

North Korea & the UN Security Council: Action, Reaction, Trust, and Mistrust

EDUARDO ZACHARY ALBRECHT



Cover Photo: A South Korean man reads a newspaper reporting North Korea's rocket launch on April 5, 2009. Seoul, South Korea. Istockphoto/Chung Sung-Jun.

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Suggested Citation:

Eduardo Zachary Albrecht, "North Korea and the UN Security Council: Action, Reaction, Trust, and Mistrust," New York: International Peace Institute, March 2013.

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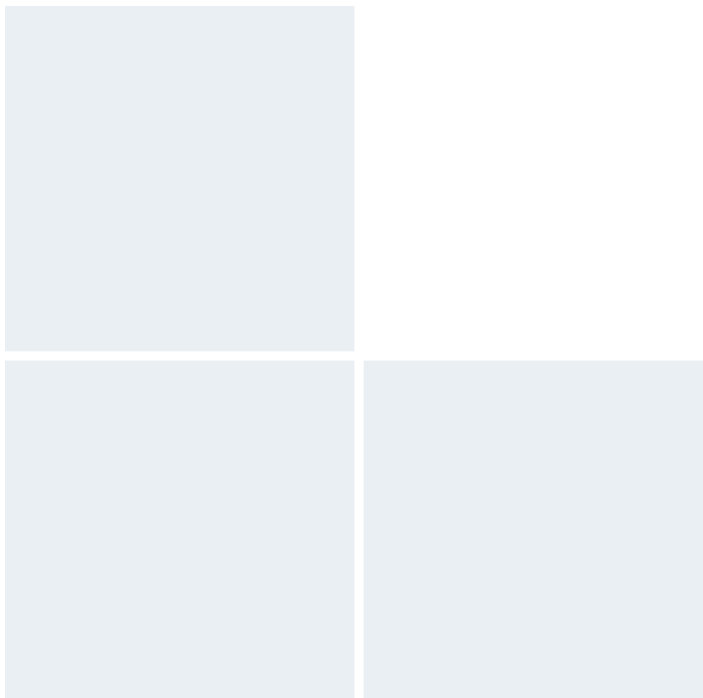
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Pukyong National University Research Fund in 2012 (PK-2012-21). The author would like to thank Francesco Mancini, IPI Senior Director of Research for guidance, Adam Lupel and Marie O'Reilly in editing and producing this publication, and Maureen Quinn, IPI Senior Adviser, for reviewing an earlier draft of this project. Last but not least, special thanks go to Betty Chemier, Amit Arora, and Cheong Ju Kim for their much appreciated assistance with the research.



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Executive Summary

This study attempts to better understand the recent history of the relationship between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United Nations Security Council by analyzing four different episodes in the relationship in depth. It then uses these analyses to infer recurrent trends in this relationship, so that we may get a better idea of what to expect from the DPRK in the near future. Since research shows that in the absence of some form of common ground between international actors lasting disarmament is not likely to be achieved, the report pays particular attention to levels of "trust" in this relationship.¹

By using an original methodology that combines a quantitative evaluation of the levels of mutual trust with a qualitative examination of the social and geopolitical context, we are able to identify what circumstances contribute to better relations and what circumstances do not. The study comes to the following conclusions and recommendations.

First, it is not uncommon for Security Council resolutions to be utilized by the DPRK to reach some kind of strategic objective of its own. In particular, the DPRK has been successfully provoking the Security Council with weapons proliferation in order to (a) play the great powers against each other, (b) gain the upper hand in negotiating with the US and Japan, (c) portray itself as the legitimate defender of the Korean people, North and South, and (d) test the attitude of the international community, particularly the US,

toward itself. Whenever any of this occurs, the level of mutual trust rapidly decreases.

Second, there is a case to be made that the Security Council should remove itself as an instrument of the DPRK's foreign policy strategy. That is, whenever it becomes obvious that the DPRK is attempting to take advantage of a Security Council reaction, the Security Council should perhaps respond in a less predictable, scripted manner. One way to achieve this could be by relying more on technical provisions and less on media-ready public statements.

We also find that every time Security Council resolutions respond to the long-term strategic interests of the larger regional players, periods of relative calm ensue. In particular, any arrangement that (a) allowed China to use the DPRK to further its role as a major stakeholder in the region or (b) allowed the US to use the DPRK to advance the case for its continued military presence in Japan and South Korea would, quite ironically, increase the level of mutual trust between the DPRK and the Security Council. Arrangements (a) and (b) are not necessarily in contradiction.

Security Council policymakers may thus want to consider that the more a provision caters to the interests of all the major local and regional players—and not just those of the DPRK—the more trust is increased in a sustainable way, and the higher the chances that the region ceases to be a problem for the international community in the near future.

¹ For the link between common interests and lasting disarmament, see Tanya Ogilvie-White, "The Defiant States: The Nuclear Diplomacy of North Korea and Iran," *The Nonproliferation Review* 17, No. 1 (2010): 115–138.

Introduction

Arguably, the relationship between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United Nations has long been one of mutual distrust. In June 1950, just five years after the UN was established, the DPRK ignored the results of a UN-overseen election in the South and attacked it. The invasion was brought before the Security Council. Given that the Soviets were busy boycotting the meetings, the council promptly condemned the attack and called on the DPRK to withdraw its troops. This was ignored, the troops stayed where they were, and the Security Council convened once again. This time the use of force was authorized, as again the Soviets were absent. A sixteen-member-state United Nations Joint Command was created, led by a resolute United States of America, which effectively put the UN at war with the DPRK.

To this day there is still no peace treaty. Yet, the relationship has evolved and changed throughout the decades. The objective of this paper is to analyze the recent history of this relationship, to better understand its dynamics, and to propose a method for identifying what contributes to building trust and what does not. In particular, the paper will look at four different cases that directly concern the DPRK and the UN Security Council.

These cases are (1) Resolution 1695 adopted on July 15, 2006, condemning a DPRK missile-launch test; (2) Resolution 1718 adopted on October 14, 2006, condemning a DPRK underground nuclear test; (3) Resolution 1874 adopted on June 12, 2009, imposing further economic sanctions in the aftermath of another underground nuclear test; and (4) the April 13, 2012, Security Council condemnation of a new rocket launch in Chulsan-gun. The fourth, albeit not involving a Security Council resolution, has been included due to the fact that it involved the new leadership in Pyongyang.

The point of these measures by the Security Council is to influence the behavior of the DPRK's government. These measures, in which the Security Council condemns specific behaviors, are meant to

persuade the DPRK not to repeat these behaviors in the future. Such pressure is purportedly applied to make that government, among other things, more compliant to international norms concerning nuclear proliferation and weapons testing. If such pressure is effective, the DPRK will be encouraged to enter within the fold of the international community and its norms.

But have these actions been effective in influencing behavior? For Tanya Ogilvie-White, disarmament efforts with "defiant states" have not always resulted in improved behavior. She finds that these efforts can actually augment the alienation felt by certain states and provoke an escalation of nuclear tensions in the long run. This risk is especially prevalent among states that have a very low level of integration into international society to start with, like North Korea. Such integration, based on the sharing of common norms, is termed "interaction capacity."²

Ogilvie-White finds that in the absence of some form of common ground between international actors, lasting disarmament is not likely to be achieved. For this reason it may be relevant to look at what contributes to building such "interaction capacity"—which we could also call "trust"—between the DPRK and the Security Council, and how this trust might influence the DPRK's behavior.

Admittedly, there may be little by way of hard evidence that suggests that the Security Council's dispute with the DPRK can only be resolved if trust is built first between the two sides. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence that the current strategy of tighter and tighter sanctions has not decreased the number of warheads on the peninsula. In fact, the DPRK has been successfully developing a nuclear arsenal in slow motion for the past thirty years despite all kinds of resolutions and provisions. It is with this fact in mind that this study has chosen to focus on the issue of building trust as an important key to making progress.

As such, when analyzing the four cases mentioned above, we will ask two questions. What

2 Ogilvie-White, "The Defiant States."

circumstances have led to an increase in the level of mutual trust? What can UN policymakers do to make the Security Council's future actions more effective in building trust so as to better influence DPRK behavior? To answer these questions, this paper will use a method that combines a quantitative analysis of the level of trust with qualitative reviews of the strategies and norms that motivate and inform decision making in both the Security Council and the DPRK.

Methodology

It is necessary to start by defining more precisely what is meant by the term trust. This is a vague concept, as there are multiple ways of conceiving it. If we are to accurately measure the level of trust between the DPRK and the Security Council, then we must find a way of objectively quantifying it.

In the field of international relations, the existence of trust among two or more actors indicates “a willingness to take risks on the behavior of others based on the belief that potential trustees will ‘do what is right.’”³ This implies that trust is based on the sharing of common beliefs and common definitions of right and wrong. But how do we measure the sharing of common beliefs? Trust, on the one hand, may allow states or nonstate actors to calculate risk and take important strategic positions that have very real effects; yet, on the other, it is also a very intangible quality that is particularly difficult to measure in absolute terms.

Like the concept of right and wrong itself, trust is a shifty and often self-serving moral construct that is constantly being bargained over. For example, is it right for sovereign states to be trusted with developing their own nuclear weapons (e.g., the DPRK's position)? Should smaller states entrust the international nonproliferation regime with providing nuclear security (e.g., the Security Council's position)? The answer to this question depends on whether or not we believe that those who manage such a regime will do so in our best interest. In fact, scholars agree that “trust refers to an attitude involving a willingness to place the fate

of one's interests under the control of others.”⁴ This, in turn, can only happen if all involved agree on a common belief of what is right.

The presence or absence of trust among actors in international relations is, therefore, not easy to pinpoint. Nevertheless, this study would like to put forth that trust is *manifested* in the *behavior* that each actor displays in relation to the other. Trust, or the absence thereof, is expressed in a state's conduct, and this, fortunately, can be more easily gauged. The behavior of international actors is, in fact, constantly monitored both by the international mainstream media and by the wider public that consumes these media stories. Both these things can be measured through the use of relatively simple technologies.

Text analytics software can quantify the level of positive or negative sentiments expressed in news articles. Text analytics uses techniques such as natural language processing to transform unstructured data (i.e., text in news articles) into structured data (i.e., numerical scores). In this way, meaning can be easily extracted from the large quantities of text contained in all the news articles that deal with the relationship between the DPRK and the Security Council. Similarly, Internet search trend analyses can quantify the general public's attention or interest toward a particular news item. Search trend analyses measure the number of web searches that contain a determined set of key terms. For example, the quantity of searches containing key terms such as “North Korea,” “Security Council,” “nuclear weapons,” and/or “security threat” can be measured over time and represented as a numerical score.

If we accept the premise that abnormally high levels of negative sentiment in the media correspond to some form of political tension between the DPRK and the Security Council, and if we also accept the premise that if there are abnormally high levels of Internet searches concerning North Korea it is because the general public is worried about that country's behavior (and not because it is interested in vacationing there), then we may appraise the levels of trust between the

3 Aaron M. Hoffman, “A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 8, No. 3 (2002): 375–401, p. 375.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 376–377.

DPRK and the Security Council by measuring the trends in these two types of values. In short, high levels of negative sentiment in the international mainstream media, in addition to high levels of interest on the part of the general public, indicates that something is not going well in the relationship, and that the level of trust between the two might be lower than usual. Vice versa, the opposite indicates if not the presence of trust, at least the relative absence of distrust.

