives of many Korean-Americans, first, second, and third generations. The churches have not been very active in human rights. They have not embraced this book and have not championed Shin or the question of human rights in North Korea. And why they have or have not done it I'm not sure. I think there's a conservatism and unwillingness to get involved in politics because they are interested in making a living and having their kids do well. I don't think the book has changed that very much but what the book has done and what Shin's story has done is it has grabbed the imagination of a lot of younger Korean-Americans whose parents probably did not tell them much about North Korea. North Korea was just sort of a mystery and they knew in the headlines that it was a troublemaker. I remember going to Los Angeles recently for a talk to a Korean-American group and the young people were just flabbergasted to hear about Shin's life. And they were interested in getting involved. But they grew up in families where this is not a subject of conversation. And I think that is still the case.

Cathcart: *That's an interesting pivot point to think about the North Korean leadership today and Kim Jong-un. Do you think that the leadership in Pyongyang is at all interested in ultimately making a change with places like Camp 14? Is there any endgame for these camps beside the destruction or dismantling of the North Korean state itself? Do you see Kim Jong-un as having any interest at all—even if it's just for propaganda purposes—in saying, “We are scaling back a bit [on the repression] and things are changing?” Is there any reason to believe that this could ever happen or that this new generation sees this as possible?*

Harden: There doesn't seem to be any evidence at all that it's begun to happen yet, nothing that would suggest that. In fact the UN rapporteur suggested that people who oppose Kim Jong-un's succession to power were sent to the camps. So the information is very limited. However, the symbolic stuff that he's done would suggest that he understands the power of symbolism. His wife wearing pants in Pyongyang, talking about farm reform, all of this stuff suggests that he understands the power of symbolism to change the popularity of his government, improve the popularity of [his] government and to allow the country to open up economically to the outside world.

So it seems to me that there's a possibility that could happen. Historically when Stalin died the camps faded out of existence and the same thing with Mao.

It didn't happen overnight. But I think within six or seven years the camps were gone and the Soviet Union basically shuddered. That could happen in North Korea but there are no signs of it yet.

Cathcart: *When North Korea looks at Myanmar, do you think they are taking an active interest in how that regime, or others like it, are defragmenting some of their controls?*

Harden: I don't know, but they had a relationship with Myanmar that involved the sale of some hardware and some solidarity in their isolation. And I'm sure they're paying attention to the benefits that Myanmar is harvesting from changing what it is doing.

The thing that strikes me and has struck every analyst who studied North Korea from South Korea—the economic types, the technocrats who have relationships with other technocrats in Pyongyang in Beijing—they see a real win-win for the government to follow the Chinese model. You can keep your job, you don't get shot, you have lots of power and wealth and yet you slowly raise the standard of living in the country through bringing in manufacturing—have people work at real jobs, earn real money and eat real food. Why not do that? And you can buy yourself time: the Chinese have bought 35-40 years.

Why can't the North Korean leadership do that? Kim Jong-un is so young. If he wants to hang around and die in his bed like his dad, it seems like a logical calculated move to preserve your power and increase the vitality of the state. But they're not doing it so far. That's the conundrum of North Korea.

Cathcart: *The North Korean media represents defectors as an existential threat, labeling people like Shin with phrases like “human scum.” But what about the redefectors, like the story of Pak Jong-suk reported in the Washington Post?*

Harden: In the story that the Washington Post's Chico Harlan reported, it's clear that the regime put pressure on the family back in North Korea. It seems that a mother went back to try to help her loved ones. That's part of the story. Still, based on my conversations with defectors, life for them in South Korea is not easy. They're always strangers in a strange land. The first generation struggles with language, employment, and, in the work place, they have a hard time distinguishing between constructive criticism and complete betrayal. Often, they fly off the handle and quit their jobs and don't build on success. So even if they don't get signals from North Korea that their son or uncle or mother is

being persecuted, they feel guilty for leaving. Guilt is a huge part of every defector's life. They leave behind loved ones who struggle to find enough food. I think that some defectors are vulnerable to pressure and inducements to go back to North Korea simply because they feel so guilty. It's a shrewd move by North Korea to search for disaffected people. Inevitably, a few may want to go back.

Cathcart: *How much of a threat do the 24,000 defectors in South Korea really pose to the North Korean state, besides the power of their stories? Are they linking up in a way that—to use a somewhat dangerous analogy—could be compared to Syria? Given that trust is such a core theme in your book, do you see North Korean defectors as a cohesive group or as fragmented and distrustful?*

Harden: One of the North Korean regime's long-term successes in self-preservation is using fear to atomize society. It relentlessly stamps out civil society. It bans medical societies, teachers unions and other professional groups that might allow people to meet together in an atmosphere of trust and to share information. There is no civil society outside the party and the military. People who grow up that way come to South Korea and bring those habits with them. Many defectors in the South remain atomized and isolated – from each other and from groups that could help them adjust to life in a new country. This cripples their ability to organize as a cohesive opposition against the North Korean regime. They certainly are not in any position to form a group that could take guerrilla military action against the North. [Another] part of it is the border. The North-South border—the DMZ—is impossible to infiltrate. Defectors can't really organize in China. That's why North Korea has survived so long. The geopolitics of Northeast Asia are conducive to its survival. China insulates it from cross-border guerrilla instability. The heavily militarized DMZ has also served North Korea well. It blocks cross-border meddling and severely limits the flow of information.

But having said that, North Koreans now have a much richer understanding of the outside world. The information seal was substantially breached in the mid-1990s, with the famine, the influx of Western food aid and the rise of

street markets. Smugglers and traders brought in food, clothes and electronic gadgets from China. The US and South Korea now bombard North Korea with radio signals, and many North Koreans listen, using cheap radios smuggled in from China. If you have a radio—and a lot of people have radios now, according to surveys of defectors—you know that North Korea is desperately poor and internationally isolated and regarded by the rest of the world as a pariah. But that knowledge has not yet led to political mobilization, because North Koreans remain socially atomized.

Cathcart: *Your book deals not just with Shin, but also one of his colleagues – Park Jong-chul. This is a guy who’s a North Korean elite, who ends up going to China, goes around the world, comes back to China to vote, has a baby in China, and brings the kids back in to the DPRK. He is not in an “underground railroad” situation: he’s just trying to make money and continue his life as a semi-elite by bringing it back to North Korea. The problem is that the domestic security forces charge him with being a Christian and dealing with South Korean intelligence. He’s an absolutely fascinating person, and quite a counterpoint to Shin’s life.*

Harden: What Park’s story shows is that the border with China has become less of a prison wall and more of a semi-permeable membrane. Smugglers, traffickers, legitimate traders and defectors crossed back and forth with relative ease from the late 1990s to very recently. It appears, however, that Kim Jong-un has significantly restricted the permeability of the border in the past year. What Park’s life shows is that lots of North Koreans have gone back and forth across the border with China – and made their living that way. There are South Korean studies suggesting that street markets constitute up to 80% of the North’s real economy and those markets are largely supplied by people moving across the border to China. Park was just one of tens of thousands of people who built their lives around transit between North Korea and China. And Shin had the good fortune of meeting him.

