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**Policy Memorandum on Nuclear Non-proliferation, Power Dynamics, and
Regional Stability Revisited:**

China's Approach to Address Nuclear Crisis on Korea Peninsula

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My paper aims to explore how China has trying to reconcile its key objectives and major national interests on the Peninsula which have to some extent strained its strategic options as well as China's relations with major stakeholders in North East Asia region. On the basis of a closer exploration of security dynamics of nuclear crisis on Korea Peninsula and the implication of China's responsive policy on the international outcomes as well as China's relation with other stakeholders in the North East Asia, the paper is going to examine the ways to optimize China's policy on nuclear crisis on Korea Peninsula. In framing the fundamental problems of China's policy towards nuclear crisis on the Peninsula, the paper applies systems thinking and the way of complexity analysis. Developments of the elements for suggested strategy are to be based on an integrated analysis of the components and dynamics of the system and the assessments of pros and cons of the recommended options.

On the basis of a deep analysis of the new developments of the nuclear crisis on the Peninsula and the difficulties China encountered by adopting an incentive-oriented approach, my paper suggests that it's time for China to optimize its responsive policies towards the nuclear crisis on the Peninsula. To reconcile its strategic goals in the region, China needs to reconcile incentive-oriented approach and prevention-oriented approach. Although China has limited influence in Pyongyang and North Korea's real aim is a relationship with the US, China can make full use of its leverages when dealing with North Korea. To inhibit North Korea's reckless behavior, China can afford to take more balanced strategy to rein in North Korea's actions and help to enhance peace the security on Korea Peninsula.

For all primary strategic goals of China towards the Peninsula, non-proliferation needs to be placed in a central position. First, proliferation of nuclear weapons poses both real and potential threats to the peace and security in North East Asia. China is to some extent the most affected among all stakeholders regarding the consequences of nuclear proliferation. North Korean acquisition of nuclear weapons will lead to an arms race in the region wherein Japan, South Korea and even Taiwan might either seek nuclear weapons themselves or at least more actively seek military cooperation with the United States and more specifically participation in its missile defense shield. Second, a neighboring country with nuclear weapons is not a good thing for any country in anyway. Few consider it probable that North Korea would ever turn its potential weapons against China, and so Chinese concern over North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles is low, at least as compared to that of Japan, South Korea and the US. But it is not impossible that China may be confronted with nuclear blackmail over some issue one day. Third, acquisition of nuclear weapons by North Korea is likely to provoke a military intervention from the US and/or other powers, or severe sanctions. China does not want a war in its periphery, particularly one that could bring US troops again to China's border at the Yalu River. Nor does China want sanctions, because these could wreak yet greater havoc on the already-struggling people of North Korea, sending more refugees to China and putting China in the awkward position of having to choose between aligning itself with its old ally and neighbor or against the international community.

While China can continue to provide necessary economic and diplomatic aid to North Korea for fear of the latter's domestic difficulty might create unexpected chaos and instability, Beijing needs to conduct resolute reduction or suspension, if not the complete termination of such aid in

the event of DPRK's overt defiance of China's strategic interests. China can heartily support North Koreans not only political side but economically as well, just like America's never ending support to Israelis. But China cannot afford to offer too much resource on North Korea if what China gets in return is a recalcitrant North Korea that frequently embarrasses China. Given the precarious security environment in and around the Peninsula, especially the deepening instability inside the DPRK, sooner rather than later China may have to formulate an alternative approach toward the DPRK.

China needs to work together with the US, Russia and other stakeholders in the Peninsula to explore the ways of providing individual or/and collective security assurance towards North Korea. The DPRK-China Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance signed in July 1961 actually remains valid unless one side agrees to a revision or abolishment. A clause guarantees automatic intervention if one of the signatories is attacked by a country or allied countries. However, China has since late 1970s downplayed this treaty. China sought to limit its long-standing, if largely dormant, security obligations to the DPRK, with ties now defined as "friendly cooperative relations," not a military alliance. The bilateral relationship between China and the DPRK entailed relations of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance, but there is no permanent body like a joint headquarters between these two countries, nor is there any joint combat plan, and still less are joint military exercises conducted. North Korea has long sought for security assurance; China and other stakeholders can explore the feasibility and effectiveness for such assurance.

Finally, China must ensure maximum communication and coordination with all states intent on inhibiting the DPRK's nuclear development and promoting peace and security on Korea Peninsula, so that no party would exploit the crisis to pursue interests that are not in conformity with the common goals. In particular, China should dialogue with South Korea and the US about the evolving situation in the North. There is so much uncertainty about the situation in North Korea that the US, ROK, and China should avoid making any brash decision based on miscalculation, which is the most likely cause of instability when clear information is absent in international relations.