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국제학석사학위논문

Implications of Chinese Netizen  
on Chinese Foreign Policy:  
Focusing on Netizen's Response  
After the North Korea's Third Nuclear Test

중국 네티즌의 태도 변화가  
중국의 북한 정책에 주는 함의:  
3차 핵실험 후 반응을 중심으로

2015년 2월

서울대학교 국제대학원

국제학과 중국지역학 전공

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**Implications of Chinese Netizen on  
Chinese Foreign Policy:  
Focusing on Netizen's Response After  
the North Korea's Third Nuclear Test**

A thesis presented

by

**Lee Soo KIM**

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# Implications of Chinese Netizen on Chinese Foreign Policy:

Focusing on Netizen's Response After  
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# **Abstract**

## **Implications of Chinese Netizen on Chinese Foreign Policy: Focusing on Netizen's Response After the North Korea's Third Nuclear Test**

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China and North Korea has seen a chill in their relationship under the new leadership of Xi Jinping. No summit meetings between China and the North, whereas China has already held several summit meetings with the South, is the embodiment of the stalemate relationship. According to some scholars and media reports, 'netizens' are the main factors behind the Chinese attitude changes. In other words, netizens are the most influential variables in Chinese foreign policy.

However, increases in the significance of netizens does not mean that netizens hold the leverage to the Chinese foreign policy. In fact, netizen's ability to set the public issue and lead the public sentiment are just one part that needs to be considered in Chinese foreign policy making process. For instance, anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005 and 2012 were initiated by the netizen via online discussion, yet were closed by the government. As such, it is the government that holds the key to open and close the online space. Also, it is the government who decides to adopt the public opinion or not.

Therefore, this paper tries to figure out the scope of netizen's influence in Chinese foreign policy. On the surface, netizen appears to have substantial

influence. Nevertheless, even the online space belongs to the government on the inside. In order to analyze the impact of netizens, netizen's responses after the third nuclear test and Chinese North Korean policy changes will be studied. Also, the responses after the third nuclear test will be compared with the 2005, 2012 anti-Japanese demonstration cases.

**Keywords** : Netizen, North Korea's Third Nuclear Test, Anti-Japanese Demonstration, Internet Censorship, Assertive Netizen

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# CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Question

In the early hours of 12 February 2013, unusual seismic activity was detected around the Punggye-ri underground nuclear test site. This was followed with confirmation by the state news agency that North Korea had successfully tested a device.<sup>1</sup> This was a third nuclear test that was carried out after tests in 2006 and 2009. The United Nations(UN) Secretary General, Obama Administration, and Lee regime strongly condemned the test and has threatened to take additional actions to penalize the North.<sup>2</sup> China was no exception. Beijing not only agreed to sign UN Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on North Korea, but also signaled their local governments to cooperate in tightened sanctions against North Korea. China also cut off the talks on Rason (Rajin-Sonbong) Economic and Trade Zone and stopped crude oil exports. What's more, Xi Jinping has been referring North Korea as "friendly neighbors" instead of the country "closer than teeth and gums". Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called on all parties to "refrain from increasing the tensions" and has drawn 'red line' on North Korea in his statement "There is a 'red line' which we will not allow war or instability on Korean Peninsula".<sup>3</sup> State Councillor Yang Jie Chi has made

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<sup>1</sup> *North Korea's Nuclear Tests*, 2013, BBC News <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17823706>> [accessed 4 March 2014]

<sup>2</sup> 김영권, "북한, 핵실험 이어 '2·3차 대응조치' 위협", 《Voice of America》 2013년 2월 13일, <http://www.voakorea.com/content/article/1602074.html> (검색일: 2014.3.10); 김기정, "美 의회 "北, 테러지원국 재지정하라"", 《매일경제》 2013년 2월 13일, <http://news.mk.co.kr/newsRead.php?year=2013&no=111979> (검색일: 2014.3.10); 홍수영, "朴 "北 4차, 5차 핵실험해도 협상력 안높아"", 《동아일보》 2013년 2월 14일, <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20130214/53021326/1> (검색일: 2014.3.10)

<sup>3</sup> 조영남, 『중국의 꿈: 시진핑 리더십과 중국의 미래』 (서울: 민음사, 2013)의

similar remarks by mentioning that “China was committed to maintaining peace on the peninsula”. Moreover, Premier Li Keqiang has warned Pyongyang to stop being provocative. Unlike the previous nuclear tests, China has already imposed sanctions and has shown signs of exacerbation with the tougher remarks made by the top leaders.

Stern actions against North Korea have been conveyed through various diplomatic channels under the new leadership of Xi Jinping. China no longer calls North Korea a ‘Blood Brother’, and has shown possibilities of making adjustments in long held ‘brotherhood’. Xi Jinping’s frustration with North Korea is visible just by the fact that he was the very first President to have summit talks with South Korea in advance to having them with North, when summit talks are an indicator of mutual relationship.<sup>4</sup> Yet Xi Jinping has still not made his visits to North Korea and carries out ambivalent relationship weighted slightly more on suspicion. China, the main trading partner and supplier of aid to North has had their patience tested numerous times, and with the third nuclear test, North is expected to face further sanctions.

Nevertheless, it was the public opinion which ran out of tolerance the most. Unlike right after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> nuclear tests, the public sentiment has evidently expressed strong resentments towards North Korea regarding the nuclear test. Especially the websites such as *Sina.com* (one of the biggest portal in China) and *Weibo* from *Sina* (Twitter-like service in China) were filled with public opinions such as “North Korea slapped China”, “China has raised a crazy dog”, and “North has crossed the Maginot line”.<sup>5</sup> Netizens not only weren’t hesitant on revealing

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「10장 한미동맹과 북중동맹은 양립 가능한가」

<sup>4</sup> 이동률 「북중 정상회담 이후 한반도 정세」, 『EAI논평』, (2011)

<sup>5</sup> "韩国军方计划部署可打击朝鲜全境巡航导弹", <新浪>, 2013/02/13, <http://news.sina.com.cn> (검색일 2014.02.13)

negative sentiments on nuclear test, but also extended criticisms to North Korea itself. Yet instead of calming the netizens, Chinese government rather provoked negative public sentiment towards the North by letting more than 41 million mentions describing North Korea as a threat to Chinese domestic security be displayed plainly on the web. Adding on to such phenomenon online, Deng Yuwen, deputy editor of the 《Study Times(学习时报)》 the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party's journal, has proposed that China abandon Pyongyang and that its nuclear capacity would threaten China at his writings at the 《Financial Times》. <sup>6</sup> Together with Deng's opinion as a government official, voices of media let the world know how Chinese and Chinese officials perceive North Korea's nuclear.

Such condemnation around the China is starkly different from the public responses of previous nuclear tests of North. This cannot be ignored considering the influence of the social media in current society. For instance, even in China, the country with a stringent internet censorship, social media has changed several procedures and methods of the government. It also has altered the way government and people communicate.<sup>7</sup> As such, changes the development of social media brings are undeniable. It has successfully set stage for people to discuss and share information on various issues. It even has allowed people to organize collective actions upon their interests.<sup>8</sup> Because of the impact social media bears, visibly different responses of netizen towards North Korea after the 3<sup>rd</sup> nuclear test should be carefully taken into consideration.

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<sup>6</sup> Deng Yuwen, "China should abandon North Korea", <Financial Times>, 2013/02/27

<sup>7</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회, 『China 3.0: 우리는 차이나 3.0시대에 어떻게 대비할 것인가』 (파주: 청림출판, 2013)의 「서문: 시진핑의 중국이 직면한 세 가지 위기」

<sup>8</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회, 『China 3.0: 우리는 차이나 3.0시대에 어떻게 대비할 것인가』, pp.133

Especially when the social media has proven its effectiveness in China through various cases. For instance on 9 April 2005, anti-Japanese sentiment has formed anti-Japanese demonstration. Through internet websites and mobile instant messages netizens have successfully gathered massive public within a short period of time. This demonstration has continued throughout 3 weeks and has spread to Guang Zhou, 1,500km away from the Beijing where it has initiated.<sup>9</sup> All the process from gathering the people to extending the demonstration nationwide were done through the social media. Though the exact reasons behind are unclear because Beijing hasn't specified the reasons other than 'urgent domestic issues', this even has resulted in Vice Premier Wu Yi unilaterally cancel meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi that was expected to help two nations resolve tensions between them.<sup>10</sup> It can never be wrong to say that Chinese actions was rude enough to put Japan be on their nerves.<sup>11</sup>

Social media effectively wield its power for domestic issues as well. Yang Dacai, head of the work safety body in Shanxi province, has been pleaded guilty of corruption charges and has been jailed for 14 years since then. His bribery was found out by the netizen who sought Yang wearing luxuries items, which a civil servant cannot afford to purchase with their salary, in several pictures of him.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, on 2011 a high-speed train collision in Wenzhou killed around 40 people and was on the Weibo's top topic for more than a week despite

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<sup>9</sup> 송의달, 조중식, “중국 반일시위에 ‘네티즌 파워’” 《조선일보》 2005년 4월 10일, <http://www.chosun.com/international/news/200504/200504100290.html> (검색일: 2014.4.24)

<sup>10</sup> *Vice Premier Wu Yi cancels meeting with Koizumi*, 2005, People's Daily Online, <[http://en.people.cn/200505/24/eng20050524\\_186438.html](http://en.people.cn/200505/24/eng20050524_186438.html)> [accessed on 4 April 2014]

<sup>11</sup> 이상수, “잠복한 중국 ‘반일시위’ 2개의 뇌관이 숨어있다”, 《한겨레》 2005년 6월 2일, <http://legacy.www.hani.co.kr/section-009100003/2005/06/009100003200506021650181.html> (검색일: 2014.4.24)

<sup>12</sup> *China 'smiling official' Yang Dacai jailed for 14 years*, 2013, BBS News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-23956170> [accessed on 4 April 2014]

government's efforts to conceal the incident. Social media not only broke the bad news but also challenged corruption by charging 10 years sentences to the Railways Minister for trying to conceal this accident. This arrest and media report was also possible due to the massive online outcry.<sup>13</sup> In addition, websites such as 'China Civilian Report' and 'China Public Opinion Supervision' further show the power of online activism by revealing and curtailing civil servants corruptions.<sup>14</sup>

Aforementioned cases show the power of the social media. Empowerment of the public opinion through social media signifies the importance of netizens response after the North Korea's 3<sup>rd</sup> nuclear test. Unprecedented outspoken criticisms of the netizen may have led Xi Jinping to turn cold shoulders to North. In other words, social media may have influenced China's North Korean policy, and changed the way China makes foreign policy decisions. Internet has enlightened public that they can be part of political decision making process via online discussions. This has explosively implanted sense of citizenship<sup>15</sup> to the public, and with such acknowledgement, public may try to enforce their influence into the government's foreign policy making decisions.

