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NORTH KOREA'S SECURITY POLICY
IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY
AND INTERNATIONAL EXPORT
CONTROL REGIMES

Marianne Hanson

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Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS

Strandgade 56, DK-1401 Copenhagen, Denmark

Ph: +45 32 69 87 87

Fax: +45 32 69 87 00

E-mail: diis@diis.dk

Web: www.diis.dk

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Dr **Marianne Hanson** is Senior Lecturer in International Relations at The University of Queensland, Australia.

Abstract

This report examines the nuclear policies of North Korea (the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, or DPRK) and the effects that these have had on regional and global politics. It will outline the unfolding of these policies from the mid-1990s, examine why the (initially successful) addressing of these problems in the mid-1990s failed in the period from approximately 2000 to 2006, and explore the renewal of tensions between North Korea and the United States (US) and its allies during this time. The report will focus on the period of tension that developed when the Six Party Talks failed to bring about any successful resolution of these issues and examine the impact that this prolonged crisis had on its relations with the US and on North Korea's immediate neighbours. This confrontation reached its height with the DPRK's testing of a nuclear device in October 2006. The report then examines the new impetus for a successful resolution of this security issue and outlines the elements of the Agreement reached in February 2007 to denuclearize North Korea. Against this background, the report provides an overview of the consequently improved security relations between North Korea and its neighbours, as manifested most clearly in the highly successful South-North Summit of October 2007, and assess the potential impact of this rapprochement for global efforts to uphold norms of WMD non-proliferation. It concludes by noting the delays in executing the 2007 Agreement and the important steps achieved in June 2008, which have enabled the denuclearization of the DPRK to proceed. In line with other analyses, the report suggests that the US policy of vilification of the DPRK had become counterproductive and eventually had to give way to concrete negotiations between the contending parties. It stresses that diplomatic negotiations and confidence-building skills will continue to be an essential factor in taking the denuclearization agreement forward. The report ends by examining briefly the case for continuation of the Six Party Talks as the basis for an informal Northeast Asian security dialogue process.

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I. Introduction

For the past decade and a half, North Korea has been viewed as a severely destabilizing factor in Northeast Asian and global politics, although in reality concern over its intentions in the region has existed since overt hostilities between the two Koreas eased with the agreeing of an armistice in 1953. Especially since the 1990s, the state has been seen variously as a nation isolated from processes of globalization, economic integration and modernization, as an undemocratic and ‘rogue’ regime that allows its people to starve while at the same time boosting its military credentials, and as dominated by a rigid ideology which has pitted it against major global powers as well as its neighbours, with the exception of China, which remains its only ally. To this uneasy mix must be added claims that the regime has violated numerous norms concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by exporting illicit materials and technology, as well as itself having acquired and tested a nuclear weapon in October 2006.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that international attention has focused so closely on this particular state. Many security concerns in the region have evolved positively over the past fifteen years: the gradual integration of China into global political and economic regimes since the 1980s (where even a rising China today is not necessarily seen as a formidable strategic threat), the peaceful ending of the Cold War in the late 1980s, and the evident success of economic and democracy programmes in states such as South Korea and Taiwan have all eased tensions in Northeast Asia, to the extent that this part of the world is now almost unrecognizable from the ideologically riven and unstable region it was a few decades ago.

In contrast to these generally positive regional developments, North Korea (the DPRK or Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) has been seen as a long-standing problem, a ‘holdout’ state that refuses to accede to international norms and which poses a serious security threat both regionally and globally. Its policies have alarmed states as far away as the United States (US), Europe and Australia and have challenged global non-proliferation norms at the highest level. Indeed, the chief concern that remains outstanding in the region – apart from the perennial and fragile issue of China-Taiwan relations – is that of the division of the Korean Peninsula, and more specifically, the direction of North Korean foreign and security policies.

Despite these concerns, however, a number of processes in the past two years focusing on North Korea's nuclear status have brought significant improvements to both regional and global security. While these processes are still unfolding and remain prone to reversal, it is nevertheless possible to discern a significant level of progress in normalizing relations between North Korea and the United States, as well as between North Korea and its immediate neighbours. With this has come the potential for a significant re-shaping of the security environment in the region.

II. The North Korean Nuclear Crisis in the 1990s

North Korea's civilian nuclear programme commenced in the 1960s, but it was not until the 1980s and, more particularly, the early 1990s that concerns that it was developing a nuclear weapons programme surfaced. Although it had bowed to international pressure and signed up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, the DPRK had nevertheless continued development of its various nuclear facilities and refused to allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors access to them (except very briefly in 1992). Global concerns about the DPRK's levels of reprocessed plutonium, its continuing refusal to accept inspections and its threat to withdraw from the NPT altogether prompted an international crisis in 1993-1994.¹

Concerted international diplomatic pressure, especially from the Clinton administration, personal intervention by former US President Jimmy Carter and the implicit threat of US air strikes were maintained until the crisis appeared to have been resolved with the Geneva Agreed Framework, concluded on 21 October 1994 between the DPRK and the US. This Agreement saw North Korea pledge to freeze its nuclear programme, come into full compliance with IAEA safeguards and re-admit inspectors in exchange for oil supplies and the building of light-water reactor plants by the US under an international consortium, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO). In terms of political and economic relations, the US and the DPRK agreed to normalize relations so as to reduce barriers to investment and start exchanging of ambassadors. Both states promised not to nuclearize the Korean Peninsula.² Thus the crisis was deemed to have been resolved thanks to a judicious admixture of diplomacy, coercion and material promises.³

¹ For details of this period in the development of North Korea's nuclear programme, see David Albright and Kevin O'Neill, 2000, *Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle*, Washington DC: Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) Press; Gary Samore (ed.) 2004, *North Korea's Weapons Program: A Net Assessment*, IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies) Strategic Dossier, London: Macmillan; Joel S Wit, Daniel P. Poneman and Robert L. Galluci, 2004, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press. See also the various reports and articles available from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 2007, *North Korea Special Collection*, available at <http://www.cns.miis.edu/research/korea/index.htm>

² By December 1991, the Korean peninsula had been denuclearized by President George H. Bush, who removed approximately a hundred weapons from South Korea, a deployment that had been in place since 1958. The South Korean President followed this with a promise that his own state would not produce, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons. It was thus vitally important that any agreement on ending the 1994 crisis reinforce this nuclear weapons-free status on the peninsula. For a comprehensive history of the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, see 'Fact Sheet: Chronology of US-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy', *Arms Control Association*, June 2008, available at <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron.asp>

³ 'The US-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance', *Arms Control Association Fact Sheet*, August 2004, available at <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework.asp>

The Clinton administration's policy of engagement and negotiated settlement with the regime – an engagement that was nevertheless premised on threats of severe action should the regime not comply – was generally seen as the correct approach to this new challenge to regional and global security. While the provision of material incentives to achieve the result might well have been criticized by some as 'rewarding bad behaviour', overall the fear of nuclear proliferation had been allayed and the crisis defused. Regional states, especially Japan and South Korea, were fully involved with the US in finding an acceptable solution, and their contribution to the material provisions of the agreement with the DPRK were substantial. There were no illusions that the agreement would proceed unproblematically, but the prevailing US policy of firm engagement seemed to be a workable approach. Various tensions intervened – most notably Pyongyang's provocative test launching of its Taepodong missile over Japan in 1998 – but overall, good relations between the US and the DPRK were maintained, and the latter's nuclear programme remained frozen. Indeed, US-DPRK relations were even enhanced towards the end of the Clinton era, when an exchange of senior US and North Korean figures took place, including a visit by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Pyongyang, and a joint communique (reaffirming non-hostile intent, respect for sovereignty and non-interference) was issued in October 2000. However, this general sense of success was not to continue.

