

China's North Korea Dilemma

Michael D. Swaine

[I am deeply indebted to Kevin Slaten and Tiffany Ng, both Carnegie Junior Fellows, for their invaluable research assistance.]

China's leadership has been faced with the exquisite dilemma of trying to balance between propping up North Korea and prodding the volatile regime to give up its nuclear weapons. Maintaining stability and working toward denuclearization have become increasingly difficult, however, as Pyongyang has repeatedly tested missiles, nuclear weapons, and Beijing's patience over the past seven years. Such provocations have led China to become more supportive of tougher international action, less willing to downplay domestic criticism against the North, and arguably more open to coordinating with the other members of the Six Party Talks. Yet none of these developments indicates a larger shift in China's strategic calculus. Beijing's core interests, beliefs, and objectives regarding North Korea, along with its suspicions and uncertainties toward Washington, almost certainly remain the same. Hence, its highly risk-averse approach, focused on even-handed mediation and limited pressure, is likely to remain unchanged in what is slowly becoming a nuclear stalemate in Northeast Asia.

Ah, the joys of responsible stakeholder-hood. Ever since the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (aka North Korea) began to acquire the elements of a nuclear weapons program in the late '80s—but especially since Beijing became the Mediator in Chief of the ill-fated Six Party Talks (6PT) in spring 2003¹—China's leadership has been faced with an exquisite dilemma: how to encourage or prod its strong-willed, highly volatile Stalinist neighbor to give up the bomb and open up to politically threatening reforms while sustaining the cooperation and support of a seemingly impatient, often internally divided and potentially threatening United States. And, oh yes, there are of course the Japanese, South Koreans, and Russians to contend with as well.

This balancing act has become far more challenging over time. Indeed, both Pyongyang and Washington (but especially the former) have put the leaders in Zhongnanhai—as the chair of the 6PT—through the proverbial wringer during the past four years. The high and low points of this saga have included:

- Numerous joint statements and agreements for carrying out the denuclearization of North Korea, in return for energy and economic assistance, security assurances,

and specific U.S. attempts to communicate a lack of “hostile intent” toward Pyongyang.

- Actual progress toward such objectives, on the basis of specific action plans involving parallel moves and accompanied by encouraging words and gestures of all sorts by all sides.
- Severe disappointments and blunt charges of betrayal, provocation, violation, and backsliding, in response to all manner of real and sometimes (probably) imagined intentions, words, and actions, from the freezing of funds to alleged failures to meet deadlines, conflicting interpretations of oral agreements, the injection of supposedly “new” conditions, and fears by one or more participants in the 6PT of being ignored or bypassed.
- Major and minor reversals, involving military and political threats and gestures, the undoing or suspension of nuclear disablement processes and economic assistance efforts, and most significantly, two pairs of ballistic missile and nuclear weapons “tests” by Pyongyang (in 2006 and 2009).
- An array of UN Security Council resolutions and statements condemning, demanding, and sanctioning North Korea for its perfidies, while also encouraging it to return to the denuclearization process through words and (promised) deeds, along with an array of unofficial finger-pointing by Council members at one another for contributing to the North’s bad behavior.²

All of this has taken place alongside indications of domestic instability in North Korea (centered on varying estimates of economic decline, the health of Kim Jong Il, and associated leadership succession moves) and major leadership transitions in Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

At present, we are in a decidedly low trough, with Pyongyang having declared that it is done with the 6PT, wants to be treated as a nuclear power, and will respond with force if anyone tries to interdict its ships on the high seas or in a foreign port—while hinting (at the behest of Beijing) that it might be interested in another round of negotiations without preconditions, preferably with the U.S. alone, but possibly as part of multilateral discussions. For their parts, Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul seem committed to resisting entering into any new talks until North Korea agrees to return to the denuclearization process, although the U.S. has apparently agreed to send its envoy to Pyongyang. And in the meantime, Beijing continues its efforts to encourage all sides to return to some type of formal talks.³

As many scholars have pointed out, since at least the first round of missile and nuclear tests in 2006, Beijing has grown increasingly perplexed, frustrated, and probably very angry over its increasingly obvious inability to persuade, cajole, or pressure its erstwhile North Korean friend and ally to forgo its nuclear weapons program and adopt the type of reform and open-door policies that have largely transformed China from its own version of a Stalinist, developmentally backward, ideologically constrained dictatorship into a rapidly growing, relatively stable and accepted member of the international community.⁴

As a result, during this period, China's leaders have become more supportive of tougher international actions toward Pyongyang; less willing to silently endure, downplay, or excuse the North's vitriol and provocative behavior; more tolerant of harsh domestic criticisms of North Korea (and even some serious internal questioning of elements of Beijing's own approach); far less inclined to present itself as the North's close friend and ally; and arguably more willing to coordinate openly its approach to the problem with Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul.

Some proponents of a tougher Chinese strategy toward North Korea might take heart from the above changes. However, rather than clarifying the way ahead and strengthening the foundations of cooperation between Beijing and Washington in pursuing a more sanctions-centered approach to the North Korea nuclear crisis, these developments have more likely intensified the above-outlined dilemma confronting the Chinese leadership and possibly laid the groundwork for future problems with the United States. This is largely because Beijing's core strategic interests, beliefs, and objectives, along with its suspicions and uncertainties toward Washington, almost certainly remain largely unchanged and hence its associated highly risk-averse approach to maintaining stability remains paramount.

This article will attempt to identify the most salient elements of change and continuity in China's approach to North Korea, in order to gain a more precise understanding of the range of interests, assumptions, fears, and hopes that will most likely influence the PRC leadership's future behavior. At the outset, one must emphasize that, while changes in official public statements are clearly identifiable, much of the evidence for determining the leadership's underlying basic beliefs and assumptions—and in particular possible divisions and debates among them—is circumstantial and indirect. In most cases, such evidence is imputed from interviews and observations by “outside” Chinese scholars and analysts (some with connections to the government), public opinion surveys, and editorials or commentaries appearing in authoritative, semi-authoritative, and non-authoritative Chinese media. This article will focus primarily on published Chinese sources.

What Has Changed: Sharper Words, More Sticks, and Extremely Open and Frank (albeit unofficial) Debate

Indications of authoritative changes in the Chinese government stance toward the North Korea problem have consisted almost exclusively of sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious bilateral or multilateral diplomatic moves as well as changes in wording (or the omission of key words or phrases) in *official* statements occurring just prior to or immediately following major adverse developments, most notably the two rounds of missile and nuclear tests conducted by Pyongyang in 2006 and 2009. The most notable examples of such authoritative Chinese signaling have included:

Immediately following the first DPRK ballistic missile tests of July 4–5, 2006: The failure of Hu Jintao and other senior PRC leaders to mention or praise the PRC-DPRK

mutual-assistance treaty of 1961 on the occasion of its 45th anniversary, or to mention any PRC offer of assistance to North Korea following flooding in July.⁵

After the DPRK publicly announced plans to conduct its first nuclear test:

Unprecedentedly direct cautionary wording in official media directed at Pyongyang, including an expression of “hope” that the PDRK (and not, as is usual, “all parties” in the dispute) “will remain calm” and “exercise restraint,” along with a flurry of diplomatic consultations and visits with Seoul and Washington.⁶

In response to Pyongyang’s first nuclear test: The use of a highly authoritative foreign-policy channel reserved for signaling very strong concern (a Foreign Ministry Statement), to issue a rare (and relatively harsh) public criticism of North Korea, employing unprecedented wording (e.g., “flagrantly conducted a nuclear test”) usually reserved for putative adversaries or non-socialist states, followed by an uncharacteristic absence of reporting by any official PRC media of any positive phrases regarding the PRC-DPRK relationship during a subsequent visit between State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan and Kim Jong Il.⁷

After Pyongyang announced its intention to launch a satellite: Authoritative PRC media treatment of DPRK Premier Kim Jong Il’s visit to Beijing characterized PRC Premier Wen Jiabao’s meeting with him as “frank” (a word usually intended by PRC media to convey disagreement), following more positive portrayals of other official bilateral talks held in previous months.⁸

In response to Pyongyang’s second nuclear test: Another Foreign Ministry Statement again employed strong, critical language toward North Korea (while avoiding the application of the word “flagrant” employed following the 2006 test), and a Foreign Ministry spokesperson described Beijing’s relations with Pyongyang as “normal state-to-state relations” similar to those “with any other country around the world,” thus striking a contrast with past, warm official references to North Korea as a friend and ally.⁹

Beyond such unilateral changes in word and diplomatic action, Beijing has also shown a greater willingness over time to support greater levels of international pressure on North Korea, in the form of more strongly worded UN resolutions and statements. Even more significantly, Pyongyang’s clear willingness to ignore Beijing’s direct public and private entreaties, and its obvious lack of appreciation of what Beijing has regarded as its efforts to prevent the employment of even stronger pressure by both Washington (separately) and the UN Security Council (collectively), have compelled the Chinese leadership to drop its longstanding “no-sanctions” strategy toward North Korea, designed in part to retain its trust, and to avoid instability.

After the first missiles tests of 2006, Beijing clearly rejected the use of UN sanctions on Pyongyang.¹⁰ However, Beijing did support those targeted, limited sanctions contained in UN Resolution 1718 (see appendix) while resisting efforts to include stronger sanctions.¹¹ And, although China’s leaders resisted applying further sanctions to North Korea (and a second UN resolution) following its second missiles test, they did support the issuance of a (less significant) Security Council presidential

statement condemning Pyongyang's launch as a violation of Resolution 1718, and calling for strengthening the punitive measures specified in that resolution.¹² Following North Korea's second nuclear test, Beijing supported a new UN resolution (1874) condemning "in the strongest terms" the DPRK's second nuclear test and imposing new sanctions in the form of cargo inspections, while resisting stronger, punitive measures (more on the latter point below).¹³

These official words and actions have been accompanied by unofficial (yet in some cases authoritative or semi-authoritative) reporting, often appearing in various types of Chinese and foreign media, ranging from PRC government-run organs to PRC government-affiliated organs, unaffiliated Chinese organs, and mainstream foreign news organs. In the case of many foreign and all entirely non-authoritative Chinese media, such reporting on the supposedly authoritative views, words, and postures of PRC officials is extremely difficult to confirm and should be taken with a grain of salt.¹⁴

Such official actions and word changes are obviously more than semantic in nature. They are deliberately intended to convey (in the case of North Korean actions) varying levels of official displeasure, are almost certainly accompanied by private verbal and/or written messages conveyed directly and in person to DPRK officials, and are most likely intended to exert some level of modulated pressure to compel or entice the North to either avoid or undo unacceptable behavior. It is uncertain whether such signals are also specifically intended to convey (almost certainly unstated) threats of subsequent Chinese countermeasures should Pyongyang not comply.