In the meantime, there are arguments denying recent changes between North Korea and China, saying 'Chinese official stance towards North Korea has not changed. Should there be any differences, they are from the attitude differences

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<sup>13</sup> *Cyber activism sores victories behind the Grete Firewall*, 2013, Waging Nonviolence, <<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/cyber-activism-scores-victories-behind-great-firewall/>> [accessed on 4 April 2014]

<sup>14</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회, 『China 3.0: 우리는 차이나 3.0시대에 어떻게 대비할 것인가』, pp.6-152

<sup>15</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회, 『China 3.0: 우리는 차이나 3.0시대에 어떻게 대비할 것인가』, pp.134

for strategic reasons, not the official political change'.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, some emphasize that Chinese netizen are under stringent censorship. If the public criticism or outrages were outspoken, they must be opinions that were tolerated to be expressed from the government.

Therefore, through analyzing netizen and their responses after the North Korea's third nuclear test, and also comparing netizen's movements of other case, this paper would be able to figure out whether netizen's public opinion have influenced Chinese foreign policy or whether netizen's outspoken opinions are just the result of government's intentions to show the public sentiments. Such analysis would provide idea on the possibilities of unofficial foreign policy decision makers influencing the Chinese foreign policy. This paper will especially focus on the netizen and their responses after the North Korea's third nuclear test. For in-depth analysis, anti-Japanese demonstration case will be examined as a comparative case study.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

Two literature reviews, first on who and how Chinese foreign policy is decided, and second, on Xi Jinping's foreign policy will provide background information in understanding the influence of unofficial foreign policy makers in Chinese foreign policy. Firstly, study on who and how Chinese foreign policy is decided will measure the netizen's influence in foreign policy making. By acknowledging to what extent official decision makers share authorities with the decision makers at the periphery, netizen's ability to enforce their will in Chinese

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<sup>16</sup> 이상숙 「북한 3 차 핵실험 이후 중국의 대북정책 변화 평가와 전망」, 『국립외교원 외교안보연구소』, (2013)

foreign policy can be estimated. Secondly, close examination on Xi Jinping's foreign policy will identify changes in the Chinese foreign policy. Especially the comparisons of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping's North Korean policy will explain the reasons of netizen's assertive attitude towards the North Korea.

To begin with, Chinese foreign policy is decided by the 'foreign policy actors' of China. 'Foreign policy actors' are people with relevance in foreign policy who have capacity to make political decisions. It can largely be divided into two: official foreign policy actors and foreign policy actors on the margins.<sup>17</sup> According to Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, official foreign policy actors consists of the Communist Party of China (中国共产党), especially the Communist Party of China Central Committee (中共中央政治局常委), the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group and other Central Committee Organs (党政机构), the State Council, and the People's Liberation Army (人民解放军). These official foreign policy actors stay under the realm of government.

Supreme authority of foreign policy making belongs to the government, while the decision-making process remain opaque within the realm of government. The ultimate decision is made within the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC)—the body consisted of 9 members from CPC Central Committee.<sup>18</sup> Final decisions are reached through consensus building within the PSC and approval of the Xi Jinping. As such, foreign policy making process is highly centralized within the government. Most of these ultimate decisions are deliberated in the Leading Small Groups (LSG) composed of PSC members and other officials. Foreign policy assessment, deliberations, and proposals are done

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<sup>17</sup> Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, 「New foreign policy actors in China」, 《SIPRI Policy Paper》 (2010)

<sup>18</sup> Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox (2010), pp.4



within the LSGs. The State Council usually represents state-to-state relationships and People's Liberation Army focuses on professionalized military issues.

Yet, as is incorporated in papers of Jakobson and Knox, the role and importance of some official foreign policy actors—mainly State Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other government bodies—have declined. Growing complexity of the issues have resulted in proliferation of foreign policy decision making entities, and official policy actors need to rely on other agencies for expertise while at the same time competing with them for influence.<sup>19</sup> People's Liberation Army's (PLA) role also has been substantially narrowed by the institutional reform. Nowadays PLA leaders are distancing themselves from the foreign policy decision making process, strengthening their role in arms control and defense related foreign policy issues. As role of other official actors decline, Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s supreme authority in foreign policy making is turning absolute. In other words, the Communist Party of China, especially the Politburo owns the unquestioned authority to make foreign policy decisions. Only with their final confirm, the foreign policy can be put into effect.

On the other hand, there are foreign policy actors on the margins, namely the business sectors, local governments, research institutions, academia, and the media and netizen. These unofficial actors stay outside of the official scope of foreign policy establishment.<sup>20</sup> However, their role cannot be ignored. Especially the Weibo<sup>21</sup>, perhaps the very first public space in China,<sup>22</sup> plays a crucial role as a foreign policy actors on the margins by providing public a relatively free and omnidirectional space of communication. Advent of internet

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<sup>19</sup> Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox (2010), pp.8

<sup>20</sup> Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox (2010), pp.24

<sup>21</sup> 微博(Weibo): Sina Weibo is the China's biggest Twitter-like microblogging platform, which started its service since 2009

<sup>22</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회(2013), pp.154

has allowed netizen to circulate news and public opinion with a revolutionary speed and manner. These voices are heard through nearly 2,000 newspapers and magazines, hundreds of television stations and scores of internet news sites that strive to provide news in different angles.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems hard to penetrate the foreign policy decision making process with the absolute reign of the CCP, especially when this explosion of new outlets for expression and lively discussions on foreign policy issues does not indicate Chinese people's freedom of speech. Yet, the foreign policy actors on the margins hold importance for two fold reasons. First is the method of foreign policy decision making and the factors that influence the mindset of foreign policy actors. To elaborate, the CCP's final foreign policy is decided on the consensus-driven basis. Decision making entities try to force their influence between the vague language of the CCP when they are trying to make compromises. Despite the hardships of reaching consensus, CCP must seek for agreements of all party to maintain harmony among various actors and also to ensure reliability in CCP's final decisions. This is when the foreign policy actors on the margins have opportunity to insert their ideas in Chinese foreign policy.

In addition, foreign policy actors on the margins can directly influence the individuals of official actors themselves. Official actors form their opinion through the information they encounter, education they receive, and through people they meet. According to Thomas J. Christenson, official actors consult with professionals in various fields when making policy decisions. Also, according to Avery Goldstein, every factor that surrounds the official actor, from the environment, institution, economics, system, idea, and so on, forms the political decision of the official actor. Actors at the margins can influence the

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<sup>23</sup> Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox (2010), pp.41

individual by guiding the individual official actors with professionalism.

Second the foreign policy actors on the margins are important because of the role the netizen and public can play. Dramatic spread of internet use has made Chinese officials have lesser ability to hide news from the public, and Chinese people have more option to express their views. More than half of the Chinese population are netizens and number of internet forums on international affairs are increasing to more than just a couple of millions. This volume of new pressure group, the netizen, indirectly yet increasingly gives impact to official actors. Government will not be able to control this new pressure group if the overwhelming majority decides to escalate their dissatisfaction into physical form of street protests and change the targets of criticisms from foreign country to their own government.<sup>24</sup>

Such potential of the unofficial actors has been well demonstrated through various examples such as the Cheonan ship incident in year 2010, which Jakobson and Knox have made analysis focusing on the role of the public. According to Jakobson and Knox, China has sent explicit signs of supporting North Korea by inviting the suspect of the incident, North Korea, twice over to China. Through North's visits, China has even agreed to strengthen the regional cooperation. However, this manifest actions of support has never been publicized nor aired on the media. This was due to the negative public sentiment towards the North Korea. On the official side, China also criticized the North for their fault in the incident just as the response of the international society. Being afraid of the public criticism changing its direction towards the Chinese government, has let China conceal the official activities of the government.

Numerous more examples support unofficial actors' empowerment. With

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<sup>24</sup> Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox (2010), pp.44

the ever-growing power of the media and the internet, Chinese official actors often are even compelled to react in certain ways. And the more China engages with the international society, which is inevitable, the more complex the challenges will be for China.<sup>25</sup> Power of the netizen will exponentially grow eventually.

In sum, there are official actors and actors on the margin in Chinese foreign policy making process. Final decisions are on the hands of the official actors. Yet, actors on the margin are gaining more and more influence, especially through their capacity to directly influence each individual official actors. In addition, globalization sweeping the world and also the China is decentralizing the power of foreign policy decision makers as the interest of people diversifies. In this sense, foreign policy actors can influence the Chinese foreign policy. Still, it is hard to conclude that the assertive netizen's attitude after the third nuclear crisis has changed the official stance of the CCP. The order of the incident remains to be examined.

Next, comparisons of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping's foreign policy can demonstrate the changes in Chinese foreign policy. At the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party China held on November 2012, Xi Jinping was designated as a president. Under the goal of achieving the well-off society by the year 2020, Xi Jinping has made clear that China will continue to follow the path of peaceful development. By focusing on (a) scientific concept of development; (b) building a moderately well-off society; (c) intensified reform and expansion of opening; (d) establishment of ecologic civilization and beautiful China; (e) better combat corruption and uphold party integrity, Xi Jinping's has announced

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Christensen, 2012, 'More Actors, Less Coordination? New Challenges for the Leaders of a Rising China', *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*, pp. 26

that his efforts and spirit of promoting the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress will not deviate from the basic policy lines of Hu Jintao's.<sup>26</sup> China will continue on their important political task to build moderately well-off society, and for that, China will devote themselves to maintain peaceful and stable international environment and concentrate on economic development. As such, Chinese foreign policy of 'promoting social harmony' and 'implementing scientific development hasn't changed.