Cathcart: *Well he’s a crucial person in his development and desire to leave...*

Harden: Park was the reason that Shin conceived of escaping. Shin never would’ve considered leaving the camp had he not met Park. Shin had been

instructed to spy and snitch on Park, but when Park started telling stories about the outside world—especially eating grilled meat in China—Shin made the first free decision of his life. He decided not to snitch, but to listen. Shin told me several times that he mourns Park’s death more than the death of his parents because Park was kinder to him, and so Park was absolutely essential in Shin’s decision to risk the fence.

Cathcart: *You write in your book that there is no celebrity advocating for the North Korean people analogous to the Dalai Lama or Richard Gere for the Tibetan people, etc. But they did have Hwang Jong-yop in Seoul for more than 10 years and I understand that his broadcasts have made an impact inside North Korea. Do defectors talk about him regularly as an influential voice, or was he seen as someone who had taken the best of the DPRK system and was living an easy life?*

Harden: I did not ask that direct question of them. A couple people brought him up.

Cathcart: *But he’s not the North Korean celebrity figure that North Korean refugees were looking for: the central oracle.*

Harden: When I mentioned the power of celebrity in the book, I was referring to a possible reason why human rights abuses in North Korea have remained under the radar in the US and Europe. There has been no Hollywood superstar to champion the suffering of people in the political labor camps. In Burma, Aung Sung Su Kyi was sanctified with the Nobel Peace Prize and became an international celebrity. She helped focus attention on Burma and helped create the current move away from corrupt military rule. This has not happened for anyone tied to the North Korea story, other than members of the Kim family. They continue to be viewed, to my disgust, as semi-comical figures. On the *Daily Show*, a key source of news for many young Americans, Kim Jong-il was merely a cartoon character, not a dictator who starved and tortured. The *Daily Show* made fun of his glasses and hair. A little cartoon figure of the Dear Leader would march across the TV screen as Jon Stewart made clever remarks. Similarly, Kim Jong-un is chubby, has a weird haircut and is easily mocked. He’s perceived as a punch line, not as someone who’s presiding over a human rights catastrophe.

Cathcart: *In your Washington Post piece last December, you talked about how skilled the North Korean leadership has become at manipulating their image internationally. Are they really that crafty? Sort of saying, “Let’s get out an odd story about a unicorn” because they know Western media will jump on it as a form of entertainment when in fact everybody should be writing about missile launches or what have you?*

Harden: North Korea’s state media flaunts missile launches, nuclear weapons and images of Kim Jong-un’s young wife. I sometimes think it’s a calculated attempt by Pyongyang to keep the world from focusing on the cruelty that sustains the state. The most important human problem in North Korea is state-enabled malnutrition: a third of the population is chronically hungry and has been for nearly two decades. Almost all of them are poor – the country is poorer than Sudan or Laos. Political labor camps have been in continuous operation for more than half a century. They are places where slavery, rape, public execution and slow-motion starvation are routine. Nearly everyone inside those camps is being worked to death. Missiles, nukes and the leader’s young wife blind us to the nauseating criminality that sustains the Kim family.

Cathcart: *Concerning the ethics of writing about North Korea and how we deal with the lack of source transparency, one of the things I’m so glad you did with this book is that you did occasionally turn to the first person, writing about the process and the difficulty of your work with Shin, and with covering North Korea more generally as a journalist. I think that’s hugely valuable for people like me, and for people interested in how the stories about North Korea are told. You have a great deal of experience working in other countries—“countries ripe for collapse” as my French edition of your book put it—but I’m wondering how covering North Korea is different from those places.*

Harden: In all those other countries (Burma, Serbia, Congo, Ethiopia), I went there and I talked to the people who were victimized and I saw it. I went there repeatedly and I got a sense of the texture of life. In Milosevic’s Serbia and in Burma I moved around quietly but the authorities seemed to know I was there. It’s just not possible to do this in North Korea. You are risking long periods of imprisonment and worse in North Korea. But in recent years it has become possible to draw strong journalistic conclusions about what’s happening in the North. There are so many defectors who can be interviewed in South Korea. They are a paranoid bunch, but they do talk to journalists and human rights investigators who are willing to invest the time necessary to overcome their wariness. For the Washington-based Committee on Human Rights in North Korea,

David Hawk personally talked to 60 camp survivors. He found a consistent and coherent story about how the camps work. It's basically the same story I got from Shin, who Hawk also interviewed. So there is now a rock-solid, interview-based, multiple-sourced story that is supported by satellite images that have been annotated by camp survivors. The camp story has been documented to the point where it is a respectable piece of social science. I think that when and if the regime collapses, the story we now know about the camps will be verified.

Cathcart: *You mention Joshua Stanton in your text as one of the “tireless bloggers” who are writing about North Korea. But Joshua and others have been critical toward the Associated Press for their work in Pyongyang. Is it worth it for AP to be there in Pyongyang? What kind of restrictions are they operating under?*

Harden: I think it's worth it for AP to be there. Its reporters and photographers operate under conditions that make it all but impossible to produce journalism that is deeply reported, well-sourced and nuanced. Still, they're sending out information and images. The photographer who often goes there, David Guttenfelder, is fantastic. His images of North Korea have enriched our visual understanding of what North Korea is. AP is doing the best it can under impossible conditions. So I admire them for trying to do that. I think it's the right decision.

Cathcart: *On the other hand, North Korea has made quite clear that they're watching out for academics and journalists who come in with bad intentions for the DPRK—basically implying that any given person could be acting as a spy. What is the discussion among journalists about where the line is in reporting from within North Korea? What about the case of Euna Lee and Laura Ling? How much of a danger exists for any journalist who is legally in the DPRK?*

Harden: There is no rule of law in North Korea. Journalists, even those with proper credentials, are helpless if the regime wants to lock them up. If you enter the country illegally as a journalist, the risk is insanely high. You will likely spend a lot of time in a very uncomfortable North Korean prison and will probably have to get the US government to send a former president to get you out.

Cathcart: *We talked a little bit about the Chinese-North Korean border region, or to be a bit more specific, the Tumen River Valley. What value is there for journalists to go to the region to do a kind of border survey?*

Harden: I think there is great value in reporting from there, but it's a very difficult journalistic assignment. Perhaps the biggest risk is endangering defectors – simply by talking to them. There are North Korean spies and security people from the Chinese government in that area. They monitor the movements of South Korean church people and other foreign human rights activists. North Korean defectors try to move secretly to safe houses. Some work inconspicuously on Chinese farms. If you go there as a foreign journalist (especially if you are white) you are so visible. You can lead Chinese police and North Korean agents to defectors or to the people who are trying to shelter them. By your presence there as a Westerner you can hurt people and lead to their imprisonment and torture in North Korea. Second, you need to have savvy interpreters/fixers who speak Chinese and Korean. And then you have to stay around for quite a long time to learn anything new and important and true. Great journalists have done it. There has been some good reporting in newspapers. Anna Fifield did it for the FT [*Financial Times*] a few years ago because she speaks Korean and she found some good fixers who moved quietly and safely. But it's a costly and long-term endeavor, given that most journalists normally turn their stories around in two hours. This is something you have to prepare for over the course of many months, if not years.