Let us briefly clarify what is meant by “international mainstream media” and “general public.” These are rather abstract categories, and it is necessary to give the reader some added detail. First, both technologies used to explore these categories (text analytics of news articles and search trend analyses) are limited by language. While the text analytics software used did, when searching international news, consider a small number of articles in a variety of languages, including Mandarin, Korean, Arabic, and some Western European languages, the vast majority of the articles kept in its mechanically updated database were in English.⁵ The search trend analysis can also be effectuated in different languages, yet, it was found to be more practical to use English terms, because of the higher amount of data yielded.⁶

Therefore, by international mainstream media we mean those major news outlets that have a global distribution and are mostly in the English language, and by general public we mean any individual interested in an English language query result concerning North Korea, irrespective of the country he or she is in. While this does represent an unfortunate selection bias, it can however be made to fit within the purposes of this methodology. Being concerned with the reaction of the “international community” to specific actions taken by the DPRK, and considering that, by and large, the lingua franca of said community in this particular moment in history is English (this is not a value

judgment, but a practical observation for the reasons of academic inquiry) then the use of mostly English language sources is, while a limit, not an insuperable detraction.

Consequently, this is not a precise science. But then again, neither is trust. There is evidence, however, that instances of negative sentiment in the media and high public interest do in fact correspond to historical events in which the relationship between the DPRK and the international community was at a relative low, while the absence of such negative sentiment and public interest corresponds to moments in which the relationship seems to be going well. Bringing to mind the old adage that good news is seldom news, we see for example that when the IAEA announced on July 16, 2007, that the nuclear reactor in Yongbyon had been shut down, we did in fact register few related news items and Internet searches—i.e., high levels of trust (see chart at the beginning of Case 1).

Let us now spend a few words on how the data used in this methodology was collected, processed, and finally portrayed graphically. This study relies on data obtained from the web analytics software Recorded Future and the search trend analyses service Google Trends. Different filters were used in order to select only news items or search terms that concerned the relation between the DPRK and the international community. Data series attained in this way were then stacked, proportioned, and leveled out using a simple moving average.⁷

Next, the values have been organized into a series of four line charts comprising the time period starting one year before and ending one year after each of the episodes being analyzed. Salient events in the history of the relationship between the DPRK and the Security Council have also been inserted so that the reader may contextualize the rising and lowering levels of trust by referring to the short

5 Purportedly, there are relatively less publications in other languages that are read internationally or focus more exclusively on international issues. It may also be noted that this technology, being mostly developed over the past decade, is relatively young and still presents considerable challenges and imperfections even in the English language. Its adaptation to other languages can be seen as a new development of a new technology, and, as such, is likely presented with even greater challenges and imperfections.

6 Experimental tests were run using terms in different languages, such as Spanish and Italian, and it was verified that the general trends, while containing less data, remained roughly the same.

7 Being still in its experimental stages, there are many shortcomings in this methodology that need to be addressed in future trials. Specifically, there is still a lot of work to be done to better fine-tune the choice of media sources, the languages used, the filters applied, and the relative weighting of the different subtopics.

description of each event directly above the line chart. Numerical values and daily dates have been omitted in order to highlight the trends and how they interact with the events.

The charts have been placed at the start of each chapter so that the reader can refer back to them and quickly assess each of the case episodes and other major events, according to their position on the chart, as either trust building or trust thwarting. With this information at hand, each chapter proceeds to investigate why certain events might have increased the level of trust, and why others might have decreased it.

The analysis of each case episode has been conducted from three different perspectives. First, we examine the narrative surrounding the conduct of the DPRK and the actions taken in response by the Security Council. Second, we discuss the strategic interests of Security Council permanent members at the time. Third, we consider what social influences were conditioning the DPRK's strategy and behavior. This review method has been set up so that each step grants us the necessary insight to proceed to the next. The first part, in which we look at the narrative surrounding the facts, tells us what strategic interests in what country were mostly at play. The second part, in turn, gives us insight into what social influences were most active in shaping the DPRK's particular policy vis-à-vis those strategic interests at the time.

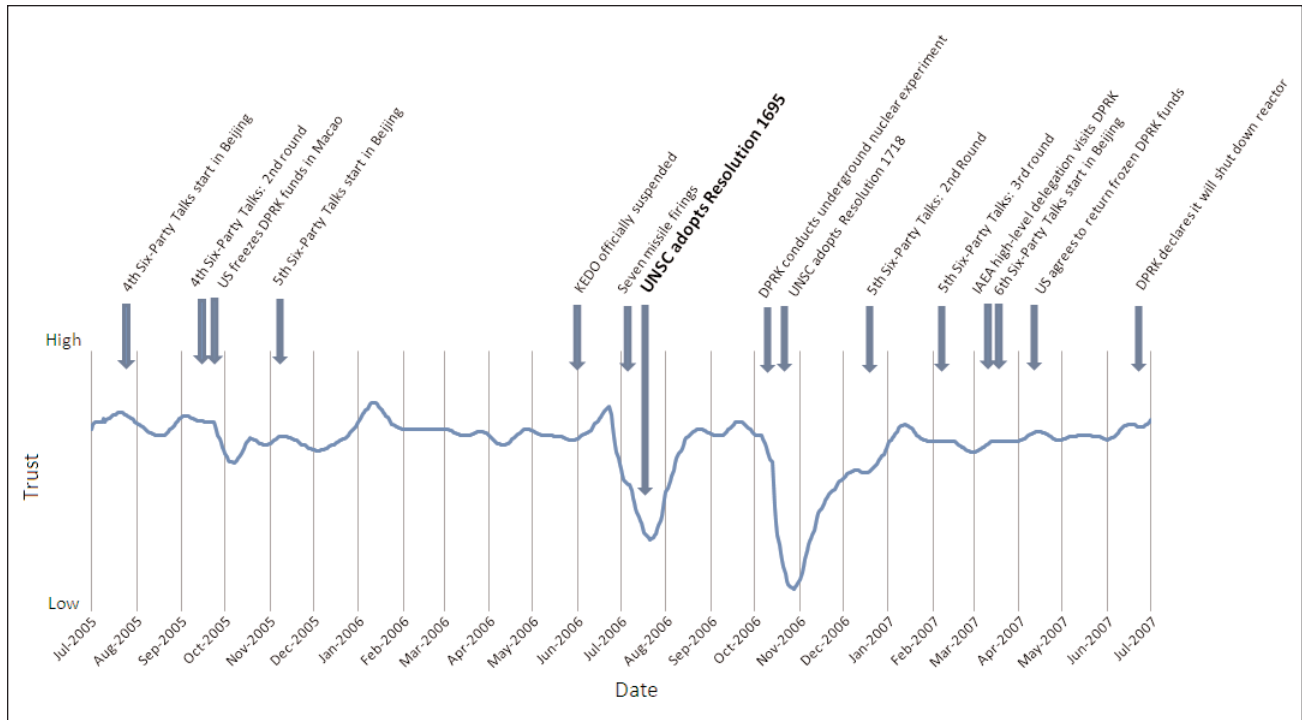
The objective of the last step, in which we look at the social influences, is to better understand the DPRK foreign policy elite's worldviews within the context of rising and lowering levels of trust toward

the Security Council and the international community. Here, we use insights from history and anthropology to deconstruct the DPRK's strategy and behavior, and explain what normative stimuli were likely to have motivated and informed decision making. Special attention has been given to the change in leadership in the DPRK. What influences shaped the decision-making process in the years preceding the succession of Kim Jung-un? What influences are occurring under the new leadership, are these the same as always, is there something new?

Finally, we use this review to compile a table that breaks down each case episode into its component parts. The three-pronged review conducted allows us to isolate and determine what specific "characteristics" of each case episode had what specific effect on the level of trust. What actions by the Security Council were effective in building trust, and what actions were not? What strategic interests of the permanent members contributed to building trust, and what interests did not? What social influences in the DPRK contributed to building trust, and what influences did not? The table will also tell us how each of these characteristics relate to each other, and what combinations led to what effects.

This will allow us to return to the question posed above: what can UN policymakers do to deal more effectively with the DPRK? The concluding discussion will focus on what role the UN Security Council should play in the future to influence behavior, given both past dynamics and insights concerning the new leadership.

Case 1: Seven Missile Firings and Resolution 1695 (July 2006)



EVENT NARRATIVE

On July 5, 2006, the DPRK conducted a series of seven missile firings. The launches themselves were not illegal and did not break any international treaty, but they did shake up the region quite a bit. Japan immediately proposed a resolution calling for action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—which opens the way for the possible use of force against an international threat.⁸ China quickly opposed Japan’s proposal, saying that such a measure would just deepen tensions in Northeast Asia, and sent a diplomatic mission to Pyongyang instead. As that mission produced little by way of tangible results, negotiations intensified in the Security Council, with the US backing Japan on the

need to draft a strong resolution, and Russia backing China on the need to drop any references to Chapter VII.⁹

By July 15th, the US and Japan agreed to drop the explicit reference to Chapter VII, replacing it with a paragraph saying that the Security Council is “acting under its special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”¹⁰ This, according to the then US ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, made the resolution just as binding as it would have been with an explicit reference.¹¹

The resolution was the strongest reprimand the Security Council had adopted against the DPRK since the Korean War. It required all UN member

8 Chapter VII does not authorize the use of force per se, although the Security Council often says it is “acting under Chapter VII” when it wants to emphasize that a resolution contains binding measures. These measures may or may not include the authorization of “action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security” as stated in Article 42 of the charter. For more information on Chapter VII, see Security Council Report, “Security Council Action Under Chapter VII: Myths and Realities,” Special Research Report No. 1, New York, June 2008.

9 Warren Hoge, “U.N. Council, in Weakened Resolution, Demands End to North Korean Missile Program,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2006, available at www.nytimes.com/2006/07/16/world/asia/.

10 UN Security Council Resolution 1695 (July 15, 2006), UN Doc. S/RES/1695.

11 Bill Varner, “UN Council Demands North Korea End Missile Program,” *Bloomberg*, July 16, 2006, available at www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aZwjGrrME5GA.

states to take measures to combat missile proliferation by preventing the transfer of “missile and missile-related items, materials, goods and technology” to the DPRK. In addition, it required that all states cease the transfer of “financial resources in relation to DPRK’s missile or WMD programs.”¹² For some observers, the resolution itself held great symbolic importance because it demonstrated that the five permanent members of the Security Council were willing to compromise and find common ground, despite their differences.¹³

Nevertheless, consensus among most at the time was that the resolution was considerably weakened by the compromise, having to rely on softer wording that, for example, “strongly urge[d]” the DPRK to return to the Six-Party Talks. Observers noted that the divisions within the Security Council had contributed to making the resolution, ultimately, toothless. In fact, Pak Gil Yon, the DPRK’s ambassador to the UN at the time, rejected it as soon as it was adopted, and made it very clear that his government had no intention of taking any of it seriously. According to the North Korean official state news agency, KCNA, it was the result of a “hostile foreign policy towards the DPRK,” which created “an extremely dangerous situation on the Korean Peninsula.” It went on, clarifying that

only the strong can defend justice in the world today where the jungle law prevails. Neither the UN nor anyone else can protect us ... First, our Republic vehemently denounces and roundly refutes the UNSC ‘resolution,’ a product of the US hostile policy towards the DPRK, and will not be bound to it in the least. Second, our Republic will bolster its war deterrent for self-defense in every way by all means and methods now that the situation has reached the worst phase due to the extremely hostile act of the US. We will firmly defend our own way the ideology and system chosen by our people, true to the Songun policy, a treasured sword.¹⁴

STRATEGIC INTERESTS

By the time Resolution 1695 was passed in the summer of 2006, the strategic positions of the different countries comprising the permanent members of the Security Council with regard to the DPRK were already clear. More than a decade of experience with the DPRK’s nuclear brinkmanship had made the geopolitical contours of the region rather obvious. One thing that did stand out this time around, however, was the depth of the strategic partnership that had been created between China and Russia. The crux of the discussion leading up to the adoption of this resolution pivoted around the divergent positions of the US on the one side, and China and Russia on the other.