III. The Renewal of the Nuclear Crisis after 2001: Lost Opportunities for Stabilizing Northeast Asian and Global Politics

The advent of George W. Bush to the US Presidency in 2001, together with the ascendance of neo-conservative policies in Washington more generally, were to have a profoundly negative effect on the agreements with North Korea that had been reached by the Clinton administration. This deterioration was, in turn, to produce a destabilizing regional security outlook for North Korea's neighbours.

By late 2001 it was clear that the 1994 Agreed Framework was in danger of fracturing, the result of inconsistencies and failed promises on both sides, but most of all because of the deepening suspicion that had now become apparent in both states as a result of the deteriorating relationship between Pyongyang and the new Bush administration.⁴ President Bush appeared to couple personal animosity towards Kim Jong-il with a clear intention to distance himself from President Clinton's policies. Although the new administration had publicly stated a few months into the new presidency that it would meet North Korean officials 'any time, any place without any preconditions',⁵ in reality official contact was almost completely broken off by Washington. The prevailing view now was that the US would refuse direct relations between itself and North Korea. In its eagerness to differentiate itself from the Clinton approach, the new administration adopted instead a much harder line against what it continued to see as a suspicious and untrustworthy state, and one, moreover, whose threats of nuclear transgression had been rewarded with material gains. The Sunshine Policy, whereby South Korea had pursued a strategy of steady engagement with the North – in contrast to earlier approaches of hostile containment – and which focussed on building confidence and cooperation between the two states, although presaging improvements in direct relations between Seoul and Pyongyang, was also affected badly by these developments.⁶

⁴ Victor D. Cha and David Kang. 2003. *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*, New York: Columbia University Press.

⁵ Cited in Chung-In Moon, 'The North Korean Nuclear Problem: Motives, Impacts and Management Strategies', in John Ikenberry and Chung-In Moon (eds.), *The United States and East Asia*, 2007.

⁶ Charles Pritchard, 2007, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution.

A number of events served to reinforce this already widening gap between the Agreed Framework's promises and actual relations between the DPRK and the US. In January 2002, President Bush had included North Korea in his famous 'Axis of Evil' speech, the 2001 US Nuclear Posture Review (made public in early 2002) had explicitly listed the DPRK as a state against which the US would be prepared to use nuclear weapons, and in September 2002, Bush articulated the new US policy of pre-emptive action against suspect states, especially those deemed to be developing WMD programmes.⁷ There were also fears in the US that in 2002 North Korea had started a programme of uranium enrichment. This was apparently confirmed in October by Washington's claim that the DPRK had admitted during a bilateral meeting to having commenced a uranium enrichment programme which could lead to the development of a nuclear weapons capability.

North Korea denied having made such a statement, but such denials were by now almost irrelevant in what was steadily becoming a serious rift between Washington and Pyongyang. As Chung-In Moon observes, it appears that at this time the Bush administration, rather than seeking to strengthen bilateral relations, was instead searching for ways to confirm its own fears.⁸ The result, however, was to trigger the second North Korean nuclear crisis, which would last until late 2006.

The US view that North Korea had indeed commenced a highly enriched uranium programme allowed it to claim that North Korea was in violation of its 1994 Agreed Framework commitments. In retaliation, in December 2002 North Korea removed its freeze on its plutonium-based nuclear programme, again refused to admit IAEA inspectors and announced in January 2003 its intention to withdraw from the NPT, an action it successfully completed. This represented the only occasion that a state had withdrawn from the treaty and was thus a deeply troubling event, especially if it were to presage a path that other states might follow in the future. By November 2003, the Agreed Framework was well and truly over, with KEDO officially suspending the building of the (in any case delayed) light water nuclear reactors.

Clearly, the Bush administration's adoption of a more hostile stance towards North Korea had resulted in a more recalcitrant North Korean leader. But Kim Jong-il also appeared seriously concerned about a possible US pre-emptive strike, based on

⁷ US approaches to the DPRK in this period are examined more fully in Victor Cha and David Kang (op. cit.) and Chung-In Moon (op. cit.).

⁸ Chung-In Moon, op. cit.

interpretations of Bush's pre-emption doctrine and the Nuclear Posture Review, and especially in light of the war in Iraq, where it seemed that the US was insistent on achieving its aim there of regime change.⁹ Thus the driving force behind the North Korean nuclear programme – if not in 1994, then almost certainly by a decade later – appears to have been serious security concerns vis-à-vis the US presence in South Korea, including the possible re-deployment of US nuclear weapons in the South, and perennial fears of the US embarking on military attack and regime change in North Korea.¹⁰

In line with the US refusal to countenance direct talks with Pyongyang, a new multilateral framework was devised to address the situation. The Six Party Talks (involving North and South Korea, the United States, Russia, China and Japan) were aimed at coaxing the DPRK out of its by now rigid and clearly anti-US stance; these proceeded over the next few years, largely with negative results.¹¹ However, the fourth round of talks in September 2005, in which China played an instrumental and constructive role, saw a breakthrough when Pyongyang agreed to abandon its nuclear weapon programmes and return to the NPT. In return, other members of the Six-Party Talks promised security assurances, stronger economic relations and political normalization.¹² Security guarantees from the United States were of particular importance to the regime: the US affirmed that it had no intention of attacking the DPRK with conventional or nuclear weapons, and that it would respect North Korea's sovereignty and work to normalize its relations with that state.¹³ The agreement promised a significantly more positive phase in US-North Korean relations than had ever been seen under the Bush administration.

This breakthrough was hampered soon afterwards, however, by two key events. The first was when Washington imposed sanctions on the Banco Delta Asia bank in Macau, accusing it of money-laundering for the DPRK, and accused the DRRK of aggressively

⁹ Derek D. Smith, 2006, *Deterring America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰ Daniel A. Pinkston, 'North Korean Motivations for Developing Nuclear Weapons', available at <http://cns.miiis.edu/research/korea/dprknotv.pdf>. See also Roland Bleiker, 2007, 'Dealing with North Korea: Conventional and Alternative Security Scenarios', in *Critical Security in the Asia-Pacific*, Tony Burke and Matt McDonald (eds.), Manchester: Manchester University Press.

¹¹ Mitchell B. Reiss, 2006, 'A Nuclear-armed North Korea: Accepting the 'Unacceptable'? *Survival*, 48 (4), pp. 97-109.

¹² Paul Kerr, 2005, 'North Korea Talks Achieve Breakthrough', *Arms Control Today*, October 2005. http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_10/OCT-NKBreakthrough.asp

¹³ Ralph Cossa, 2005, 'Six Party Statement of Principles: One Small Step for Man', Center for Strategic and International Studies, PacNet 41, September. <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pac0541.pdf> See also Kerr, Ibid.

pursuing smuggling and drug-trafficking charges. The timing of the raising of these concerns was unfortunate: the September 2005 Six Party Talks had been the most productive in years. By conflating these (certainly important) issues with the need for North Korean denuclearization, the US gave the impression that it was willing to sacrifice the gains recently achieved and focus on these new and contentious issues. What is likely is that the US believed it would be able to continue with the September 2005 Agreement and still pressure Pyongyang over the Banco Delta claims in the hope of securing a more Washington-friendly deal. If so, it was soon clear that Kim Jong-il would not consent to linking these issues to success on the nuclear front.

The second element in the rupture was the highly troublesome question of the return of Japanese abductees. This issue had its origins in the time when the DPRK, as part of its efforts to normalize diplomatic relations with Japan, admitted to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi in a spirit of openness that it had abducted several Japanese citizens over the years. The revelation produced outrage in Japan and resulted in Tokyo cutting off relations with Pyongyang. That Japan insisted on linking a return of the abductees to any Japanese material assistance to the DPRK dealt a further blow to hopes that the September 2005 Agreement would proceed. Naturally, Japan wished to seize the opportunity to enforce the abductees' return, and the US was sympathetic to this strategy. Eventually however, it was clear that these concerns would have to be de-linked from the central goal of the North's denuclearization, a policy that was subsequently followed.