Same applies to the Chinese North Korean policy. Hu Jintao has aimed to foster peace and stability in international community, deter western blockade, and enlarge Chinese influence in international arena.<sup>27</sup> For this, China's goal was to (a) maintain peace and stability in the Korean peninsula; (b) continued existence of the North Korean regime; (c) strengthen relationship between China and South Korea. To maintain peace and stability, China tried to adopt 'equidistant diplomacy' to both South and North Korea, insisting on a policy of 'separating politics from economic affairs'.<sup>28</sup> Yet, because of the decades-old history of a 'special' relationship with North Korea, China has failed in successfully achieving the goal.<sup>29</sup> Still, China's official North Korea policy and its goal will continue on through the president Xi Jinping's administration. In other words, there are no drastic changes in any policies regarding the foreign relations, and Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping share the same political goal of maintaining peace and stability.

Despite the official foreign policy however, China's attitude towards the

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<sup>26</sup> 유현정 「시진핑 시기 중국의 대북정책 전망과 우리의 과제」, 『세종연구소』, (2012)

<sup>27</sup> 조영남, 『후진타오 시대의 중국정치』 (과주: 나남, 2006), pp.257

<sup>28</sup> Chen ping, 2012, 'China's (North) Korea Policy: Misperception and Reality (An Independent Chinese Perspective on Sino-Korea Relations)', *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*, pp.255

<sup>29</sup> Chen ping (2012), pp.255

North Korea clearly shows difference. China's primary goal is still the regime stability of North Korea and maintenance of peace and stability in Korean peninsula. Yet, in recent years, China no longer describes North Korea as the 'friend sealed in blood', no longer invites Kim Jeong-eun, and now China participates in the international level sanctions. China has emphasized the importance of safe guarding their core interest—sovereign security, territorial integrity, and national unification, and has put extra effort to secure their core interest. Perhaps, North Korea's nuclear could've been considered as threat to China's core interest, and had China turn cold feet against the North. Regardless of the attitudes however, there hasn't been any official policy changes.

Some speculations point out that North Korea has undermined China's credibility by conducting a nuclear test, when China tried to gain reputation as the 'responsible great power' by showing their ability to dissuade the North Korea. In fact, China has continuously requested the North to refrain from developing nuclear weapons, which in trade China will continuously support North Korea economically.<sup>30</sup> Yet, North Korea betrayed this condition and gave embarrassments in the face of China. Some another suspect that North Korea lost their strategic advantage as a buffer-zone between the US and China. The others, the majority, assume that China's attitude is the result of Chinese government having studied the Chinese public sentiment. The most visible difference after the third nuclear test is the loud negative public opinion towards the North. It is assumed that the impact of the media has led Chinese government to act cautiously and follow the international decision, because public sentiment just cannot be avoided as the internet develops.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 이상숙, 「시진핑-김정은 시대의 북중관계 전망」, 『국립외교원 외교안보연구서』, 2012-39호, (2012)

<sup>31</sup> 이상숙(2012), pp.14

To conclude, previous research has shown that the players of the Chinese foreign policy makers and the process. Also, it has revealed that Chinese foreign policy continues on with the same directions and goals. Developing media, internet, and their impact imposes more significance as the unofficial foreign policy actors. Moreover, although there are no official changes in North Korea policy the changes in attitude are obvious since the president Xi Jinping. As the official policy actors are showing decentralization of the power depending on their professional expertise, and as the impact of netizen grow, it can be estimated that the netizen have influenced Chinese North Korea policy and attitude. In order to prove this hypothesis, other similar cases must be studied.

### **1.3 Structure and Method**

The structure of the thesis will be as follows: Chapter two will analyze characteristics of Chinese netizen and their reaction after the North Korea's third nuclear test. Chinese netizen enjoy limited freedom, but still more than half of the Chinese people actively appeal their opinion online. Also, as emphasized previously, Chinese netizen and media's negative response of North Korea was exceptional after the third nuclear test. Whether there are some special aspect in Chinese netizens and whether negative response has reached the level of changing the official stance will be examined through this chapter. This will be done by comparing netizen's responses online after the North Korea's first and second nuclear test and third nuclear test. Should the outspoken public opinion be explicitly outstanding after the third nuclear test, it can be assumed that the public opinion has effected China to change its attitude towards North Korea.

Yet, China has stringent internet censorship. To avoid this censorship, various underground routes and secret codes have been developed. At the same

time, there are countless visible criticism towards North Korea on the websites, Weibo, blogs, and replies under the internet news reports. Therefore, there are limitations in accessing certain information or sorting out effective information. Due to these constraints in quantitative research, analysis will be focused on qualitative research especially focusing on the netizens responses projected in media.

At the latter part of the chapter two, main factors that brought changes in netizens attitude will be analyzed. Development of internet and increases of the internet supply to the very remote part of the country may have caused netizens to response differently. Or, the growing power of China may have implanted confidence in Chinese netizen and let them speak out freely of what they think. Analysis of the various factors that affect the netizen will give idea on which is the most influential factor in forming the public sentiment. Also, by analyzing the reasons, to what extent netizens can have influence can also be figured out throughout the thesis.

Chapter three tries to focus on the impact of netizens in foreign policy making. This would be done by a case study of anti-Japanese demonstrations in China. Two big anti-Japanese demonstrations held in year 2005 and 2012 was formed by the netizens, and the impact of these demonstrations are widely known to have influenced foreign policy of China. This case would be carefully compared with the North Korea's nuclear test case, and through this analysis, netizens' impact on foreign policy can be estimated.

Chapter four will mainly focus on the implications of such changes in netizens. Changes of Chinese attitudes aroused by some factors may influence Chinese North Korean policy to some extent, and this extent can be estimated by comparing this case with the anti-Japan demonstration case. Yet, the fact that China has strong internet censorship leaves us question on whether Chinese



netizen are able to successfully affect Chinese foreign policy. As a matter of fact, these changes in the public opinion and its means of outlet might be part of the government's strategy. Therefore, throughout this chapter, implications netizens in Chinese foreign policy, whether they can truly be the foreign policy actors on the margins, or whether they are just another masterpiece of Chinese government will be analyzed.

## CHAPTER TWO. CHINESE NETIZENS AND NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

### 2.1 Chinese Netizen and Internet Culture

After the third nuclear test of North Korea strange public sentiment was detected. Even though the government decided to augment sanctions up to international level, netizen never ceased to express their uncomfortable feelings towards North Korea's nuclear test at the online spaces. Substantial amount of criticism were worth to be noted. Before analyzing such negative responses of the netizen, analysis on the netizen and internet culture of China would be done in advance, which was formed under the unique condition.

First and foremost, internet in China was only for the official uses. It has not been so long since it was opened to everyone.<sup>32</sup> Together with the opening of the internet, number of web users exponentially grew. Number of internet users have reached over five hundred million at the end of December 2012, and this number excludes the number of mobile web users, which is accounted to be around four hundred million.<sup>33</sup> These numbers tell that majority of Chinese are internet users. In fact, more than 70 million blogs exist, and more than 4 million people exchange their opinion at the online Bulletin Board System (BBS) such as 'Qiangguo Forum (强国论坛)' or else known as 'Strong China Forum'.<sup>34</sup>

As the number of internet users increase, people started to call themselves netizens. *Netizen* or in Chinese *Wangmin*(网民) which literally means the citizens

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<sup>32</sup> Jakobson and Knox(2010), p.41

<sup>33</sup> “중국 네티즌 수 5억 6400만명 도달”, 《베이징 관광국》, 2013년 1월 16일, [http://visitbeijing.or.kr/bbs\\_detail.php?bbs\\_num=2713&tb=board\\_news](http://visitbeijing.or.kr/bbs_detail.php?bbs_num=2713&tb=board_news) (검색일: 2013.10.3)

<sup>34</sup> Ashley Esarey and Xiao Qiang, (ASIAN survey), vol. xiviii, no5, (2008), pp.753

of the internet is how they described themselves voicing out in the very first public sphere for Chinese. This definition of themselves embrace a strong political connotation, yet, Chinese online behavior resembles teen's behaviors. According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) research, some top categories of internet usage in China was for instant messaging (83%), downloading music (76%) and playing games (62%).<sup>35</sup> However, with the technological development, diversified memes travel around Chinese web faster than ever before. There are now some people generating mild political discussions with some keen observations. For instance, Egao(恶搞), one of the famous bloggers for his satires, takes the lead of mild political discussion by posting funny satires online. Such leaders at the forefront encourage others to post their opinions online. Still, many of them do so with the secretly encrypted codes. In other words, internet's impact, speed, comfortableness, and indirectness has diversified the issues and voices of netizen.

This trend spilt over to the group level as well. It is not only the individuals that are seeking for changes but also the social groups that try to follow-up the remarkable pace. Most of all, it brought various civil organizations into existence, which internet contributes as an effective tool of publicity for them. So the numbers of start-up businesses and grass root civic organizations have sought organizational development through the use of the internet.<sup>36</sup> In fact in many cases, civil-society actors were the early adopters of the internet,<sup>37</sup> such as the environment organization "Greener Beijing" and "Green Web" that gained

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<sup>35</sup> Linus Chung, *What are the major differences in content between Chinese video sites such as Youku and You Tube?*, 2013, Quora, < <http://www.quora.com/What-is-the-major-difference-between-Chinese-netizens-and-US-netizens>> [accessed on 2 January 2015]

<sup>36</sup> Guobin Yang, 『The power of the internet China, Citizen activism online』 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp.126

<sup>37</sup> Guobin Yang(2009), pp.127

reputation through online BBS ‘environment forum’. Their online discussion forums have been catalysts for offline activism and finally resulted in physical existence of the group<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, “Green Web” used to function as a space for online discussions on environmental issues, but like the “Greener Beijing”, “Green Web” developed into a portal site and even campaigns, which were canceled by the local government for its impact in daily lives.<sup>39</sup> Internet has enabled growth of new types of business such as ‘Alibaba (阿里巴巴集团)’.<sup>40</sup> As such, internet presents new opportunities and becomes the pioneer of the new fields’ development.

However, above mentioned developments and new grounds are just the common changes that technological development can bring to anywhere. What makes the Chinese internet special is the netizen’s vibrant uses of the online BBS. British and American observers were surprised to see high figures of online discussions going on. Simply comparing sites with similar characteristics such as Ebay and Taobao, of which are not even online discussion sites but online shopping malls, it can be noticed that Taobao is much more crowded with discussing about the products. This vibrancy of the Chinese online distinguishes Chinese netizens from the others, making Chinese online culture special.