Cathcart: *In China domestically, we've seen a limited opening up of the spigots on the discussion of North Korean defectors, particularly in early 2012. How you think the appearance of your book might change Chinese views of North Korea? Is it possible for Chinese public opinion or the Chinese Communist Party to apply some pressure on North Korea about this issue?*

Harden: I think it goes back to the power of Shin's story. He was bred by guards to be worked to death. His mind and values were molded by the guards who ordered his parents to have sex. He was part of a state-created system that bred children to be slaves. And Shin was raised to believe in a set of rules that encouraged him to betray his own mother – and cause her death. Then he managed to meet somebody who told him about the outside world, and he had the courage to risk his life by wiggling through a high-voltage fence and run for freedom. This is a sensationally interesting human story. I hope that in China readers will be captivated by it and learn about the North Korean government's cruelty to its own people. If they know Shin's story, perhaps they will demand that their government stop supporting the Kim family. In any case, that's my hope.

Cathcart: *What about the Chinese treatment of Shin when he crosses the water, and meets a wise old man...*

Harden: Shin's crossing of the border into China was an anti-climax. By the time he made that crossing, it was a workaday behavior for tens of thousands of North Koreans. The guard asked him, "When you come back, will you bring me something to eat?" Shin was smart enough to realize that the crossing had become a routine transaction. He also had been informed that when you go across the border, it's not that foreign, at least not initially. On the Chinese side of the border, people speak Korean. They are familiar with the defectors and they often give them employment, if it serves their financial interests. They're useful. Tens of thousands of North Koreans have gone into the ethnic Korean part of China and found a life, as the spouse of a farmer or as a worker. For many of them, it's a better life than they had back home. They can eat and they can find medical care and they can get paid hard currency for hard work.

Cathcart: *At one point, Shin is getting paid five yuan a day to work. He gets a couple of handouts here and there, but it's really his first job, isn't it?*

Harden: A Chinese pig farmer gave Shin his first job. It was the first time he wasn't a slave. And it happened so fast. After crossing the border, he had one of the best days of his life. He had a proper meal with rice and meat. He had a job and a warm place to sleep. He could sleep eight hours without being disturbed. The pig farmer even went to a store and bought Shin some medicine to get the lice off his body.

Cathcart: *He's also taking showers every day, which had never happened before. This brings to mind that China has talked recently about bringing in more North Korean workers, more systematically. If the North Koreans are coming across the Chinese border legally to work—maybe 20,000 at a time—what's wrong with that?*

Harden: There's nothing wrong with that. It's a better life for them, except when they are victims of sex-trafficking or physical abuse or indentured servitude. In China, they often have no legal rights.

Cathcart: *So it would be possible to say, "This is a repugnant regime in North Korea," but steps that would result in more food, or information, come into North Korea from the outside.*

Harden: To repeat myself, the biggest human rights problem in North Korea is hunger, and severe malnutrition for pregnant women and newborns. There is widespread cognitive impairment caused by malnutrition. If people can cross the border and find food and bring back food, which they are doing, that decreases the chances of famine and severe hunger.

Cathcart: *The activist Robert Park has asserted that North Korea is engaging in genocide against its own people, and this is a crime against humanity. In Syria, we've seen the government systematically denying food to its domestic opponents—in other words, we are not just talking about weapons or repression. Do you believe that the North Korean government is in fact engaged in a slow-scale warfare against people outside of Pyongyang that would keep them hungry and unable to think about anything besides eating? When people talk about genocide, is there anything to these accusations?*

Harden: I think genocide is a pretty loaded word. There is no need to exaggerate the scope of the human rights tragedy. There is data showing that the farther you live from Pyongyang, the less you eat, the more likely you are to stunted and cognitively impaired. That's based on food and nutrition surveys done by the UN World Food Program and UNICEF. The government maintains an apartheid policy of moving people away from the capital if they are not considered to be loyal or trustworthy. Those people moved to the periphery do not eat much. Pregnant women have serious problems of malnutrition and their kids have chronic to severe—and sometimes lethal levels—of malnutrition. And that's the policy of the government. That's a very bad system and may be unique on the planet. The political labor camps are also a part of the state. They perform a very useful service for the regime. The camps isolate and eliminate those who have the courage to speak out (and those unlucky enough to be snatched upon by informers). And they scare the hell out of everybody else and keep people quiet. To that nasty end, the camps work. That's why they've been there for more than half a century. Does it add up to genocide? I don't know, but it is clearly reprehensible and criminal.

Cathcart: *The Kim Jong-un regime has spent a lot of money in Pyongyang—and the city now has electricity 24 hours a day and is posed, as ever, as a real party for kids. We in the West have mocked a lot of these parks and playgrounds that he's built, but the funding speaks for itself, and life seems to be improving for residents in Pyongyang. Is that enough to sustain the regime? Are people in Pyongyang living in fear? Something like two million people or 10 percent*

of the country is there. Is their living in comfort fully counterbalanced by the atrocities occurring the camps beyond the capital? Or is the fundamental part of the regime so rotten that it doesn't matter how much comfort people have in Pyongyang?

Harden: To live in Pyongyang you have to be a trusted person. You have to come from a trusted family or have proven yourself to be trustworthy. So by improving the life of the people in Pyongyang, the regime has been tending to its own survival. To cater to the needs of the people who matter seems like a shrewd tactic for self-preservation. You now have the AP in Pyongyang, so it also makes sense to dress up the capital to manufacture images showing that life is better.

Cathcart: *My last question is just about process. One of the things we do at Sino-NK is mentor younger writers and work to bring new voices in. So we have writing groups, and we talk a lot about process and publication. Your book has been hugely successful but obviously it wasn't written in a day. Could you talk a bit about your process, not necessarily doing the research, but just sitting down and knocking this out? How did you approach a big project like this?*

Harden: It goes back to the story of Shin's life. This is a story that has a wonderful arc to it. So it was easy to write. It has a clear beginning: a little boy goes with his mom to watch a public execution. It has the awful scene when Shin, at age 13, betrays his mother and brother. There's his magical encounter with Park, who teaches him about the outside world, and then there's the amazing escape, with Shin crawling over Park's electrocuted body. I tried to take maximum advantage of these scenes to make the story irresistible to the readers. Then I tried to fold in reportage about North Korea, but without drowning the story in context. It was relatively easy to organize and write. Reporters don't come across stories like this very often. If you are a reporter and if you do stumble across a powerful human story, my advice is to drop everything and pursue it. Go as deep into it as you can. Shin presented lots of problems for me as a reporter. He is a really smart person with a phenomenal memory. But he was also very traumatized when I met him. Some of the most interesting and important parts of his story caused him pain to talk about. So what I did was slowly nibble at the details he was willing to offer, going back again and again to make the narrative as rich as possible. I probably should have waited longer and got more detail. But I tried my best. What makes for a readable book about a remote country is

a character-driven adventure story, one that makes a reader's heart beat quickly and painlessly increases understanding. Shin's story does that. **Y**