On the surface, China and Russia simply disagreed with the US over the strength of the wording and the inclusion of references to Chapter VII. However, underneath the surface, the Chinese and Russian positions in the Security Council were converging over a common need to resist US unipolarity, to establish buffer boundaries, and to avoid any unnecessary disturbances to their increasingly restless populations internally.¹⁵

David Kerr explains that they both have an interest in the multipolarization of power in Northeast Asia, as elsewhere, and have often collaborated over the Korean crisis in order to prevent the US from applying any unilateral solution.¹⁶ It is possible that this common interest has solidified Sino-Russian relations. While not always rosy, relations between China and Russia are rarely a source of any serious tension. In a survey of Chinese public opinion, respondents were asked to name the countries that posed a threat to China. Only 3 percent identified Russia as a threat (76 percent identified the US).¹⁷

Geopolitical balancing is a major consideration

12 UN Security Council Resolution 1695.

13 Karin Lee and Julia Choi, “North Korea: Unilateral and Multilateral Economic Sanctions and U.S. Department of Treasury Actions 1955–April 2009,” Washington, DC: The National Committee on North Korea, April 2009, p. 32.

14 Korean Central News Agency, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Refutes Resolution of UN Security Council,” Press Release, July 16, 2006, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1695. “Songun” refers to the military-first policy.

15 These three needs are sometimes dramatically intertwined.

16 David Kerr, “The Sino-Russian Partnership and U.S. Policy Toward North Korea: From Hegemony to Concert in Northeast Asia,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49, No. 3 (September 2005): 411–438.

17 Wenfang Tang, “Political and Social Trends in the Post-Deng Urban China: Crisis and Stability,” *The China Quarterly* 168 (December 2001): 890–909.

in both China and Russia's foreign policies. The DPRK, which shares a long border with China and a shorter one with Russia, figures prominently in both countries' strategic thinking. In Chinese history books, the Korean war was a victory for the People's Liberation Army. Indeed, the Chinese succeeded in reaching their wartime objective: pushing the US-UN forces out of the North and to the acceptable boundary of the 38th parallel.¹⁸ The need to defend this past success is behind many of China's decisions in the Security Council concerning the DPRK. China's insistence on not including any reference to Chapter VII in Resolution 1695—that would raise the specter of the use of force in and against the DPRK—can be explained in this way. Russia is just as sensitive when it comes to its border nations. The South Ossetia War of August 2008 sent a clear signal in this sense.¹⁹

Lastly, both the Chinese and Russian states are facing potentially destabilizing internal problems. Rapid economic change and overstretched government apparatuses have contributed to inequality and have strained relations with minority populations. These issues are all factored in their foreign policies. In particular, China and Russia share the perceived need to avoid at all costs foreign manipulation of these internal cleavages. (They feel that any "growing pains" must be resolved independently for their nation to be strengthened and for it to emerge as an autonomous and respected player on the global stage.) A collapsed DPRK would almost certainly increase the flow of refugees into China, with potentially destabilizing effects in the Chinese Northeast, where there already exists a sizable Korean minority. Russia, managing myriad ethnic minorities on its own territory, is in a position to sympathize with the Chinese.

In sum, the convergence of Chinese and Russian interests in Northeast Asia created a strong, unified front within the Security Council in New York that ultimately slashed the credibility of the resolution.

In fact, three months later, the Security Council found itself dealing with yet another DPRK provocation, this time of the nuclear sort.

SOCIAL INFLUENCES

The firing of seven missiles in July 2006 signaled a shift in the DPRK's identity and, especially, a new phase in their dealings with the international community. We must remember that the event came only a few months after the official collapse of a joint US–Japan–South Korea project to offer civilian nuclear energy to the DPRK called the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, or KEDO. After this broke down, any remnants of the Agreed Framework between the US and the DPRK, which had held the situation precariously together since 1994, also fell apart.²⁰

From the DPRK's point of view, the country was quickly losing what little material assurances it had from the US. The leadership in the DPRK had always perceived its own material survival as tied to the existence of a stable relationship with a sponsoring state. With the end of KEDO, it was clear to the leaders that the US was not stepping up to this role. The absence of a material provider made them very nervous. The ground was moving beneath them, and they needed to find new footing.

Since the very beginning, the single greatest preoccupation for the DPRK's government has been that of securing a material provider. In the 1940s and 1950s, the elite took power and ruled thanks to their relationship with the USSR. According to Winston Smith:

The very existence of the North Korean state is the direct result of the Soviet occupation in the region at the end of World War II. Kim Il-sung's seizure of power in 1948 was not the result of an internal revolution in North Korea (prior to the Soviet occupation, the Korean Workers' Party was better organized, more active and more popular in the South than in the North). Kim Il-sung was chosen, manipulated, and 'installed' by the Soviet Union, where he'd lived in exile for years during the Japanese occupation.²¹

18 Kerr, "The Sino-Russian Partnership."

19 See Ronald D. Asmus, *The Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

20 The Agreed Framework broke down in 2003.

21 Winston Smith, "The Juche Myth," *Tomorrows City*, March 6, 2011, available at www.tomorrowscity.com.

The Soviets guaranteed the government's survival through financial, energy, and military support for decades. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, China became the sole source of support. Yet the Chinese, busy normalizing relations with the rest of Asia (including South Korea) in the wake of the Soviet collapse, were somewhat limited in how much they could overtly back the DPRK.

This profoundly worried the North Korean leadership. As a consequence, it decided to end its diplomatic isolation and engage with the West in an attempt to guarantee material resources from that channel. It opened a diplomatic dialogue with several EU countries, tapping into some resources there, but, more importantly, in what may seem like an ironic twist of events, it opened an aid-based relationship with its archenemy, the US. According to Jean du Preez and William Potter:

In June 1993 Pyongyang began direct negotiations with the United States. The negotiations eventually produced the 1994 Agreed Framework ... The United States promised to supply heavy fuel oil shipments and to construct two light-water nuclear power reactors, agreed to normalize political and economic relations and pledged to 'provide formal assurances to the DPRK against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the United States.'²²

By the mid-2000s it was clear that the EU was asking too high a price—concerned as it was with altering the internal structure of the state, harping on about human rights—and that the US was simply not planning on delivering. The negotiating strategy the DPRK had developed to deal with the West, one in which it bargained its weapons systems against food and energy aid, was not working as well as hoped. More specifically, it was not looking very sustainable for the future. By summer 2006, the DPRK knew it needed a new model.

If it could no longer enter into satisfactory bilateral relationships with the great powers, then it would have to move on to a more sophisticated model that was capable of leveraging the divisions among the great powers to its own advantage. It is

possible that the seven missile firings of July 2006 signaled a shift from a sponsor-based survival mentality to a new mentality that sought to exasperate and exploit the strategic divisions that were developing between Russia and China on the one side, and the US, Japan, and much of the West on the other.

We may surmise that from that rising divergence, the DPRK hoped to extract the necessary conditions for its future survival. If it could make itself indispensable to both teams—if both China and Russia's strategy, as much as the US's, depended on the DPRK's continued existence—then the trick was done. It would no longer have to depend on one or two providers for the material goods and assurances necessary to survive but could now rely on the tensions existing between a number of regional and global powers to create the conditions that would sustain it.

This marked a return for the DPRK to classic, small-power statecraft, a realist attitude and skill honed through the centuries, as Koreans learned how to play China against Japan in order to keep their nation and culture safe. A consequence of this renewed (old) thinking is that the objective went from simply winning energy and aid deals to finding ways to exacerbate the tensions existing between the great powers.

In particular, DPRK foreign-policy specialists were looking for ways to split the Security Council; more specifically, they needed to create as much tension as possible between China and the US over the peninsula. The seven missile firings did just that. They forced China and Russia to stick up for the DPRK by opposing the inclusion of references to Chapter VII—alluding to the use of force—in the inevitable resolution that the North Korean leadership knew would follow its provocation. In other words, the DPRK knew that those two powers in the region could not allow the US to encroach, so it gave them no choice but to indirectly acknowledge the DPRK's right to sovereignty over its own territory and weapons program.

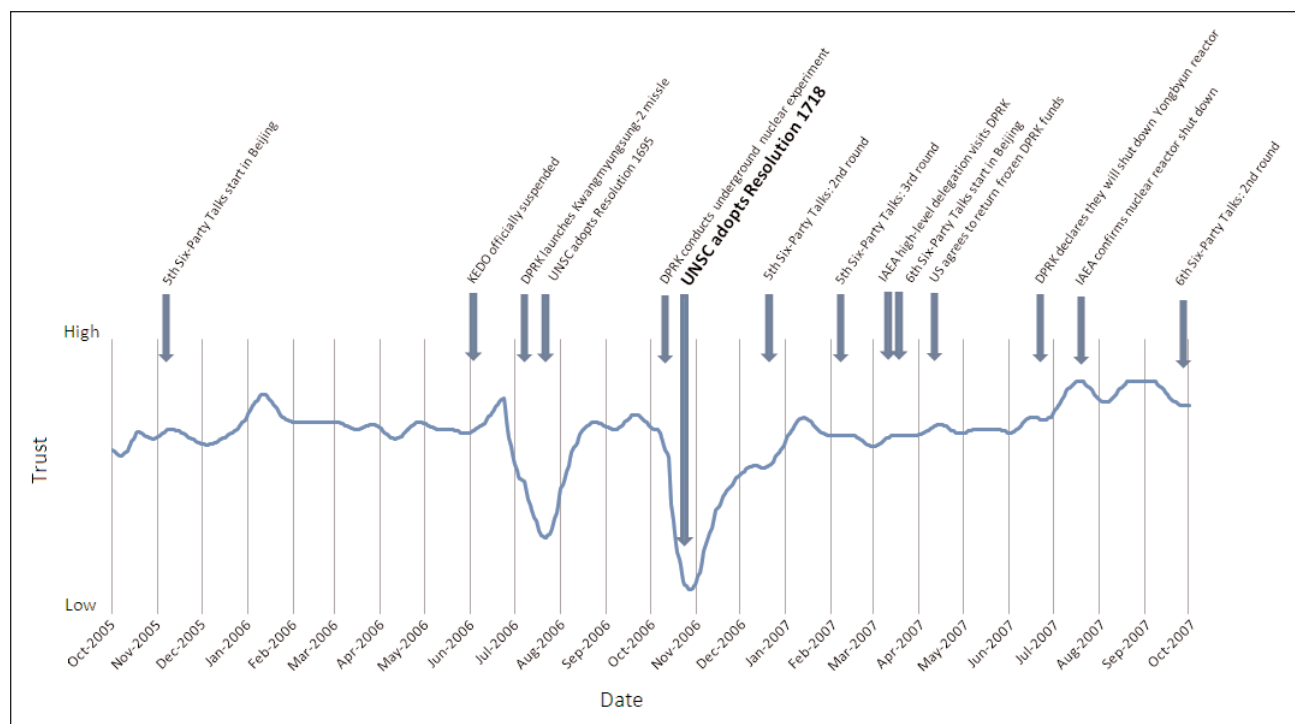
22 Jean du Preez and William Potter, "North Korea's Withdrawal from the NPT: A Reality Check," Monterey: James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, April 2003.