By looking at the civil groups’ internet using habits, individual netizen’s patterns of using the internet can be closely looked into. According to Guobin Yang, the network services used by the civil associations parallel patters of individual internet users.<sup>41</sup> Also, internet culture and civil-society culture share

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<sup>38</sup> Guobin Yang(2009), pp.149

<sup>39</sup> Guoobin Yang(2009), pp.149

<sup>40</sup> Alibaba is a online and mobile marketplace in retail and wholesale trade, that provides technology and services to enable consumers, merchants, and other participants to conduct commerce in their system (<http://www.alibabagroup.com/en/about/overview>)

<sup>41</sup> Guobin Yang(2009), pp.136

a high degree of affinity.<sup>42</sup> For this, Guobin Yang has surveyed 550 civic groups, which turned out to favor using interactive functions such as BBS and chat rooms online. Except for e-mail or other personal uses, BBS was the main reason for their internet usage. Such frequent in turn involves more people voluntarily for the information and socialization. This brings the cross-fertilization between the BBS forums and civic groups. This research of Yang explicitly pinpoint the internet culture of China, favoring cluttered and interactive online environment. As such, online BBS where people can be crowded and which is in fact crowded is becoming effective and crucial means of communication in China.

Nevertheless, online space is genuinely for horizontal communication among the peer groups. Chinese netizen seek for social networking and mobilization of peer groups through the online BBS and internet, rather than communicating with or lobbying the government.<sup>43</sup> Internet is just a supplement of traditional means of communication for Chinese people, who already acknowledge the fact that there is a strong internet censorship in China. In other words, Chinese netizens can be distinguished for their frequent online BBS discussions, however are not used to criticize the government or mobilize people to stand against the government through the internet. Of course there are some satires targeting government or political figures like Egao's. Yet they merely are a means to disseminate uncomfortableness, not to arouse and mobilize the public.

Chinese netizens have profound understandings on the sanctioned internet culture. Some middle class people even like the controlled environment. Still, online discussions are lively, and the subjects of discussions are not limited. This is because online BBS has been the very first agora for Chinese people to voice

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<sup>42</sup> Guobing Yang(2009), pp.127

<sup>43</sup> Guobin Yang(2009), pp.139

themselves. Surely, there are people unsatisfied, expressing their opinions using synonyms, slangs, secret codes, and nicknames. For instance, a ‘river crab (河蟹, hexie)’ can be read same as the ‘harmony (和谐, hexie)’ in Chinese. Thus, this word ‘river crab’ is used to lampoon Chinese government sacrificing others for harmonious society.<sup>44</sup> However, normal people who didn’t even have a chance to speak out loud earned a space to talk. Some even get tremendous supports of what they say. People could hear what others were thinking. As such, online BBS could work as a supplement of Chinese people’s limited freedom of speech.<sup>45</sup> People could express their depressing stories, earn people’s sympathy, and share information. The number 600 million netizens tells how much Chinese enjoy their very first agora.<sup>46</sup>

In sum, social media and internet has totally changed the lives of Chinese. Lives of Chinese people both as an individual and as a group have expanded its spectrum, and by dealing with the drastic changes, Chinese formed the culture of their own. Some consider this as a chance to fully enjoy the enlarged freedom, whereas others still seek for secret roots that can protect themselves from government monitoring. In the meantime, the government also puts great effort to seek the best possible win-win situation for both netizen and the state, for they’ve realized the importance of the online publics. One thing for sure is the fact that Chinese people have gained agora of communication for the first time in their modern history that has the power to takedown one significant political figure such as Bo Xilai.

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<sup>44</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회(2013), pp.155

<sup>45</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회(2013), pp.153

<sup>46</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회(2013), pp.154

## 2.2 Responses of Chinese Netizen After the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Unlike the first and second nuclear test, ferocious opinions on the North Korea's nuclear test across the internet became rampant. They remained online unless excessively extreme. Thus, from the day of the nuclear test 12 February 2012 to 18 February 2012, more than 150 statements denouncing North has been posted on <Qingguo Forum(强国论坛)> within a week. Renowned bloggers such as 'Gao Yu (高瑜·70)' freely posted their personal opinion on North Korea at their blogs. Netizens could embrace a feeling of broadened freedom once again, and the number of postings criticizing the North was growing exponentially as if netizens were competing against each other.

In fact, Flow of netizens negative opinions could be further suspected on Weibos, rather more personal place than the official BBS such as <Qingguo Forum(强国论坛)>. For instance, 'Hu Xijin(胡錫進)', chief editor of 'Huanqiu Shibao (Global Times, 环球时报)', has more than 3.3million followers at his Weibo. At his Weibo, he denounced North Korea by mentioning that "North Korea is no longer Chinese ally".<sup>47</sup> Other outstanding people at Weibo with more than several thousand followers condemned North Korea calling it a "Nation of waste". Even the nobodies, just a normal individual netizen such as 'Wuyuesanren' or 'Zhuangshengben' has claimed that "China is raising a crazy dog" or else "It is a fool to be allies with North Korea". As such, netizens didn't

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<sup>47</sup> "'미친 개' 소리 듣는 북한", <<뉴스 앤 피플>> 2013년 2월 21일, [http://newsandpeople.com/article/view.php?id=focus\\_people&page=3&sn1=&divpage=1&sn=off&ss=on&sc=on&select\\_arrange=headnum&desc=asc&no=1043](http://newsandpeople.com/article/view.php?id=focus_people&page=3&sn1=&divpage=1&sn=off&ss=on&sc=on&select_arrange=headnum&desc=asc&no=1043) (검색일: 2014.6.21)

hesitate to blame North Korea calling them a ‘insane dog’, ‘ trash, waste’, ‘useless nation’, and so on.<sup>48</sup>

Such phenomenon spread over to the professionals of China. ‘Ma Yong (馬勇)’ a researcher of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)—one of the most representative think tanks of China’—has posted on his Weibo that thousands of people living at northeast part of China may have been exposed to the radiation due to the North Korea’s nuclear test. Such provocative posting has been retweeted (passing on the message) more than 25,000times, and had more than 3,000 replies under it.<sup>49</sup> With his initiative, other professional’s negative views started to be detected. ‘Yu Jenlung(于建嶸)’ of China Academy of Social Science (CASS) has mentioned “North Korea has blew a nasty-smelling bomb in front of other’s house” on 13 February. On 14 February, ‘Wang Fan’ professor and a director of the Institute of International Relations, China Foreign Affairs University has shed possibilities of increased military trainings of China at <China Daily> and continued on estimating that North Korea’s nuclear would bring no good to the international society as a whole.<sup>50</sup> ‘Xi Weijiang (斯偉江)’ the renowned lawyer has expressed his worries on China being mocked by other countries at the periphery for North Korean nuclear test, and has requested China

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<sup>48</sup> “中 네티즌, 北 핵실험에 "집 지키려고 미친개 키우는 격”, <<조선닷컴>> 2013년 2월 13일 [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/02/13/2013021302516.html](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/13/2013021302516.html) (검색일: 2013년 6월 21일)

<sup>49</sup> “[北 3차 핵실험 이후] "평양에 말만 말고 보복·제재를" 성난 中 네티즌”, <<조선닷컴>> 2013년 2월 14일, [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159) (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>50</sup> “중 ‘들끓는 북 비난여론’ 달래기”, <<한겨레 뉴스>> <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/china/573965.html> 2013년 2월 14일 (검색일: 2014.10.1)



stop supporting North Korea.<sup>51</sup> Professor ‘Zhu Feng (朱鋒)’ of Peking University has continuously emphasized that China is the most victim of the third nuclear test, and announced that “North Korea with a nuclear is a threat to China”. In his remarks made 15 February, he tried to imprint the degree of anger inside the Chinese towards the nuclear test. ‘Hong Lei’, spokesman of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has made definite standpoint that China is willing to be part of UN sanctions. Last but not least, ‘Liu Jianglong (劉江永)’ professor of Tsinghua University, and ‘Xi Yunhong (時殷弘)’ professor of Renmin University have underscored importance of resolving North Korean nuclear crisis, even if that means other countries have to intervene in Chinese diplomatic affairs.<sup>52</sup>

Such sentiments even spread out worldwide. Power Twitterian ‘Pan Zenchuan (樊建川)’ has mentioned at his twitter that “China will definitely be harmed for their hesitations in punishing the tiger they’ve raised (養虎憂患)”. Though Chinese couldn’t hear his outcry, for he used Twitter, yet, his opinion was on the media worldwide.<sup>53</sup> ‘Li qiwuruwei (閻丘露薇)’ a journalist of <Feng Huang TV> , Hong Kong, has voiced that “China has lowered its face” and continued on by saying “China shouldn’t consider ‘little brother (North Korea)’s stance for giving them sanctions”.<sup>54</sup> Professor ‘Niu Jun (牛軍)’ of Peking

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<sup>51</sup> “[北 3차 핵실험 이후] "평양에 말만 말고 보복·제재를" 성난 中 네티즌”, <<조선닷컴>> 2013년 2월 14일, [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159) (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>52</sup> “朝鲜核试验根源在哪里?”, <新华社>, 2013/2/16, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/2013-02/16/c\\_114692027.html](http://news.xinhuanet.com/2013-02/16/c_114692027.html) (검색일: 2014.03.14); 이정남(2014), pp.9

<sup>53</sup> “北 3차 핵실험 후폭풍 ‘미친개 키우는 꼴’”, <<동아일보>> <http://blog.donga.com/nambukstory/archives/48865>, 2013년 2월 14일 (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>54</sup> “[北 3차 핵실험 이후] "평양에 말만 말고 보복·제재를" 성난 中 네티즌”, <<조선닷컴>> 2013년 2월 14일,

University has written a newspaper column on <Ming Pao Weekly (香港明報)> on 18<sup>th</sup> saying “Hereditary succession of North Korea is outdated and cannot last”, “China should stop thinking North Korea as a buffer zone, and when there are enough negative public sentiment towards North Korea already, China should distance themselves from North Korea.” On 13<sup>th</sup>, <South China Morning Post> of Hong Kong have also dubbed North Korea as a ‘crazy dog’.<sup>55</sup> Apart from Hong Kong, American journals and netizens also chastised North Korea strongly for their nuclear test. <Wall Street Journal> has mentioned that “China should reestablish relationships with North Korea”<sup>56</sup>, and on 1 March <Financial Times> have stated Vice chief editor of <Study Times(学习时报)> ‘Deng Yuwen (鄧聿文)’ that “China should give up on North Korea”.<sup>57</sup>

As seen above, netizen’s clamor has spread out to media, and then to the professionals and intellectuals, and finally to the international society. Nevertheless, this wasn’t it. Netizens voice came into physical existence offline. Numbers of small and big demonstrations criticizing North Korea have been formed online, and was practiced offline. On 13 February 2013, people of An Hui province (安徽) of He Pei (合肥) have held on the placard on anti-nuclear test and conducted demonstration. On the same day, there were another demonstration

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[http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159) (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>55</sup> “[北 3차 핵실험 이후] “평양에 말만 말고 보복·제재를” 성난 中 네티즌”, <<조선닷컴>> 2013년 2월 14일,

[http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/02/14/2013021400159.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013021400159) (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>56</sup> “朝鲜核爆标志中国朝核政策失败”, <華爾街時報>, 2013/02/13, <http://www.cn.wsj.com/big5/20130213/ZHC092101.asp> (검색일: 2014.10.1).