At the same time, one must emphasize that, throughout the course of the crisis, Beijing has strenuously and repeatedly sought to express official caution and, whenever possible, an even-handed and balanced approach to managing the North Korea Problem. More often than not, the above harsh words or cautions directed at Pyongyang have been accompanied or followed by a variant of this official statement:

China strongly urges all of the parties concerned to stay cool and restrained, stop all moves that may . . . increase . . . tensions, and be resolved in settling the issue peacefully through consultation and dialogue. China will continue to make unremitting efforts toward this end.¹⁵

In other words, Beijing has continuously placed a primary emphasis, over all other goals and means, on the need to preserve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula via the persistent application of dialogue and consultations, and the avoidance of actions by any side that might provoke conflict. In this effort, it has consistently presented itself as a mediator seeking to sustain or resume dialogue between the six parties (and especially the United States and the DPRK), while also working with the other members of the 6PT to achieve the ultimate goal of denuclearization and the maintenance of the international nonproliferation system.¹⁶

In support of this primary objective, Beijing on many occasions during the period 2005 to the present has also sought to counter-balance its expression of displeasure

toward Pyongyang with public, often official, affirmations of Sino-DPRK comity and friendship, along with fairly steady increases in the scope and depth of bilateral commercial economic ties and assistance. Such positive statements and actions are sometimes overlooked by analysts caught up in charting what is new (and negative) in PRC official policy toward North Korea. Such behavior confirms a consistent desire to sustain both the image and, no doubt to some extent, the reality of China's longstanding, unique relationship with Pyongyang; it is also an indication of Beijing's commitment to maintaining engagement with North Korea despite setbacks in the 6PT process.¹⁷

It is most likely, however, that under the surface of Beijing's official expressions of friendly ties with North Korea and its overall restraint and evenhandedness, some level of official discussion, and even debate, is occurring over the motives and intentions of both Pyongyang and Washington and, most importantly, the continued utility of various aspects of China's approach to the North Korea problem, involving everything from basic strategies and assumptions to specific tactics. No real evidence of such high-level leadership debate exists on the open or public level. But it is nonetheless very strongly suggested by the fact that, since at least 2006, Beijing has permitted government-affiliated media and (in some cases) organs associated with authoritative PRC media to publish an unprecedented scope and intensity of unofficial discussion of these issues among a wide range of scholars, analysts, and observers.

Some of this commentary is quite blunt and directly or indirectly critical of Beijing, calls into question China's basic calculus, and recommends variants of a tougher approach to Pyongyang. Some call for China to "wake up,"¹⁸ cast off its "illusions" regarding North Korea,¹⁹ and take a more active stance commensurate with its desired image as a "responsible big power."²⁰ Some observers even assert that Beijing should "support the United States," shut off food and energy supplies to North Korea,²¹ and transition the 6PT from "consensus diplomacy" to "coercive diplomacy toward North Korea."²²

Criticism of Chinese policy became particularly notable beginning in spring 2009, following the second North Korean ballistic missile launch.²³ In fact, one particularly frank assessment of China's strategy toward North Korea of July 2009 (following North Korea's second nuclear test), argued that Beijing's relatively passive, hands-off approach has given Pyongyang an enormous opportunity to avoid the denuclearization process.²⁴

However, other commentary is far less harsh toward China, arguing either that Beijing must basically stay the course or adjust its policies only on the margins.²⁵ Indeed, the majority of the unofficial public Chinese commentary on the North Korean nuclear crisis ultimately blames (or holds responsible) either Pyongyang or Washington (or in some cases both powers) for the unending and arguably worsening situation. The anger and frustration directed at the DPRK is clear and obvious, and builds fairly steadily from at least the first ballistic missile test to the present. Pyongyang was characterized as "stupid," "impervious to reason," and even "insane" for conducting the first nuclear test.²⁶ Its policies are variously described as "extreme adventurist," "brinkmanship," "dangerous," "dishonest and unprincipled," "nuclear blackmail," provocative, and

trouble-making.²⁷ Many Chinese analysts characterize North Korea's actions as highly deleterious to China in various ways. As noted above, one commentator described Pyongyang as a "strategic burden" to Beijing.²⁸ Another explained in considerable detail why the possession of nuclear weapons will undermine, rather than strengthen, North Korea's security.²⁹ Finally, several Chinese commentators blame North Korea for undermining peace and stability, violating the will of the international community, and potentially triggering disastrous consequences, including everything from a nuclear arms race in Asia to accelerated levels of nuclear proliferation and war.³⁰ Some have concluded that Pyongyang's second nuclear test constitutes the "failure" of the 6PT.³¹

Such growing hostility toward North Korea among the Chinese commentariat to some extent reflects a steady shift in public attitudes toward the DPRK regime since 2005. This change is reflected in a variety of public-opinion polls taken in China surrounding the first and second round of missile and nuclear tests. Even after the first series of ballistic missile tests in early July 2006, public sentiment toward Pyongyang was very warm. Two separate polls conducted by international polling agencies found that a majority of Chinese had positive opinions of North Korea. In a survey conducted just weeks after the missile tests, 74 percent of Chinese respondents rated their feelings toward North Korea as somewhat or very warm.³² Similarly, about half of the Chinese in an August poll thought positively of North Korea, while 31 percent expressed unfavorable views.³³ However, after the first nuclear test in October 2006, this ratio already started to reverse course. By November, only 34 percent of Chinese respondents held "mainly positive" views of North Korea; the other two-thirds had either equivocal or outright negative opinions of the country.³⁴ For the first time, more Chinese held negative views of North Korea than positive ones. And public sentiment toward North Korea became especially negative after the second nuclear test. An online survey conducted by *Huanqiu Shibao* in the weeks following the October 2009 test revealed a dramatic downturn.³⁵ Nearly three-fourths of Chinese respondents felt that North Korea's nuclear provocations had a negative impact on China, were likely to spur a nuclear arms race in Asia, and in the words of Zhu Feng, Deputy Director for Peking University's Center of International and Strategic Studies, "totally undermine[d] Chinese security and national interests."³⁶ The overwhelming trend in the comments posted on the newspaper's website also indicated that North Korea was unreliable and undeserving of China's trust and backing. By contrast, only a small minority—15 percent—continued to hold a positive view of the North Korea issue, and according to Zhu, they represented the "last threads of support for Kim Jong Il's despotic rule."³⁷

In addition—and perhaps most notably—since the first nuclear test, several Chinese commentators have asserted that North Korea will not give up its nuclear weapons, thus increasing the chances of a major confrontation. Such assertions directly question a fundamental tenet of Beijing's policy toward Pyongyang, namely, that the North would negotiate away its nuclear weapons in return for assurances of security and economic assistance.³⁸

However, some Chinese observers also express considerable understanding of North Korea's decision to develop, and possibly retain, nuclear weapons, with a few coming close to defending the decision.³⁹ This viewpoint was evident among Chinese

commentators even *after* Pyongyang's second nuclear test.⁴⁰ Even more notable, this stance in some instance cases is associated with a much broader and more widespread assessment of North Korea's strategic situation that places significant (and in many cases primary) responsibility on the United States as a source of the ongoing crisis. Specifically, very many Chinese scholars and observers fault Washington (and in some cases Japan) on at least two interrelated counts: 1) for establishing and sustaining an overt policy of hostility toward Pyongyang that essentially forces the North to undertake desperate and provocative measures;⁴¹ and/or 2) for manipulating and using the North Korea crisis in order to strengthen Washington's larger strategic position in Asia, and, specifically, to put pressure on China in various ways.⁴²

Although the number of such criticisms apparently diminished after the Bush administration began to negotiate with Pyongyang on the basis of the 6PT in 2004–5, and especially after the second DPRK nuclear test, their general presence throughout the crisis (along with their virulence, in some instances) suggests that they form an important element of the Chinese mindset toward the North Korea problem, as well as Chinese thinking toward the larger U.S.-PRC strategic relationship.

What Endures: A Basic Interest in Maintaining Peace, Stability, and Leverage, Via Restraint, Dialogue, and a Balanced Approach

While the above analysis of Chinese unofficial commentary on the North Korea crisis does not constitute categorical proof of internal ferment and debate at senior levels of the Chinese leadership, it does strongly hint at uncertainty, unrest, and perhaps some contention among the political elite regarding both the prospects for maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the best means of doing so. Indeed, it is quite possible that Beijing permitted such frank and critical discussion of the North Korea issue among Chinese media commentators and experts (and within authoritative and semi-authoritative media organs) in order to elicit a wider variety of input into the policy process, as part of the search for new approaches. At the very least, the Chinese leadership is probably using such commentary to “rattle” or pressure Pyongyang.

That said, none of the above data confirm that the Chinese government's basic interests toward the North Korea nuclear issue have fundamentally changed, much less that its basic, cautious and relatively even-handed approach to handling the crisis has given way to much bolder, less risk-averse policies. This is obviously not to say that Beijing's approach has remained unchanged. As the above record shows, it has accepted limited sanctions on North Korea and unambiguously displayed its displeasure toward Pyongyang and its commitment to denuclearization in a variety of ways. In all, it is now attempting to balance greater toughness with renewed overtures to Pyongyang and arguably closer levels of cooperation with Washington, Seoul, Tokyo, and Moscow, all in order to revive the dialogue process.⁴³

It is not at all surprising that Beijing is essentially sticking to its long-standing approach to the North Korea nuclear problem, for that approach is deeply rooted in a set of enduring Chinese interests, assumptions, beliefs, and concerns.

Throughout the North Korean nuclear crisis, China has remained committed, above all else, to the twin goals of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and ending Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. This position, repeated consistently in many of the official and unofficial sources cited above, derives from certain structural conditions confronting the Chinese leadership:

- The geographical proximity of North Korea along the border of China's densely populated, industrialized northeast region.
- The presence of large numbers of ethnic Koreans in the immediate border region.
- The long-standing and obvious animosity between Pyongyang and both Seoul and Washington, combined with the presence of very large and opposing conventional forces on the Peninsula.
- The (by now) clear confirmation of the possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea.
- The nearby presence of Japan and South Korea, which regard Pyongyang as an obvious potential threat, are capable of acquiring nuclear weapons in a relatively short time frame, and (especially in the case of Tokyo) possess a sometimes contentious relationship with Beijing.

Last but not least, the continued success of China's long-term grand strategy and associated reform policies depends on the maintenance of peace and stability along its entire periphery, and especially in Northeast Asia, given the obvious strategic importance of that region.

From the perspective of China's leaders, these basic features of China's strategic landscape obviously present a high level of danger associated with serious instability on the Peninsula, involving a range of highly adverse scenarios, from massive refugee problems to unpredictable "loose nukes" crises connected with a messy North Korean meltdown, sudden and escalating military actions, and a nuclear domino effect among neighboring powers. Regarding the latter point, Beijing fears that increasing instability in the absence of denuclearization could induce Seoul and Tokyo to seriously contemplate not only the acquisition of expanded missile defense capabilities and more potent long-range strike assets, but perhaps, most disturbingly, a more potent strategic deterrent, in the form of nuclear weapons. Such a situation would fundamentally alter the security environment in Northeast Asia in decidedly unfavorable ways for Beijing.⁴⁴

In addition, Beijing is almost certainly concerned that the prospect of a nuclearizing Asia resulting from a severely destabilized Korean Peninsula could motivate Washington to contemplate some type of preemptive military action or other form of dangerous behavior, to prevent the occurrence of many of the worst-case scenarios mentioned above. Such U.S. reactions could result in either major conflict with uncertain outcomes, or the long-term presence of American forces north of the 38th parallel, neither

of which Beijing desires. Beyond this, it is also possible that some leaders in Beijing suspect Washington might in some way seek to draw China into an increasingly antagonistic relationship with Pyongyang in order to advance its larger strategic position in East Asia. Such elite suspicions and concerns regarding U.S. motives are certainly highly suggested by the unofficial record, as presented above.⁴⁵

Some outside analysts hold the view that Beijing prizes peace and stability over the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, the above summary of China's fundamental interests and much of the preceding Chinese commentary suggest that the two objectives are closely linked.⁴⁶

In addition to fears regarding a nuclear domino effect and the potentially severe instabilities associated with a "loose nukes" scenario (including U.S. military intervention), Beijing is also undoubtedly concerned that a failure to undo Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program could greatly undermine the international non-proliferation regime by providing a dangerous precedent to other countries contemplating such weapons. Even more importantly, China's leaders almost certainly fear that a nuclear-armed Pyongyang might sell or transfer increasing amounts of nuclear-related materials and technologies to both state and non-state actors, thus again provoking strong, potentially destabilizing responses from the United States and the international community in general.⁴⁷

Furthermore, as some of the above commentary suggests, some Chinese leaders might also fear that a hostile PRC-DPRK relationship (arising from a unified PRC-U.S. stance in favor of strong pressure on Pyongyang) might provoke North Korea into directing its nuclear deterrent against Beijing.⁴⁸

All of these considerations understandably induce a deeply rooted sense of caution among China's leaders in handling the North Korean problem. Such caution is heightened even further by the fact that China's leaders almost certainly hold deep uncertainties and suspicions regarding the calculations and behavior under varying circumstances of what Beijing views as the two major antagonists in this drama: Pyongyang and Washington.