Unsurprisingly, Kim Jong-il revoked the September 2005 Agreement. Relations between the US and North Korea continued to decline, with Kim requesting direct talks with Washington and Bush refusing to grant them. North Korea launched a provocative (but ultimately failed) Taepodong II missile test in July 2006, but the crisis reached its most critical point when the DPRK, against all exhortations, tested a nuclear device on 9 October 2006 in the North Hamgyong province. Although it had been suspected that the DPRK might conduct such a test, virtually no warning was given to the outside world by Pyongyang; even China received only a peremptory short notice (a fact that is likely to have played some part in convincing China to support subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions against the DPRK). While there was some dispute about the size of the test and whether it had in fact been a nuclear test at all, confirmation of a nuclear test of rather less than one kiloton was provided within days.¹⁴

¹⁴ Richard L. Garwin and Frank N. von Hippel, 2006, 'A Technical Analysis of North Korea's 9 October Nuclear Test', *Arms Control Today*, November. http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006_11/NKTestAnalysis.asp

Pyongyang's actions had done nothing to build security and confidence in the region: both the nuclear device test and the various missile launches that preceded it represented some of the most overtly aggressive actions seen in the region in the past decade. Responses to the nuclear test were unanimous in their condemnation. Analysts and political leaders called for strong sanctions, and some voices hinted at military action against the DPRK.¹⁵ The test was widely seen as a violation of non-proliferation norms and a hostile gesture to the international community. The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1718 on 14 October, denouncing the test and imposing sanctions on the DPRK (which nevertheless were of limited impact).

But the question of what to do subsequently did not bring any simple answers. It was recognized that both stronger sanctions and military action would carry with them substantial problems, possibly destabilizing the Korean peninsula to the point where massive population upheavals would result, something that the DPRK's neighbours, China, Japan and South Korea, clearly did not wish to see. Ultimately, it became clear to the driver of the Six Party Talks, the US, that the only feasible option was to resume negotiations with Pyongyang. Even so, direct talks with North Korea – the DPRK's preferred method of contact – continued to be resisted by Washington.

¹⁵ Four months earlier, former Defense Secretary William Perry and Pentagon strategist Ashton Carter had called for a cruise missile attack to prevent North Korea launching its Taepodong missile, and although military responses were not overtly mentioned as a response to the actual nuclear test, they were not ruled out. US envoy Hill warned that the US would 'not live with a nuclear North Korea. We are not going to accept it.' Cited in Jim Mannion, 'US Military Response to North Korean Test Called Unlikely', *Agence France Press*, 5 October 2006.

IV. The Impact of the 1994-2006 Nuclear Crises on Neighbouring States and Regional Security

As already noted, the divided Korean peninsula and particularly the nuclear policies of North Korea, remained an unresolved and deeply troubling element of Northeast Asian security, notwithstanding the improved security environment in the region since the 1980s. The closed North Korean state was explicitly run in accordance with the policies of a 'strong and prosperous great nation' and in conformity with the state's ideology of *Ju-che*, and was to be enabled by a focus on what it defined as 'military first politics'.¹⁶ Under these doctrines, emphasized by Kim Jong-il, the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability seemed a natural progression, also providing an essential deterrent to what was perceived as a perpetually hostile United States 'intent' on military attack against the DPRK and the imposition of regime change there. Yet these guiding doctrines, especially the overriding focus on military power, evidenced by the DPRK's military spending and weapons acquisition, were clearly destabilizing to the region, and especially to US allies South Korea and Japan.

A North Korean Nuclear and Missile Inventory

A brief inventory of North Korean nuclear and missile capabilities reveals the basis of its neighbours' fears. Findings by the IAEA, together with a US National Intelligence Report, estimated that by 2001 the DPRK might have reprocessed enough plutonium for one or possibly two nuclear weapons,¹⁷ though there remained doubts about the extent of such weapons production (even in July 2008, North Korea had still not declared the full extent of its weapons arsenal). Robert Norris of the Natural Resources Defence Council nevertheless estimates that by 2006 the DPRK had produced about 43 kilograms of separated plutonium, which could, depending on that state's technical capabilities and the yield of any bomb, have resulted in the production of between five and fifteen weapons.¹⁸

¹⁶ For a discussion of how elements of *Ju-che*, the state ideology of North Korea, and its emphasis on self-reliance and independence have shaped Kim Jong-il's rule of the country, see Chung-In Moon, op.cit.

¹⁷ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2007, *North Korea Profile*, September, http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/NK/index.html

¹⁸ Robert Norris, 2006. 'Nuclear Notebook: Global Nuclear Stockpiles 1945-2006', <http://thebulletin.metapress.com/content/c4120650912x74k7/fulltext.pdf>

As with the case of India and Pakistan, themselves established nuclear weapon states since 1998, an accompanying missile programme has added to the security concerns surrounding Pyongyang's intentions. North Korea's missile capability has caused grave regional and international concern, as has its record of proliferation to other states of concern, whether it be its propensity to export its nuclear technology and dual-use materials¹⁹ or its ballistic missile knowledge. It is widely believed to have exported missile materials and technology to Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iran, Pakistan and Yemen.²⁰

North Korea's short-range missile arsenal includes the KN02 with a range of 10 to 120 kilometres, the 500 kilometre-range Scud-C and the 800 kilometre-range Scud-D missiles. The DPRK has also demonstrated a programme of medium-range and intermediate-range missiles: it tested the 1300 kilometre-range Nodong missile, of which it has up to 200 deployed, in 1993 and again in 2006. In 1998, it tested the Taepodong I, with a range of 1800 kilometres, flying this over the Japanese island of Honshu and causing widespread regional and international alarm.²¹ Its long range 4000 to 6000-kilometre intercontinental ballistic missile, the Taepodong II, was flight tested in July 2006, at the height of the tensions and failure of the Six Party Talks following the breakdown of the September 2005 Agreement, but it failed to reach its target after achieving less than a minute in flight.²² Given its ability to reach the US mainland, the Taepodong II, notwithstanding the failure of the 2006 test, remains of great concern internationally.

The potential regional impact of North Korea's nuclear program was profoundly evident from the 1994 crisis onwards, but especially so after the test of 2006.²³ The test meant that yet another state had crossed the nuclear threshold, thus bringing a total of four nuclear weapon states outside the NPT (North Korea, India, Pakistan and Israel).

¹⁹ Sheena Chestnut, 2007. 'Illicit Activity and Proliferation: North Korean Smuggling Networks,' *International Security*, 32 (1), Summer.

²⁰ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2007. It must be stressed that financial gains have been a motivating factor for these activities.

²¹ Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2007, *ibid*. See also Wade Boese, 2007, 'Worldwide Ballistic Missile Inventories,' Arms Control Association Fact Sheet, September, 2007, <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/missiles.asp>

²² Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2007; Boese, 2007.

Regional Impacts: Japan

Japan had been gravely concerned about Pyongyang's nuclear intentions from the early 1990s, a concern that increased after Pyongyang's missile launch over Japanese territory in 1998. It was clear in its condemnation of the October 2006 nuclear weapon test and supportive of UN sanctions against the regime in its immediate aftermath. It had in any case already introduced unilateral sanctions against Pyongyang after the latter's missile test in July of 2006.

Of immediate concern was the possibility that a nuclear-armed North Korea might spark a round of nuclear proliferation in Japan and South Korea, itself a possible trigger for proliferation elsewhere in Asia. The stance taken by Japan's Prime Minister at the time, Shinzo Abe, was seen as particularly strong against Pyongyang, although Abe had been elected at least partly on the basis of promising a tougher approach towards the North Korean threat than his predecessor had shown.²⁴ Nevertheless, while there was a modicum of global concern that Japan might be tempted to reverse its non-nuclear weapon status, this was not considered a serious option. The United States, for its part, was quick to reassure Japan and South Korea that it would continue to protect them from any attack from the DPRK through its nuclear umbrella.