<sup>57</sup> 전리리, 안외순, 「북한 핵실험과 중국-북한 관계 변화」, 『동양문화연구』, 2014-18호, (2014), pp.310

against North Korean nuclear in front of North Korea Embassy in Beijing (北京).<sup>58</sup> On 16 February, people have gathered in front of North Korean Consulate at Shenyang(瀋陽) of Liaoning (遼寧), Dandong(丹東), Puxun(撫順), and other areas, promulgating anti-North Korean nuclear tests.<sup>59</sup> Not only on these borderline areas, but also in Guang zhou (廣州), a city of quite distance, had a demonstration against North Korea's nuclear test.<sup>60</sup>

In the meantime, Chinese government remained silent on ever-spreading negative sentiments towards the North. Chinese government strangely didn't prohibit the demonstrations taking place as well. Some of the demonstrators at Guan Zhou Renmin Park was taken to the police stations, in which they were released after two hours or so. Under such circumstances, <Huan Qiu Xi Bao (Global Times)>, the official newspaper of CCP, have admitted that Chinese need to impose sanctions on North Korea. Along with these press release, China has conducted military training of the Second Artillery Corps, strategic missile unit of China, under presumption that there was nuclear attacks to China.<sup>61</sup>

Many point out that this is a victory of netizen. Netizen who managed to take risk of government monitoring has eventually succeeded in persuading the government to abandon the North. However, it is hard to conclude that China changed their stance because of the netizens. Compared to the aftermath of first

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<sup>58</sup> ““北核강력 제재하라” 중서 잇단 항의 시위”, <<동아일보>> 2013년 2월 18일, <http://blog.donga.com/nambukstory/archives/49079> (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>59</sup> ““北核강력 제재하라” 중서 잇단 항의 시위”, <<동아일보>> 2013년 2월 18일, <http://blog.donga.com/nambukstory/archives/49079> (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>60</sup> “리셋 요구되는 시진핑 시대의 북중관계”, <<중앙일보>> 2013년 3월 4일, <http://nk.joins.com/news/view.asp?aid=10440149> (검색일: 2014.10.1)

<sup>61</sup> “중 ‘들끓는 북 비난여론’ 달래기”, <<한겨레 뉴스>> <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/china/573965.html> 2013년 2월 14일 (검색일: 2014.10.1)

and second nuclear test, netizens definitely have voiced out. After the first and second nuclear test, which its size is considered puny compared to third, netizens remained silent. CCP as well continuously supported and embraced the North. Yet, all in all, Chinese netizens obviously succeeded in gaining public attention. Through this, they were able to make North Korean nuclear crisis a public issue. This caught the eyes of media, professionals, and then the international society. Chinese netizen's capability of setting the public issue was finally proven at the two meetings of China by being adopted as one of the discussion points of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (中国人民政治协商会议).

Still, the order of the incident has to be carefully examined. Whether netizen's ability to set public issue has changed the Chinese North Korean policy, or whether it just ended being discussed, since some of the people courageously criticized the North, such as vice chief editor 'Deng Yuwen' of <Huan Qiu Xi Bao (Global Times)>, had to resign for his words. <Ren Min Ri Bao (People's Daily)> was asked to refrain from exposing extremely provocative comments on North Korea, and it was only a few of offline demonstrations that came into physical existence among thousands many that have been planned online. Contents of the demonstrations were thoroughly scrutinized,<sup>62</sup> and with just a slight changes in their direction of criticism, demonstrators were dissipated.

## **2.3 Main Factors of Assertive Netizens**

Various factors would have led Chinese netizen express negative voices towards North Korea and their nuclear test. By examining some of the major factors would be critical to measure why netizens were assertive. Figuring out

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<sup>62</sup> 이상숙(2013), pp.320

whether netizens were voluntary or not can tell whether netizens negative voice have resulted in Chinese government to change their political stance towards the North Korea.

Throughout the chapter two, three major factors will be examined: First, enhancement in the Chinese national power in the international society; second, Chinese nationalism; and third, development of technologies and capabilities of netizen.

### **2.3.1 Chinese National Power**

It was after the 2008 financial crisis that Chinese could feel the power of China down to their skins. Financial crisis had severely struck US, EU, and other developed countries, and this downsized the power they execute in the international arena. Relatively healthy economic condition of China has strengthened their persuasiveness beyond the economic policies. Undoubtedly Chinese influence were getting stronger. Naturally, Chinese could sense the ever-growing national power of China, and this implanted strong confidence in Chinese. This led Chinese netizen react aggressive towards the North Korea. In other words, Chinese netizen were assertive on their own discretion, out of confidence.

Not only did Chinese confidence drive out the fear of how other countries might think or even the possibilities of being attacked, but also Chinese confidence have enlarged their ‘core interest’. As much as the scope of the ‘core interest’ broadened, Chinese strengthened its measures to protect them. In order to avoid unwelcomed circumstances and soundly secure their core interest, Chinese responded aggressively to the elements that stir up their peace. All in all, strengthened power of Chinese and enlarged core interest are the cause as well as

the evidence of Chinese offensive diplomacy.<sup>63</sup>

To elaborate, core interest indicates the ‘vital interest’ of a nation. This illustrates the vital interest that a nation will no matter what by any means secure.<sup>64</sup> China prescribes territory and sovereignty as the core interest, and thus Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang area are one of the Chinese core interests. However, as aforementioned, Chinese have expanded the scope the core interest. Ambiguous and comprehensive definition of Chinese core interest of up-to-date seems as if it incorporates every single minor issues. Through the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress Meeting, along with the safety of its nationals, China even defined East and South China sea as one of their core issues.

In this regard, North Korean nuclear issue is a serious threat to Chinese core interest, especially when it is a country that directly shares the border line with China. It is also considered as a factor that can stir up the peace and security of the region, since North Korea shares borderlines with China, South Korea, and even Russia. Even before and after the Xi Jinping administration, China has stipulated that it will walk the path of ‘Peaceful Rise’. Xi Jinping has even emphasized that China will never be the victim of the threats that interfere in the Chinese path of peace and stability. This has indirectly announced worldwide that North Korea is in the way of China, and China will not give in.

Indeed, China’s influence and power is becoming more effective to the international society, and China will exert this power to secure their core interest by all means. North Korea’s nuclear capability is one of the major threats to China, and Chinese naturally bore inconvenient sentiments to the North, which disregards Chinese messages. All the news Chinese netizens had to encounter has

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<sup>63</sup> 조영남(2013), pp.303

<sup>64</sup> 조영남(2013), pp.299

led Chinese netizens express their anger.

Nevertheless, some view that this aggressiveness is the result of China playing responsible role in the international society. Strong powered countries bear certain responsibilities to take part in crucial international issues. Based on this argument, China, should it be considered strong power country due to their enhanced national power, has to be responsible of North Korea and their nuclear capability. Aggressive attitude of China and netizens lie in this realm of Chinese responsibility to maintain peace and security of the peninsula and the region.

No matter what, it is a fact that China is now stronger force in international arena, and their aggressive attitude is the result of the stronger Chinese empowerment. Without a doubt, Chinese netizen will continue on with their negative posture towards the North Korean unless their government puts a break to it.

### **2.3.2 Chinese Nationalism**

Chinese nationalism is another factor that contributed to Chinese netizen's aggressive response to North Korea. This again tells that Chinese netizen's were voluntarily writing criticisms of North Korea online.

The nationalism, however, is a not a concept that has recently come to the fore and affected Chinese. It has long been existent ever since the beginning of the nation, and has re-surfaced in 1990s allowing Chinese acquire strong sense of confidence. Unlike the obstructive nationalism before, reappeared nationalism aims at universality and is public-oriented. As the mass public takes the lead of nationalism, nationalism is understood as popular nationalism.<sup>65</sup> As Marxism and Leninism lost its persuasiveness and pivotal role in Chinese ideological

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<sup>65</sup> 오승연, 「중국 민족주의의 전개에 관한 연구」, 『인하대학교 대학원』, (2009), pp.63

thinking,<sup>66</sup> public nationalism became the post-pivotal ideology that justifies the one party-rule of Chinese Communist Party.<sup>67</sup> Variety of reasons such as obtaining approval in one-party rule, reconsidering the west, having sense of external threat, and conceiving confidence on the power of China all enrooted popular nationalism in Chinese society. And prevalent popular nationalism functioned as a means to integrate the society.

With such background, there are three distinctive characteristics in Chinese popular nationalism, and these characteristics made Chinese of now respond aggressively towards the North. These are firstly on controlled nationalism, second on the victim mentality towards west, and lastly on instrumental and practical feature of nationalism. To elaborate, firstly, Chinese popular nationalism is a controlled nationalism. In other words, there are limitations in nationalism set by the government. Nationalism in China is considered as a popular nationalism, however it has not yet possessed identity, independence, and dynamics apart from the CCP's rule.<sup>68</sup> Chinese public aims and goes to the direction that party has set. Chinese public can take the lead up to the point party has set. And Chinese public can express their nationalistic feelings only when party says yes. Party, on the other hand, with skillful mechanism of acceptance and oppression, controls the public through the method of standing by at first and intervene afterwards. According to Gilbert Rozman, national identity is the social science choice for systematic investigation.<sup>69</sup> Yet, despite its name, Chinese

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<sup>66</sup> 유현정, 「후진타오 시기 중국의 대일본정책」, 『세종정책연구』, 2011-18호, (2011), pp.18

<sup>67</sup> 조영남(2006), pp.307

<sup>68</sup> 조형진, 「중국의 대중 민족주의와 대외정책: 1999년 중국 대사관 피폭부터 2005년 반일시위까지」, 『서울대학교 대학원』, (2006), pp. 85

<sup>69</sup> Gilbert Rozman, 2012, 'Chinese National Identity and Foreign Policy: Linkages Between the Two', *The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*, pp. 156



popular nationalism depends on the leaders' decision on how it will proceed.