REVIEWS

**ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE,
AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN
MERELY PLAYERS**

Peter Ward

**FROM AMERICAN DOMINANCE TO THE
RISE OF THE REST: DAMBISA MOYO'S
HOW THE WEST WAS LOST**

Ryan D. Schomburg

**THREE HISTORIES OF THE END OF THE
COLD WAR AND THE LESSONS LEARNED**

Matthew Bates

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE, AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN MERELY PLAYERS

Peter Ward

Korea University

Kwon, Heonik and Byung-Ho Chung. North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics. Rowman & Littlefield. Lanham, MD, 2012. 232 Pages. ISBN 978-0742556799

According to Kwon and Chung, the North Korean leadership has turned itself into a “theatre state,” a regime that relies on the use of rituals to perpetuate the charismatic rule of the leadership. The authors point to what Max Weber called the “routinization of charismatic authority.” What Weber meant in a nutshell was that charisma was an inherently unstable form of political authority. It cannot be easily renewed or “routinized,” and is further prone to decay and erosion; this means of course that charismatic authority usually cannot be inherited because it is usually invested in one leader alone (pp. 43-45). The authors make liberal use of the ideas of Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist who pioneered the concept of the theatre state with reference to Bali in the 19th century (pp. 44-45). They also make use of the notion of “partisan state” with reference to North Korea. The idea of North Korea being a “guerrilla state,” as the authors point out, is that of the Japanese historian Wada Haruki. Haruki is Japan’s foremost authority on Kim Il-sung’s Manchurian partisan days, as well as being a noted historian of North Korea in general. The authors make use of the theory to describe the mythology that the North Korean state relies upon, and how that mythology, i.e., of the Manchurian partisan ethos, has been actualized in state ideology (pp. 15-19).

Utilizing the “Theatre State” model, the authors stress the use of theatrical spectacles and rituals to instill a sense of loyalty amongst the North Koreans for the Manchurian partisans, especially Kim Il-sung himself. Rituals take many forms, be they mass parades, mass games or theatrical plays. The authors also stress the importance of monuments and cemeteries for the authority of Kim Il-sung, the Manchurian partisans in general and the fact that Kim Jong-il was

instrumental in creating said landmarks. The authors state that in sanctifying the Manchurian partisans, above all Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-suk (Kim Il-sung's first wife; she was also a partisan fighter), Kim Jong-il and the regime in general has been able to practice "legacy politics." This form of politics has been crucial to the regime's "routinization" of charismatic authority (pp. 43-63).

North Korea's military-first (Songun) politics is the ideological vehicle for this partisan kind of politics. Songun itself is of importance in the ways that it ties the military-dominated regime of Kim Jong-il to the legitimacy of the regime under Kim Il-sung, the military's role in protecting the legacy of Kim Il-sung helps to legitimate Kim Jong-il, as the successor to his father. The Manchurian partisan "tradition" is protected and perpetuated by Kim Jong-il's Songun Korea (pp. 71-93).

The authors also highlight the importance of the Great Leader's bestowing of gifts to his people. The act of gift giving to the leader by the peoples of the world is also of great importance to the regime. North Korea's state relies on the so-called "moral economy," in which relations between people are characterized by "general reciprocity"—i.e., generosity and gift-giving, rather than mere selfishness. The authors assert that before the famine of the 1990s, this was an operating norm within North Korean society. The gift functions as a symbol of both power—i.e., economic largess—and also as a symbol of paternal benevolence. Gifts received by the leader, from the rest of world, symbolize the love of the peoples of the world for the leader (Kim Il-sung and later Kim Jong-il, too).

The book offers some very interesting readings of North Korean ideological texts, but the employment of anthropological methods to a closed country, as noted by the authors themselves, is highly problematic. Many of the issues with the book are indicative of broader problems with academia itself: an over-reliance within certain disciplines on "discourse," i.e., words and ideas, and the elaborate but unsubstantiated analysis of said words and ideas without proper reference to how the words are actually understood by those involved and targeted.

The authors make use of second-hand reports from organisations like Good Friends in describing the social and economic situation in North Korea post-Kim Il-sung. However, they rarely if ever make use of refugee testimony when discussing the practical sources of the regime's authority. They have clearly not checked whether their metaphysical analyses of the North Korean state and their interpretations of North Korean texts actually resonate with the average North Korean. As a reader one is left with the impression that the authors have put together a very interesting theory, but have not tested it. At one point in the

book they even go so far as to assert that the ideology of Juche is a major reason why the regime did not collapse in the early 1990s (p. 128). This may indeed be the case; there are 24,000 North Korean refugees in Seoul. Surely some of them could have been asked by the authors whether North Korea is indeed a theatre state and whether so-called “legacy politics” explain why North Korea’s regime has been able to maintain itself up until present. Unfortunately, the book does not contain any sources to substantiate this assertion.

It should be noted that the modern North Korean state’s projection of authority is indeed mass-based, highly theatrical and often takes the form of dramatic display. From reading the book, it is not at all clear though that this form of authority construction—with Juche and Songun in tow—have kept the regime in power.

The definition of the North Korean state as a partisan state also is problematic. North Korea was not the only socialist state (or state in general) to be established and run by partisans. Let us not forget that Marshal Tito, former leader of Yugoslavia, was also a partisan fighter. The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola—Labour Party (MPLA), who continue to their country to this day, were also no strangers to the use of partisan tactics. Fidel Castro and his brother were partisans before they became the leaders of Cuba. And the reformist regimes in Beijing and Hanoi were both set up by former partisans, namely Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh. The authors do not differentiate between a state founded by partisans and a partisan state (pp. 15-16).

The political, social and economic institutions of North Korea cannot easily be explained purely by describing North Korea as a theatre state. The systems of social control, for instance the *inminban* (people’s unit), as well as the presence of a command economy until the collapse in the 1990s, and the regime’s use of other Stalinist rituals as a means of legitimation are overlooked by the authors. Indeed, the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) continues to be “elected” every five years, and it continues to certify North Korea’s annual state budget. The successions from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il and from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un, were confirmed and certified by the 6th Party Congress and the 3rd Party Conference, respectively. These rituals confer a popular, modern political legitimacy on the regime, rather than that of theatrical symbolism. The regime’s authority does not merely rest on the charisma of its leadership, but also upon its putative democratic and representative institutions. While the authors do talk about the conference that confirmed Kim Jong-un as leader, its significance as a legitimating event is not discussed (p. 186). The leaders of North Korea have all been anointed by supposedly representative institutions of party and state, their authority does not merely come from their charisma, but also from rational-legal processes.

The authors also make reference to the “new constitutional order” of North Korea after the death of Kim Il-sung (p. 73). Kim Il-sung was constitutionally declared “eternal president” posthumously. The issue is though, what kind of legitimacy does a constitution bestow? A constitution is a legal document and therefore the leaders of North Korea seem to seek legitimacy from rational-legal sources as well as from theatrical display.