Although absolutely critical to understanding Beijing's calculus, the nature and extent of such suspicions are extremely difficult to confirm, given the absence of official commentary on the matter, due to its sensitivity. However, unofficial Chinese commentaries, along with interviews of officials undertaken by outside analysts, provide some strong indicators. Such sources suggest that China's leadership does not have a clear, comprehensive understanding of the political outlook of the North Korean leadership, and in particular fears that Pyongyang is capable of both disproportionate and highly escalatory military and political moves in response to intense pressure.⁴⁹

Many observers note that Beijing is concerned that its support for a high-pressure approach to resolving the nuclear problem will at the very least result in the loss of whatever limited influence it might enjoy over Pyongyang, thus resulting in the public,

international isolation of the DPRK leadership and increasing the likelihood even further of highly destabilizing, provocative reactions.⁵⁰

This is a key point, as it relates directly to outside criticisms of China's approach to the problem, and bears on Chinese assumptions regarding the North's mindset and endurance qualities. Some observers believe it is patently obvious that Beijing wields enormous influence over Pyongyang's calculus and could easily coerce the DPRK regime into complying with the denuclearization demands of the international community if it chose to do so. They cite the fact that the regime relies for its very existence on assistance from Beijing, primarily in the form of food and energy supplies, and presumably assume, therefore, that Pyongyang could not sustain its defiant policies and would have no choice but to comply with U.S. or UN demands if only Beijing were to turn off the spigot.⁵¹

However, there is no clear evidence to suggest that the survival of the DPRK regime is decisively dependent on Chinese assistance and that Pyongyang would become compliant, as opposed to more desperate and defiant, in response to such a Chinese action. Indeed, some, perhaps most, Chinese apparently believe that either domestic chaos or some form of escalatory, provocative behavior is at least as likely as a North Korean "capitulation" to any attempt to apply strong pressure.⁵²

Moreover, as some knowledgeable observers point out, the North Korean government has already shown enormous resilience in the face of considerable diplomatic, political, financial, and economic pressure.⁵³ In the absence of obvious, severe "game-changing" instability, such uncertainties thus militate in favor of continued caution from Beijing's perspective. It should be noted that many South Korean administrations have tended to agree with this assessment, which further reinforces the Chinese stance.

Some outside observers argue, in a different vein, that Beijing in fact knows that a high-pressure approach to Pyongyang will work, but refuses to support such action because it places a high premium on the preservation of a viable North Korean regime that is implacably hostile to the United States and perhaps in possession of nuclear weapons. Some observers even argue that Beijing has largely orchestrated the ups and downs of the North Korean nuclear crisis to serve its decidedly devious ends, as part of a grand strategy aimed at distracting and balancing the United States while maintaining Sino-U.S. cooperation.⁵⁴

This view is sometimes associated with the notion that the Chinese leadership seeks to sustain the nuclear crisis at manageable levels in order to reduce the likelihood that Washington will transition to a more confrontational policy toward China. In other words, by keeping the United States engaged on the North Korean problem, the argument goes, Beijing is able to sustain bilateral cooperation, prevent the emergence of a more hostile U.S. policy, and enhance China's strategic leverage.⁵⁵

The notion that Beijing actually favors a nuclear-armed Pyongyang and encourages its provocative behavior by and large ignores the larger, arguably more logical (given Chinese interests) geostrategic realities underlying China's commitment to stability and denuclearization outlined above. It also assumes a highly risk-acceptant Chinese mindset toward the United States and other powers regarding this issue that is not at all evident in the historical record. However, it does contain one significant possible element of truth, namely, the notion (reflected in some of the above Chinese commentaries) that at least some Beijing leaders probably view Washington as capable of transitioning to a highly confrontational policy toward China and/or attempts to destroy the North Korea regime by coercion or force, in order to eliminate an adversary, protect America's allies and forward bases, and extend its influence along China's border. Such fears have arguably diminished in recent years, as a result of Washington's shift to an intensive negotiating strategy involving bilateral talks with Pyongyang in the context of the broader 6PT. But they undoubtedly still exist within certain circles of the PRC leadership.

Thus, for China's leadership, all the plausible alternatives to its current stance (including a high-pressure policy of isolation and containment, as well as more-subtle efforts to undermine the DPRK regime, or a commitment to follow the U.S. lead in handling the problem) pose far more serious risks and dangers, given the high stakes and deep uncertainties confronting Beijing. In the absence of more-reliable information about U.S. and (especially) North Korean motives and objectives, along with clearer signs of a North Korean collapse, a transition to a new, more enlightened DPRK leadership, or the acquisition by Seoul or Tokyo of nuclear weapons,⁵⁶ the Chinese leadership's default approach will remain one of caution, even-handed mediation, encouragement, and limited pressure, despite the urgings and criticisms of a significant number of Chinese pundits and scholars. This essentially amounts to a "wait-and-see" attitude, centered on continued negotiations and behind-the-scenes efforts to encourage Pyongyang to comply with the international community, while keeping Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo in the game. Beijing is probably hoping that the North Korean crisis will remain controllable through such means until a more moderate, less hostile government emerges in either Washington and/or (more likely) Pyongyang. In the meanwhile, the dilemma it confronts in Northeast Asia will remain, and most likely worsen.⁵⁷

Appendix⁵⁸

In spring 2005, Pyongyang announces, after two years of 6PT, that it has produced nuclear weapons, is no longer bound by its more than five-year moratorium on flight-testing longer-range missiles, and has begun reprocessing spent plutonium fuel rods at its infamous Yongbyon nuclear reactor.

In July–September 2005, Washington decides to freeze not only the assets of North Korean entities responsible for WMD and missile programs but also about \$25 million in North Korean funds residing in a Macau bank (Banco Delta Asia—BDA), citing Section 311 of the USA Patriot Act.

On September 19, 2005, the renewed 6PT result in a joint statement of principles that commits Pyongyang to abandoning its nuclear weapons and programs and returning to the NPT and IAEA safeguards in return for economic and energy assistance.

In late 2005, North Korea departs from the fourth round of the 6PT in protest over the freezing of its BDA funds.

In June 2006, KEDO announces that it will terminate its project to build two light-water reactors in North Korea, due to Pyongyang's failure to comply with its obligations under the 1994 Agreed Framework.

On July 4–5, North Korea test fires seven ballistic missiles, including the long-range Taepo Dong-2.

On July 15, 2006, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1695 condemning the missile launches and prohibiting the transport of missile- and WMD-related materials and technologies and related financial resources to and from North Korea.

On October 9, 2006, Pyongyang conducts its first underground nuclear weapons test, prompting UN Security Council Resolution 1718 demanding that Pyongyang refrain from future tests, while calling on it to return to the 6PT and abandon its nuclear weapons; the resolution also imposes additional sanctions on commerce with North Korea, widening those banned under Resolution 1695.

In November–December 2006, the fifth round of 6PT resumes and the United States presents a multistage denuclearization plan.

On February 8–13, 2007, the 6PT produce an “action plan” to implement the September 19, 2005, joint statement on denuclearization, involving the disablement of Pyongyang's nuclear facilities and a declaration of its nuclear program in return for further economic and energy assistance, the removal of North Korea from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, and the cancellation of the U.S. Trading with the Enemy Act as it applies to Pyongyang.

In March–July 2007, the sixth round of the 6PT and the implementation of the action plan are obstructed by wrangling between Pyongyang and Washington over the lifting of the freeze on North Korea's BDA account; upon resolution, the 6PT reconvene and North Korea begins the process of dismantling its Yongbyon nuclear facilities.

On September 6, 2007, Israel destroys a suspected Syrian nuclear facility under construction with apparent North Korean assistance.

In September–October 2007, the sixth round of 6PT discusses the further implementation of the phases of the February 13 action plan; this results in a joint statement of agreement involving Pyongyang's complete declaration of its nuclear programs, the final disablement of the Yongbyon facilities, assurances regarding the disablement of all other nuclear facilities subject to the September 2005 statement, and pledges not to transfer nuclear materials or technologies, in return for additional shipments of large supplies of fuel oil, and U.S. initiation of efforts to remove North Korea from the terrorist sponsors list and to end the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act to Pyongyang.

In June 2008, North Korea provides a declaration of its nuclear programs to China, after missing the December 31, 2007, deadline, and in return, President George W. Bush rescinds the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act and notifies Congress of his intention to remove Pyongyang from the terrorism sponsors list after 45 days, in accordance with U.S. law; North Korea in turn destroys the cooling tower at Yongbyon.

On July 12, 2008, the 6PT members issue a statement outlining broadly the process for verifying North Korea's nuclear programs and establishing a timeline for completing the disablement of Pyongyang's key nuclear facilities and the provision of energy assistance, in parallel fashion.

In August–September 2008, Washington does not de-list North Korea from the State Department's terrorism list at the end of the 45-day period, stating that the period sets a "minimum" point for delisting and is not a deadline; Kim Jong Il reportedly suffers a stroke, and Pyongyang begins reversing the disabling process at Yongbyon, accusing the United States of violating its commitment to remove it from the terrorism list.

In October 2008, Washington reaches a preliminary agreement with Pyongyang on measures to verify North Korea's nuclear weapons program, consisting of a written joint document and verbal understandings (which must be approved by the other four 6PT members), including (according to the U.S. side) an agreement to permit scientific sampling; in response Washington removes Pyongyang from the terrorism sponsors list and North Korea then resumes disabling its Yongbyon facilities.

In November–December 2008, North Korea denies that it agreed to permit samplings to be taken at its nuclear facilities, announced that it is slowing its removal of spent fuel rods in response to delays in receiving pledged energy aid; and the 6PT discussions on verification, disablement, and energy assistance end in stalemate over the issue of verification; Washington suspends fuel oil shipments due to the absence of a verification

agreement and claims that Pyongyang refuses to agree in writing to what it agreed upon verbally in October regarding verification procedures; China and Russia continue their energy assistance.

In April 2009, North Korea attempts, apparently unsuccessfully, to place in orbit a satellite using a three-stage Unha-2 rocket that is similar to its long-range Taepo Dong-2 ballistic missile; the UN Security Council issues a presidential statement condemning Pyongyang's launch as a violation of Resolution 1718, and calls for strengthening the punitive measures under that resolution; in response, North Korea states that it will never again participate in the 6PT and "will no longer be bound" by any of its agreements, will reverse the nuclear disablement process, and "fully reprocess" the 8,000 spent fuel rods from its Yongbyon reactor in order to extract plutonium for nuclear weapons; it also ejects all IAEA and U.S. monitors from the Yongbyon complex and asserts that it will conduct long-range ballistic missile tests if the UNSC does not provide a formal apology for "infringing" on North Korean sovereignty.

In May–June 2009, North Korea conducts a second underground nuclear test; in response, the UNSC releases a presidential statement condemning the test as a violation of Resolution 1718 and announces that it will pass a new resolution; South Korea officially announces that it will participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) involving maritime interception and monitoring of proliferation activities by North Korea; in response, Pyongyang states that: Seoul's action represents a "declaration of war," its army is no longer bound by the 1953 Armistice Agreement ending the Korean War, and that it will respond with a "powerful military strike" if its ships are stopped; it also sentences two American journalists to 12 years of reform through labor for illegally crossing the border.