This is not to say that the DPRK completely abandoned the original policy of seeking energy, security, and food support from sponsoring nations. That thinking still exists, but it was significantly complemented with this new policy that would be more aggressively implemented from

then onward. As Peter Hayes and Scott Bruce put it, the DPRK would now “leverage the threat posed by the great powers to each other to the DPRK’s advantage—not a game that the nuclear weapons states are used to playing with a small state.”²³

23 Peter Hayes and Scott Bruce, “North Korean Nuclear Nationalism and the Threat of Nuclear War in Korea,” *Pacific Focus* 26, No. 1 (April 2011): 65–89.

Case 2: Nuclear Test and Resolution 1718 (October 2006)



EVENT NARRATIVE

On October 3, 2006, the DPRK announced its intentions to test a nuclear device. On October 9th the device was detonated, and the KCNA released the following statement:

The nuclear test was conducted with indigenous wisdom and technology 100 percent. It marks an historic event as it greatly encouraged and pleased the KPA [Korean People's Army] and people that have wished to have powerful self-reliant defense capability. It will contribute to defending the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the area around it.²⁴

Immediately, talk of additional sanctions intensified. When the DPRK envoy to the UN was asked about the possibility of a new resolution filed against his country, he said that "it would be better

for the Security Council to offer its congratulations rather than pass 'useless' resolutions."²⁵ Five days later the resolution was passed anyway, imposing, among other things, an asset freeze and travel ban on persons related to the nuclear program, and limitations on the trade of weapons and luxury items with the DPRK.²⁶

Not surprisingly, the DPRK rejected the resolution, calling it "gangster-like of the Security Council to have adopted today a coercive resolution while neglecting the nuclear threat and moves for sanctions and pressure of the United States against the DPRK," and specifying how "this clearly testifies that the Security Council has completely lost its impartiality and still persists in applying double standards in its work."²⁷

24 Korean Central News Agency, "DPRK Successfully Conducts Underground Nuclear Test," Press Release, October 10, 2006.

25 "US Asks for Tough UN Sanctions on North Korea," *Voice of America*, October 9, 2006.

26 United Nations Department of Public Information, "Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test by Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1718 (2006)," Press Release No. SC/8853, October 14, 2006.

27 "Security Council Imposes Sanctions on DPR Korea After its Claimed Nuclear Test," *UN News Centre*, October 14, 2006, available at www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp.

Despite the usual lack of synchronization between the Security Council and the DPRK mission to the UN, this round of sanctions saw a somewhat less confrontational atmosphere within the Security Council itself. Reference was made to Chapter VII without much commotion, although military enforcement was barred. It is particularly interesting to note that, some days after the resolution was adopted, the tone of the Sino-US dialogue was actually rather positive. Some senior US State Department officials, including then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, went so far as to say that, in the end, the nuclear crises may even bring the US and China into a closer partnership.²⁸

In fact, the general post-resolution environment was far less tense this time than it was after the July 16th resolution. Just six days after the resolution was adopted, Kim Jong-il allegedly said that he was “sorry” about the test and was looking to make some concessions, including returning to the Six-Party Talks.²⁹ In fact, at a low-key meeting with envoys from the US and China on October 31st, the DPRK quietly agreed to rejoin the talks.³⁰ The talks resumed on December 18, 2006.

Marcus Noland noted that, “before the test, it was widely believed that such an event would have cataclysmic diplomatic ramifications in Asia, possibly even prefiguring war,” but none of that happened. Indeed, Noland points out, even stock markets in Asia were unmoved by the event.³¹ Oddly, there was no significant disruption to international alliances or to the foreign strategies of the great powers in the region.

The sanctions themselves were just as inconsequential. The new ban on luxury items was largely ignored—luxury trade to the DPRK actually increased between 2006 and 2007.³² The DPRK’s arms trade was also unaffected, according to Clara Portela, “partly due to the fact that Pyongyang sells arms and missiles to ‘countries of concern’ such as Iran, Pakistan, Yemen and Syria, which are unable to find alternative suppliers easily,”³³ and are,

arguably, not always the most enthusiastic about the imposition of UN sanctions in the first place.

STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Ironically, when the KCNA stated that its country’s nuclear capabilities would “contribute to defending the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the area around it,”³⁴ it was not completely off the mark. The events leading up to Resolution 1718, and those immediately following it, saw a remarkable lining up of interests among many of the concerned parties.

The Chinese and the Americans, forced to cooperate on the issue, found some common ground—shaky, but common. The DPRK’s behavior, after the deed, seemed to indicate that it had reached some sort of strategic objective of its own with the nuclear test, and was now willing to talk. Perhaps it felt that, as a confirmed nuclear power, its standing among nations was now more solid.

Whatever the case, the events of October 2006 inaugurated a long period of increased trust between the DPRK and the international community, exemplified by the resumption of the Six-Party Talks. Why was this so? Why were the key players in the region behaving as if the new state of affairs was a win-win situation? The reasons can be found in (a) the changing nature of China’s relationship with the DPRK and (b) the changing nature of China’s relationship with the international community.

The Sino-DPRK relationship has always been somewhat ambiguous. In the years leading up to Resolution 1718 Beijing had maintained a military alliance with Pyongyang, had been contributing generous economic and military support, and was increasingly involved in different types of joint economic ventures. Nevertheless, by the fall of

28 Thom Shankar, “A Different Tactic for Rice: Speaking Softly Without the Stick,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2006, available at www.nytimes.com/2006/10/23/world/asia/23rice.html.

29 “Report: Kim ‘Sorry’ About N. Korea Nuclear Test,” *NBC News*, October 20, 2006, available at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15341349.

30 “North Korea to Rejoin 6-Nation Nuclear Talks,” *Associated Press*, October 31, 2006, available at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15494100.

31 Marcus Noland, “The Non-Impact of UN Sanctions in North Korea,” *Asia Policy* No. 7 (2009): 61–88, pp. 63–64.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

33 Clara Portela, “Impact of Sanctions and Isolation Measures with North Korea, Burma/Myanmar, Iran and Zimbabwe as Case Studies,” paper prepared for the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament, 2011, p. 14.

34 Korean Central News Agency, “DPRK Successfully Conducts Underground Nuclear Test,” Press Release, October 10, 2006.

2006, the two countries' strategic goals were becoming less and less compatible and the relationship was coming under considerable strain.

China was becoming less willing to put up with the DPRK's erratic behavior, not least because of the stirring effects this was having in South Korea, the US, and Japan. A nuclear DPRK is arguably more of a headache for China than any other major power in the region. The more weapons it has, the more pressure there is on South Korea and Japan to fabricate their own nuclear capacity. Japan has already accumulated tons of plutonium and is thought to be able to produce a bomb within a very short time. For Ting Wei, "possession of nuclear arms by these regional powers that are democratic and remain loyal allies of the US is regarded as detrimental to Chinese interests."³⁵

Yet, intervening politically in the DPRK to change the leadership's behavior was not possible. For China, any political change in the DPRK must be delayed until it can be properly managed. More precisely, it is imperative for China to avoid any post-collapse scenarios that involve the possibility of having US troops on its border. Therefore, China had no choice but to play along with Pyongyang's antics. The leadership in the DPRK knew this all too well, and continued with whatever strategy it deemed best—testing the limits of China's patience first with the July 5th missile firings and then with the October 9th nuclear test.

But there was also an upside for China in all of this. Chinese strategists saw that there was an opportunity to be had from the situation. If they could not get the DPRK to behave, then perhaps they could at least benefit from its troublesome behavior. They knew that the more dangerous the DPRK, the more the international community would look to them to broker a solution, bolstering the image of China as a "responsible stakeholder." China long perceived itself as a kind of middle man between the isolated DPRK and the West. The events of October 2006 provided a perfect opportunity to cement that image.

This "right of brokerage" gave China more real power, too, since it was tantamount to acknowledging that the DPRK is indeed under its sphere of influence. It could be argued that China had been strategizing for years and positioning itself exactly for this. The US and the EU, which had been only intermittently warming up to this idea, embraced it a little more wholeheartedly in the aftermath of the 2006 nuclear test. For this reason, the events can be considered a strategic win for the Chinese—contributing to a period of relative calm in the region, from their point of view.

What happened is that the regional players found new footing. There was a kind of settling into new positions—much like the earth's crust after a seismic shock—that allowed for a change in attitude and for trust to be built in the international community, and, by extension, in the Security Council.

SOCIAL INFLUENCES

With the events of fall 2006 the DPRK achieved a very fundamental strategic goal of its own. According to Peter Hayes and Scott Bruce, it was still possible to reverse the DPRK's nuclear breakout up until 2006; after that "the identity of the top leadership in North Korea was fused with the image of a strong nuclear state in the DPRK's internal propaganda."³⁶ To better understand this shift in identity, it is necessary to first briefly consider the shape and structure of the polity in the DPRK.

From an anthropological point of view, the DPRK's sociopolitical structure is based on a small group of strongly patriarchal families, bound together by a common founding myth—that of the guerilla's struggle against imperial Japan. The struggle was led by the nation's founder and eternal leader Kim Il-sung. Hence, families within this kinship network derive their authority from how close they are to the remaining members of this leading family.

This is not too distant from traditional forms of

35 Ting Wei, "China's Strategic Thinking: The Role of the European Union," in *Europe-Asia Relations: Building Multilateralisms*, edited by Richard Balme and Brian Bridges (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 146.

36 Hayes and Bruce, "North Korean Nuclear Nationalism," pp. 65–89.

tribal power relations, the biggest difference being the amount and sophistication of the surveillance technologies at their disposal. Hayes and Bruce explain that this has created a system “based on the exercise of personalized power embedded in kin relations which, when combined with the means of surveillance and control, generates a centripetal and introspective politics that spirals inwardly like a tornado-like vortex in Pyongyang.”³⁷

The families in Pyongyang, in turn, “protect” the nation and people from a myriad of real and imagined threats. The more pressing the threat, the more legitimacy those families earn. This arrangement has created an incentive for the government to continually emphasize the theme of Korean national victimhood. This theme roughly narrates as follows:

Korea as the victim of great powers, especially China, but in recent history, Japan and today, the USA. Thus, the anti-Japanese struggle, liberation from Japanese colonialism, and the division of the Korean nation by the great powers are all constantly invoked in explaining the predicaments that confound the DPRK’s rightful place in the sun and reduce its inhabitants to shameful penury ... These external pressures are referred to constantly by the regime to justify leadership by one-person, one-party, and now one-military rule.³⁸

Security Council sanctions and condemnations of the DPRK play into this narrative. They serve to highlight the image of North Korea as a small nation bullied around by larger powers and provide a reason to rally around a strong parent-like government. The depiction of the Security Council as a reproachful and US-controlled force is also part of the rationale by which the DPRK defends its nuclear program: “The DPRK portrays its hard-won nuclear weapons status as driven by US nuclear threat and victimization by great powers.”³⁹

In 2006 this substantial internal gain (the bolstered legitimacy of the leading families) was augmented by an external gain (the increased bargaining power of the DPRK after the nuclear test). According to Pyongyang, proof of nuclear capabilities allowed the DPRK to gain the initiative in dealing with the US and Japan. They felt that they could now set the tone, or at least manage the stakes, of any future round of Six-Party Talks. This thinking in the DPRK has prompted some to call it a “stalker state.”⁴⁰ In any case, it is reasonable to assume that officials in the DPRK considered the events of October 2006 a strategic win—which, incidentally, may have also contributed to the period of relative calm that ensued.