While some of the ideological elements of the regime’s authority are discussed by the authors, they have missed more classically nationalistic or state socialist ideologies that have emerged from North Korea’s official media in the last 20 years. The cult and its theatrical elements notwithstanding, it is worth recapping some of these ideological motifs that the authors of this book have largely ignored. From the late-1980s, great stress in North Korean ideological publications and news media was placed upon “Socialism in our style.” During the famine in the 1990s, “the principle of national superiority” became a popular ideological leitmotif in North Korean ideological output. Another often repeated idea was that of the “Red Flag Idea.” Leading up to the centenary of Kim Il-sung’s birth, the importance of building a “Strong and Prosperous Nation” was ubiquitous in North Korean ideological output. Throughout North Korea’s entire history, words like revolution and socialism have been ever-present in North Korean ideological publications and general propaganda output. Such ideological themes could probably have been fitted into the model and there is no reason one cannot have a theatre state with socialism and revolution. The authors neglect to discuss these elements of the regime’s ideological discourse, and one is therefore left with a rather limited understanding of North Korea.

The personality cult and its state not only has a theatrical form, but also a Stalinist content. The authors stress the human-centeredness of Juche in contrast to Marxian materialism (p. 145). North Korean ideology is indeed more focused on ideas than classical Marxism. However, Stalin did often stress the importance of ideas under state socialism.¹ North Korea was, until 1994, a Stalinist state. The presence of collective farms, state planning and party-state domination over society is best explained through an understanding of Stalinism in practice, not through comparing Marx with Juche.

The authors of this work, while purporting to offer a holistic model of the North Korean state, ignore its socialist contents, its political structure, and its actual socio-economic realities; instead, they focus almost exclusively on certain cultural elements of the regime and the society that it has constructed. This approach is not without merit. The role of symbols, ideological norms

1 Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 268-270.

and performance in the creation of legitimacy is an area that remains largely unexplored in the context of North Korea. Nonetheless, the theatre state in the form presented in this book is highly limited even when it comes to dealing with North Korean ideological publications, let alone how North Korean state and society actually work. It represents a limited model of authority creation, not a model of the entire North Korean state, its inner-workings and how state-society relations are constituted.

The survival of the North Korean state is not merely the product of a regime centered on the personality cult of two or three men, nor is the Manchurian partisan "tradition" a sufficient explanation for the survival of the state. The closed nature of North Korea leading up to the famine meant that its people could not countenance an alternative. The seemingly cohesive nature of the North Korean elite who fear change is also a major reason why the country remains intact. Institutional inertia and the general lack of dissent because of the closed, monolithic, and controlled nature of North Korean state and society explain the regime's longevity.

The cult that surrounds the Kims certainly also plays a role. The author of this review has frequently met refugees who believe much of the cult that surrounded Kim Il-sung. Almost all of them though are (and were before they left) united in their hatred of Kim Jong-il. The cult of Kim Jong-il, according to refugee testimony at least, seemingly never really took hold as a popular phenomenon in the country. It is important to remember that what actual North Koreans think and feel may be quite different from what the regime wants them to. **Y**

FROM AMERICAN DOMINANCE TO THE RISE OF THE REST: DAMBISA MOYO'S HOW THE WEST WAS LOST

Ryan D. Schomburg
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Moyo, Dambisa. How the West Was Lost: Fifty Years of Economic Folly—and the Stark Choices Ahead. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. 226 pages. ISBN 978-0-374-53321-2

Since the 2007-2008 global financial crisis began, sparked by the real estate bubble bursting in the United States, there have been profound shifts in the world economy. The shocking bankruptcies of prominent American investment banks and financial institutions (such as Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers and AIG), coupled with the government taking over quasi-governmental companies such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, led the world to begin questioning whether the policies and ideologies that the so-called West had been promulgating were in fact the best ways for an economy to be run. This has led some experts to believe that the developed world is in the midst of a decline and that global power will begin tilting back to the developing world, particularly to China.

In the *New York Times* bestselling book *How the West Was Lost*, Dambisa Moyo¹ provides an extremely thorough, well-written account of not only the recent global financial crisis, but also the flawed economic policies and choices that have resulted in the foundations being set for a shift in global power from “West” to “East.” She delves into enough detail that readers with a basic knowl-

1 Dambisa Moyo was born and raised in Zambia. She received a master’s degree from Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and a PhD. in economics from Oxford University. She also has an MBA. in finance and a B.S. in chemistry. She was formerly a consultant for the World Bank and also worked as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs. Before publishing *How the West Was Lost*, in 2010 Moyo wrote *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (also a *New York Times* bestseller). And just recently in 2012 she released *Winner Take All: China’s Race For Resources and What It Means for the World*. In 2009 TIME Magazine named her one of the world’s 100 most influential people, and she is currently a contributor to financial journals such as *the Financial Times* and *the Wall Street Journal*.

edge of business can understand everything, while managing to avoid making explanations so shallow that those with stronger financial backgrounds will feel disinterested. However, the book attempts to cover a large variety of topics (ranging from a historical overview of economics, to the mortgage industry in the US, to political ideologies) and thus falls short of fully developing arguments at times. She also frequently makes sweeping generalizations throughout her diagnosis of the crisis, particularly regarding the loosely defined “West” and “East.” Additionally, her conclusion is quite short yet dramatic, attempting to provide a panacea for too many loosely related problems in the world today. Thus some of her arguments become too broad and run the risk of losing focus and clarity.

Erosion of the West’s Advantages: A Focus on Flawed Economic Policies

The book is separated into two main parts: “The Way It Was” and “Back to the Future: From East to West and Back Again.” Moyo believes that the West’s advantages have substantially been eroded, and that there are three main reasons for this: 1) the West has alienated most emerging market countries through its political and military policies; 2) the “flatness of the world” (per Thomas Friedman) has resulted in the lowering of transaction costs, which has made the transfer of technology easier; and 3) flawed economic policies implemented over the past fifty years have directly resulted in the downfall of the world’s most advanced nations.² The third reason is the focus of this book. Moyo argues that had these flawed policies been detected and dealt with properly in advance, the financial crisis of 2008 may have never occurred, or at least may have been much less prominent.

The strongest points of the book can be found in the first few chapters, which explore her main argument: “What is clear, and what this book will demonstrate, is that deliberate (American) public policies are making things worse, exacerbating [America’s] economic step down by weakening” the three pillars of growth: capital, labor and total factor productivity (pp. 10-11). In the second chapter, Moyo gives a phenomenal explanation of how the US government, through a strategy of broad homeownership strengthened by subsidy,³ has en-

2 Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, 2007).