In June–July 2009, the UNSC unanimously adopts Resolution 1874 condemning "in the strongest terms" the DPRK's second nuclear test, imposing new sanctions (permitting cargo inspection), "demand[ing] that the DPRK not conduct any further nuclear test or any launch using ballistic missile technology," and urging the isolated country to come back to the six-party talks without preconditions; in response, Pyongyang announces that it rejects the resolution and will begin weaponizing newly extracted plutonium and enriched uranium; it then fires seven mid-range ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan; the UNSC in turn condemns the launches and urges Pyongyang to fully comply with its obligations and relevant UN resolutions.

In August, former U.S. President Bill Clinton makes a 20-hour visit to North Korea to secure the release of the two U.S. journalists and meets with Kim Jong Il; the visit is described as "a purely humanitarian mission"; Washington indicates that it is willing to engage in bilateral talks with North Korea (as requested by Pyongyang), but only in the context of the 6PT or a similar multilateral dialogue, and will not accept Pyongyang's demands to be regarded as a nuclear power.

In September 2009, Kim Jong Il reportedly states to a senior PRC envoy that North Korea is willing to engage in both bilateral and multilateral talks.

Notes

¹ For a typical Chinese source espousing the importance of China's role as a mediator in the 6PT, see Hua Liming, senior diplomat, translated by *People's Daily Online*: "Six-party talks: another step forward expected" (February 8, 2007, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200702/07/eng20070207_348271.html). Hua states: "China is hosting the talks, but it has played a role far more important than that. China has been trying to bridge the differences dividing the parties, resolve conflicts, mediate and keep the momentum of the talks going. It is no exaggeration to say that without the tremendous efforts of China and other countries, that [*sic*] talks would have been abandoned."

² See the appendix for a summary timeline of the major events in the North Korean nuclear crisis, beginning in spring 2005 (i.e., the lead-up to the first round of North Korean missile and nuclear tests).

³ For discussions of the current situation, see Henry A. Kissinger, "The North Korea Fallout," *Washington Post*, August 9, 2009; Choe Sang-Hun, "North Korea Opens Border; Again Calls for U.S. Treaty," *New York Times*, September 2, 2009; "DPRK Permanent Representative Sends Letter to President of UNSC," Korean Central News Agency (hereafter KCNA), September 3, 2009; Stephen W. Bosworth, "Morning Walkthrough in Beijing, China," U.S. Department of State Briefing at Westin Chaoyang Hotel, September 4, 2009; Qi Huaigao, "New Vista on the Korean Peninsula?" *Shijie Zhishi*, September 1, 2009, translated by OSC, CPP20090923671001; "North Korea Warns Against Sanctions," Associated Press, September 28, 2009; Harvey Morris, "N. Korea warned on arms race," *Financial Times*, September 24, 2009; Choe Sang-Hun, "North Korea Is Said to Be Willing to Resume Talks on Weapons," *New York Times*, September 19, 2009; Blaine Harden, "N. Korea Open to Talks, Kim Tells China; Statement Signals Reversal on Nuclear Issue, Fits Familiar Bargaining Pattern," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2009; Choe Sang-Hun and David E. Sanger, "North Korea Reveals Second Path to Nuclear Bomb," *New York Times*, September 4, 2009; "N. Korean claims annoy US and Seoul," *Financial Times*, September 3, 2009; "A Familiar Pitch; Once again, North Korea offers talks with the United States. Will the new administration repeat old mistakes?" editorial, *Washington Post*, September 2, 2009; "U.S. to Meet With North Korea Only as Path to Multilateral Nuclear Talks," *Global Security Newswire*, October 20, 2009; Choe Sang-Hun, "North Korea Presses U.S. to Agree to Bilateral Talks," *New York Times*, November 1, 2009; Scott Wilson, "Obama will send top diplomat to North Korea for direct talks," *Washington Post*, November 9, 2009; "U.S. sets N. Korea talks, looking for positive steps," Reuters, November 10, 2009.

⁴ See Bonnie S. Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," joint report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies & U.S. Institute of Peace (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace), 2008; Bonnie S. Glaser, "China's Policy in the Wake of the Second DPRK Nuclear Test," *China Security*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), pp. 1–11; Jonathan D. Pollack, "The Korean Peninsula in U.S. Strategy: Policy Issues for the Next President," in Ashley J. Tellis, Mercy Kuo, and Andrew Marble, eds., *Strategic Asia 2008–09: Challenges and Choices*, (Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), pp. 135–166; Jonathan D. Pollack, "Kim Jong-il's Clenched Fist," *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4 (October 2009), pp. 153–173; and Alan D. Romberg, "China and North Korea," unpublished manuscript, June 19, 2009. For a similar assessment by a Chinese analyst of Beijing's desire to lead Pyongyang into the world of reform and opening up, see "Beijing Expected To Adjust Its Policy Toward the DPRK and Support Sanctions," *Ming Pao*, October 10, 2006, in OSC CPP20061010710020.

⁵ "Greetings From Chinese Party And State Leaders," KCNA, July 10, 2006; "Chinese President Expresses Consolation To DPRK Leader Over Heavy Flood Losses," Xinhua, July 22, 2006, in OSC CPP20060722055016.

⁶ Le Tian, "DPRK Urged To Show Restraint on Nuke Test," *China Daily*, October 5, 2006.

⁷ The Foreign Ministry Statement included the phrase: "the Democratic People's Republic of Korea flagrantly conducted a nuclear test in disregard of the common opposition of the international community. The Chinese Government is firmly opposed to this act." See "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Of the People's Republic of China," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, May 25, 2009, available at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/> (italics added); for Tang's visit, see "Kim Jong Il Meets Hu Jintao's Special Envoy in Pyongyang," Xinhua, October 19, 2006, in OSC CPP20061019150048.

⁸ “Wen Jiabao Holds Talks With DPRK Premier, Touches on Six-Party Talks,” Xinhua Domestic Service, March 18, 2009, in OSC CPP20090318004011; “Hu Jintao Meets DPRK Premier Kim Jong Il, Discusses Bilateral Ties,” Xinhua Domestic Service, March 19, 2009, in OSC CPP20090319172008.

⁹ The statement said: “On 25 May 2009, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea conducted a nuclear test again, *in disregard of widespread [pu pian]* opposition from the international community. The Chinese government *expresses resolute opposition* to this. To realize non-nuclearization on the peninsula, oppose nuclear proliferation, and maintain peace and stability in Northeast Asia has been the Chinese government’s unswerving, consistent position. China *strongly demands [yao qiu]* that the DPRK abide by the non-nuclearization commitments, *stop related actions* that may lead to further deterioration of the situation, and return again to the track of the Six-Party Talks.” “Chinese Foreign Ministry Issues Statement on DPRK Conducting Nuclear Test Again,” Xinhua Domestic Service, May 25, 2009, in OSC CPP20090525004009 (italics added); “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang’s Regular Press Conference on June 2, 2009,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, June 2, 2009. In contrast to such tough language, China officially responded to the DPRK’s earlier April 5th missile launch in a more restrained manner, saying only that it had “taken note” of the launch. See “China Calls for Restraint on DPRK Launching Activity,” Xinhua, April 5, 2009, in OSC CPP20090405968047. On May 27, 2009, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu said: “China strongly urges the DPRK to honor its commitment to denuclearization, stop relevant moves that may further worsen the situation and return to the Six-Party Talks.” See *World Wide Watch*, CCTV-9, May 27, 2009, in OSC CPM20090527017001.

¹⁰ Wang Guangya, China’s representative to the UN, explicitly stated that a draft U.S. and Japanese resolution demanding sanctions on the DPRK would be vetoed if not altered fundamentally, while Premier Wen Jiabao said that sanctions will not necessarily help achieve the desired goal but “may even get the opposite results; the relevant parties should be very cautious over the issue of sanctions.” On September 19, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said: “The Chinese government has always advocated that this issue should be resolved by dialogue and we are opposed to sanctions.” See Tao Wenzhao, “Two Nuclear Issues Are Testing the UN Security Council,” Hong Kong *Ta Kung Pao*, July 18, 2006, in OSC CPP20060720715030; “Guo Boxiong Says China Can’t Force Change on DPRK Nuclear Program, Missiles,” Hong Kong Agence France-Presse (hereafter Hong Kong AFP), July 19, 2006, in OSC CPP20060719052024; “Wen Jiabao Says Resolving the Korean Peninsula and Iran Nuclear Issues Requires Incessant Diplomatic Efforts,” Xinhua Asia-Pacific Service, September 6, 2006, in OSC CPP20060906063004; “PRC FM Spokesman: China Will Not Attend Talks in NY on DPRK Nuclear Program,” Hong Kong AFP, September 19, 2006, in OSC CPP20060919150024.

¹¹ As a Chinese scholar has observed: “Immediately after the DPRK conducted its nuclear weapons test, the United States and Japan proposed that the UN Security Council impose specific sanctions on the DPRK. China asked that changes be made to the proposal. The UN Security Council carried out serious discussions on the proposal. The plan that was finally approved is different from the original US-Japanese proposal in that the sanctions against the DPRK are lighter than originally recommended.” See Tao Wenzhao, “The UNSC Resolution on the North Korea Nuclear Issue is Just and Appropriate,” *Ta Kung Pao*, October 16, 2006, in OSC CPP20061024715001.

¹² Wang Yudan and Xu Song, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson: Pressure and Sanctions Not Conducive to Non-Nuclearization of Korean Peninsula,” Xinhua Domestic Service, April 9, 2009, in OSC CPP20090409136015. Also see Zhang Haizhou, “US Seeks China’s Support in Stance Against DPRK,” *China Daily Online*, June 4, 2009, in OSC CPP20090615968034.

¹³ “Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang Issues Statement on Adoption of Resolution No. 1874 by UN Security Council on DPRK Nuclear Test Issue,” Xinhua Domestic Service, June 12, 2009, in OSC CPP20090612354001. Regarding sanctions, Qin Gang stated: “China is of the view that, as a sovereign country and a member of the United Nations, the DPRK’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and reasonable security concern and development interests should be respected. . . . Imposing sanctions is not the purpose of the UN Security Council’s move and political and diplomatic channels are the only correct way to settle the relevant issues on the Korean Peninsula.”

¹⁴ For example, according to an account by a mainstream South Korean media organ (one subsequently repeated by the semi-authoritative Hong Kong news agency Zhongguo Tongxun She), during a visit to South Korea following Pyongyang’s first missile tests, Chinese Foreign Ministry Senior Spokesman Liu Jianchao stated, “The DPRK . . . does not listen to what China has to say. It seems that not only does the DPRK not listen to China, but it also does not listen to itself.” If the account is true, this is pretty harsh

public language for a PRC official. In addition, Liu reportedly also struck an apparently negative contrast between PRC-DPRK and PRC-SK relations by referring to the former as merely “good-neighborly and friendly” and the latter as “not just relations between friends, but relations between relatives.” See Chu Wan-chung, “‘These Days, North Korea Does Not Even Listen to China’; Interview with Liu Jianchao, senior spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry,” *Chosun Ilbo*, August 7, 2006, in OSC KPP20060809356001. A senior official of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quoted in the Japanese press as saying, in August 2006: “We cannot let North Korea insult and injure China’s honor and dignity in the international community any longer.” A mid-level PRC official reportedly stated, “If [North Korea] tramples upon not only China’s honor and dignity but also its strategic interest, *chaoxian jiu wan le* [North Korea is finished].” See Hiroki Fujita, “The Truth of ‘China-DPRK Relations’ That Looked on the North’s Missile Launches,” *Foresight*, August 19, 2006–September 15, 2006, pp. 70–71, in OSC JPP20060831023004. “Another indication of Beijing’s being upset with its neighbor in the DPRK is that not long ago, the Chinese government allowed three DPRK exiles to go directly to the United States, ignoring the DPRK’s request that they be sent back to the DPRK. Furthermore, China’s state-owned Bank of China has frozen several DPRK accounts in the gambling city of Macau because China suspected Pyongyang of circulating not only counterfeit US dollars, but also counterfeit renminbi, although the Chinese official agency has never confirmed this allegation.” See Ch’en Ruei-yang, “Kim Jong Il Cold-Shoulders Beijing Again,” *Kuang Chiao Ching*, no. 408 (September 16, 2006–October 15, 2006), pp. 46–48, in OSC CPP20060921710014.