These reasons have made it very difficult for the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons program. The fact is that the DPRK’s position was considerably strengthened in the summer and fall of 2006. Both Security Council resolutions, seen within this normative context, unfortunately played into the DPRK’s proliferation ambitions. According to the thinking of the DPRK leading families at the time, any amount of economic or diplomatic sanctions were a price well worth paying for consolidating their power inside and outside the country.

Essentially, these events confirmed to the DPRK leadership that nuclear nonproliferation is not a universal principle and that it is more an issue of how nuclear weapons fit within a very specific regional balance. They demonstrated that, if a state has sufficient amount of nuclear wiggle room because of its particular geopolitical position in the region, then it might as well continue taking small steps toward expanding its nuclear arsenal. This type of reasoning, unfortunately, can be dangerously contagious.

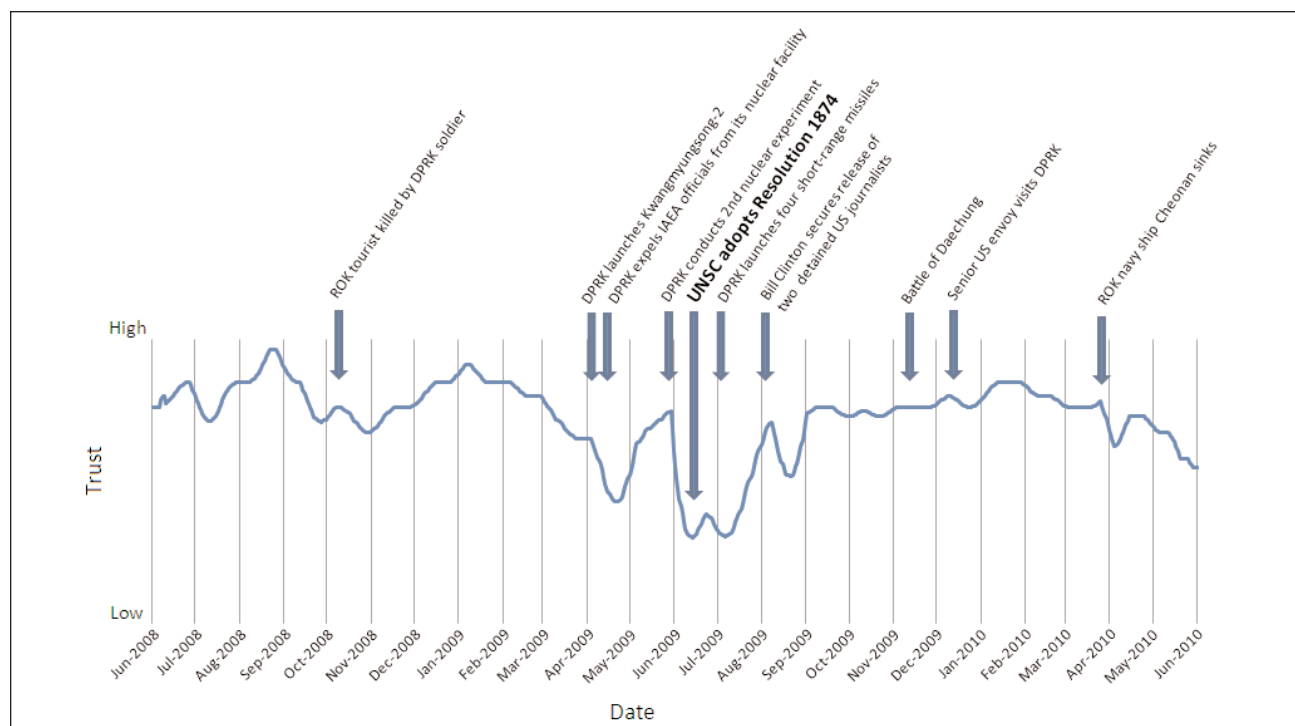
37 Hayes and Bruce, “North Korean Nuclear Nationalism,” pp. 65–89.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Peter Hayes, “The Stalker State: North Korean Proliferation and the End of American Nuclear Hegemony,” *Japan Focus*, October 4, 2006, available at www.japanfocus.org/-Peter-Hayes/2238.

Case 3: Nuclear Test and Resolution 1874 (June 2009)



EVENT NARRATIVE

On April 5, 2009, the DPRK launched a long-range ballistic missile over Japan. This led to a Security Council condemnation by way of a presidential statement, in response to which the DPRK said it would abandon the Six-Party Talks, restart its nuclear facilities, expel international and US inspectors, and conduct another nuclear test. On May 25th the DPRK detonated an underground nuclear device. Japan said the test was “unacceptable” and a violation of the UN Security Council resolutions.⁴¹ China chimed in: “The DPRK ignored universal opposition of the international community and once more conducted the nuclear test. The Chinese government is resolutely opposed to it.”⁴² Unperturbed, three days later the DPRK threatened to end the Korean War armistice and claimed that the Korean Peninsula could go back to

a state of war. On June 12th the Security Council passed Resolution 1874, which

condemned in the strongest terms the 25 May nuclear test by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and tightened sanctions against it by blocking funding for nuclear, missile and proliferation activities through targeted sanctions on additional goods, persons and entities, widening the ban on arms imports-exports, and calling on Member States to inspect and destroy all banned cargo to and from that country – on the high seas, at seaports and airports – if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a violation.⁴³

An interesting development in this round of sanctions was the increased participation of European nations, both in the Security Council negotiations and in the immediate aftermath of the resolution’s adoption. The permanent representative of France to the United Nations, for example,

41 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Joint Press Statement V4+ Japan Foreign Ministers’ Meeting,” Press Release, May 25, 2006.

42 “Chinese Government ‘Resolutely Opposes’ DPRK’s Nuclear Test,” *Xinhua*, May 25, 2009.

43 United Nations Department of Public Information, “Security Council, Acting Unanimously, Condemns in Strongest Terms Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Nuclear Test, Toughens Sanctions,” Press Release No. SC/9679, June 12, 2009.

announced the satisfaction of his country in having adopted a resolution that only targets the government, and not the people, of the DPRK:

The sanctions that we passed are strong, they send a very clear signal that the international community is not ready to accept what the North Korean authorities are trying to do. We are imposing sanctions only against the people, entities and goods which are related to nuclear activities. We are trying to preserve the future of the population of North Korea, which is already suffering a lot through the regime, which is in a very serious humanitarian situation.

He continued, emphasizing that,

at the same time, we are calling on the authorities of North Korea to join back the Six-Party Talks. We think it is very important for them to rejoin the dialogue with the rests of the international community. It is never too late to be in a position to enjoy peaceful and secure relationship with your neighbors.⁴⁴

The French were not alone in insisting that the sanctions do not target the North Korean people. The Russian representative also highlighted this issue. He added, however, that the sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible once the DPRK cooperates.⁴⁵ Despite the stronger wording, the more willing collaboration of China and Russia, the increased participation of European nations, and the detailed instructions on what goods to ban, the new, thirty-four-article resolution still explicitly excluded the use of coercive measures to enforce sanctions.⁴⁶

It was also unclear what effect the sanctions could have, given that the DPRK ships significant amounts of cargo on its own vessels and would likely refuse inspection.⁴⁷ The DPRK's official response to the resolution left little room for doubt regarding its intention of noncompliance. The resolution was followed by a series of "countermeasures" by the DPRK in the next months, including

the launch of four short-range missiles and a declaration to develop a new uranium-enrichment program in order to further "weaponize" its stockpile.⁴⁸ According to its side of the story,

The US and Japan, not content with this 'resolution,' are hatching dirty plots to add their own 'sanctions' to the existing ones against the DPRK by framing up the fictional issues of 'counterfeit money' and 'drug trafficking'. The US incited the United Nations Security Council to get more deeply embroiled in its attempt to stifle the DPRK, which resulted in the creation of an unprecedentedly acute tension on the Korean Peninsula ... Had any other country found itself in the situation of the DPRK, it would have clearly realized that the DPRK has never chosen but was compelled to go nuclear in the face of the US hostile policy and its nuclear threats. It has become an absolutely impossible option for the DPRK to even think about giving up its nuclear weapons. It makes no difference to the DPRK whether its nuclear status is recognized or not.⁴⁹

STRATEGIC INTERESTS

The increased participation of European nations in this round of negotiations was not by chance. The Lisbon Treaty was coming together at around the same time, and one of its provisions was the delineation of a Europe-wide foreign policy. In past Security Council negotiations, the UK and France had been relatively less vocal when it came to the DPRK. One reason for this was the considerable divergence among the two countries concerning not only what to do with the DPRK but also the degree to which they should harmonize their foreign policies with that of the US. Brian Bridges finds that, as the different DPRK nuclear crises unfolded, some Europeans began to be concerned with the US's attitude:

It should be noted that while the Europeans have been critical of the North's posturing, they have also demonstrated some frustration at the US approach, in particular its reluctance to talk with the North

44 "North Korea: Adoption of Resolution 1874—Remarks to the Press by Mr. Jean-Maurice Ripert, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations," France at the United Nations website, June 12, 2009, available at www.franceonu.org.

45 United Nations Department of Public Information, "Security Council, Acting Unanimously."

46 The Security Council referred to taking Article 41 (non-coercive) measures and not Article 42 (coercive) measures.

47 Neil MacFarquhar, "UN Security Council Pushes North Korea by Passing Sanctions," *New York Times*, June 12, 2009, available at www.nytimes.com/2009/06/13/world/asia/13nations.html.

48 Peter Crail, "UN Tightens North Korea Sanctions," Washington, DC: Arms Control Association, July/August 2009, available at www.armscontrol.org/print/3730.

49 Korean Central News Agency, "DPRK Foreign Ministry Declares Strong Counter-Measures Against UNSC's 'Resolution' 1874," Press Release, June 13, 2009.

Koreans, and, in the light of revelations about intelligence errors on Iraq, they also became more skeptical about US revelations of North Korean efforts to cheat on the 'Agreed Framework' by secretly developing highly enriched uranium.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, by the summer of 2009 France and the UK were feeling the need to synchronize their national positions with those of a fitful, but slowly emerging, EU foreign policy. This meant, among other things, taking a stronger position on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions. The reference to humanitarian conditions in the DPRK was also not by chance. The then nascent European External Action Service was seeking to integrate normative standpoints, such as issues of human rights, into its foreign policies as instruments befitting what some have termed a postmodern superpower.⁵¹

The term "postmodern superpower" roughly refers to an increased reliance on soft power (i.e., the creation of common values and a common civic culture) in lieu of traditional means of projecting influence in foreign relations. For example, in relation to the DPRK, the EU has not only been concerned with security issues, it has consistently been tabling resolutions concerning humanitarian issues in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. With the UK presidency of the EU in 2005, the EU also sponsored a resolution on DPRK human rights at the UN General Assembly.