Second, Chinese popular nationalism implies victim mentality towards the west. Owing to the entangled history with the west, China clings on to their status in the international society, and considers very minor and trivial interest of the west as infringement and violation of Chinese sovereignty. Lastly, Chinese nationalism is pragmatic. As aforementioned, Chinese popular nationalism plays a role as a tool to integrate the Chinese society and mass public. With such functional role of restoring trust between the mass public, society, and the government, popular nationalism is emphasized for practical reasons as well.<sup>70</sup>

Tapping on to each three characteristics of popular nationalism, this gives idea on the reasons of Chinese growing assertive to North Korea, and they are twofold: government led assertiveness, and check against the west. First of all, Chinese shed aggressive behavior on North Korea's nuclear test because that was what government allowed to post. The very first characteristics of Chinese popular nationalism, controlled nationalism, allows the government to control what public are talking about. Netizen's anger was voluntary. However, whether they can remain online may be decided by the government. As the government permits negative statements stay online, the more assertive netizen will look.

Second, through nationalism, China tries to tackle the western intervention. As already said, Chinese popular nationalism is based on the victim mentality towards the west. Victimizing themselves from west let Chinese prohibit west from having any kind of interest in any trivial, minor, and very unimportant issues. Through this, China aims to gain equality of the national status in the international society. Nevertheless, issues such as North Korean nuclear crisis provide the west numerous rooms of intervention. In the name of world peace

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<sup>70</sup> 조영남(2006), pp.314-316

and security, west can anytime put their nose in this crisis, especially when China always sided with the North. International society, and especially the west—United States—will intervene in this issue if Chinese cannot or does not handle North Korea's nuclear issues as a regional hegemony. In this regard, Chinese had to show that they are not standing up for North anymore, and North Korean nuclear test is also making China inconvenient. China utilized the media and popular nationalism that can most effectively reach the world on how China thinks. Thus, in order to avoid the repetition of western reigning history, China made the public sentiment express negative and assertive voice to North Korea.

Thus, in order to strengthen the government rule, enhance the social integrity, and prevent China from west intervention, Chinese government released the popular outrage and assertive voices based on nationalism. That caused North Korea to be brutally blamed by Chinese netizens.

### **2.3.3 Technological development**

The numbers of Chinese internet users, reaching approximately 600 million by the end of the June 2013, are growing exponentially. Weibo—Chinese version of Twitter—is used almost by the half of the internet users, 300 million. More than 70% of these people live in the highly populated city areas, and most of the time internet is used by the people in their 20s and 30s with higher education. These numbers already show the power of Chinese informatization, and its large scale is expected to have great ripple effects.

Not only on its large and ever-growing numbers of netizens, however, it is important to focus on the functional changes of Chinese online space. Currently, Chinese online space is used beyond the purposes of amusement or information gathering. Now it is reasonable to say Chinese online space is a battlefield between the government and people. This can be easily proved just by looking

into the Weibo, which became a crucial platform for people to express their wills and collect other's opinions.<sup>71</sup> Remarks on social or political figures can be easily found. Should any social or public issue arise, it becomes the hot topic to discuss right away.<sup>72</sup> No matter on what, if an issue draws mass public's attention it can be the 'public issue'. Thus, when trying to understand the public sentiment, analysis on the Weibo posts must be done first. Chinese government acknowledges Weibo's contribution in forming the public opinion, and thus is trying to use various methods to control the Weibo, not to mention its real-name posting system.

As can be seen, the number and the power of netizens cannot be ignored. Without the technological development, this empowerment of netizens wouldn't be possible. Also, such development is the reason behind the assertive netizens. For instance, after the third nuclear test of the North Korea, numerous Weibo postings criticizing North was floating around the online space, spreading out worldwide. This was obviously the public issue. However were it not for technological support to let it be spread to global scope, Chinese netizen would have not known that they were allowed to criticize 'blood brother' North Korea. Technological development definitely exacerbated assertive voices.

There are number of cases that project similar cases—empowerment of netizen with the support of the technology. Firstly, the investigation or the Beijing University student murder case has been posted on the BBS. This whole process of after-treatment pulled the attention of Beijing university students and further spread out to the public. It was a matter of time it became a public issue. Public crying out for fair and right procedure in handling this murder case became

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<sup>71</sup> 이민자. 「중국정부의 인터넷 통제: 새장속의 자유」. 『중화연구』. 제37권 3호(2013), pp.222

<sup>72</sup> 이민자(2013), pp.222

stronger and stronger. This online outcry eventually turned into a demonstration within the campus. Though it was in-campus and small scaled, people succeeded in using the online space as a place to express their ideas. Moreover, people realized that online space is effective place to mobilize the public, which can form power to face the government. In this regard, people spoke out to make their will be public issue and made public opinion sound more aggressive.<sup>73</sup>

Another case of Sun Zhigang(孫志剛) shows the power of angry netizens. Sun Zhigang, the designer has been killed because of the policy battery. He was a mistakenly killed due to the police's misunderstandings. His unfair death was introduced online, and people started to request police get certain punishments. People further asked open and transparency in handling the process. Owing to these requests, the State Council approved to adopt management practices of vagrants and beggars by the establishing a new law to fulfill its duties and protection of aid recipients of the free salvor (城市生活無着的流浪乞討人員救助管理辦法). Sun Zhigang's case represents the influence power of netizens to politics.<sup>74</sup> Netizens proved themselves that they not only can set the public issue, but also can revise or establish new regulations of interest. Through Sun Zhigang case, it is realized that netizens can watch over the government's power.<sup>75</sup>

Same applies in the BMW case, which BMW driver with its car killed one farmer and other 12 people. Just by paying some fines, this BMW owner hasn't been arrested. This touched upon the public sentiment of feeling discriminated by the wealth, when gap between the rich and poor is the severe social problem.

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<sup>73</sup> 이민자. 「중국 온라인공간의 주도권 쟁탈전」. 『한국과 국제정치』. 제20권 4호(2004), pp.209

<sup>74</sup> 이민자(2004), pp.209

<sup>75</sup> 이민자(2004), pp.209

For this, netizens ferocious criticism peaked and government had to ban this issue being publicized. This issue even had to be raised at the National Party Congress meetings, which directly show how much impact netizens could bring.

Beijing university murder case, Sun Zhigang case, and BMW case definitely are evidence of the power of the netizen and the internet. Yet, these are no longer rare cases. In fact cases such as 2003 hepatitis B case, 'Greeger Beijing' case, Wenzhou train collision case, 'China Civilian Report' and 'China Public Opinion Supervision' case, and so many other cases, though not elaborated, demonstrates the influence of netizens. Certain power netizens can exercise and their ability to influence offline and the government makes netizens act more aggressive, since they need to function as the passage of the public opinion. It can also balance against the government authority by raising uncomfortable issues.

All in all, netizens make their assertive voices to be heard because they have confidence in their national power, because of the nationalistic motives, and because of the power netizen enjoy owing to the technological development. All these reasons testify that netizen's assertive voices were voluntarily. However, that does not mean netizens enjoyed full sense of autonomy. It was the government who let netizens be aggressive on certain issues. For instance, BMW case could not be publicized when the government banned its report. Criticisms on North Korea were only allowed up to the point where the criticism was directed only toward the North. Thus, by figuring out the factor that aroused negative and assertive voices from the netizen, reveals that netizen's discretion was limited and controlled by the government.

## CHAPTER THREE. CASE STUDY

### 3.1 Anti-Japanese Demonstration and China-Japan Relations

Possibilities of netizen's controlled freedom influencing the Chinese foreign policy would be analyzed through the close examination of the precedents, 2005 and 2012 anti-Japanese demonstration cases. By comparing and measuring 2005 and 2012 cases' progress and effects to the official Chinese foreign policy, prospects of netizen's responses after the third nuclear crisis would be measured. Especially, in the sense that all three cases were netizen-driven movements, they can be juxtaposed together to compare and contrast the influence of netizen on Chinese foreign policies.

To begin with, in the spring of 2012, anti-Japanese demonstration has took the streets over again. Protests that started out rational and peaceful ended with violence. Angry crowds across China ransacked Japanese businesses, smashed Japanese cars, and pelted Tokyo embassies in Beijing with eggs and plastic bottles over the disputed islands in the East China Sea, which Japanese government attempted to purchase.<sup>76</sup> Just as the outbursts of the 2005, which gathered the most Chinese public after the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, 2012 demonstration was also sparked by the online movement. In 2005, however, the protest was elicited against the Koizumi honoring the controversial Yaskuni shrine and the Japan being accepted as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Specifically in 2005 major portal sites posted a signature campaign against

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<sup>76</sup> Brian Spegele, Takashi Nakamichi, *Anti-Japan Protests Mount in China*, 2012, Wall Street Journal <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390443720204578000092842756154>> [accessed on 4 January 2014]

Japanese bid for a permanent UN Security Council seat. Along with the online campaign, messages planning for a street demonstration were passed out, and through those online propaganda thousands of demonstrators swarmed over the streets. These inflammatory online discussions and thousands of fervent offline demonstrators turned violent and caused material damages.<sup>77</sup> Japanese government asked for stopping the demonstrations and ensuring the safety of their own people. Yet, Chinese government sent insignificant signs and efforts to deter the angry demonstrators. For instance, text messages and online postings about the street demonstration were delivered freely without the scrutiny.