A more likely impact for Japan (other than developing its own nuclear weapons capability) was the very public strengthening of its alliance with the United States, coupled with its continuing development of a robust conventional weapon defence capability.²⁵ Notwithstanding the (in any case relatively mild) comments made by one speaker affiliated with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, it was generally believed that Pyongyang's actions would not lead to a 'tsunami of proliferation in Asian countries that threatens to engulf Japan'.²⁶

The other key issue for Japan was that of the return of the abductees. While it was not a prominent issue at this point – strategic reasons now taking centre stage – the

²³ See the report prepared by Erik Quam, 2006. *The North Korean Nuclear Test: Regional and International Implications, October 12, 2006, Panel Discussion at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Center for Nonproliferation Studies*, Monterey Institute of International Studies.

²⁴ Mike M. Mochizuki, 2007, 'Japan Tests the Nuclear Taboo', *The Nonproliferation Review*, 14 (2) July, <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol14/142/142mochizuki.pdf>

²⁵ Hajime Izumi and Katsuhisa Furukawa, 2007, 'Not Going Nuclear: Japan's Response to North Korea's Nuclear Test', *Arms Control Today*, June. http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007_06/CoverStory.asp. See also Mochizuki, 2007.

²⁶ Hajime Izumi and Katsuhisa Furukawa, 2007.

overall deterioration in relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang cannot but have made negotiations on this issue more difficult.

Regional Impacts: China

One of the most notable regional developments in addressing the North Korean nuclear crisis, namely China's hosting of and participation in the Six Party Talks, has come to have a substantial global impact. China had risen in importance as a player in the course of the Six Party Talks, acting as a mediator between the DPRK and the US, Japan, Russia and South Korea, to the point where by 2005, and certainly in 2007, its influence over North Korea was seen as indispensable in achieving a resolution of the crisis.²⁷ The China-North Korea relationship was of great interest during the period 1994-2006: while the DPRK had remained one of Beijing's closest allies and had provided considerable amounts of aid and material support, there were nevertheless strong reasons why China did not wish to see a nuclear-armed North Korea emerge in the region. If China enjoyed a position of strategic dominance in the North-East Asian region vis-à-vis nuclear weapons, this was likely to be erased if a nuclear-armed DPRK subsequently resulted in South Korea or Japan seeking a nuclear weapons capability in return. Japan in particular would be able to convert its existing civilian nuclear capabilities into a weapons programme within a matter of months if not weeks. (Indeed a reassurance from the Japanese Prime Minister to the Chinese President that Japan would *not* alter its non-nuclear stance was given shortly after the DPRK's test.²⁸) Further nuclear proliferation in the region was clearly not in China's interest, any more than would be the accompanying de-stabilization of the region overall, especially given China's integration into finance and trade markets regionally and its engagement with global politics at a broader level.

China had agreed to US demands for sanctions on 13 October, four days after Pyongyang tested its nuclear device, eventually agreeing to UN Security Council Resolutions against Pyongyang. Indeed China had continued to exert pressure on the regime to resume negotiations after the breakdown of talks in 2005. Particularly from this time, it was seen as having moved from being something of a neutral party towards a more assertive presence that was potentially capable of bridging the different views of Washington and Pyongyang. This evolution in China's behaviour was in line with

²⁷ KOREA.net, 2007, 'N. Korean Nuclear Issue will be Resolved: Former President', 19 September. http://summit.korea.net/inter_korea_news/news_view.asp?serial_no=598&board_no=17489#

²⁸ 'Abe assures China's Hu that Japan won't go nuclear', *The Washington Post*, 20 November 2006.

its generally more multilateralist approach to world politics, which became evident around 2002/2003. Yet it was also clear, especially by 2006, that China's influence over Pyongyang's actions was limited. It had, for instance, strongly advised the DPRK against conducting the Taepodong II missile test of July 2006, and even more vehemently against the DPRK's nuclear test in October of that year. Indeed, one motive for the DPRK's nuclear test may well have been to signal a decreased willingness to comply with the wishes of its regional partner. This is not to say that China had lost control over its junior partner – it remained influential throughout the crises and was in the end instrumental in bringing about a successful negotiation in February 2007. But it is also important to understand the extent to which Pyongyang was, by 2006, determined to exercise a degree of independence from China as part of its effort to push the nuclear issue to its highest level of tension against the US.

Regional Impacts: South Korea

Most affected perhaps by fears of a nuclear-armed North Korea, as well as by the DPRK's conventional weapon levels, was South Korea. A strategic imbalance between the two states, which is what a nuclear-armed DPRK would amount to, would pose serious problems of destabilization for the entire Korean peninsula. The human dimensions of the division of Korea remain, and would be amplified in any resumption of hostile actions between the two states, whether utilizing conventional or nuclear weapons. The broader strategic environment would, in theory, allow the North to accelerate unification of the peninsula by force and on its own terms. Inevitably, this prospect could tempt Seoul to develop its own nuclear deterrent capability.

This report has already noted the deleterious impact that the unravelling of the Agreed Framework had on relations between North and South Korea, especially on the latter's Sunshine Policy, which had grown in importance from the late 1990s. The policy was never entirely dropped, however, and South Korea remained bound by the need to engage the North in cooperative and confidence-building measures, while at the same time continuing with its fears of Pyongyang's intentions. One immediate result of the Sunshine Policy was the holding of the first summit between the two states in June 2000. This had been followed by the decision to allow a thousand Koreans to reunite with family members they had not seen since the division of the peninsula. South Korean governments faced much international criticism for continuing with this policy, as they did also from opposition parties determined not to 'go soft' on the North. Despite the strained relations between the two states and a hardening US

stance,²⁹ Seoul and Pyongyang opened their borders in 2003 and commenced efforts at joint economic activity in the border city of Kaesong. Nevertheless these efforts continued to be seriously questioned, all the more so when North Korea ignored international and regional pleas to refrain from testing its nuclear device in 2006.

²⁹ The Bush administration was especially reluctant to support the Sunshine Policy.

V. The February 2007 Agreement

Despite its negative security implications, the test provided the catalyst needed for the United States to recommence serious negotiations with Pyongyang. Talks re-started in earnest in December 2006, this time displaying a more concerted wish on the part of the US to achieve a breakthrough. Notable by now was the growing importance of China, which, while it had not prevented North Korea from testing, was nevertheless seen as the key factor in persuading Pyongyang to return to talks and agree to denuclearization. Its role as a mediator in getting the DPRK to hold this meeting, as well as during the deliberations themselves, cannot be overstated.

The result was the historic decision achieved in Beijing on 13 February, reasserting the September 2005 Joint Agreement, in which Pyongyang agreed to declare its activities and disable its nuclear facilities in exchange for a series of political and economic incentives, most notable of which was the promise by the US, China, Russia and South Korea to provide the DPRK with a million metric tons of heavy fuel oil.³⁰ Further, the US would begin the process of removing North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and would ease existing economic sanctions, leading to a political normalization of relations between the two states.³¹ The deal also established five working parties to address outstanding issues (including that of the Japanese abductees), thus de-linking them to some extent from the paramount need to achieve denuclearization.³² The Agreement represented achievement of the best hopes for reversing what could be a dangerous trend in Northeast Asian security policy: apart from the risks of a nuclear strike that proliferation posed in itself, any continued possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea would only exert further pressure – avoided for now – on South Korea and Japan to consider their own nuclear options, a factor which would quickly have destabilizing effects on the entire region.

The Agreement differed from the 1994 Agreed Framework in that it spelled out in detail only those steps that were to be taken in the first sixty days of its implementation.