3 A subsidized loan is a loan where the interest is paid by a third party. The US government offers citizens a number of incentives to purchase a home, including securing a loan with a very low (or in some cases zero) down payment, allowing for deferred payments and even by paying all of the interest on the loan. Mortgage rates are subsidized through Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (government-sponsored enterprises). Borrowers interested in these loans must meet certain requirements, though they were not

couraged the majority of American citizens to pour their financial resources into one form of investment asset class (real estate), even when there may have been much better options available. This “has been assiduously accomplished by a dual-pronged strategy of 1) providing incentives for individuals to borrow, through subsidized debt mortgages and tax relief on mortgage interest payments, and 2) the wholly negative gift of providing guarantees to the mortgage-lending institutions” (p. 36).⁴

Moyo also gives a thought-provoking explanation of one of the fundamental flaws in the United States and some other developed countries: the misallocation of capital, caused by a breakdown between debt and equity holders. As a solution to these problems, she believes that “policy should be focused around weaning the financial system off guarantees for mortgage loans and removing tax benefits on mortgage debt, instead providing a subsidy for equity (cash) down payments” (p. 46). Furthermore, she draws an interesting parallel between the post-World War II United States and the recent rapid economic development of China: both countries made sure that the buyers of their products were also their debtors (i.e., the US and Europe, and China and the US). She uses ideas such as this to explain how China could become the next global superpower, in much the way that the balance of power shifted from Western Europe (particularly the United Kingdom) to the United States after WWII.

Another focal point is Moyo’s discussion on why a housing market bubble is the worst type of bubble to have (as opposed to, say, the technology boom from 1995 to 2000, which created some benefits for society despite the negative aspects). She believes that “the US government has presided over and continues to create and foment the worst kind of bubble: a bubble in an unproductive asset financed by bank debt” (p. 60). In this sense, the author feels that the US government’s policies deserve the majority of the blame for the global financial crisis. Other topics discussed include the US labor market losing its luster due to pension plans, which she humorously calls “government sponsored Ponzi schemes” (China does not have state-run pension plans).

Lack of Clarity, Dramatic Tones and Misquoting: Detrimental Factors

While many of Moyo’s well-founded points are useful in terms of understanding the recent crisis, there are some faults to be found in both her arguments and logic. She generalizes repeatedly, often referring to the “developing world”

stringent enough leading up to the financial crisis.

4 The US government offers homeowners large deductions on federal income taxes for mortgage interest payments and for state and local property taxes.

when it seems it would be better, and probably more accurate, for her to refer precisely to China. The same goes for referring to the “West” when she seems to be exclusively discussing the United States. At many points in the book I wondered, “Would this be true for developing countries in Africa or South America?” Or, “Would this be true for Scandinavian countries, which are developed but have quite different economic situations and policy prescriptions than the United States?” Harm de Blij, an expert in the field of geography and globalization, splits the world into two parts: the global core and the periphery. Moyo would have benefited from following in his path by using a more specific and relevant division of the world, rather than using the ambiguous geographic terms “East” and “West.”⁵ De Blij believes that the “core” consists of urbanized and wealthy nations, including Western Europe, the US, Canada, Japan and Australia. Meanwhile the “periphery” consists of, roughly, South and Central Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

One example of the generalizations can be found on page 36, when Moyo states that: “Western nations, their governments and households alike, are buried under seemingly insurmountable amounts of debt,” which is not necessarily a true statement. Yes, the US and UK have high levels of personal and government debt, but what about other developed nations? In 2008 Australia had a gross public debt of 13.9 percent, while China’s in the same year was 16.2 percent.⁶ In order to avoid confusion, Moyo could have abstained from using the terms “East” and “West” as often, and focused more on specific countries to make her points, or opted for using terms such as those that de Blij coined in *The Power of Place*. It would also have been beneficial to include these definitions at the beginning of the book.

Meanwhile excessively dramatic tones are overused throughout the text, attempting to lead the reader to believe that if something is not done immediately, the US will collapse and China will rule the world. This gives the book a tabloid feel in some sections, such as when Moyo urges the reader to believe that time “is running out. Unless the West adopts radical solutions, many of them offered in this book, and adopts them quickly, it will be too late” (p. xiii). Opting for subtler, less biased wording would strengthen the quality of her arguments.

In some instances, it also appears that she takes quotes out of context in order to underscore her points. She quotes an anonymous mortgage advisor in the UK (sans source) as stating that his “best advice to someone hoping to buy

5 Harm de Blij, *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization’s Rough Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

6 “Public debt (% of GDP),” *IndexMundi*, <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=as&v=143>.

[real estate] with a small deposit is to live on a credit card. Buy your groceries on it, go out to dinner on it, spend on it what you'd normally spend on a debit card" (p. 37). While she is trying to prove that the UK government and businesses are encouraging people to live deeply in debt rather than spending within their means, it is in fact common knowledge that consumer loan approvals of all kinds are based on one's credit history. One way to develop a good credit score is to utilize a credit card, paying it off in full and on time every month. Therefore the quote does not necessarily prove anything regarding living within one's means, or her idea that developed countries have been encouraging reckless spending by their citizens.

Another issue that struck me was Moyo's discussion on race in the United States. The US, being a country of immigrants, is accustomed to having people of different races and backgrounds living within its borders. However, in the chapter entitled "Labor Lost," Moyo notes that when looking ahead, "for America in particular...the outlook for the labor market is bleak. By most census forecasts, America's minority (non-white) populations will be the majority before too long" (p. 90). While she proceeds to discuss that these groups are statistically the least educated, the matter of race alone is not a good index of the power of the United States. The US is a country built on immigration and multiculturalism, and claiming that having a non-white majority could be a negative aspect contradicts the ideals of the nation. Furthermore, delving more deeply into the topics presented in the first several chapters and saving more general topics such as the education system for another book would have further strengthened the focus of Moyo's argument.

In her conclusion, she offers four monochromatic scenarios for the future: 1) the status quo, 2) China faltering, 3) America fighting back, and (4) America defaulting on its debt. The last one was particularly fascinating, since I had never considered it a viable option for the United States to solve its debt predicament by defaulting. Moyo was able to take a seemingly unimaginable solution—the mighty US defaulting on the internationally renowned US dollar—and make it a surprisingly rational step in the process of solving America's seemingly insurmountable debt problems.

Conclusion: A Solid Resource for Understanding the West's Policy Faults

Moyo's *How the West Was Lost* is overall an excellent source of information on not only the recent global economic crisis, but even more so regarding America's problems with home mortgages and a general overview of the flawed economic policies that resulted in the crisis itself. Therefore, despite some overarching

generalizations and a lack of depth on the more crucial issues, and putting the excessively dramatic tones aside, *How the West Was Lost* is absolutely a worthwhile read for anyone interested in US/China relations, the current status of the global economy and causes of the recent global financial crisis. Moyo skillfully paints a picture of how, despite good intentions, flawed economic policies can ultimately lead to the downfall of even the strongest global superpowers. **Y**

THREE HISTORIES OF THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND THE LESSONS LEARNED

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This review considers how the understanding of Ronald Reagan, drawn by the authors of three leading recent histories of the end of the Cold War, corresponds to the lessons drawn from the end of the Cold War. This correspondence is then compared to nuclear diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula, as discussed in the memoirs of three leading members of the George W. Bush administration: former President George W. Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney and former Undersecretary of State and Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton.¹

In considering how Reagan's approach to Gorbachev and the Soviet Union has been referenced by Bush administration officials in its handling of Kim Jong-il and the DPRK, a few key differences will be briefly noted. Firstly, the US was less concerned about, and the USSR was much less inclined towards, nuclear proliferation among other states and potentially non-state actors such as terrorists. Secondly, the disarmament proposed by Reagan and Gorbachev was mutual rather than one-sided (hence additional inducements), and the related charge of "appeasement"—anathema to Reagan, Cheney and Bolton alike—were far less significant. Thirdly, Gorbachev was an idealist, guided by moral principles and a global vision increasingly influenced by liberalism, whereas Kim Jong-il was much more a realist mostly concerned with his own security and sceptical, if not cynical, of the international order.