¹⁵ “Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang Issues Statement on Adoption of Resolution No. 1874 by UN Security Council on DPRK Nuclear Test Issue,” Xinhua Domestic Service, June 12, 2009, in OSC CPP20090612354001.

¹⁶ For the main examples of variations on the above quoted statement, see Chang Ailing and Huang Fuhui, “China Expresses Grave Concern on the Test-Firing of DPRK Missiles,” Xinhua Domestic Service, July 6, 2006, as translated in OSC CPP20060706138007; “China Wants U.S., N.K. To Be Flexible On Stalled Nuclear Talks: Official,” Yonhap News Agency (hereafter Yonhap), August 4, 2006, as translated in KPP20060804971042; Bai Jie and Lin Liping, “Foreign Ministry Spokesman: China Encourages Direct DPRK-US Contacts to Create Conditions for Resumption of Six-Party Talks,” Xinhua Asia-Pacific Service, September 14, 2006, as translated in OSC CPP20060914063012; Xu Song and Hao Yalin, “Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Says: China Encourages the DPRK and the United States To Hold Direct Dialogues,” Xinhua Domestic Service, September 26, 2006, in OSC CPP20060926005001; Li Shijia, “Hu Jintao Comments on Korean Peninsula Situation,” Xinhua Asia-Pacific Service, October 13, 2006, in OSC CPP20061013063008; “Hu Jintao, Bush Exchange Views on DPRK Nuclear Test by Telephone” Xinhua Domestic Service, October 9, 2006, in OSC CPP20061009029005; “Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao’s Regular Press Conference on 10 October 2006,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, October 10, 2006, available at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t275804.htm>; “Foreign Ministry Spokesman Issues a Statement on the UNSC Resolution Concerning the Korean Nuclear Issue,” Xinhua Domestic Service, October 15, 2006, in OSC CPP20061015138004; Lin Liping and Rong Yan, “Foreign Ministry Spokesman: All Parties Should Carry Out UN Security Council Resolution No. 1718 in Balanced Manner,” Xinhua Domestic Service, October 19, 2006, in OSC CPP20061019063013; “Chinese Premier Says Six-Party Talks Process Will Not Stop,” Xinhua, April 4, 2007, in OSC CPP20070404968107; “Foreign Ministry Spokesman Answers Reporter’s Question on Presidential Statement Passed by Security Council Regarding DPRK Launch Issue,” Xinhua Domestic Service, April 14, 2009, in OSC CPP20090414722007; “China disavows nuclear energy cooperation with DPRK,” *People’s Daily Online*, April 20, 2009, available at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6640876.html>; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang’s Regular Press Conference on June 2, 2009,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, June 2, 2009, available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t565945.htm>; Gu Zhenqiu, Bai Jie, and Wang Xiangjiang, “New UN Resolution Not All About Sanctions Against DPRK,” Xinhua, June 13, 2009, in OSC CPP20090613968098; Hiroyuki Sugiyama, “China Voices Opposition To N. Korea Missile Launch,” *Daily Yomiuri*, June 22, 2006, in OSC JPP20060622969091.

¹⁷ These official, often effusive, expressions of close PRC-DPRK friendship and deepening economic ties (by both civilian and military figures and state and party organs) have usually occurred on the occasion of leadership visits and important anniversaries and events in the bilateral relationship. For example, in 2008, after the first round of missile and nuclear tests, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported (on the

occasion of the visit by Chinese vice president—and presumed successor to Hu Jintao—Xi Jinping to Pyongyang in June 2008): “The China-DPRK friendship has acquired new elements and improved steadily in the 21st century. . . . Cooperation in commerce and trade between the two countries has developed steadily in recent years. Bilateral trade amounted to 1.97 billion U.S. dollars in 2007, increasing 16.1 percent over the previous year, according to Chinese statistics. Committed investments by Chinese companies in the DPRK reached 445 million dollars by May this year. . . . China has provided economic and humanitarian aid to the DPRK for years. Factories built by China have played an important role in the economy of the DPRK.” See Zhang Binyang and Gao Haorong, “Traditional China-DPRK Friendship Gains New Momentum,” Xinhua, June 17, 2008, in OSC CPP20080617968087. In August 2008 Hu Jintao stated to a North Korean official attending the Beijing Olympics: “In recent years the China-DPRK relations have developed in depth, and the two countries will name the next year ‘Year of China-DPRK Friendship’ to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.” See “Chinese President Meets Top Legislator of DPRK,” Xinhua, August 7, 2008, in OSC CPP20080807968276; “Chinese Leaders Send Congratulatory Message on 60th Anniversary of Founding of DPRK,” Xinhua, September 8, 2008, in OSC CPP20080908968073; “Senior CPC Official Meets DPRK Guests,” Xinhua, October 28, 2008, in OSC CPP20081028968183; Zhang Binyang and Gao Haorong, “Chinese Ambassador: Year of China-DPRK Friendship Aims at Enhancing Bilateral Ties,” Xinhua, February 6, 2009, in OSC CPP20090206968144.

In February of 2009 the PRC ambassador to North Korea stated: “History and reality have constantly proved that no matter what changes had taken place in the international and regional situation, Sino-DPRK friendship could withstand all kinds of tests, became even firmer as time went by, and has demonstrated its strong vitality. See “Ambassador Liu Xiaoming Grants Joint Interview to Xinhua, Renmin Ribao Reporters on ‘Sino-DPRK Friendship Year,’” PRC Embassy in DPRK Website, February 6, 2009, available at <http://kp.china-embassy.org>, and in OSC KPP20090209032001. Also see “Chinese Hu Meets DPRK Premier on Bilateral Ties,” Xinhua, March 19, 2009, in OSC CPP20090319968148.

Following the second nuclear test, Beijing continued to hold several events with North Korea and make positive statements, often associated with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of PRC-DPRK diplomatic relations. See “China’s Party Delegation Arrives in N. Korea For ‘Goodwill Visit,’” Yonhap, August 3, 2009, in OSC KPP20090803971100; Yao Ximeng and Zhang Binyang, “The Workers’ Party of Korea Central Committee Secretary Meets a CPC Goodwill Delegation,” Xinhua Domestic Service, August 7, 2009, in OSC CPP20090806172001. In this article, Luo Shugang, deputy head of the Department of Publicity of the CPC Central Committee, is reported to have stated: Under the great attention and care of the top leaders of the two parties and two countries, all kinds of exchanges and commemoration activities have proceeded smoothly. This fully demonstrates the vitality and vigor of China-DPRK traditional friendship.” Also see J.R. Wu, “China Says Wen to Sign Accords with North Korea,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2009.

¹⁸In June 2009 a foreign source printed an article by Zhu Feng that characterized the second nuclear test as “not just a slap in the face of China, but a sobering wake-up call for the Chinese leadership to face up to the malignant nature of their North Korean counterparts.” See Zhu Feng, “North Korea Nuclear Test and Cornered China,” *PacNet*, no. 41, Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), June 1, 2009.

¹⁹Zhu Feng, Deputy Director of the Center for International & Strategic Studies and a professor at the School of International Studies, Peking University, argued that China and the United States should step up “strategic cooperation” to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue. See “Sino-US nuclear cooperation must cross North Korean nuclear threshold,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, November 9, 2006, as cited in BBC Monitoring, November 13, 2006. At that time, Zhu was also reported in an overseas Chinese media organ as stating that “China all along had illusions about North Korea.” See Han Yonghong, “Chinese International Issues Experts: Having Denounced Nuclear Explosion Test With Strong Wordings, China’s Sanctions Against North Korea are Unavoidable,” *Lianhe Zaobao*, October 10, 2006, in OSC CPP20061010052019.

²⁰In early April 2009, a Shanghai newspaper carried online an interview with three policy experts: Shen Dingli, Liu Jianguo, and Zhang Liangui, the latter a professor at the International Institute for Strategic Studies under the Party School of the CPC Central Committee and a noted North Korea specialist. During the interview, one participant stated that China must display the image of a “responsible big power,” and must consider China-U.S. relations. The speaker expected that North Korea’s behavior will force Beijing to concede or compromise on such core items of concern to the United States as “the Iranian nuclear issue

and the issue of borrowing.” See Zhou Wenjing, “Chinese Mediation May Be the Reason US, Japan Did Not Intercept,” Interview, *Dongfang Zaobao* online, April 6, 2009, in OSC CPP20090406066004.

In May 2009, a young North Korea specialist at Fudan University published a frank and insightful article in *Shijie Zhishi* (World Knowledge, a semimonthly journal published by the World Affairs Publishing House under the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs) stating: “Based on our historical experience and the current development trend, reunification of the Korean Peninsula is unavoidable. We must therefore focus our attention on these questions: Who will play the leading role in the reunification, South Korea or North Korea? . . . From a long-term perspective, if China wants to be a world power and a responsible member of the international community, it has to put its responsibilities and duties to the international community above its responsibilities and duties to North Korea.” Cai Jian, “How Should China Respond to the Resurgence of the North Korean Nuclear Issue,” *Shijie Zhishi*, May 1, 2009, pp. 27–29, in OSC CPP20090514671009.

²¹ For example, on October 24, 2006, *Shijie Zhishi* held a symposium on the North Korea crisis, addressing whether China should curtail economic aid, how far it should go in supporting UNSC-mandated sanctions, and other issues. The conference was chaired by Shen Guofang, a former assistant foreign minister, and featured speakers Liu Jianguo, Wang Yusheng, and Zhang Liangui (mentioned in note 20). During the proceedings, Zhang argued that China’s “national interests” would be best served by “supporting the United States” in “blocking DPRK possession of nuclear weapons.” In the past, such symposia have signaled either leadership policy debate or a significant policy shift. See “After The DPRK Nuclear Test, What Can The World Do,” *Shijie Zhishi*, November 16, 2006, in OSC CPP20061129455001.

In May 2009, *Ming Pao*, a well-respected, non-PRC-owned Hong Kong newspaper, carried an article quoting Zhang Liangui calling on Beijing to take harsh action toward Pyongyang—such as suspending food and oil assistance—to stop it from continuing its development of nuclear weapons. See Wang Yenchu, “Without a Strong Power of Persuasion, the Mainland Is Concerned About North Korea’s Nuclear Threat,” *Ming Pao* online, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526710001.

²² In July 2009, the journal *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* (Contemporary International Relations), published by the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR, a research institute under the Ministry of State Security), carried an article by Zhu Feng stating, “the Six-Party Talks mechanism should switch from ‘consensus diplomacy’ to a certain degree of ‘coercive diplomacy.’” See Zhu Feng, “The DPRK Nuclear Crisis After the Second Nuclear Test: The Six Party Talks and ‘Coercive Diplomacy,’” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, July 20, 2009, pp. 44–50, in OSC CPP20090811671002.