³⁰ Japan was notable for not contributing to this material aid, largely because of the unresolved issue of its abductees.

³¹ See Appendix I for the text of the 13 February 2007 agreement.

³² *International Herald Tribune*, 2007, 'Text: The Agreement', February 13, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/02/13/asia/AS-GEN-Koreas-Nuclear-Text.php>; Jacques E.C. Hyman, 2007, 'North Korea's Nuclear Neurosis', *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 63 (3), May/June. <http://thebulletin.metapress.com/content/4h86506508163552/fulltext.pdf>

This was, however, a deliberate plan, based on a view that success in the initial phases would be likely to bolster the chances of success in subsequent negotiations also. Thus the Agreement left open for future negotiation details of the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, the future of the DPRK's plutonium programme and the complete declaration of all North Korean nuclear activities.³³

³³ Dave H. Kim, 2007, 'Critique of the Criticism of the Beijing Accord', *IEKAS (The Information Exchange for Korean-American Scholars)*, Issue 7-14, No.470, April 6, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/IEKAS%204-6-07.pdf>

VI. The Impact of the Agreement on North Korea's Neighbours: A New Regional Security?

Ten months on from the February 2007 Agreement, and notwithstanding the residual fears held by many that Pyongyang might withdraw its cooperation yet again, the key elements of the negotiations were in place and proceeding positively. The US envoy and senior negotiator, Christopher Hill, expressed his optimism that North Korea would be denuclearized by the end of 2008. This evident progress produced positive impacts on the DPRK's neighbours, with the sense that should this trend continue, there would be every reason to believe that these encouraging impacts would grow in importance.

Impact on China

One major result of the Six Party Talks overall (and their successful result in 2007) was the new status accorded to China as a cooperative and constructive partner in global security issues. Through its involvement in the talks over the years, but especially since 2005 (and notwithstanding its inability to prevent the DPRK from testing its weapon), China has rightly been able to claim a new importance regionally and as a global partner.

As observers noted, China had been able to 'reorient the talks to the long-term interest of regional security and economic prosperity'.³⁴ China earned considerable merit in the eyes of neighbouring states,³⁵ as well as in the US, at a time when there had been a lull in any positive or dynamic relationship between Washington and Beijing. Indeed, one unexpected outcome of the Korean nuclear crisis has been a widespread affirmation of the approach taken by China, viewed as a result of its commitment to the process as 'a responsible regional player and re-emerging world power'.³⁶ In the ongoing process of denuclearization of the peninsula, China will continue to have a vital role, both in ensuring that Pyongyang honours its commitments and in providing North Korea with steady support during what will likely be a difficult period of transition, at least economically if not politically, for that country.

³⁴ Jason Qian and Anne Wu, 2005, 'China's Role in North Korea', *The Boston Globe*, December 19, http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2005/12/19/chinas_role_in_north_korea/

³⁵ *Korean Nuclear Talks*, 2005, 'S. Korean Chief Negotiator: China's Role 'Outstanding'', September, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/talks/142772.htm>

³⁶ Jason Qian and Anne Wu, 2005.

Impact on Japan

Japan for its part, while it has welcomed the Agreement and the evident progress in its implementation, has nevertheless remained significantly cooler towards North Korea than have other regional states. This is largely because of its continuing dissatisfaction over the issue of the Japanese abductees. This issue having been relegated to one of the five working parties established by the 2007 Agreement – in order to prevent this and other factors from derailing the imperative objective, namely denuclearization – many Japanese observers, especially from political conservatives, believed that Japan had come away almost ‘empty handed’ from Beijing.³⁷

This issue remains unresolved, although the efforts of the working parties are by no means over; additionally, China has (with the US) stepped in to support the Japanese case here, with Chinese Foreign Minister Zhaoxing Li pledging to pressure North Korea on the abduction issue. How this plays out will be particularly interesting: China, after all, remains wary of any Japanese military enhancements (not to mention Tokyo’s compliance with US plans for a missile defence shield), and while it understands the logic that Pyongyang’s nuclear policies might have repercussions for Japan, it is nevertheless also keen to minimise such possibilities, given its own concern over recent Japanese foreign-policy initiatives.

One factor that might assist in the abductees issue is Pyongyang’s need for Japan to allow the resumption of transfers of funds from the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan. These had been blocked following the nuclear test, but their value, amounting to between US\$100 and US\$250 million annually, represents a key source of external funding for the DPRK.³⁸

In line with Japan’s scepticism towards the Agreement, ten days after it was concluded, Japan launched its fourth spy satellite into orbit, thus allowing it to monitor North Korean technical developments more closely. (It had commenced this programme in 1998 following the DPRK’s missile test over Japan that year.) In sum, Japanese-North Korean issues remain unique and complicated and are not likely to be resolved easily, with some observers believing that these states will remain ‘very uneasy neighbours.’³⁹ However, the September 2007 appointment of

³⁷ Axel Berkofsky, 2007, ‘Japan, North Korea: Distrust Prevails’, *ISN Security Watch*, 5 March.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Berkofsky, *ibid.*

a new Prime Minister, Yasuo Fukuda, appears to have produced a more flexible and patient approach from Japan.⁴⁰

Impact on South Korea

Perhaps the most profound impact of the resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis, assuming that the February 2007 Agreement is fully honoured, is the peace that it portends for the Korean peninsula, and in turn the positive security benefits that this would bring for international relations more broadly. The last week of September 2007 saw confirmation that North Korea was making appropriate progress in the dismantling of its facilities, thus fulfilling the terms of the February accord. This was followed by a highly acclaimed South-North Summit on 3-5 October (as already noted, only one such summit had been held before, in June 2000), in which the South Korean leader made an important and symbolic visit to the North, presaging considerably closer economic and political engagement between the two Koreas.⁴¹ Former South Korean President Kim Dae Jung expressed his optimism regarding the process and growing peace on the Korean peninsula.⁴² Confirmation of this came when the US envoy, Christopher Hill, made public his view that he was confident that, by 2008, the terms of the Agreement would have been fulfilled and North Korea denuclearized.⁴³

The most obvious result of this summit was the promise of further close economic relations. This is increasingly seen as necessary if the North is to avoid the economic collapse that some observers see as inevitable, despite the significant reforms undertaken over the past few years.⁴⁴ For South Korea, there is no immediate rush to unification – indeed, there is a reluctance to do this, given the dire economic situation in the North and the disastrous economic consequences it would have for the prosperous South.⁴⁵ Instead, what would most likely be preferred is a planned and slow process that would allow for greater integration of the two economies. Integration of the two political systems remains an even more difficult prospect, and there is no indication

⁴⁰ Peter Crail, 2007, 'Yongbyon Facility Disablement Considered', *Arms Control Today*, October 2007.

⁴¹ James Schoff, 2007, 'North Korea: Enabling Disablement', PacNet#40, Pacific Forum CSIS, Hawaii, 12 October.

⁴² KOREA.net, 2007.

⁴³ *GSN (Global Security Newswire)*, 2007, 'US Envoy Foresees Nuclear-Free North Korea in 2008', 1 November, http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007_11_2.html#D7E17577

⁴⁴ Axel Berkofsky, 2007, 'North Korean Economy: Reform or Collapse?', *ISN Security Watch*, 8 May.

⁴⁵ Here the lessons of German unification, and its economic consequences for the prosperous West German state, might well influence South Korea's caution.

as yet that this is being envisaged as an early project. Indeed, the North continues to express disquiet at any South Korean talk of reform and openness.⁴⁶

A further factor to be considered was the Presidential election in South Korea in December 2007. While Kim Jong-il was prepared to meet President Roh – and indeed the September Summit was an extremely cordial one – he clearly did not favour the conservative opposition Grand National Party's candidate, Lee Myung-bak,⁴⁷ who subsequently won the December 19 election. President Lee has, however, supported the overall direction of his predecessor, indicating that he will continue to pursue a policy of close engagement with Pyongyang, albeit while demanding greater security concessions from the North. Thus while the Sunshine Policy looks set to continue, it is unlikely to be as fervently pushed by the South as it was in September 2007.