This in spite of (or partly because of) the fact that the DPRK and the UK have established diplomatic relations since December 2000. In fact, human rights have been a constant theme throughout the relationship—the UK provides "human rights training" for DPRK officials, and its embassy in Pyongyang co-finances a number of "humanitarian projects."⁵² We may see this as part of the way that a self-styled "postmodern state" projects power.

Many European nations have been undergoing

this process of change in their foreign policies. This predilection for the postmodern and for soft power has led to a perception of continuity in which misbehavior in one field is linked to misbehavior in another. Thus Europeans have tended to view reprimands on human rights abuses as also serving to apply political pressure to help the containment of missile and nuclear proliferation.⁵³

This logic goes both ways, so that sanctions against missile and nuclear proliferation can be seen as part of a general strategy that may eventually improve human rights conditions as well. Such reasoning was partly the premise for which European nations in the Security Council decided to more enthusiastically back Resolution 1874.

SOCIAL INFLUENCES

Does the soft power approach work? Is it feasible to expect the modification of behavior by a state's government by fostering the creation of common values and a common civic culture? Or, is it possible to use the stick with the DPRK leadership but the carrot with its population?

We should not underestimate the influence of Korean nationalism on the decisions made by the DPRK in matters concerning foreign policy. The official state ideology, *juche*, while considered by some to be largely a smokescreen for the outside world,⁵⁴ is nevertheless a rather straightforward statement of just how united the country perceives itself to be. The extreme homogeneity of the Korean people is encapsulated in this system of thought put forth by Kim Il-sung from the 1950s to the 1970s. *Juche* is a set of principles that roughly translates into "mainstream" or "main body," and explains that, essentially, the Korean way is precious and unique, while the rest of the world is deviant and corrupt.

It is in part due to this kind of thinking that the

50 Brian Bridges, "The European Union and the Korean Conundrum," in *Europe-Asia Relations: Building Multilateralisms*, edited by Richard Balme and Brian Bridges (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 218.

51 Ulrike Guérot, "Europe Could Become the First Post-Modern Superpower," Washington, DC: The European Institute, Fall 2004, available at www.europeaninstitute.org/20040902261/Fall-2004/europe-could-become-the-first-qpost-modern-superpower.html.

52 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Travel and Living Abroad," available at www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/north-korea/.

53 See Eduardo Z. Albrecht, "North Korea in the East Asian Puzzle: Anthropological Perspectives for EU Policy Developments," Brussels: European Institute for Asian Studies, April 2012.

54 Brian R. Myers, "Ideology as Smokescreen: North Korea's Juche Thought," *Acta Koreana* 11, No. 3 (2008): 161–182.

DPRK's reaction to Security Council resolutions, or statements made by any international forum, has always been one of open contempt. From the point of view of the internal normative context, there is not a great deal of interest in, or indeed respect for, international norms or standards such as those regarding weapon proliferation or human rights (as they are defined and intended in the West). Promises of greater integration into those "international values," therefore, are a rather weak incentive for the DPRK to consider modifying its behavior or dropping its nuclear weapons program.

Actually, too much integration within that system is, according to the DPRK worldview, something which should be actively avoided. Any substantial exchange with the capitalist and imperialist outside—be it economic, political, or cultural—is seen as corrupting the Korean way of life and potentially destabilizing to the integrity and independence of the country.

Some have even argued that the more the relationship with the outside world is made hostile through provocations, the stronger the harmony within the DPRK itself and, specifically, the more willingly the people rally around their government and leadership.⁵⁵ In sum, what the DPRK craves is not participation in the international system; rather, what it wants is some kind of assurance that it will be left alone by that system—that the state will be allowed to exist, that the US or any other world power will not go about the business of a "preventive" war, and that the people in the South, in China, or indeed in Japan do not have another shot at toppling their precious but chronically precarious self-rule.

Such sense of precariousness among North Koreans stems from the belief that the southern part of their country is under American imperial control and that an existential threat to their unique way of life is imminent. As a consequence, as John Bauer puts it, "they have become victims of a

confused survival reflex based on a belief that their future as an unblemished, autonomous Korean nation is at stake and that the fragile liberty they possess is but a dream for their brothers to the south."⁵⁶

As Benjamin Habib explains, the nuclear weapons program has great intrinsic value to Pyongyang when seen in this context. We have seen above how it is used both "as a rallying symbol of the country's hyper-nationalist ideology ... and as a defensive deterrent and important cog in Pyongyang's offensive asymmetric war strategy."⁵⁷ The DPRK is extremely unlikely to relinquish it in exchange for the lifting of economic or diplomatic sanctions, much less in exchange for what the French representative to the Security Council called a "dialogue with the rest of the international community ... to enjoy [a] peaceful and secure relationship with [its] neighbors."⁵⁸ It seems that, from the DPRK point of view, the nuclear program has done a far better job at guaranteeing the country's peace and security than any amount of dialogue or integration within the international political system ever could.

In fact, after the nuclear test in the summer of 2009, the DPRK became a lot more confident in relation to the international community in general. In particular, there was a new calculus in Pyongyang toward South Korea. Having doubly secured its nuclear status, the DPRK could now go on strengthening its position vis-à-vis its southern contender to the peninsula. The DPRK's status as a nuclear weapon state was one clear dimension in which it could match and exceed South Korea in its "never-ending battle between the two Koreas over who will dictate the terms of eventual reunification of the Korean nation."⁵⁹ This thinking emboldened the leadership. Just like in the fall of 2006, the DPRK reached an important strategic objective with the 2009 nuclear test and could now interact with the world more assuredly. Also like in 2006,

55 John W. Bauer, "A Philosophical Case for OPCON Transition on the Korean Peninsula," *Joint Force Quarterly* 60, No. 1 (January 2011): 67–72, p. 68.

56 Ibid.

57 Benjamin Habib, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Programme and the Maintenance of the Songun System," *Pacific Review* 24, No. 1 (March 2011).

58 "North Korea," France at the United Nations.

59 Hayes and Bruce, "North Korean Nuclear Nationalism," pp. 65–89.

this led to a period of relative calm emanating from the DPRK.

Then, within less than a year after the test, on March 26, 2010, the leadership decided to use their newfound confidence to sink the South Korean navy ship the *Cheonan*. On November 23, 2010, they did it again and shelled Yeonpyeong island. What gains were being made in the relationship between the DPRK and the international community in the aftermath of Security Council Resolution 1874 were quickly vaporized. The period of relative calm proved to be only temporary. It is very likely that Kim Jong-il went ahead with these war acts thinking that his nascent nuclear force would suffice in dissuading the US and South Korea from retaliating. Georgy Toloraya notes that even though the actual use of a DPRK nuclear weapon was highly improbable, the presence of a nuclear potential was sufficient to deter all-out war on the peninsula.⁶⁰

The leadership knew this and pushed the boundaries of its provocations further and further, in an attempt to, essentially, show who is the boss on the peninsula. From the point of view of the DPRK, this was a critically important maneuver because a very delicate transition in leadership was soon to be underway. The new leadership, the son, would have to come into power with a good deal of advantage over the South, left by the old leadership, the father. In sum, Kim Jung-il needed to secure a solid throne for his heir. It is conceivable to think that these sort of succession concerns influenced much of the DPRK's actions in the period of time immediately preceding the second nuclear test and the years that followed.

The Kim family succession was an important part

of the equation motivating the DPRK's behavior in the summer of 2009. It is likely that Kim Jong-il knew that he had a limited amount of time to prepare for it. The continuity of Kim family leadership is necessary for a number of reasons, not least because the successful passing of power from father to son represents the successful succession of power from one generation to another in the elite families that govern Pyongyang. We have noted above that power in Korea is very much about family. Anthropologists Roger and Dawnhee Janelli find that Koreans actually see themselves primarily through the prism of family ties and obligations.⁶¹ Bruce Cumings elaborates further, noting that in the DPRK the notion of family takes on an even more fundamental role. His argument, in sum, is that at the root of social and political organization in North Korea is the family.⁶²

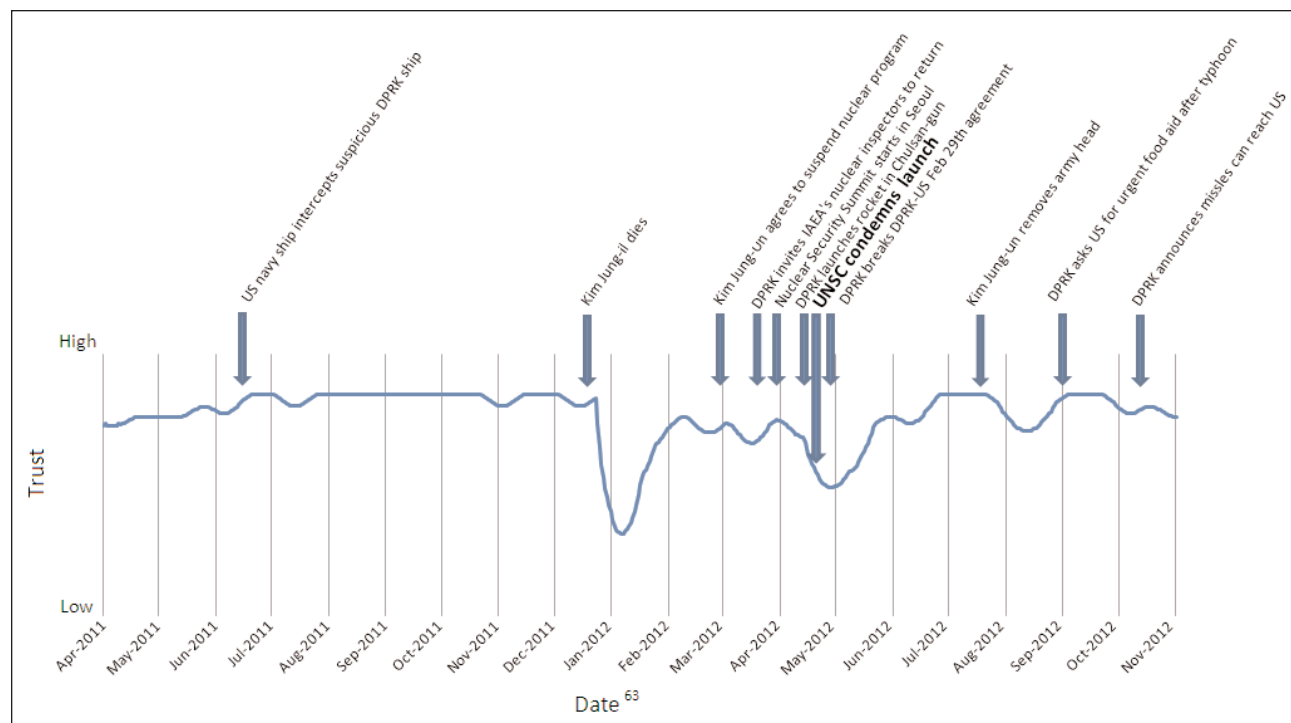
Ancestor worship is still practiced in both Koreas and is tied to the continuance of existing power structures. In the South, where *chaebol* leadership is organized around family ties, the maintenance of the company founders' graves is taken very seriously, as are issues of CEO succession. In the North, how else may we explain the extreme reverence for the dead Kims—fundamentally a form of state-sponsored ancestor worship. Succession concerns make more sense once we understand that society and family are fundamentally interwoven in Korea. If Kim Jung-un's succession were to have had any problems, the ideological structure of the state would have suffered, and, with it, the government's chances of survival. This concerns the DPRK far more than finding ways to get on good terms with the international community.