In 2012, netizens posted advertisements on street protests against the Japanese decision to nationalize the uninhabited island of East China Sea. Netizens immediately spread out the information via websites and mobiles. These were not encrypted messages or postings. This easy-to-recognize messages successfully mobilized several hundreds of demonstrators all over the China. Some of the demonstrations like in Shanghai were carefully controlled by placing police and latent polices outnumbering demonstrators. However, the demonstration itself continued to be conducted. This time as well, as the protests turned violent, Japanese urged China for protection, yet Chinese government rather officially proclaimed territorial rights of the East China Sea and dispatched surveillance ships to the waters near the islands.<sup>78</sup> What's more, China has cancelled commemorative event between China and Japan for their 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and temporally cancelled selling Japanese tour packages.

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<sup>77</sup> 김인, 「중국의 반일시위와 중일관계」, 『Asia-Pacific Review』, (2005), pp.5

<sup>78</sup> Ian Johnson and Thom Shanker, *Beijing Mixes Messages Over Anti-Japan Protests*, 2012, The New York Times < <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/world/asia/anti-japanese-protests-over-disputed-islands-continue-in-china.html> > [accessed on 4 January 2014]

Though the size of 2005 and 2012 protests have big gaps, their beginnings, progress, and end resemble each other. In both cases, China deliberately tolerated netizen's movements, and even refused to make an apologies for the damages. Government officials fanned the flames through their formal remarks with the words that arouse patriotic sentiments. Chinese government official websites even announced that there are no liabilities on Chinese government for the demonstrations. China-Japan relations naturally faced stalemates.

For the netizens, both 2005 and 2012 protests were a big victory. They managed to organize big and small protests around the country, mobilize anti-Japanese sentiment among the public, setting it as a public issue, and expressed opposition on Japan's decisions and actions worldwide. Nevertheless, policy-wise, tensions between China and Japan escalated, which both China and Japan do not desire.

However, regardless of the fact that negative sentiment of Japan was triggered by the netizen, it is hard to conclude that netizen's aggravation resulted in worsened relationships between the two countries. Nevertheless, for one thing, China and Japan still retained a healthy and strong economic ties even during this period. Second, there were no amendments in Chinese Japan policy.

### **3.2 Implications of Netizen in Foreign Policy Making**

As aforementioned, all the outlets of netizen's were possible because of the official tolerance. In other words, netizens are strictly controlled by the government. Then, the influence of the netizen in Chinese foreign policy may be doubtful should the netizens be merely the puppets of the government. Yet, though indirect, netizens can still play certain roles in Chinese foreign policy



making.

First of all, netizens indirectly influence the counterpart and the government. Ability of netizen to indirectly influence both the diplomatic counterpart and the government gives room for netizen to effect Chinese foreign policy.

To elaborate, netizens have ability to form public issues in a second, which can affect people's daily lives. 70% of netizens already have proven that anti-Japanese sentiment has influenced their consuming patterns, and anti-Japanese sentiment has influenced the order of signing FTAs. Japanese on the other had felt threatened to reside in China during 2005 and 2012. During that period, Japanese rather didn't leave their residences. This has also put Japanese government under pressure of protecting their nationals and economy. Surprisingly, these kinds of impacts in society are all owing to the Chinese netizens. To secure the safety of their people both in and out China, and to prevent slowdown of heightened economic relations, Japan had to seek for possible solutions. There were no official statements nor political changes that might pressure the Japan. However, its impact has effected every part of the Japanese society. Sun Zhigang incident, BMW case, Beijing University student case, and numerous other cases domestic and international becomes the manifest evidence of the netizens' power. Indirect pressures can curb foreign country's diplomatic claim. Japan was pressured to curb their stance in South China Sea, or being part of the UN Security Council in 2005 and 2012. Such pressures can influence the foreign policy.

However, on the other hand, netizens may not be induced as the government's intentions. Government may wanted anti-Japanese demonstration to focus more on the historical issues. However, netizens questioned economic relations as well, boycotting purchases of Japanese products. This has indirectly influenced the Chinese government as well. If majority of netizen's voices lie

somewhere unexpected, then Chinese government also has to change the directions of political discourse. Netizen's ability to change the foreign policy discussion topics can also be another way of indirectly influencing the foreign policy. As such, netizens play an important role to indirectly influence both the diplomatic counterpart and the government. This is not yet in the form of check and balances against the absolute authority of Chinese government. However, this brings high hopes that someday netizens can play a proper role of check and balances.

Second, netizens can play a significant role as a time bomb. Despite the Chinese stringent 'Great Firewall', netizens find the weak points to penetrate. In fact, with more than a millions of brains contribution in this 'Great Firewall', government has considerably strong capabilities to control 600 million netizens. Yet, they cannot be absolute, just as 2005 anti-Japanese protest has aroused in a violent way, arousing more public attention than the government had expected. Even though this was a protest totally under the government control, its volume has made the government nervous. In addition, series of 2012 anti-Japanese demonstrations randomly attacked Japanese people, enterprises, markets, and factories. This was totally out of government's calculations. Government could not hide their frustration and rapidly prohibited such unexpected violence with forces. As can be seen, technological development, empowerment of netizens, and smarter public being able to deal with the technology always bring unpredictable and unprecedented happenings. No matter the protest is government-led or not, the results always turn out to be exacerbated then the original plan, attracting colossal public interest. Through encrypted messages and coded words demonstrations are organized and social figures are criticized. Should such demonstrations or voices of netizens go beyond the government control, it is when the netizens can finally take leverage in the foreign policy.

In sum, netizens do not have freedom to demonstrate nor make speech. Freedom of speech or protest is given only when there is the permission from the government. When there seems to be freedom of speech, then it is the government-led discussion. However, despite such controlled environment, as if they are a parrot in the bird cage enjoying ‘freedom within the bird cage’ as professor Min Ja LEE has dubbed, there are still rooms for netizens to play certain roles in foreign diplomacy. Firstly, netizens impose burdens both to diplomatic counterpart and the government to change the foreign policy decisions. Second, netizens can always be the time bomb. With the technology and knowledge in their hands, they can always walk the unexpected way.

In fact, however, apart from the implications of the netizens, it is the Government who takes away the real advantage. Netizens can be utilized as an effective political tool for the government. They help government to exert their wills without making any official political changes or adjustments, and they can also function as a tool to integrate the people in China.

Firstly, by band-wagoning on Chinese nationalism, Chinese government can secure the assertive position in diplomatic relationship.<sup>79</sup> Netizens do all the talks that makes the environment favorable for Chinese government, and without any official political movement China can occupy the higher ground in negotiating with the Japan.<sup>80</sup>

Secondly, China tries to advocate national integration having foreign country as a public enemy. As much as the public enemy is strong, tighter will the bond be among the public. Thus, public enemy especially the enemy at realm outside of the inner circle is highly useful to integrate the people in the inner

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<sup>79</sup> 오승연(2009), pp.65

<sup>80</sup> 임우경, 「2005년, 중국의 반일 시위를 보는 몇 가지 방법」, 『실천문학사』, 78호, (2005), pp.263

circle.<sup>81</sup> With the opening of China, importance and persuasiveness of socialist ideologies diminished. New ideology or theme that can consolidate the nation was necessary. Nationalism has come to fore as a pivotal ideology replacing the socialism, and the government has promoted the growth of nationalism by stimulating the public sentiment. Endeavors to amalgamate the nation, strengthen the party rule, and stabilize the system have brought the public nationalism on the surface. Recent technological development has further facilitated the government to easily advocate the nationalism and internet became the core means of mobilization, since netizens can be mobilized with just a few clicks.

Furthermore, there are three main factors that proves netizen were used as a political tool in China. Firstly, during the anti-Japanese demonstration in 2012, China reconfirmed to the world that China is “one nation”, because Japan kept inviting Taiwan Independence Party (建國黨) to Japan and laid out a scheme of encouraging Taiwan’s independence. As a countermeasure, China invited the Chairman of the Taiwan Kuomintang (KMT) Lien Chan (連戰) to China. Through this visit, Lien Chan and Hu Jintao successfully arranged Kuomintang-Communist collaboration for the first time ever after the year 1945. During Lien Chan’s visit, China strictly banned anti-Japanese demonstration and foundered planned 2<sup>nd</sup> demonstration. Through this, China has shown the world that Taiwan is within the China. At the same time, China has sent warnings to Japan by inviting Taiwan’s political figure that stands at the opposite line of Taiwan Independence Party. Restricting protests condemning Japanese during this period has further threw message to Japan, by showing that China could’ve always stopped such protest. In other words, anti-Japanese demonstrations that highly offended Japanese, were within the realm of government control, and were just

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<sup>81</sup> 오승연(2009), pp.65

another means of warning to Japan as the Lien Chan's invitation.

Next, despite the rapid chill between Japan and China, their economic relations were active and robust. It can be said that Chinese government overlooked at the anti-Japanese demonstration since it didn't have negative influence to Chinese economy. Even though 2005 anti-Japanese demonstration were to be known as the worst and largest demonstration after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, China has become Japanese largest trading partner in 2004,<sup>82</sup> and in 2005 more than 6 billion dollars were directly invested to China from Japan. This was 14.4% from Japanese total FDI<sup>83</sup> and an evidence of their robust economic relationship not being influenced by the political and historical conflicts.<sup>84</sup> Even during the whole Koizumi administration from 2001 to 2006, when China and Japan had the worst diplomatic relations, trade volume of China and Japan steadily grew.<sup>85</sup> There is this saying in China that says "We blame the fault not Japan (反罪不反日)".<sup>86</sup> Chinese approached Japan with such strategy, and shown explicit division in politics and economy.

Lastly, anti-Japanese protest has become the tool for Chinese regional diplomacy. China seeks to solidify their stance as a regional hegemony. In this regard, China had to prevent Japan from strengthening their power and influence in the region. Especially China had to tackle Japan's attempts to bandwagon on the American power. Thus, China has brought up the discourse on historical issues, since history works as an important strategy for the Asian countries competing for the Asian leadership.<sup>87</sup> For this, China has let anti-Japanese

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<sup>82</sup> 임우경(2005), pp.272

<sup>83</sup> 유현정(2011), pp.21

<sup>84</sup> 유현정(2011), pp.22

<sup>85</sup> 유현정(2011), pp.21

<sup>86</sup> 임우경(2005), pp.272

<sup>87</sup> 조민호(2006), pp.71

demonstration be heard, which was protesting against the Japanese honoring the war criminal shrines, Japanese textbook with wrong historical backgrounds and information, and Japanese permanent seating in UN Security Council. Heightened Chinese public nationalism as a result has aggravated China and Japan relationship,<sup>88</sup> however, hampered Japan from springing into a regional superpower.