⁴⁶ Norimitsu Onishi, 2007, 'Pledging Peace, Koreas Agree on Economic Projects', *New York Times*, October 4.

⁴⁷ Onishi, *op. cit.*

VII. Impact of the 2007 Agreement on International Export Control Regimes

The February 2007 Agreement also portends some gains for global non-proliferation and export control processes, although these cannot be measured in detail or proved at this stage. As noted above, North Korea is believed to have exported missile materials and technology to Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iran and Yemen, with 'ample speculation' also that it traded missiles for uranium enrichment technology from Pakistan.⁴⁸ While it may well have exported nuclear technology, there is no evidence that it has engaged in the transfer of nuclear materials. What has also been of concern is the DPRK's engagement in transnational smuggling activities involving counterfeit currency and goods, which have provided Pyongyang with hard currency, a factor that could mean that this activity will not cease completely unless the North's economic situation was to change significantly for the better.⁴⁹

The DPRK is also widely suspected of having been developing biological weapons from the early 1980s, although it acceded to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in 1987. Between 10 and 20 bioweapons research and development facilities are estimated to be in existence, although as most sources note, it is notoriously difficult to gain accurate information on these issues.⁵⁰ Similarly, the DPRK is reputed to have weaponized a number of chemical agents and has established six facilities for this purpose. The state has yet to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention.⁵¹ All these factors give rise to concern, not just for the DPRK's near neighbours, but also, given its missile programme, for distant states. It is unclear as yet how these biological and chemical weapon activities might be influenced by the February 2007 Agreement, but there is a reasonable likelihood that a successfully unfolding denuclearization process, a degree of rapprochement between Pyongyang and Washington and the DPRK's own sense of being carefully monitored will render these developments less dangerous than they once were.

⁴⁸ *Arms Control Association*, 'Arms Control and Proliferation Profile: North Korea. Fact Sheet' 2008, <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/northkoreaprofile.asp>

⁴⁹ Chestnut, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ *NTI Country Overview: North Korea Profile*, available at http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/NK/index.html

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

It is important to note here the 'action for action' nature of the February 2007 Agreement and the fact that this process is seen as one that will unfold over a considerable time. In this sense, while the breakthrough signals a significant lessening of tension, it will be some months, or even years, before it is possible to make an accurate assessment of the impact of the February 2007 Agreement on the DPRK's observation of international export controls.

One response to the DPRK's WMD-related proliferation activities has, of course, been the Proliferation Security Initiative undertaken by the US and like-minded states from 2003 onwards, which was devised explicitly to interdict vessels from North Korea suspected of transporting illicit materials destined for illegal use elsewhere.⁵² This in itself is likely to have played a part in restraining Pyongyang from these activities recently, and to this can now be added the new level of scrutiny and expectations surrounding the 2007 Agreement. What is most relevant to note perhaps is that the Six Party Talks themselves have been proposed as a means of ongoing engagement with the DPRK, and that this process will itself play an instrumental confidence-building role among the parties, as well as providing a capability for engaged states to monitor any suspect North Korean exports more closely than before.

There does remain one outstanding issue regarding North Korean proliferation of illicit materials, however, and that concerns the as yet unexplained case of Israeli air strikes against a Syrian facility in September 2007, said by some to be a nuclear-programme facility supported by North Korea, only days away from verification of a key stage in the Agreement. As of June 2008, there does not appear to be a clear and convincing explanation for this event. One possibility is that it was conducted to add credence to claims that the DPRK remains a 'rogue state' and that the US should therefore not proceed with implementing the February 2007 Agreement. Another is that there might indeed have been collaboration between North Korea and Syria at an unknown period, and that exposure of this 'fact' at the time was either deliberate or coincidental. Whatever the case, there is concern that the DPRK has not fully disclosed any involvement it might have had with Syria, and it is being pressed to declare this fully now.⁵³ For its part, Pyongyang steadfastly refuses to admit any role in a Syrian nuclear programme (although its support of missile technology to this

⁵² The PSI followed directly from a failed US attempt in December 2002 to seize 15 Scud missiles detected on a North Korean cargo vessel, the *So San*, in the Gulf of Aden and bound for Yemen. The belief that current international law would not allow their seizure prompted the US to adopt a more muscular PSI approach.

⁵³ Henry Kissinger et al. 2007, 'North Korea Pressed on Syria Nuclear Aid', 20 Nov. *Global Newswire Service*, http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2007_11_20.html#23D2939C

and other states remains well known), and a number of reports attest that Syria is unlikely to have embarked on a nuclear programme apart from its very small civilian and IAEA-monitored nuclear programme.⁵⁴

Following the Israeli strike, the United States insisted that North Korea reaffirm its commitment, made in the February 2007 Agreement, not to transfer nuclear materials, technology or know-how in a statement to the Six Party meeting in October 2007.⁵⁵ The 2007 Agreement calls on the DPRK to cease such activity, although monitoring this fully might be more complex than overseeing the dismantling of nuclear facilities.

This particular issue enabled those who were opposed to the 2007 Agreement to voice their disapproval of the process and to press for a US refusal to remove North Korea from the US list of states sponsoring terrorism. The former US Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, a noted critic of the deal, argued that the White House had ‘violated the original purpose of the diplomatic talks by agreeing to negotiate side agreements with North Korea about taking it off both the terrorism list and a second list of “enemy” nations forbidden from trading with the United States.’⁵⁶ He went on to argue that North Korea’s ‘record of developing nuclear weapons, exporting advanced missile technology, engaging in international criminal activity, and engaging in international terrorism’ required that the US stop its engagement with it.⁵⁷ Bolton’s views did not prevail, however, and it seems likely that the US will proceed to normalise relations with Pyongyang, provided there is no serious disruption of the process.

⁵⁴ Peter Crail. 2007. ‘North Korea-Syria Connection Questionable’, *Arms Control Today*, October 2007. See also Paul Kerr. 2007. ‘Iran-North Korea Deepen Missile Cooperation’, *Arms Control Today*, January/February 2007.

⁵⁵ ‘North Korea and the Incident in the Syrian Desert’, Daryl Kimball, *Arms Control Today*, May 2008, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_05/focus.asp

⁵⁶ John Bolton, cited in Helene Cooper, 2007, ‘North Koreans Agree to Disable Nuclear Facilities’, *New York Times*, October 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

VIII. Incomplete Inventories and Fuller Declarations in June 2008

It became evident that the denuclearization process was slowing down by early December 2007, when the US claimed that the inventory of the DPRK's nuclear activities, which was required under the Agreement and which had been provided by Pyongyang in November, was insufficiently comprehensive. Six Party Talks participants (except the DPRK) believed that the report should provide a fuller disclosure of the DPRK's history of production of separated plutonium, uranium enrichment activities and nuclear cooperation with other states, and that this should be done by 31 December. For their part, North Korean officials claimed that they had been quicker with disablement of nuclear facilities than the West had been with its promised shipments of oil.

It is important to note here that the problem did not seem to lie in the actual denuclearization process itself. The US and other monitors agreed that the disablement procedures in the DPRK's three main facilities had commenced, although only the Yongbyon reactor has been decommissioned. What was missing was Pyongyang's willingness to disclose fully the history of its nuclear activities, possibly because of security concerns and fears that Western questioning will continue. As the US envoy noted, 'regime leaders are reluctant to acknowledge their activities in certain areas because they have denied that in the past.'⁵⁸ Thus it seemed that this particular delay revolved not so much around any disagreement about the desired end-point of the process, but rather on the exchange of sensitive reports. Once again, the Six Party Talks were proposed as a way of negotiating beyond this impasse, and the general sense was that, while implementation of the accords had slowed, there was still a high level of confidence that the denuclearization of North Korea could be achieved.