60 Georgy Toloraya, "Russia and the North Korean Knot," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (April 19, 2010), available at www.japanfocus.org/-Georgy-Toloraya/3345.

61 Roger Janelli and Dawnhee Janelli, *Ancestor Worship and Korean Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982).

62 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: Norton, 2005).

Case 4: Rocket Launch and Security Council Condemnation (April 2012)



EVENT NARRATIVE

In February 2012, the DPRK agreed to a partial freeze in nuclear activities and a missile test moratorium in return for US food aid. Since early 2009, the United States had provided virtually no aid. Relations between the DPRK and the international community were beginning to thaw, as analysts in the West looked upon the new leadership in Pyongyang with a mixture of expectancy and goodwill. That is, until on April 13th the DPRK put an earth observation satellite called Kwangmyongsong-3 (“bright star 3”) onto an expendable carrier rocket called Unha-3 (“galaxy 3”) and hurled it into the sky. The launch, purportedly for weather forecasting purposes, was a failure. The rocket disintegrated a minute or so after launch and fell into the sea west of Seoul. Nevertheless, the international media portrayed it as a veiled ballistic missile test, capable of delivering a nuclear warhead

into any number of foreign cities.

In an unusual move, the DPRK acknowledged the failure and insisted that the launch was for peaceful purposes. The satellite was meant to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jung-un’s grandfather and the founder of the state. For Japan, however, there was no room for misunderstanding.⁶⁴ The Japanese chief cabinet secretary said “the flying object which North Korea referred to as a satellite was a missile,” and that his country would therefore seek another Security Council resolution against the DPRK.⁶⁵

With China and Russia urging the usual “restraint,” and with the US and others realizing early on that another resolution would not have been possible, the Security Council agreed that the launch was in violation of Resolutions 1718 and 1874 and needed to be condemned.⁶⁶ On April 16th

63 This chart covers a shorter time frame of twenty instead of twenty-four months.

64 “UN ‘Deplores’ North Korea Botched Rocket Launch,” *BBC News Asia*, April 13, 2012, available at www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17703212.

65 “Japan to Seek UN Security Council Resolution Against North Korea Over Missile Launch,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, April 13, 2012.

66 “UN Security Council to Meet on North Korea,” *Financial Review*, April 13, 2012, available at <http://afr.com/p/home/>.

the Security Council condemned the launch and demanded that the DPRK not proceed with any further launches using ballistic missile technology, suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program, and re-establish its pre-existing commitments to a moratorium on missile launches.⁶⁷ No new resolution was passed; however, existing sanctions were tightened. Adjustments were made to the measures imposed by Resolution 1874 in 2009, which in turn included adjustments made to the measures imposed by Resolution 1718 in 2006.

While all Security Council members agreed relatively swiftly on the condemnation, the spotlight was brought onto the new leadership in Pyongyang. Questions were raised about the new government's strategy and, in particular, how the international community should relate to it. Ruan Zongze of the China Institute of International Studies said that the West should not "overreact" to the launch, explaining that any exaggerated response would only push the DPRK further into a corner, and ultimately increase the militarization of the region.⁶⁸

Richard Haass of the Council on Foreign Relations saw things differently, advising that, for the moment, the West should not let its guard down. For him the failed launch constituted a humiliating setback for the new leader, who would now have to resort to some other provocative act to reconsolidate his authority. "If history is any guide, this suggests that a test of a nuclear warhead or some sort of aggressive military action—for example, an artillery strike—against South Korea could be in the offing."⁶⁹

One US official agreed that the launch failure could speed up the new leadership's determination to conduct a third nuclear test, citing satellite photographs that allegedly showed those preparations underway. Mitt Romney, then the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, said that the "emboldened" attitude of the DPRK was a sign that Obama's strategy of "appeasement" had failed, and that the DPRK was now in a position to undermine the security of the US.⁷⁰ This sort of anxiety pushed the US Congress to cancel the proposed food aid deal mentioned above.

STRATEGIC INTERESTS

While the event itself was not particularly noteworthy (and largely intended for internal propaganda reasons, namely, to celebrate and consolidate the Kim's latest dynastic succession), the level of alarm and uncertainty that spread through Western nations, in particular the US, was noteworthy. Why was this so? The simple answer is that the need to neutralize the threat to the international nonproliferation regime posed by Pyongyang's continued noncompliance has long been a US priority.

However, many observers have noted that this point alone is insufficient to explain the US's strategic interests in the region—and, by extension, the US foreign policy establishment's reaction to the rocket launch. In particular, they note that the US also needs to maintain and improve its military alliance system with South Korea and Japan. Tied to this, the US needs to find ways to build up its China containment system. It has been observed that the last two of these strategic interests (i.e., strengthening the alliances with Japan and South Korea as well as containing China) are in direct contradiction with the first (i.e., neutralizing the DPRK threat).

To understand the existence of this contradiction, it is necessary to quickly review the recent history of the US-DPRK relations. With the end of the Cold War—and the end of Soviet subsidies—the DPRK resorted to a strategy of using nuclear proliferation as the principal means to secure the material resources needed for its own survival. By the turn of the century they had successfully set up a threat-engagement cycle that essentially bargained the creation and cessation of threats for US guarantees of sovereignty on their part of the peninsula. (As we learned above, they later fine-tuned this strategy to leverage existing tensions among regional powers to extrapolate the conditions necessary for their continued existence.) This explains why threats

67 United Nations Department of Public Information, "Security Council Condemns Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Satellite Launch as Breach of Resolutions Barring Country's Use of Ballistic Missile Technology," Press Release No. SC/10610, April 16, 2012.

68 "Press Split After North Korean Rocket Launch," *BBC News Asia*, April 14, 2012, available at www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific.

69 Richard Haass, "North Korea's Failure: The Good and the Bad," New York: Council on Foreign Relations, April 13, 2012.

70 Cited in Sang-hun Choe and Rick Gladstone, "North Korean Rocket Fails Moments after Liftoff," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2012, available at www.nytimes.com/2012/04/13/world/asia/.

have always “been left deliberately ambiguous” and the “capacities to act on these implicit and explicit threats” has always been “very opaque and uncertain.”⁷¹

This nuclear strategy could not have come at a worse time for the US. Indeed, it is conceivable that the timing was not by chance. In the post–Cold War 1990s and 2000s, many nations were reconsidering their affiliation to the global nonproliferation regime spearheaded by the US. Some, including allies of the US, felt uneasy with the US’s unchallenged “leadership” in nuclear matters, and were feeling unsure about the US’s capacity to halt the spread of nuclear weapons to smaller, relatively unstable countries and groups. The DPRK’s announced intention to leave the nonproliferation treaty in 1993, and its effective abandonment in 2003, signaled a weakness in that system.⁷² In other words, like David with Goliath, the DPRK hit the US where it hurts.

The US has had to try to make the best of this situation. The option of regime change through armed intervention would put an end to the nuclear challenge, but it would also set off a series of ripple effects whose costs are simply too high to manage. Notably, the US’s relationships with China and South Korea would have to be seriously renegotiated. Since full military intervention to neutralize the threat was off the table, the US (just like China) opted for the second-best solution, utilizing that very threat to its strategic advantage.

For David Kerr, the nuclear threat “serves to validate the US focus on material factors” in the region. The lack of a stable security system in Northeast Asia keeps the spotlight on the need to maintain and strengthen the US–Japan and the US–South Korea military alliances. These, in turn, are part of the China containment system, which stretches from the Central Asian republics, through South Asia and Taiwan, and up into the Northeast. In this way, the crises can serve to both legitimize

US unilateralism and pose limits on China’s strategic options.⁷³ We have seen, above, how China’s frustration with the DPRK’s proliferation-related misdemeanors was in part due to the fact that such behavior only draws the US further into the region.

Such a dynamic has created the incentive for the US to continuously characterize the DPRK as a threat. Peter Howard finds that the US has been discursively portraying the DPRK as dangerous (i.e., an inhumane regime with weapons of mass destruction) but also manageable. It is important for the US to keep the threat “manageable,” for an all-out war is not the preferred option.

“By examining the US entanglement in intersected language games ... it becomes possible to show how the United States could construct North Korea’s nuclear program as a manageable threat that could be dealt with diplomatically.” This ambivalence, he says, has made it possible for the US to continually seek negotiated solutions, despite the fact that the DPRK represents a larger material threat to the United States and its security interests than, for example, Iraq or Afghanistan ever did.⁷⁴

This may in part explain the US’s reaction to the April 13th rocket launch, where the DPRK was again portrayed as a maximum security threat, but no serious case was made for military intervention. The DPRK must be threatening enough to justify a continued US military presence in the region, but not so threatening as to actually require preventive strikes or regime change. Perhaps this also explains why the DPRK’s leadership has been portrayed by Western media as dangerous but also somewhat buffoonish.

Roland Bleiker, in an article published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, argues that this dynamic has been obscured by “the highly technical discourse of security analysis” that “has managed to present the strategic situation on the peninsula in a manner that attributes responsibility for the crisis solely to North Korea’s actions, even if

71 Hayes, “The Stalker State.”

72 Ibid.

73 Kerr, “The Sino-Russian Partnership,” p. 433.

74 Peter Howard, “Why Not Invade North Korea? Threats, Language Games, and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, No. 4 (December 2004): 805–828, p. 805.

the situation is in reality far more complex and interactive.”⁷⁵

SOCIAL INFLUENCES

The April 13, 2012, rocket launch by the DPRK came at a rather unexpected time. In the months before, the US and DPRK were making some notable progress on an aid-for-nuclear-compliance deal. Aside from reasons of internal propaganda (or indeed weather forecasting), why was the rocket launched? What reasoning was brought to bear on that decision? Usually, provocative actions such as these are meant either to remind the US that it should not ignore the DPRK, to demonstrate that Japan and South Korea should be afraid, or to drive a wedge between the members of the Security Council.

This time, with the new leadership in place, it is conceivable to think that the motivations were somewhat different. It is likely that the DPRK launched the rocket in order to test the US's true willingness to engage with it. Quite simply, the regime was assessing whether the US's intentions regarding rapprochement were honest or not. If the US foreign policy establishment reacted aggressively to the launch of the rocket (which the DPRK announced as a peaceful weather-reconnaissance satellite and to which the international media was invited), then the DPRK would know that the US was not serious about the aid-for-nuclear-compliance deal that was on the table. If the US reacted with more contained reproach to the launch of the rocket, then the DPRK would know that the US was turning over a new leaf in its relationship with the DPRK.

The new leadership in the DPRK was not going to

enter into genuine negotiations with regard to denuclearization unless it got some form of proof that the US was no longer considering it an enemy. The leaders needed some form of assurance that once they toned down their nuclear ambitions, they would also stop being a nuclear target. They needed the US to show that it was willing to “shift from a hostile to at least neutral stance with respect to the continued existence of the DPRK state, as it currently exists.”⁷⁶

The US's reaction, especially among the foreign policy intelligentsia and from a potential Republican Party presidential candidate, convinced the DPRK that the US was not ready to consider it a non-threat and therefore not ready to enter into an honest engagement. This, in turn, explains why the DPRK scrapped the aid-for-compliance deal on April 17th, just four days after the launch. Essentially, the elite leaders decided it was best to take a step back, wait for the US elections, and take some time to figure out what strategy they should have their new leadership adopt.