²³ In April 2009, a PRC-owned daily with good access to Chinese government sources printed an online article by a regular commentator stating that China had failed to safeguard its core interest, had at times become subservient to its overall “mediation” needs, and had often acted “gingerly like walking on thin ice with the apprehension that the talks might break down should it offend any party . . .” The commentator added that “China cannot accomplish more on the DPRK’s nuclear issue unless it defines and safeguards its national interests, and justifiably safeguards its interests in the six-party talks as an active and constructive mediator.” See Shih Chun-yu, “Crisscross Talk: The Six-Party Talks Break Down, China Should Change the Part It Plays” *Ta Kung Pao* online, April 15, 2009, in OSC CPP20090415710012.

In the same month, the *Global Times*, a newspaper sponsored by the official CCP newspaper *People’s Daily*, printed an article by Zhang Liangui chastising the five powers dealing with North Korea in the 6PT (including China). Zhang stated: “Although for many years everyone has proposed in high-toned fashion that the Korean Peninsula should be kept nuclear-free, there has not been a great deal of intention to turn this into truly effective action . . . although the DPRK nuclear crisis has been going on for many years, the powers concerned have not set a physical and time red line for the DPRK’s nuclear program, nor have they truly adopted really effective action to block nuclear proliferation by the DPRK.” See Zhang Liangui, “Does the DPRK Really Care About Sanctions Resolutions?” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, April 17, 2009, in OSC CPP20090417710013.

In May 2009, the *Global Times* printed a discussion among Chinese experts containing such views as: “It’s high time for China to reconsider its policy toward the DPRK,” and “There is no need for China to maintain its past policy toward its trouble-making neighbor any longer . . . the Chinese government should teach the DPRK a lesson.” See “China’s policy at turning point: experts” *Global Times*, May 26, 2009, available at <http://china.globaltimes.cn/policies/2009-05/432554.html>.

The same media source cited another Chinese expert as saying: “China’s policy at present is too one-tracked. I am not opposed to maintaining the friendship between our two countries, and I feel we should go

further . . . I feel that China has developed to the point that now no country dares to bully China anymore, and we should feel national self-confidence as a result.” See Zhan Debin et al., “Expert Believes China Should Prepare a Plan B for Crisis on the Korean Peninsula,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May 31, 2009, in OSC CPP20090601710003.

Shortly thereafter, *Ta Kung Pao* published an article by a Chinese analyst stating: “It now appears that the threat from North Korea, a country possessing nuclear weapons and a country with a regime without fundamental rationality, far offsets the benefits it provides as a geopolitical buffer in China’s border against the advance of the United States, Japan, and South Korea.” See Zhang Jingwei, “North Korea’s Nuclear Testing Challenging the Bottom Line of China-North Korea Relations,” *Ta Kung Pao* online, June 1, 2009, in OSC CPP20090601710014.

Just subsequent to that, the *Global Times* published an article by Zhan Debin, a part-time researcher with the Center for Korean Studies of Fudan University and a doctor of international politics, stating that North Korea is a “strategic burden” for China. Zhan added, “If this continues, China will not be able to stall international expectations by saying that North Korea doesn’t listen or that we have no influence.” See Zhan Debin, “Has the DPRK Become China’s Strategic Burden?” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, June 3, 2009, in OSC CPP20090603710011.

Later that month, one half of a group of Chinese experts consulted by “China mainland media” expressed support for tougher sanctions against the DPRK. See Lin Xixing, “The Predicament of the DPRK Nuclear Issue,” *Yazhou Zhoukan* online, no. 24, June 21, 2009, in OSC CPP20090616710006.

Finally, in September 2009, one Chinese scholar stated that “The international community, including China, should take responsibility for North Korea’s shameless, dishonest and unprincipled behavior. In order to improve ‘North-South relations,’ in order to maintain ‘the traditional friendly and cooperative relations,’ or [for] other considerations, South Korea, China and Russia give way to North Korea’s creditless and rogue behavior. Because of these countries’ unprincipled accommodation toward North Korea, they nurse a viper in their own bosom. . . . China had better abandon its regular experiential cognition and thinking towards North Korea, namely, that North Korea’s behavior is aimed at the U.S. and South Korea instead of China; that North Korea’s nuclear weapons are aimed at the U.S. and South Korea, and are not a threat to China.” See Chu Shulong, “The North Korea Nuclear Issue Calls for New Thinking and New Policy,” *MacArthur Foundation Asia Security Initiative Blog*, September 3, 2009, http://asiasecurity.macfound.org/blog/entry/guest_post_chu_shulong_on_north_korea_policy/ (accessed September 3, 2009). Chu is a specialist on U.S.-PRC relations and international affairs at Qinghua University in Beijing. He is a former CICIR analyst.

²⁴ See Wang Zaibang and Li June, “Searching for the Root of the DPRK’s Second Nuclear Experiment, and Diplomatic Thoughts,” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, July 20, 2009, pp. 38–44, in OSC CPP20090811671001. The authors stated: “China’s policy stance of a peaceful, stable, and nuclear-free peninsula meant that the DPRK could carry out nuclear development without any scruples, without needing to worry about incurring serious consequences, and so it [i.e., North Korea] continually raised the asking price.”

²⁵ See Chia Lei, “A PRC Scholar Says that China Sticks to Its Original Just Stance on the DPRK Nuclear Issue,” *Ta Kung Pao* online, October 10, 2006, in OSC CPP20061010710013. The scholar is Yu Sui, research fellow from the Research Center on China’s Contemporary World Studies and academician of the International Academy of Natural and Social Sciences; also see comments by Professor Su Hao, deputy director of the International Security Research Center of the China Foreign Affairs University, in Ko Ch’ung, “Experts: China Will Continue Its Mediation,” *Wen Wei Po*, October 11, 2006, in OSC CPP20061011718002; Chang Chih-hsin, “The Fate of the Six-Party Talks Hangs by a Thread,” *Wen Wei Po* online, April 22, 2009, in OSC CPP20090422710005; and “China’s policy at turning point: experts,” *Global Times*, May 26, 2009, available at <http://china.globaltimes.cn/policies/2009-05/432554.html>. In this article, Yu Wanli, an associate professor at Peking University, urged the international community (presumably including China) to “keep calm and cautious, not to overreact, because the amount of nuclear material possessed by the DPRK is limited.” (!) Also see Qi Huaigao, “New Vista on the Korean Peninsula?” *Shijie Zhishi*, September 1, 2009, in OSC CPP20090923671001; and a commentary by Wang Linchang, member of the Korean Peninsula Research Institute of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in “The Tone of China’s Policy Toward North Korea Must Not Change Just Because It Conducted Another Nuclear Test,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, June 12, 2009, p. 14, in OSC CPP20090618710003. Wang states: “The tone of China’s policy toward North Korea must not change just because it is in possession of nuclear weapons. Maintaining the traditional friendship between China and

North Korea and upholding the principle of ‘building a good-neighbor relationship and partnership with its neighbors’ in an effort to stabilize North Korea remains China’s best option.”

Rear Admiral Yang Yi, senior researcher at the National Defense University, said the issue can be resolved through political and diplomatic measures. “Don’t shut the door,” Yang said, without specifying whether China should support or oppose sanctions. Shen Dingli, executive dean of the Institute of International Studies at Shanghai-based Fudan University, said: “A sanction is intervening into other country’s domestic affairs, [so it’s] against the basic principle of China’s diplomacy.” See Zhang Haizhou, “US Seeks China’s Support in Stance Against DPRK,” *China Daily Online*, June 4, 2009, in OSC CPP20090604968061.

²⁶ “Beijing Expected To Adjust Its Policy Toward the DPRK and Support Sanctions,” *Ming Pao* online, October 10, 2006, in OSC CPP20061010710020.

In June 2009, the *Global Times* stated: “North Korea has only itself to blame for its plight. Its nuclear fantasy drove the country to behave irrationally and drift further away from reality. Possessing nuclear weapons will not solve its security concerns and give it a bargaining chip in international politics as it has imagined; rather, as clearly shown, its nuclear moves have only hit snags and are foiled everywhere, putting its future into jeopardy.” See “UN Sanctions Will ‘Burst DPRK’s Bubble’ of Pride over Nuclear Arms,” *Global Times* Editorial online, June 12, 2009, in OSC CPP20090618722005.

Similarly, Zhu Feng noted in a July 2009 issue of *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*: “The DPRK has disregarded the Six-Party Talks’ dignity and the propriety of its own state behavior, stirred up disputes, aggravated the situation, ignored the international community’s common desire for stability, cooperation, and prosperity, and single-mindedly pursued the legalization of its nuclear capability; it has let down China, with all its sincerity in hosting the Six-Party Talks, and has clearly demonstrated to the international community that it is always hard to resolve the “DPRK issue” that lies beneath the “DPRK nuclear issue.” See Zhu Feng, “The DPRK Nuclear Crisis After the Second Nuclear Test: The Six Party Talks and ‘Coercive Diplomacy’,” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, July 20, 2009, pp. 44–50, in OSC CPP20090811671002.

²⁷ See, respectively, Cai Jian: “How Should China Respond to the Resurgence of the North Korean Nuclear Issue,” *Shijie Zhishi*, May 1, 2009, pp. 27–29, in OSC CPP20090514671009; Shen Yi, “Cornered to the Wall, But It Will Return to the Six-Party Talks,” *Wen Hui Bao* online, April, 16, 2009, in OSC CPP20090418066003; Chang Ching-wei, “Does North Korea Have No Other Choice But To Return to the Six-Party Talks?” *Ta Kung Pao* online, April 23, 2009, in OSC CPP20090423710004; Yuan Jirong, “The DPRK Demands an Apology. What Will the United Nations Do?” *Qingnian Cankao* online, May 5, 2009, in OSC CPP20090506710002; Zhang Zhixin, “The DPRK Insists on Having Its Own Way in Nuclearizing Itself,” *Wen Wei Po* online May 27, 2009, in OSC CPP20090527710010; Tang Xiang, “Many Noted Chinese Scholars Support More Severe Sanctions To Be Imposed on DPRK,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526710008; and Chu Shulong, “The North Korea Nuclear Issue Calls for New Thinking and New Policy,” *MacArthur Foundation Asia Security Initiative Blog*, September 3, 2009, http://asiasecurity.macfound.org/blog/entry/guest_post_chu_shulong_on_north_korea_policy/ (accessed September 3, 2009).

²⁸ Zhan Debin, “Has the DPRK Become China’s Strategic Burden?” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, June 3, 2009, in OSC CPP20090603710011. After the North’s second nuclear test, the *Peter Chiu’s Talk* [*Chen-hai Ting Feng Lu*] program on Hong Kong Phoenix TV’s Mandarin channel (*Feng Huang Wei Shih Chung Wen Tai*) featured a 30-minute discussion on whether China should diplomatically abandon the DPRK. It aired on July 1, 2009, at 11:34 GMT and was almost certainly received in parts of China proper. See OSC CPP20090702786009. Also see Zhang Jingwei, “North Korea’s Nuclear Testing Challenging the Bottom Line of China-North Korea Relations,” *Ta Kung Pao* online, June 1, 2009, in OSC CPP20090601710014.

²⁹ Peng Guangqian, “Nuclear Arms Will Harm the Fundamental Interests of the DPRK,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, June 8, 2009, in OSC CPP20090610710008.

³⁰ Fang Xiangsheng, “Nuclear Tests Cannot Bring Security for North Korea,” *Guangming Ribao* online, October 10, 2006, in OSC CPP20061010710003; Zhang Liangui, “Nuclear War is Most Likely to Break out in East Asia” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, April 10, 2009, in OSC CPP20090415710005; Hong Yuan, “Second DPRK Nuclear Test Triggers Three ‘Massive Changes’,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, June 2, 2009, in OSC CPP20090602710011.