What was perhaps most remarkable about this period was that the absence of the required report by 31 December 2007 seemed to be downplayed by the US – certainly there was little evidence of the name-calling and tension of earlier years – indicating that US negotiators were by now confirmed in their determination not to let such 'hiccups' derail the long-term process. It was also important not to allow the process

⁵⁸ 'North Korea to Receive Additional US Fuel', *NTI: Global Security Newswire*, 7 February 2008, http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008_2_7.html#DBFA1430

to be halted at this point, as doing so would deprive President Bush of claiming a successful non-proliferation victory in the last days of his presidency.

The impasse was broken on 26 June 2008, when Pyongyang released a fuller report to all parties in the Six Party Talks via its embassy in Beijing. The United States subsequently moved to lift some of the existing trade sanctions that had been imposed on North Korea and to remove the state from its list of state sponsors of terrorism. The report was followed on 27 June by a very public and symbolic demolition of the Yongbyon cooling tower.

The report submitted in June 2008 nevertheless fell short of expectations and was criticized by those who argued that an even fuller disclosure was required. Indeed, the report did not provide details of the DPRK's uranium enrichment and proliferation activities (thus keeping the Syria-DPRK connection unresolved), nor of its actual holdings of nuclear warheads, instead acknowledging in a separate document that the United States continued to harbour suspicions about these.⁵⁹ The report noted that the DPRK had produced thirty kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium and that it had used two kilograms of this in its 2006 test, but this was the barest of information that had been expected. Nevertheless, US envoy Christopher Hill deflected US critics of the report, and of the administration's acceptance of it, by arguing that the Six Party Talks and the report were all 'work in progress' and that working on an 'incremental basis' was the only realistic way forward.⁶⁰ His statements serve to remind us that this will be a long drawn-out process, and that any hopes of a quick denuclearization are simply unrealistic. The next round of Six Party negotiations, commencing in the first week of July 2008, were to move to the second stage of the overall process and seek to verify the report's claims, as well as press for full dismantling of the DPRK's nuclear complex. The final and probably distant stage (of months if not years) of the process would result in the elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons.⁶¹ There can therefore be no ultimate confidence that this is an inevitable outcome; rather, it will continue to depend on 'action-for-action' progress, continuing international and especially US patience and a commitment by Kim Jong-Il to honour the promises he has given.

⁵⁹ 'North Korea Issues Overdue Nuclear Declaration', 2008, 26 June, *Nuclear Threat Initiative: Global Security Newswire*, http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008/6/26/a42c7515-d183-4990-ad25-8cbe68a48ef9.html

⁶⁰ Hill, Christopher, 2008, 'Hill Seeks to Blunt Criticism on N. Korea', *Washington Post*, 1 July, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/01/AR2008070102308.html>

⁶¹ North Korea Destroys Nuclear Cooling Tower', 2008, *Nuclear Threat Initiative: Global Security Newswire*, 27 June, http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008/6/27/287de892-6cb6-48f2-b39f-739559b7b470.html

IX. Lessons Learned from the North Korean Nuclear Crises

There are two broad observations to be made here. The first focuses on the need to prioritise negotiation and engagement with an adversary over name-calling, ideologically motivated disengagement and simple neglect. This is especially so when the stakes are as high as they inevitably are when dealing with nuclear proliferation. The second observation regards the lack of any institutionalised security architecture in the Northeast Asian region and calls for the transformation of the Six Party Talks from an *ad hoc* and loosely organized entity into an evolving and permanent security institution for the Northeast Asian region.

A significant aspect of the crisis can be seen in terms of the evolution of US behaviour during the course of the talks. President Bush demonstrated a hawkish attitude towards Pyongyang right from the time of his election, clearly related to his wish to distance the new administration from the policies, and especially the Agreed Framework, adopted by President Clinton. This stance, however, can be said to have discarded what was in 2000 a flawed but still salvageable negotiation and provoked the very thing the US wished to avoid, namely a nuclear-armed North Korea. Indeed, Bush's adamant decision *not* to engage in direct one-to-one negotiations with Pyongyang (apart from a few encounters which in any case were still within the arena of the Six Party Talks), his insistence on painting the regime as a rogue state and his refusal to 'reward' Pyongyang for what was perceived as bad behaviour appeared to fuel a new kind of security dilemma that can only have been exacerbated by the US policies of regime change evident in Iraq and elsewhere.⁶² Added to this was a failure to recognize the shrewd nature of the DPRK leadership, and a continuing tendency to paint the North's leader as irrational.⁶³ This tactic only prevented a fuller understanding of the dynamics involved and the early formulation of appropriate policy analysis. In reality, there has not been any serious and prolonged attempt at genuine dialogue and negotiations with North Korea by the Bush administration. As Robert Gallucci noted, 'although we have successfully avoided rewarding North Korea ... North Korea has tested a series of ballistic missiles, separated enough plutonium for about eight additional nuclear weapons, and conducted one nuclear test explosion. The Bush

⁶² Smith, 2006; Pritchard, 2007.

⁶³ Hazel Smith, 2000, 'Bad, Mad, Sad or Rational Actor? Why the "Securitization" Paradigm makes for Poor Policy Analysis of North Korea', *International Affairs*, 76(3) July, pp. 593-617.

administration's policy may be righteous, but it has failed to secure the national interest.⁶⁴ The unfortunate lesson that other would-be proliferators might take from this episode, especially if they took into account the possibility of US intervention or suggestions of regime change, might well be to negotiate from a position of nuclear weapons capability.

Particularly in the case of North Korea, where all too often outside observers denounced Kim Jong-il as mad or irrational and the US itself was quick to add the DPRK to its 'axis of evil', it seems clear that a willingness to talk was essential for achieving the strategic goals the US sought. As former South Korean President Kim noted, 'the reason North Korea wants to go nuclear is because they want direct dialogue with the US, through which they want to discuss security assurances, lifting of economic sanctions and normalization of relations with the US. Therefore the US should change its attitude and pursue dialogue.'⁶⁵

Another aspect becomes evident when assessing the broader picture of the progress and impact of North Korea's security policies on the regional and global levels: as yet no institutionalized security framework has been created to help address the tensions caused by the DPRK's nuclear policies (nor indeed for future tensions, such as the Taiwan-China issue, or the continuing if low-level territorial disputes between Japan and Russia).

There has evolved a quite plausible case for institutionalizing the Six Party Talks into such an ongoing regional security framework. As one observer notes, 'a strong argument for seeking to embed the Six-Party process in a permanent institution is the simple fact that if the six-party process is successful – still a big if, to be sure – there are structural imperatives that will arise out of the implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement or any additional diplomatic agreements.'⁶⁶ Utilising these structures and processes on a long-term basis will not only assist in the resolution of future developments, but could serve to entrench habits of transparency and engagement among states in a region where such provisions are minimal. Indeed, what seems remarkable is that the region has so far survived the many tensions and ideological rifts it has endured without serious military consequence since 1953, and

⁶⁴ Gallucci, Robert, 2006, 'Nuclear Shockwaves: Ramifications of the North Korean Nuclear Test', *Arms Control Today*, October. http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006_11/Gallucci.asp

⁶⁵ Kim, Dae-Jung, 'A Glimmer of Peace on the Korean Peninsula', *Korea Policy Review*, October 2007.

⁶⁶ Michael Schiffer, 2006, *Time for a Northeast Asian Security Institution*, PacNet #59, Pacific Forum CSIS, Hawaii.

has even prospered and evinced an encouraging degree of economic integration and political coexistence. Institutionalising such habits further via the Six Party Talks would represent a highly positive spin-off from the North Korean nuclear tensions. A further encouraging factor here is China's willingness to act in a mediating and hosting capacity, as well as its evident wish to be seen as a multilateralist and moderate state actor in international relations.