The reasons for such acute caution can be better understood if we take a moment to consider the DPRK's geography and history. The DPRK's decision makers are steeped in a very distinctive strategic culture. Due to their history as a smaller nation among relative giants (China and Japan) they have developed a sophisticated style of small-power statecraft that avoids putting all their eggs in one basket. History has made them very reluctant to trust their more powerful neighbors, and so, they have developed mechanisms that test the temperature of the water, so to speak, before they contemplate diving in.

75 Roland Bleiker, “A Rogue Is a Rogue Is a Rogue: US Foreign Policy and the Korean Nuclear Crisis,” *International Affairs* 79, No. 4 (2003): 719–737, p. 719.

76 Hayes and Bruce, “North Korean Nuclear Nationalism,” pp. 65–89.

Conclusion

Date	Case Episode	Trust Trend	Event Narrative	Strategies Interests	Social Influences
July 15, 2006	Resolution 1695	Thwarted trust	Chapter VII not referenced No use of force	Russia and China teamed up Attempted to avoid US unilateralism	Divided the great powers to extract survival guarantees DPRK could no longer rely on a single sponsor
October 14, 2006	Resolution 1718	Rebuilt trust	Post-resolution goodwill Sino-US relations improved	New image for China China as middleman	Nuclear status fused with the leadership's image Justified by the view of DPRK as victim
June 12, 2009	Resolution 1874	Rebuilt trust temporarily	European nations more involved Normative aspects included	EU foreign policy starting to come together Emphasis on soft power	DPRK strengthened vis-à-vis South Korea DPRK preparing state for succession
April 16, 2012	Rocket Launch Condemned	Increased trust	New leadership's strategy questioned Doubts in the international community	US kept the pressure on DPRK depicted as manageable but dangerous	DPRK testing US attitude toward new leadership Expressed small-state survival instinct

What conclusions can we draw from this review for the benefit of future actions by the UN Security Council? The good news is that three out of four of the case episodes led to a building of trust. The bad news is that this was not always for reasons entirely under the Security Council's control. Two general observations can be made. The first is that, unfortunately, it is not uncommon for resolutions to be utilized by the DPRK to reach some kind of strategic objective of its own. Policymakers may want to avoid falling into this kind of trap in the future. Second, and on a brighter note, it would seem that there are some recurrent conditions that contribute to building trust in the aftermath of the resolution or condemnation. In particular,

whenever regional and local strategic interests are met, a period of relative calm ensues. Policymakers may want to take note of this dynamic.

With regard to the first observation, how is it that the DPRK can use Security Council resolutions and condemnations to its own advantage? We have seen that the DPRK is extremely sensitive about its own survival. It feels that its standing among nations is insecure and knows that its grip on its own people is tenuous. Much of its apparently excessive behavior, both in the international arena as well as domestically, stems from this self-perceived precariousness. The proliferation narrative is used to guarantee survival as it simultaneously manages an

outside, purportedly hostile world and its own divided nation.

To this end, the DPRK has successfully been provoking the Security Council with weapons proliferation in order to (a) play the great powers against each other, (b) gain the initiative in negotiating with the US and Japan, (c) portray itself as the legitimate defender of the Korean people, North and South, and (d) test the attitude of the international community, particularly the US, toward itself. These four features are to be understood as layered on top of the DPRK's usual strategy of bartering promises of nonproliferation in exchange for security assurances and aid.

The Security Council's current approach of matching these provocations with expanded but largely rhetorical sanctions has, unfortunately, played further into the hands of the DPRK in a multitude of ways. Resolutions and condemnations contribute to fulfilling both the DPRK's strategic interests and its normative conditions. In essence, the more the government is chastised and isolated, the more it can exploit and enjoy that gray area in the international legal system it has cut out for itself. According to Peter Hayes and Scott Bruce:

Indeed, the DPRK has declared that it doesn't seek prestige or external recognition of its nuclear weapons status and stands outside all legal frameworks governing nuclear weapons. In effect, it has attributed to itself a self-declared nuclear outlaw status. In response to the call by 189 countries at the 2010 NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty] conference that the DPRK denuclearize and return to the NPT, it rejected any notion that it is beholden to the international community or its rules for governing nuclear weapons.⁷⁷

From a bilateral point of view, China and the US are arguably the only countries in a position to do something about this situation. But why have they not acted decisively? Given the costs of intervention, both have decided to opt for second-best solutions. They have chosen to contain, and not to eliminate, the threat. For China, intervention could lead to US encroachment. For the US, a successful intervention would remove the prime justification

for its military presence, and thus its China containment strategy in Northeast Asia. In the meantime both powers seek to benefit in whatever way they can while avoiding trusting each other enough to put an end to Pyongyang's antics.

It is an unfortunate fact that for the time being an unaligned and disruptive DPRK is a win-win situation for a number of regional players. This fact is the strength keeping the DPRK government alive. The DPRK, taking note of this reality, tries to exacerbate the tensions that exist between China and the US on the Security Council in order to perpetuate the conditions that make their state useful to both sides. They know all too well that the moment China and the US see eye to eye on the Security Council there will be little use in their rusty regime sticking around much longer.

The Security Council, ironically, has long been the stage of choice for the DPRK to play this most dangerous of games. There is a case to be made for the Security Council removing itself from this game. Whenever conditions similar to the ones registered in this paper unfold (that is, whenever it becomes obvious that the DPRK is placing itself to take advantage of the Security Council's reaction), perhaps policymakers should try to counter DPRK intentions by not giving them what they want.

For example, instead of issuing post-factum statements with which the DPRK can further portray itself as a victim, the Security Council could focus its actions preventively at the technical level of sanctions through the UN's 1718 committee.⁷⁸ This way, the Security Council could stay one step ahead of the DPRK. This would both diminish the DPRK's reliance on the proliferation narrative and increase the level of trust in a more sustainable way.

With regard to the second observation, what are the conditions that contributed to an environment where trust could be built after a resolution or condemnation? The first case episode worsened the situation. It was the first part of a missile-nuke combination that the DPRK also used in 2009. Resolution 1695 arguably had little chance of building trust. The leadership in the DPRK was

⁷⁷ Hayes and Bruce, "North Korean Nuclear Nationalism," p. 65.

⁷⁸ This Security Council committee oversees sanctions relating to the DPRK set out in Security Council Resolutions 1718 (2006) and 1874 (2009).

very likely already planning the October nuclear test at the time the July resolution was being negotiated. The following two episodes were more successful in building trust.

Resolution 1718 was followed by a sustained reversal in the negative trend. From this case episode we may gather that a Security Council resolution “works” best when it responds to the strategic objectives of regional and local players. Resolution 1718 contributed to China’s image as a responsible stakeholder. The US, eager to lighten its load, was not entirely opposed to this role.

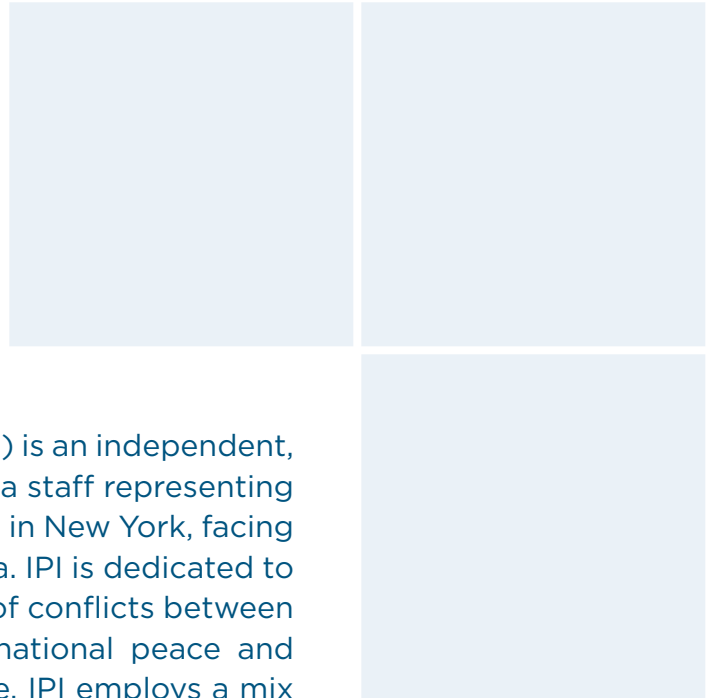
Resolution 1874 was also followed by a reversal in the negative trend, albeit one that did not last nearly as long. From this case episode we may conclude that the rebuilding of trust is relatively more fickle when the Security Council resolution responds to the strategic interests of a somewhat less involved, or non-regional player, such as the EU in this case. In addition, the soft-power emphasis on normative issues did not seem to register much of an impact on the actual behavior of the DPRK. In sum, policymakers might want to keep in mind that the more a resolution meets the strategic or normative needs of regional and local players, the higher the chances that such players cease to be a problem for the international community in the near future.

The last case episode was different for a number of reasons. After an initial dip, the rocket launch condemnation was followed by an increase in the level of trust. Here, we saw that the new leadership was likely testing the possibility that the rest of the world was ready to see them as a potentially equal partner, or at least as somewhat less of a threat. Policymakers may want to take note of the fact that more such tests will likely be forthcoming in the future. More specifically, the new leadership might be inclined to use similar provocations—mixed, of course, with moments in which they will be pulling out the occasional olive branch—to test the attitude of post-election administrations in the US and South Korea. That said, we should not expect any groundbreaking shifts in foreign policy from the new leader, for the simple reason that both the geopolitical context within which he operates externally as well as the family-based power structure that he represents internally are not likely

to change much any time soon. Research for this project was conducted in the summer and autumn of 2012, not in time, therefore, to observe the eventually successful rocket launch in December 2012 and the third nuclear test conducted in February 2013. Nevertheless, it can be noted that the latest events followed a similar pattern of action, reaction, trust, and mistrust with the Security Council. Future research including these latest proliferation efforts and Security Council resolutions will soon be forthcoming.

Let us now conclude with some ideas for future research using this same methodology and approach. One of the benefits of focusing a study on the methodology as much as on the subject at hand, is that we are better prepared to apply a similar approach to other subjects as well. In particular, could this methodology be applied to the relationship between the Security Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the other big nonproliferation challenge for the international community? The nature of the dispute between the Security Council and Iran is indeed very similar to the dispute between the Security Council and the DPRK: a plethora of conflicting interests hiding behind a thin veil of mutual misunderstandings. In other words, here too we have a rather low “interaction capacity” between the different players.

While the conclusions we may reach on how to build trust will of course be different from the ones we have reached here, a study of the recent history of the Security Council’s relationship with Iran—coupled with a monitoring of the rising and lowering levels of mutual trust—may nevertheless help untangle many of the hidden details that often go unnoticed in more broad-stroke analyses. In addition, this methodology has proven especially useful in deconstructing recurrent trends in the behavior of the DPRK and could possibly do the same for the Iran case as well. It is clear that Iran too makes recourse to what we may call “cyclical provocations” within a general “slow motion” proliferation strategy. Mapping these out over time may allow Security Council policymakers to know in advance exactly what Iran’s objectives are and figure out ways to avoid unwittingly catering to them.



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