³¹ Tang Xiang, “Many Noted Chinese Scholars Support More Severe Sanctions To Be Imposed on DPRK,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526710008.

³² World Public Opinion, Program on International Policy Attitudes, “Question: Please rate your feelings toward some countries and peoples, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that country or those people. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that country or those people leave the box blank and move on to the next question. North Korea.” Chinese participants were interviewed July 10–21, 2006.

³³ The Pew Research Center for People and the Press, “Question: Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of North Korea.” Chinese participants were interviewed August 7–17, 2006.

³⁴ The Pew Research Center for People and the Press, “Question: Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of North Korea.” Chinese participants were interviewed August 7–17, 2006.

³⁵ “North Korea Conducted a Nuclear Test: Web Inquiry,” *Huanqiu Shidai*, available at <http://survey.huanqiu.com/result.php?s=SFFzdXJ2ZX1fOTA0>.

³⁶ Zhu Feng, “North Korea Issue Divides China,” *MacArthur Foundation Asia Security Initiative Blog*, article posted June 17, 2009, http://asiasecurity.macfound.org/blog/entry/north_korea_issue_divides_china/.

³⁷ In addition to the above surveys, also see “North Korea lets ordinary Chinese down,” *Global Times* Editorial online, June 2, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/editorial/2009-06/433998.html>. An apparent Chinese-language version of this article was posted on the *Huanqiu Shibao* website on June 5 under the title, “Why Does North Korea Offend Chinese Folk With its ‘Ingratitude?’” See OSC CPP20090603786001. The article states: “Right now, ordinary Chinese people cannot understand why an ally with whom we shared good times and bad for so many years could become such a troublemaker.”

³⁸ Luo Jie, “Just See it as a Midway Station—Professor Zhang Liangui Interviewed on the Latest Round of Six Party Talks,” *Shijie Zhishi*, January 1, 2009, in OSC CPP20090123587002; Zhang Liangui, “Nuclear War is Most Likely to Break out in East Asia” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, April 10, 2009, in OSC CPP20090415710005; Wang Yen-che, “Without a Strong Power of Persuasion, the Mainland Is Concerned About North Korea’s Nuclear Threat,” *Ming Pao* online, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526710001; Zhu Feng, “North Korea Nuclear Test and Cornered China,” *PacNet*, no. 41, CSIS, June 1, 2009; and Zhang Liangui, “Reality Starts to Teach Everyone a Lesson,” *Beijing Shijie Zhishi* in Chinese, June 16, 2009. This is an unremittingly pessimistic assessment by a well-known North Korea scholar highly critical of Pyongyang. Zhang states: “even if the six-party talks reconvene, they cannot achieve the objective of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.”

³⁹ See Jin Linbo, “Crisscrosses and Conflicts of the DPRK-US Strategic Interests,” *Liaowang*, August 17, 2008, in OSC CPP20080725710013. Jin states: “[The DPRK] have good reasons not to abandon or destroy [their nuclear weapons]. To the DPRK, the nuclear deterrent power is not only of vital importance to its political security and economic development, but also indispensable to keep the operation of its seriously fragile economy.” *Liaowang* is a weekly foreign-affairs journal published by Xinhua.

Also see Shen Dingli, “DPRK’s Walkout from the Six-Party Talks is its Realistic Inevitability,” *Dongfang Zaobao* online, April 15, 2009, in OSC CPP20090416138003. Shen states: “It was inevitable that the DPRK would walk out of the ‘six-party talks’ and this was bound to happen sooner or later. The reason is very simple; like all states possessing nuclear weapons, the DPRK holds the view that these weapons are the fundamental guarantee for safeguarding its national security. The DPRK does not trust alliances and security guarantees, it only puts its trust in holding its destiny in its own hands. The DPRK is highly realistic.” Other sources expressing this view include: Shih Chun-yu, “DPRK Nuclear Issue Depends on Building of DPRK-US Mutual Trust,” *Ta Kung Pao* Political Talk Column, July 19, 2007, in OSC CPP20070719710007; Wu Delie, “Who Is Responsible for the Situation on the Peninsula?” *Shijie Zhishi*, April 16, 2009, pp. 30–31, in OSC CPP20090515671005; Cai Jian, “How Should China Respond to the Resurgence of the North Korean Nuclear Issue,” *Shijie Zhishi*, May 1, 2009, pp. 27–29, in OSC CPP20090514671009; and “Can the ‘Nuclear Umbrella’ Ensure Security on the Peninsula?” broadcast on *Today’s Focus [Jin Ri Guan Zhu]*, CCTV-4, June 16–17, 2009 at 13:30–14:00 GMT, in OSC CPP20090617073001.

⁴⁰ See Shen Dingli, “DPRK’s Development of Nuclear Is a Necessity,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090603710004. Shen states: “In a certain sense, the DPRK deems its development of nuclear

weapons as conducive to the stability in the East Asia region. This is not entirely unreasonable . . . We disagree with the DPRK's development of nuclear weapons, but we need to develop normal relations with the DPRK. We should not regard the issue of nuclear weapons as the fundamental obstacle to developing state-to-state relations."

Lin Xixing, "The Predicament of the DPRK Nuclear Issue," *Yazhou Zhoukan* online, no. 24, June 21, 2009, in OSC CPP20090616710006. This source, also mentioned above, summarized an "investigation" by Chinese media of the views of PRC experts following the second nuclear test, and noted significant differences among them over the use of sanctions, the future of the 6PT, and whether the DPRK had "exhausted all its cards." The article concluded: "[One group of respondents] holds the view that the DPRK possesses nukes out of its need for defense against the U.S. threat . . . Based on [this] viewpoint, there is a certain rationality in the DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons."

Wang Zaibang and Li June, "Searching for the Root of the DPRK's Second Nuclear Experiment, and Diplomatic Thoughts," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, July 20, 2009, pp. 38–44, in OSC CPP20090811671001. Wang and Li concluded: "If we rationally observe and think about the issues, any country in the DPRK's security predicament would probably find it hard to resist the lure of the nuclear option."

Also see Lin Chuan, "Inadvertent Outbreak of Hostilities' Still Cannot Be Ruled Out in Korean Nuclear Problem," *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, June 25, 2009, in OSC CPP20090625004002. Lin states: "Possessing nuclear deterrence is not only critically important for North Korea's politics and security, it also seems indispensable for maintaining its extremely fragile economic operations."

⁴¹ See Xu Lifan, "Test-Launching of Guided Missile Should Not Be a New Obstacle for Resumption of Six-Party Talks," *Huaxia Shibao*, June 19, 2006, in OSC CPP20060621070001. Xu states: "The United States and Japan regard the DPRK's missile test firing as a gesture of 'hostility.' However, 'hostility' is not something unilateral. By comparison, 'provocative behaviors' from the United States and Japan are much more common. . . . One cannot preclude the possibility that they are trying to spread the "DPRK threat theory" to pave the way for expanding their military presence in East Asia playing up the issue to such an extent." Zhu Feng, "China's Diplomatic Mediation and the Six Party Talks on the Korean Nuclear Issue—Why is the Diplomatic Resolution of the Korean Nuclear Issue so Difficult?" *Waijiao Pinglun*, April 25, 2006, in OSC CPP20060621070001. Zhu's criticisms have been increasingly directed at North Korea over time, however, as the above cites indicate. Shih Chun-yu, "There Are Variables as well as Hope for Six-Party Talks," *Ta Kung Pao*, November 23, 2006, in OSC CPP20061123701025; Ling Dequan, "Strategic Focus of DPRK Nuclear Issue," *Liaowang*, No. 49, December 4, 2006, pp. 54–55, in OSC CPP20061207710016; Chiu Po and Chiu Hsiao-heng, "Blocking US Strategy Helps Resolve the Korean Nuclear Crisis," *Ta Kung Pao*, December 14, 2006, in OSC CPP20061214710008; Ta Yin, "The United States is the Culprit who Started North Korea's Nuclear Crisis," *Ta Kung Pao*, December 21, 2006, in OSC CPP20061221710004. Ta refers to U.S. policy as animated by "gangster logic that reeks of hegemonism." He adds: "The peremptoriness demonstrated by the United States during the talks fully demonstrates that the United States is the guilty party and is seeking to cover up its wrongdoing by using an international multilateral forum and by showing that North Korea's nuclear issue is not a problem for the United States, but a problem for everybody." Wang Fan, "Six-Party Talks Worth Anticipating" *Wen Wei Po* online, February 10, 2007, in OSC CPP20070209710004. Wang states: "the biggest problem of the United States is that it has not learned how to deal normally with small countries. As a result, it regards one small country after another as an enemy and turns them into beehives (with bullet holes)." Huang Qing, "Two-sided View Should Be Taken On Nuclear Issue," *People's Daily*, February 27, 2007, in OSC CPP20070227701002; Wang Qing, "US Still Hopes To Make Progress in DPRK Nuclear Renunciation; Experts Expect Six-Party Talks To Resume," *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, April 16, 2007, in OSC CPP20070416136003; Liu Yuyin, "The US Foreign Policy Has Changed a Little," *Renmin Ribao Overseas Edition*, June 5, 2007, in OSC CPP20070605710003; Yang Jun, "Party Difficult To Isolate," *Renmin Ribao* online, September 9, 2008, in OSC CPP20080909701004; Lin Hung-tsai, "The Six-Party Talks Are in a Crucial Period" *Ta Kung Pao* online, July 27, 2008, in OSC CPP20080728710006; Zhu Kechuan, "DPRK Nuclear Issue Again Meets Twists and Turns," *Liaowang*, November 8, 2008, in OSC CPP20081023710018; "All Parties Should Strive To Stabilize the Situation of Northeast Asia," *Ta Kung Pao* Editorial online, April 6, 2009, in OSC CPP20090406710010. Wu Delie, "Who Is Responsible for the Situation on the Peninsula?" *Shijie Zhishi* (April 16, 2009), pp. 30–31, in OSC CPP20090515671005. The author believes that it is entirely the responsibility of the United States that the Korean Peninsula remains in a "state of Cold War" today and cannot set up a "peace mechanism." See Cai Jian, "How Should China

Respond to the Resurgence of the North Korean Nuclear Issue,” *Shijie Zhishi* (May 1, 2009), pp. 27–29, in OSC CPP20090514671009. Despite his strong criticism of Pyongyang (noted above), Cai Jian also asserts: “It was precisely the hostile policy against North Korea persistently pursued by the United States over the past several decades that has prompted North Korea not to give up its pursuit of a strong military force, especially the pursuit of a missile and nuclear deterrent capability.” Chang Chih-hsin, “United States Should Start Afresh With Its DPRK Policy,” *Wen Wei Po* online, May 30, 2009, in OSC CPP20090530716014. Wang Sheng and Wang Wenzhong, “Kim Jong Il’s Nuclear Riddle; Each Nuclear Crisis More Urgent Than the Previous One,” *Huanqiu Renwu*, June 16, 2009, pp. 22–25, in OSC CPP20090701671001. Zhu Kechuan, “Easing the Peninsula Tension Requires All Parties to be Calm,” *Liaowang*, July 17, 2009, in OSC CPP20090717710011. Wang Zaibang and Li June, “Searching for the Root of the DPRK’s Second Nuclear Experiment, and Diplomatic Thoughts,” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, July 20, 2009, pp. 38–44, in OSC CPP20090811671001.