X. Conclusion: From Regional Instability to Eventual Denuclearization?

In the space of eighteen months, the February agreement appears to have transformed a highly charged and tense Korean peninsula into a region of potential further integration and peaceful change. Indeed, when seen against the view that prevailed as recently as 2006, the changes that have taken place seem momentous. This is not to say that the Agreement is guaranteed to proceed unhindered: the possibility remains that, in line with past behaviour, the Pyongyang regime might renege on its commitments, withdraw from rapprochement with South Korea (certainly it appears reluctant to change its domestic policies, something that would become inevitable if real integration were to proceed, however slowly) or that critics of the deal in the US might sway the administration to revert to a more hard-line stance towards the DPRK.⁶⁷ It would be wise to note the relatively short history of this 'success' and to keep our expectations in check accordingly.⁶⁸

Yet in terms of how tensions have played out over the past seven years, there are positive indicators that all sides will recognise the benefits to regional stability in ensuring full compliance, even if this is to be a slow and tedious process. It is also likely, as noted above, that China, with its new-found positive status as a key link between Washington and Pyongyang, will be further encouraged to ensure a steady fulfilment of the process.

As a further point, it is worth noting that, in the long term, a key requirement in the successful pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation is that the US, China and Russia (together with the remaining nuclear weapon states) will have to divest themselves of their nuclear arsenals over time if they are to retain any credibility in their role as consistent advocates of regional and global nuclear non-proliferation in principle.⁶⁹ This broader issue of nuclear disarmament

⁶⁷ Kim, Dave H., 2007, *Critique of the Criticism of the Beijing Accord*, IKEAS (The Information Exchange for Korean-American Scholars), Issue 7-14 (No.470) April 6, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/IEKAS%204-6-07.pdf>

⁶⁸ James Schoff, op. cit.

⁶⁹ This is an important issue that cannot be addressed fully here, but which must nevertheless be noted; for views on the need for equitable processes of nuclear disarmament, see Marianne Hanson, 2002, 'Nuclear Weapons as Obstacles to International Security', *International Relations*, 16(3), September; and more recently, Schultz, Perry, Kissinger and Nunn, 2007, 'A Bipartisan Plea for Nuclear Weapons Abolition', *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 January.

has not been examined in this report, but it is an inevitable backdrop to any exercise that seeks to prevent the acquisition of nuclear weapons by countries other than the five acknowledged nuclear weapon states, the US, Russia, Britain, France and China. The inequalities in the NPT might well be used by states such as North Korea or India to justify their own nuclear programmes and motivations for never joining (in the case of India) or for withdrawing from (in the case of North Korea) that Treaty. But while most states support and encourage full nuclear disarmament by the five nuclear weapon states acknowledged as such in the NPT, the absence of full nuclear disarmament must not be allowed to stymie efforts to wind back proliferation⁷⁰ in areas such as South Asia, Northeast Asia or the Middle East.

The alternative to ongoing collaboration and engagement with North Korea is clearly seen in the tensions and uncertainty that have surrounded this issue for the past fifteen years, and which could easily reach a tipping point where a nuclear catastrophe results. To date, the Six Party Talks and acceptance that non-proliferation is a long-term activity requiring negotiation and compromise indicate that this, rather than rhetoric or castigation, is a more appropriate approach to the difficult task of ensuring nuclear non-proliferation.

⁷⁰ One further troubling issue arises here, of course: when India blasted its way into the 'nuclear club' in 1998, it was originally castigated for doing so. That the United States is now pursuing close participation with India on the latter's civilian nuclear programme indicates first, that the US no longer considers India's nuclear weapon status a problem, and second, that it is quite willing to differentiate between who can and who cannot become a nuclear weapons proliferator. This inconsistency in approach will make it commensurately harder for the US and others to insist on full denuclearization by states such as North Korea.

Appendix I

THE TEXT OF THE JOINT AGREEMENT ON NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AS PROVIDED BY THE CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY

BEIJING: The text of the joint agreement on North Korea's nuclear disarmament as provided by the Chinese Foreign Ministry:

The Third Session of the Fifth Round of the Six-Party Talks was held in Beijing among the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the United States of America from 8 to 13 February 2007.

Mr. Wu Dawei, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC; Mr. Kim Kye Gwan, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK; Mr. Kenichiro Sasae, Director-General for Asian and Oceanian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan; Mr. Chun Yung-woo, Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs of the ROK, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Mr. Alexander Losyukov, Deputy of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; and Mr. Christopher Hill, Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Department of State of the United States attended the talks as heads of their respective delegations.

Vice Minister Wu Dawei chaired the talks.

I. The parties held serious and productive discussions on the actions each party will take in the initial phase for the implementation of the joint statement of September 19 of 2005. The parties reaffirmed their common goal and will to achieve early de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and reiterated that they would earnestly fulfill their commitments in the Joint Statement. The parties agreed to take coordinated steps to implement the Joint Statement in a phased manner in line with the principle of "action for action."

- II. The parties agreed to take the following actions in parallel in the initial phase:
1. The DPRK will shut down and seal for the purpose of the eventual abandonment the Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility, and invite back IAEA personnel to conduct all necessary monitoring and verification as agreed between the IAEA and the DPRK.

2. The DPRK will discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs as described in the joint statement, including plutonium extracted from used fuel rods, that would be abandoned pursuant to the Joint Statement.
3. The DPRK and the U.S. will start bilateral talks aimed at resolving bilateral issues and moving toward full diplomatic relations. The U.S. will begin the process of removing the designation of the DPRK as a state sponsor of terrorism, and advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect with the DPRK.
4. The DPRK and Japan will start bilateral talks aimed at taking steps to normalize their relations in accordance to the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of the settlement of unfortunate past and the outstanding issues of concern.
5. Recalling Section 1 and 3 of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, the Parties agreed to cooperate in economic, energy and humanitarian assistance to the DPRK. In this regard, the Parties agreed to the provision of emergency energy assistance to the DPRK in the initial phase. The initial shipment would be the equivalent of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, which will start in the next 60 days.

The Parties agreed that the above mentioned will be implemented in the next 60 days and that they will take coordinated steps toward this goal.

III. The Parties agreed on the establishment of the following Working Groups in order to carry out the initial actions and for the purpose of full implementation of the joint statement:

1. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula
2. Normalization of DPRK-US relations
3. Normalization of DPRK-Japan relations
4. Economy and energy cooperation
5. Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism

The Working Groups will discuss and formulate specific plans for the implementation of the Joint Statement in their respective areas. The Working Groups shall report to the Six-Party Heads of Delegation Meeting on the progress of their work. In principle, progress in one Working Group shall not affect the progress in other Working Groups. Plans made by the five Working Groups will be implemented as a whole in a coordinated manner.

The Parties agreed that all working groups will meet within the next 30 days.

IV. During the period of the Initial Actions phase and in the next phase – which includes provision by the DPRK of a complete declaration of all nuclear programs and disablement of all existing nuclear facilities including graphite-moderated reactors and repossessing plants – economic, energy and humanitarian assistance up to the equivalent of 1 million tons of heavy fuel oil, including the initial shipment equivalent to 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, will be provided to the DPRK.

The detailed modalities of the said assistance will be determined through consultation and appropriate assessment in the working group on Economic and Energy Cooperation.

V. Once the initial actions are implemented, the Six Parties will promptly hold a ministerial meeting to confirm implementation of the Joint Statement and explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

VI. The Parties reaffirmed that they will take positive steps to increase mutual trust, and will make joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly related Parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.

VII. The Parties agreed to hold the Sixth Round of the Six-Party Talks on 19 March 2007 to hear reports by the Working Groups and discuss action for the next phase.

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