¹ This review takes into account five works: *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (2004) by Jack Matlock Jr; *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (2009) by James Mann; *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (2008) by Andrei Grachev; *Decision Points* (2011) by George W. Bush; *In My Time* (2012) by Dick Cheney; and *Surrender is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad* (2008) by John Bolton. Full citations are provided in subsequent footnotes.

Reagan's intentions can be briefly understood in terms of a four part agenda: 1) to reduce the threat and use of force in international disputes; 2) to reduce stockpiles of armaments; 3) better working relationship, cooperation and understanding; and 4) human rights and humanitarian concerns.² Matlock is unequivocal that there was no tangible plan to bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union.³ Gorbachev, however, was already convinced of the need for arms reduction to enable more liberal internal reform.⁴ Hence Reagan's greatest contribution to change in the USSR was perhaps to have recognized the opportunity Gorbachev represented and through their agreements to have enhanced Gorbachev's authority to make progress with his reform agenda.⁵

In contrast, the Bush administration responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11th in accordance with the concepts of pre-emption and unilateralism. While referencing Reagan's early arms build-up, and echoing his belief in the possibility for dramatic change, the trust-building diplomatic method associated with his second term was arguably made less relevant by the informal nature of the terrorist threat and rendered redundant by belief in the necessity of regime change by military means.

The Cult of Sincerity

The George W. Bush administration, modeling itself after Reagan and his approach to the Soviet Union, also placed great emphasis on his purported candor and honesty, and invests the tendency to "tell it like it is" with great potential for unpredicted positive consequences.

President Bush's memoir *Decision Points* recalls some personal contact with Reagan, but only alludes to Reagan as a model of leadership in the chapter "Freedom Agenda" where he mentions reading a book by a former Soviet prisoner who felt "inspired by hearing leaders like Ronald Reagan speak with moral clarity and call for freedom."⁶ While much of Matlock's account of Reagan suggests implicit criticism of the younger Bush administration, his final analysis of Reagan also lends support to this notion, claiming that Reagan's greatest asset was that he "dealt with his friends, adversaries and subordinates openly and

2 Jack Matlock Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (USA: Random House, 2004), 150-152.

3 Ibid., 75.

4 Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy & the End of the Cold War*, (USA: Polity 2008), 44-47.

5 James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 346; and Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 318.

6 George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (London: Virgin Books, 2010).

without guile,” describing a “transparency of intention so unusual among political leaders that many failed to appreciate it.”⁷

Matlock also shows, particularly the memorandum of Reagan’s own thoughts before first meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva, that Reagan was still selective about what was said publicly. Here Reagan regrets that “we are somewhat publicly on record about Human Rights. Front page stories that we are banging away at them on human rights abuses will get us some cheers from the bleachers but it won’t help those being abused.” Reagan also instructs his advisors that there should be “no talk of winners and losers. Even if we think we won, to say so would set us back in view of their inherent inferiority complex.”⁸

Clearly, for those closely involved in the first term of the George W. Bush administration, emphasis on Reagan’s candor creates a resonance between Bush’s famous description of Iraq, Iran and the DPRK as forming an “axis of evil,” and Reagan’s famous description of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.” The phrase originally drafted as “Axis of Hatred” became “Axis of Evil” with Reagan’s “Evil Empire” in mind, and may have been intended to draw a broader parallel with the defence build-up in early part of the Reagan administration. North Korea and Iran were added to Bush’s State of the Union address at Condoleezza Rice’s suggestion to avoid focusing solely on Iraq.⁹

The label “evil” is only meaningful for what it portends, and although in the early 1980s both the US and USSR were continuing to lend covert support to various proxy wars in Africa, South America and the Middle East, this cannot be compared with an overt policy of regime change by the world’s sole superpower. Furthermore, in contrast to Reagan’s efforts towards mutual disarmament agreements and reducing distrust and hostility, the Bush administration sought release from international agreements which they felt undermined their military capabilities or could not be sufficiently robust in concrete terms, including the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Rome Statute which created the International Criminal Court and Biological Weapons Convention Verification Protocol.¹⁰

7 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 320.

8 *Ibid.*, 153.

9 “Rumors of War,” *Newsweek*, February 19, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17086418/site/newsweek>.

10 John Bolton, accorded authority beyond the position of Undersecretary of State after his crucial role in the result of the 2000 presidential election, in his memoir used quotation marks to reflect his contempt for the notion of “international law,” dismissing it as “just another theological exercise.” See: John Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Beyond* (New York: Thresholds Editions, 2007), Chapter Three.

While this threatening defense posture successfully intimidated Gaddafi into renouncing nuclear weapons, in the absence of the trust building efforts which characterised Reagan's second term, it was always likely that for some countries any possible prospect of war would be incompatible with the one-sided form of denuclearisation.

Negotiation and Summit Dialogue

As in the Bush administration, Matlock describes how there were also those in the Reagan administration that felt that the Soviet Union must do something to deserve dialogue, and that the US would be "honoring" the Soviet Union to engage in dialogue while Soviet troops were still present in Afghanistan. But Secretary of State George Schultz, among others, argued communication on political and security issues was necessary whether or not the Soviet Union was changing and that change was much more likely with serious dialogue than without. Reagan would sometimes waver but ultimately always support dialogue.¹¹

The notion of Reagan as a hardliner is supported by the fact that he had no meetings with the Soviet General Secretary until his second term when he met Gorbachev. However, communications now show that Reagan had been interested in meeting Gorbachev's predecessors including Yuri Andropov, during whose leadership (1982-1984) Reagan labelled the USSR an "evil empire."¹² Dick Cheney's famous comment that "We don't negotiate with evil, we defeat it" does not seem to be one that Reagan would have agreed with. As Reagan wrote in his diary in April 1983, "some of the NSC staff are too hard line and don't think any approach should be made to the Soviets. I think I'm hard line and will never appease. But I do want to try to let them see there is a better world if they'll show by deed that they want to get along with the free world."¹³

Cheney's memoir *In My Time* devotes a whole chapter to North Korean proliferation to Syria and the Six-Party Talks, concluding with a number of lessons. One of these is to "negotiate from a position of strength," a principle associated with the Reagan administration's building up of America's purportedly inferior defence capabilities before entering negotiations with the Soviet Union on disarmament; this clearly has no parallel in negotiations with the DPRK in view of the US undisputed military superiority. Cheney uses the aphorism of "mindfulness" when referring to denuclearization (as an objective) and the

11 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 64.

12 *Ibid.*, 65-66.