⁴² Li Dunqiu, “Developing the Six-Party Talks Mechanism Into a Northeast Asia Security Mechanism is in Keeping with the Interests of All Parties,” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* online, February 28, 2006, in OSC CPP20060301510009. Li states: “North Korea wants desperately to get out of the shadows of the Cold War, improve relations with the United States, and blend in to the international community, while the United States wants to maintain the status quo, drag things out and see what changes take place. The strategic consideration of the United States is not to be anxious to alter the cease-fire mechanism on the Korean peninsula and maintain the current situation.” Also see Chiang Hsun, “Breakthrough in joint oil exploitation between DPRK and China,” *Yazhou Zhoukan* online, no. 13, April 2, 2006, in OSC CPP20060410501008. “China Expresses its Grave Concern,” *Hsin Pao*, July 6, 2006, p. 8, in OSC CPP20060706710004. “US Seeking Favorable Development Of Korean Nuclear Issue,” *People’s Daily Online*, October 30, 2006, in OSC CPP20061031701005. This source stated: “The Bush administration’s sanctions have caused the DPRK to believe that talks with the US have become impossible.” Lin Chuan, “Roundup: Six-Party Talks Deadlocked Over Transfer of Funds, Hill Believes There is Hope of Resuming Within One or Two Weeks,” *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, March 24, 2007, in OSC CPP20070323073006. Lin states: “The actions by the United States will call on the Chinese side to either demonstrate that the DPRK is not at fault, or demonstrate that they were and, at the same time, (call on) China to stick to its principles and institute sanctions against North Korea, thus turning the contradictions between North Korea and the United States into contradictions between North Korea and China and weakening China’s effective role in the six-party talks.” Also see Tang Xiang, “Many Noted Chinese Scholars Support More Severe Sanctions To Be Imposed on DPRK,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526710008. Although many of the scholars cited in this article criticized Pyongyang, one “senior *Renmin Ribao* reporter” stated: “the DPRK’s nuclear test is clearly a result of US connivance. . . . The United States knows well that the less importance it places on the Korean nuclear issue, the more anxious the neighboring countries will become, and the more it is to the U.S. advantage.” “China’s policy at turning point: experts” *Global Times*, May 26, 2009, available at <http://china.globaltimes.cn/policies/2009-05/432554.html>. “Chinese Expert: Western Countries Should Not Shift Pressure of DPRK Nuclear Issue to China,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May 27, 2009, in OSC CPP20090527710004. Ren Weidong, “The DPRK-US Relationship is the Crucial Point in the Peninsula Issue,” *Liaowang*, no. 26, June 29, 2009, p. 58, in OSC CPP20090707710015. Ren’s criticism of U.S. motives in the North Korean crisis is perhaps at the extreme end of the spectrum on this issue. He states: “The reason why the United States has long been hostile to the DPRK is because the DPRK is a stumbling block to US hegemonist expansion. . . . Internationalizing the DPRK nuclear issue, luring other countries to pull the US chestnuts out of the fire, and proceeding to worsen their relations with the DPRK, and finally to win dominance over the DPRK and the entire Korean Peninsula is the fundamental US objective in picking up the DPRK nuclear issue. . . . It is very evident that, facing China’s rise, the United States is now adopting corresponding measures in a bid to realize strategic control over China. . . . Looking at the issue from this angle, in east Asia and indeed the entire Asia-Pacific region, the DPRK has become a natural screen and effective lever balancing the US-Japanese hegemonic strategic alliance.” This was written after Pyongyang’s second nuclear test. Also see Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park, “Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea,” *USIP Working Paper*, Center for Strategic and International Studies and United States Institute of Peace, January 2008, available at <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/Jan2008.pdf>, for further evidence of Chinese criticism toward the U.S. The authors assert that PRC interlocutors expressed fears that the U.S. might eventually accept Pyongyang’s possession

of a limited nuclear capability, thereby leaving Beijing “out to dry” as a proponent of denuclearization, and severely damaging Sino-DPRK relations.

⁴³ Alan Romberg, “The Limits of Chinese Support,” in Joel S. Wit, ed., *U.S. Strategy Towards North Korea: Rebuilding Dialogue and Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2009), pp. 81–84; and Bonnie S. Glaser, “China’s Policy in the Wake of the Second DPRK Nuclear Test,” *China Security*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), pp. 1–11. As Romberg and Glaser point out, such greater toughness might include greater efforts to squeeze Pyongyang’s financial network, a slowing of PRC-DPRK border transactions, interruptions of oil and food supplies, and enhanced cooperation with Washington, Tokyo, and other powers in providing intelligence and inspecting possible North Korean shipments of items prohibited under UN resolutions.

⁴⁴ For further discussions of these basic elements of Beijing’s mindset, see Bonnie S. Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park, “Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea,” Joint Report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies & U.S. Institute of Peace (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace), 2008; Bonnie S. Glaser, “China’s Policy in the Wake of the Second DPRK Nuclear Test,” *China Security*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), pp. 1–11; Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Korean Peninsula in U.S. Strategy: Policy Issues for the Next President,” in Ashley J. Tellis, Mercy Kuo, and Andrew Marble, eds., *Strategic Asia 2008–09: Challenges and Choices* (Washington, D.C.: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), pp. 135–166; Jonathan D. Pollack, “Kim Jong-il’s Clenched Fist,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4 (October 2009), pp. 153–173; Alan Romberg, “The Limits of Chinese Support,” in Joel S. Wit, ed., *U.S. Strategy Towards North Korea: Rebuilding Dialogue and Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2009), pp. 81–84.

⁴⁵ See, in particular, Wang Zaibang and Li June, “Searching for the Root of the DPRK’s Second Nuclear Experiment, and Diplomatic Thoughts,” *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, July 20, 2009, pp. 38–44, in OSC CPP20090811671001. While critical of China’s stance toward North Korea in many ways (as noted above), this analysis also presents what likely constitutes a typical Chinese interpretation of Washington’s motives in the North Korea issue, as designed in large part to strengthen the U.S.-led alliance system by maintaining hostility toward Pyongyang.

⁴⁶ As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu stated after Pyongyang’s second nuclear test: “it is China’s stand that the objective of the non-nuclearization on the Korean Peninsula should be upheld under any circumstances in order to safeguard peace and stability in Northeast Asia.” Hou Lijun and Chang Lu, “Foreign Ministry Spokesman: The Objective of Non-Nuclearization on the Korean Peninsula Should be Upheld Under Any Circumstances,” Xinhua Domestic Service, May 26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526354001. Also see Cai Jian, “How Should China Respond to the Resurgence of the North Korean Nuclear Issue,” *Shijie Zhishi*, May 1, 2009, pp. 27–29, in OSC CPP20090514671009. Cai states: “On the issue of the Korean Peninsula, what China and the United States have in common the most is denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”

⁴⁷ Bonnie S. Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park, “Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea,” Joint Report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies & U.S. Institute of Peace (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2008); Bonnie S. Glaser, “China’s Policy in the Wake of the Second DPRK Nuclear Test,” *China Security*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), pp. 1–11; Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Korean Peninsula in U.S. Strategy: Policy Issues for the Next President,” in Ashley J. Tellis, Mercy Kuo, and Andrew Marble, eds., *Strategic Asia 2008–09: Challenges and Choices*, (Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), pp. 135–166; Jonathan D. Pollack, “Kim Jong-il’s Clenched Fist,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4 (October 2009), pp. 153–173; Alan D. Romberg, “China and North Korea,” unpublished manuscript, June 19, 2009.

⁴⁸ As one Chinese North Korean expert (Liu Jianyong) has stated: “In fact, the biggest peril for China is to deal with a North Korean neighbor which possesses nuclear weapons but holds an anti-China stance.” *Peter Chiu’s Talk [Chen-hai Ting Feng Lu]*, program on Hong Kong Phoenix TV’s Mandarin channel (*Feng Huang Wei Shih Chung Wen Tai*), July 1, 2009, in OSC CPP20090702786009.

⁴⁹ Guo Li, “How Can China Avoid Falling Into the Quagmire of Nuclear Arms Competition in East Asia?” *Nanfang Zhoumo* online, November 30, 2006, in OSC CPP20061204050001; Zhu Feng, “North Korea Nuclear Test and Cornered China,” *PacNet*, no. 41, CSIS, June 1, 2009; Zhu Yunjian, “China Was Given A Hard Time,” *Sin Chew Daily*, July 24, 2006, in OSC KPP20060727032001; Tang Xiang, “Many Noted Chinese Scholars Support More Severe Sanctions To Be Imposed on DPRK,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May

26, 2009, in OSC CPP20090526710008; Liang Hui and Jin Kai, “Korean Peninsula Shrouded In Dark Clouds of War,” *Guoji Xianqu Daobao* online, June 4, 2009, in OSC CPP20090605671002.

⁵⁰ Zhang Weiran, “PRC Expert Liu Jiayang Stresses Need To Guard Against the Possibility that the DPRK Nuclear Crisis Would ‘Step Back Amidst Imbalance’,” *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, June 13, 2009, in OSC CPP20090613066008; Shih Chun-yu, “Has North Korea Stepped Onto the ‘Path of No Return?’,” *Ta Kung Pao* online, May 29, 2009, in OSC CPP20090529710001; “North Korea lets ordinary Chinese down,” *Global Times* Editorial online, June 2, 2009, available at <http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/editorial/2009-06/433998.html>. An apparent Chinese-language version of this article was posted on the *Huanqiu Shibao* website on June 5 under the title, “Why Does North Korea Offend Chinese Folk With its ‘Ingratitude?’” See OSC CPP20090603786001.

⁵¹ Anne Applebaum, “Shadow Boxing in Pyongyang: Why All the Threats? We’d Best Ask China,” *Washington Post*, June 2, 2009.; “De-fang Pyongyang,” *Financial Times*, May 26, 2009; Dennis Wilder, “It is China that holds the key to North Korea,” *Financial Times*, June 4, 2009; Dan Blumenthal and Robert Kagan, “What to Do About North Korea,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 2009.

⁵² Zhan Debin et al., “Expert Believes China Should Prepare a Plan B for Crisis on the Korean Peninsula,” *Huanqiu Shibao* online, May 31, 2009, in OSC CPP20090601710003; Wang Linchang, “The Tone of China’s Policy Toward North Korea Must Not Change Just Because It Conducted Another Nuclear Test,” *Huanqiu Shibao*, June 12, 2009, p. 14, in OSC CPP20090618710003; Zhang Haizhou, “US Seeks China’s Support in Stance Against DPRK” *China Daily Online*, June 4, 2009, in OSC CPP20090604968061; Zhang Weiran, “PRC Expert Liu Jiayang Stresses Need To Guard Against the Possibility that the DPRK Nuclear Crisis Would ‘Step Back Amidst Imbalance’,” *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, June 13, 2009, in OSC CPP20090613066008.

⁵³ Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Korean Peninsula in U.S. Strategy: Policy Issues for the Next President,” in Ashley J. Tellis, Mercy Kuo, and Andrew Marble, eds., *Strategic Asia 2008–09: Challenges and Choices* (Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), pp. 135–166; Jonathan D. Pollack, “Kim Jong-il’s Clenched Fist,” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4 (October 2009), pp. 153–173.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Dan Blumenthal and Robert Kagan, “What to Do About North Korea,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 2009; Anne Applebaum, “Shadow Boxing in Pyongyang: Why All the Threats? We’d Best Ask China,” *Washington Post*, June 2, 2009.

⁵⁵ This viewpoint is at times expressed by Chinese scholars, in conversations with the author.

⁵⁶ As Alan Romberg points out, the chances of Japan or South Korea opting for an independent nuclear deterrent against North Korea have arguably diminished or remain quite low, given apparently credible U.S. reassurances of extended deterrence to both powers, recent domestic movement in Tokyo away from the nuclear option, and the likelihood that Washington would prevent Seoul from efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. See Alan D. Romberg, “China and North Korea,” unpublished manuscript, June 19, 2009.

⁵⁶ Parts of this timeline are adapted from: Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy” <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>.