13 *Ibid.*, ix.

will to walk away from the negotiating table without an agreement. “A good model for future leaders” he helpfully suggests, (shifting between Reagan’s two presidential terms) “is Ronald Reagan’s approach at the Reykjavik Summit with Gorbachev,” which ended after Reagan refused to give up “America’s right to missile defense” (more accurately to the program’s out-of-laboratory testing, which Reagan believed essential to Congressional funding approval).¹⁴ But to take Reagan at his word, he envisioned the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a necessary means to guarantee US and Soviet security from other nuclear states after they had abolished their nuclear weapons. Although Reagan may also have been reluctant to make an agreement in view of on-going proliferation activities, Reagan’s minimal requirements to what he was otherwise prepared to agree on was entirely different to that required by Cheney.

Bush’s Undersecretary of State and Ambassador to the UN John Bolton similarly claims in his memoirs that the continuation of the Six-Party Talks, in spite of clear evidence of North Korean assistance to Syria in constructing a nuclear reactor, “threatened to prove once and for all that Bush was no Ronald Reagan.”¹⁵ This also identifies Reagan with a hard line negotiating position, but, in the quotation three paragraphs above, Reagan says he thought of himself as hard line, and was indeed not prepared to compromise what he believed to be essential for the survival of a program designed to protect the US after its nuclear disarmament. Matlock is clear that the “linkage” Reagan talked of in his first press conference was (generally) “not a rigid ‘You must do x before we do y,’ but a more general attitude that improvement of relations in one area [of his four-part agenda] could not get far ahead of improvement in others.”¹⁶

In negotiating with the Soviets, Reagan believed that the process of dialogue may in itself be a result, and before his first meeting Gorbachev recorded that agreeing to future meetings would be an important result, as it would “set up a process to avoid war in settling our differences in the future,”¹⁷ whereas Bolton fears that the longer the Six-Party Talks continue the more able the DPRK is to strengthen its nuclear and missile capabilities.¹⁸ Clearly this partly reflects differences of the level of development in the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program and the greater risks of and concerns about proliferation.

14 Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 490-494.

15 John Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*, 465.

16 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 152.

17 *Ibid.*, 153,

18 Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*, 466.

While the Six-Party Talks are castigated by Cheney and Bolton, George W. Bush's memoir concludes:

In the short run, I believe the Six-Party Talks represented the best chance to maintain leverage on Kim Jong-Il and rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons. In the long run, I am convinced that the only path to meaningful change is for the North Korean people to be free.¹⁹

Contrary to Matlock and Cheney, Bush's opinion is very Reaganesque formulation.

Empathy

Whereas emphasis on honesty may be associated with an awareness of one's own objectives and hence with hard line negotiating positions, Reagan was also fascinated by Soviet psychology and his selectivity of about what he said was based on strategic calculations informed partly by empathy for his counterpart:

We must always remember our main goal and Gorbachev's need to show his strength to the Soviet gang back in the Kremlin. Let's not limit the area where he can do that to those things that have to do with aggression outside the Soviet Union.²⁰

After the INF Treaty had been ratified by Congress and Reagan visited Moscow, he did not hesitate to mention to the Soviet media that he had read and enjoyed Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*, that he no longer considered the USSR an evil empire and that most of the change that had taken place in the USSR was to the credit of Gorbachev, rather than himself.²¹ This is said to have visibly increased Gorbachev's confidence and enhanced his authority in moving forward with his reform program.

Clearly this is all based on the fact that Gorbachev really was the leader of change in the direction of a more liberal society, which cannot authoritatively ever be said to have applied to Kim Jong-il. Amidst severe humanitarian and security concerns, it may be legitimately questioned whether attempts at empathy for Kim Jong-il would have been meaningful or helpful. But as stated above,

19 Bush, *Decision Points*, 426.

20 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 152.

21 Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, 304-305.

Reagan had been open in principle to meeting with Gorbachev's predecessors, including Yuri Andropov, and it seems likely that he would have displayed the same interest in understanding their psychology and challenging their beliefs.

Trust

All three authors agree on Gorbachev's primacy role, rather than Reagan's, in bringing the Cold War to an end. Moreover, Grachev's description of the separated spheres of influence of individual members of the Politburo supports Matlock's statement that only the General Secretary himself could have liberated the Soviet Union peacefully from the Party's dictatorship. This applies just as much to the DPRK.

Matlock concludes that face to face meetings moved relations "from suspicion to trust (reinforced by promises kept)" and quotes Gorbachev saying that without trust "the slight improvement in world affairs [would have been] impossible to achieve," which echoes Reagan's identification of the "prevalent suspicion and hostility between us" as one of the "main events" to be addressed by the summit process.²²

Castigating Bush's support of the Six-Party Talks as showing that he was "no Ronald Reagan," John Bolton regards the possibility of the DPRK giving up nuclear weapons program as a "chimera,"²³ and a nuclear DPRK as too dangerous to accept. So in some sense it follows that he advocates a policy of regime change, even though this in itself is usually considered too dangerous.

Verification

Cheney's critique of the Six-Party Talks process emphasizes the importance of insisting on adequate verification procedures. Although Reagan did not allow himself to personally get overly immersed in the technical details of arms control, he was well known for his Russian proverb "doveryai no proveryai" (trust but verify), and the verification protocols agreed under his leadership appear to have been broadly respected. In contrast, the lack of formally agreed verification procedures the Six-Party Talks appears to have been justly criticized. In this respect, citing Reagan would have been appropriate.

Reagan believed in the importance of trust. This is embodied in his saying that "Nations don't fear each other because they are armed, they arm because the fear each other," whereas Cheney appears to focus exclusively on concrete

22 Mikhail Gorbachev, *On My Country and the World* (New York: Columbia Press, 2000), 179.

23 Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*, 465.

and absolute results, accusing Condoleezza Rice's State Department of allowing agreements to become an end in themselves while losing sight of the goal of "getting the North Koreans to give up their nuclear weapons program."²⁴ This contrast is consistent with Mann and Matlocks's characterization of the outlook of the older George H. W. Bush administration (in which Cheney was Defence Secretary) as fundamentally geostrategic, in contrast to Reagan's more psychological perspective.

Conclusion

In sum, while Reagan was remembered for his honesty, manifested most conspicuously in the willingness to proclaim a foreign leadership as "evil," to address US military weaknesses, and to ensure reliable verification of any agreements, recent histories highlight how his judgement was informed by his empathy, a point that appears to have been lost on those wishing to emulate him. Contrary to widely held perceptions, it appears that he was far more strategic than his public image would suggest. Reagan expressed an opposition to appeasement similar to that of Cheney and Bolton, but this was much less significant in the context of mutual rather than one-sided disarmament.

There are numerous important differences between the USSR that Reagan encountered under Gorbachev and the DPRK that Bush's administration witnessed under Kim Jong-il. Nonetheless, the example of Reagan suggests that empathy for the North Korean leader is not incompatible with, and indeed may be instrumental for, effectively caring for the North Korean people and ourselves. Y

24 Cheney, *In My Time*, 490.

GUIDELINES

FOR SUBMISSION

PEAR (Papers, Essays and Reviews) welcomes submissions from all scholars, most notably graduate students, regarding the diverse field of International Studies, particularly those topics that challenge the conventional wisdom of any given issue. Each issue of the printed Journal will contain the following three sections:

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