Thus, through the 2005 and 2012 anti-Japanese demonstration case, it can be learned that Chinese netizens have no freedom. The ostensible freedom they enjoy are the ‘controlled freedom’ under the government’s permission. Government condones the controlled freedom if netizens’ online postings have value as the political tool, and if they contribute to national integration. Under such circumstances, it is hard to say that netizens have ability to influence the foreign diplomacy. However, as stated above, netizen’s strength to indirectly influence both the Japan and the government, and unexpectedness of the netizen makes the role of netizen in foreign policy significant.

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<sup>88</sup> 조민호(2006), pp.71

## **CHAPTER FOUR. IMPLICATIONS OF NETIZENS ON NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS**

### **4.1 Government and Netizen**

The anti-Japanese case concludes that online is a limited space where netizens have indirect or no influence to the foreign policy. To compare and contrast this case with the North Korean nuclear crisis case, relationship between the netizens and the government should be examined in advance. Through this, importance of netizen's—the foreign policy makers on the margins—responses would be figured out.

Firstly, online space is a battlefield for netizens and the government. Through online space, netizens try to watch over the government's policies, express their opinion, and discuss freely even on the sensitive issues. On the other hand, government wants to publicize their policies, collect public opinions, and look over the public sentiments. These two wants clash and compete each other, making an online space a place for the two powers to interact and compete at the same time.

To elaborate, online is a space for netizens who uses it as a platform to share and gather various information. Technological development presented netizens with capacities to instantly communicate worldwide and let netizens challenge the 'Internet Great Firewall' by creating codes and encrypted messages. Netizens could express freely under the surface where official surveillance system didn't reach. Despite the efforts of the government to fully handle every single steps of the netizens, netizens won escaping the surveillance of the government and eventually succeed in revealing the corrupt party officials like Bo Xilai (薄熙來)

and bring them down. Netizens not only become the watch dog but also plays the role as a troubleshooter for some unfair circumstances. All the cases aforementioned reveal the enhanced power and impact of netizens. Chinese people who were deprived of the freedom of speech, now can set the public issue, rule the public sentiment, and even work as the watchdog of the government. In addition, netizens became professionals through the information acquired online and earned hotline to communicate with the government. Especially the new media such as Weibo is one of the significant platforms for the netizens and the government to exchange their thoughts, and the government acknowledging the importance of such new medium tries to catch the public sentiment through the Weibo.<sup>89</sup> In fact, it is not hard to find countless discussions online on foreign affairs, which is relatively unveiled and less sensitive subject to talk about. Unless the issue touches upon the government's wrongdoings in foreign policy, most of the opinions online are shown without filter. This facilitates the government to easily catch public sentiment on the foreign affairs.

However, as much as empowered netizens are, their stance is also vulnerable since government holds the key to their existence. It is a battlefield, yet a battlefield of the imbalanced powers. It is the government with the absolute power which can shutdown the internet in case of emergency. Online space becomes further limited area when it comes to the political issues. Making online seem like a zone of freedom of speech and a corridor between the government and public is just an illusion and a result of the cultural build-up. Communication between the government and public is one-sided unilateral communication. This communication do not take place to help netizen solve the problem or listen to their agonies. Chinese government are not afraid and hesitant to reveal the limited

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<sup>89</sup> 이 민 자(2013), pp.221



atmosphere of the online space when it seems necessary. Thus, calling the online space a battlefield is indeed a wrong statement.

Specifically, for the government online space is a place where government promotes policies. Party people disguise as a normal netizen participating at the online BBS discussion sessions and writes positive or praising statements about the government and the policies. Political figures open the blog and Weibo to introduce their activities and raise awareness of their political efforts. As such, unlike the conventional governing style—from up to down—government has changed the form of delivering the message and publicizing the policies. In addition, these medium allows government to easily grasp the notion of the public simultaneously. For instance, in 2009 Wen Jiabao, the Premier of the state, has collected public opinions through the Chinese Government Network (中國政府网), Sina Network (新华网) and obtained discussion topics for the two meetings, *Liagn Hui* (两会)—National People’s Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.<sup>90</sup>

Government on the other hand is actively preparing to handle the overwhelming power of online public. Among several countermeasures, ‘Internet Commentators’ are one of the outstanding methods. More than often, some standing out opinions are spotted at the blogospheres and Weibos. The ‘Internet commentators’ does the masterpiece, leading the public opinion tilted towards praising the government. In case of conflict or in cases of which the government needs public consent, ‘Internet Commentators’ try to drag out agreements from the public by posting statements relevant to such. In 2008, Chinese have boycott ‘Carrefour’ which supports the independence of Tibet. Internet Commentators’ has let people acknowledge the fact and led people to boycott Carrefour items to

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<sup>90</sup> 이민자(2013), pp.219

curb the Carrefour supporting the independence of Tibet. Moreover, according to the Chinese government, several western media have covered 2008 Lhasa violence in a distorted way. No matter whether this was just an attempt to veil the uncomfortable stories or not, with the lead of the Internet Commentators, online public has come to agreement that western media have covered Lhasa issue in a biased way.

Yet, more than everything, government mostly utilizes the internet to control and supervise the public. From 2007, Chinese government has emphasized establishing the internet culture featuring the socialism of Chinese style, and has reiterated the importance of monitoring. More than ten thousand task forces contributed in building up the culture and maintaining it, and through this effort Chinese online space is operated strictly without harm, favorable for Chinese nationalistic morals and socialistic moral civilization.<sup>91</sup>

Online space can be conceived differently according to the subject. Netizens see online space as an open platform to communicate and express their opinion. Even though they are aware of the fact that this is a controlled freedom and area under government surveillance, netizens still continue to enjoy relative freedom. Nevertheless, government is in total dominant position. Government uses the online space to promote their policies, form the public sentiment favorable to the government, and watch over the public. Government gives and takes away the freedom according to their needs. Online space is totally a ‘governmental space’ and netizens are often fooled at the illusion of freedom they receive. Anti-North Korea sentiment, anti-Japanese protest are all the results of government loosening the control, not the result of the government losing the control. Necessity of

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<sup>91</sup> 이민자(2013), pp.219

such opinion let government loosen its control.<sup>92</sup> Through such give and take strategy government can chase two hares at once, on the one hand letting the world see how public's role and freedom is expanding in China, and on the other hand integrating Chinese public sentiment by arousing nationalistic sentiment and showing that the government tries tackle the problem in the face of nationalism.

Thus, the relationship between the Chinese government and the netizen cannot be defined with one concept. However, it is obvious that both Chinese government and netizen have different understandings, taking advantages of the online space differently. Nevertheless, Chinese government still owns the absolute control of the online space. For netizens who would request for Twitter or Facebook-like spaces, Chinese government has created social media network of their own similar to them.<sup>93</sup> Also, it is the Chinese police who arrives at the venue of demonstration the first.<sup>94</sup> Still, it is hopeful for netizens who can form the public sentiment. Compare to the closed past, when people could only receive information through official channels, netizens perceive the current relative freedom as hopeful. Netizens of now even can participate in the policy making.

## **4.2 Role of Netizen's Response in Chinese Foreign Policy Making**

However, as seen through the 2005 and 2012 anti-Japanese demonstration cases, by saying 'policy making ability of the netizen', it does not mean that they

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<sup>92</sup> 윤근노, 「중국의 대북정책변화와 여론요인」, 『국립외교원 외교안보연구소』, (2013), pp.4

<sup>93</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회(2013), pp.25

<sup>94</sup> 유럽외교관계협의회(2013), pp.155

take big role as the official policy actors. It is the indirect influence netizens can exert that makes the public opinion netizens make unavoidable. Especially the netizens ability to form public opinion is highly notable when online space belongs to the government and netizens stay under the umbrella of the state.

Having the role of netizens and the relationship between the netizens and the government in mind as well as the analysis of 2005 and 2012 anti-Japanese demonstration cases, the impact of netizen's responses after the third nuclear crisis of the North Korea can be analyzed. After the Third Nuclear Crisis, criticism on North Korea was pervasive. Anti-North Korea sentiment has spread rapidly and launched several offline protests. Netizens have successfully set anti-nuclear and anti-North Korea with nuclear capacity as a public issue. This was all condoned by the government, allowing offline protest to take place until the protest expanded its range and the size. China was in tight diplomatic relationship with North Korea. Treating them like their younger brother, China always stood on North Korea's side and majority of economic support was given to the North from China. Even though China had expressed their will to participate in the UN sanctions with other measures after the third nuclear crisis, China could not abandon North Korea at once due to their strategic importance. Yet, China wanted to punish the North Korea about the betrayal they gave in the face of China. Thus, China let netizens give the punishment, allowing anti-North Korean sentiment to be rampant. Since, anti-North Korea sentiment have no relevance with corruption, Taiwan, Tibet, Falungong, and human rights issues, China felt less concerned in allowing this issue to be public opinion.<sup>95</sup> Thus, as the issue that would less threaten and antagonize the stability of the system, netizens could freely discuss on North Korea's nuclear capacity online.

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<sup>95</sup> 이상숙(2012), pp.9

The discussion also dragged the attention of professionals, and the scope of discussion was expanded to the official state-backed media.<sup>96</sup> This exactly resembles the progress of the 2005, 2012 cases, when netizens mobilized the public, set public issue, and criticized Japan, and then spread the discussion to the various sectors of the society.

However, despite the netizen's capabilities to set the public issue, hold simultaneous and nation-wide discussion sessions, and speak out instead of the government does not mean that netizens can bring changes in diplomatic relations or in foreign policies. No matter how obvious it is that China has not cut off the diplomatic relations with the North Korea because of the public sentiment, and no matter how evident that China has let their relationship with Japan deteriorate during the 2005 and 2012, this is not due to the netizens. Netizens are not the official players of the foreign policy, thus they cannot directly influence the foreign policies to change its directions.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, as can be seen in the analysis of 2005 and 2012 case, through the netizen's response after the North Korea's nuclear test, the fact that the netizens are still important variables can be seen especially on the followings:

First of all, netizens hold the indirect political leverage. By blaming the netizens and the public sentiment, Chinese government could postpone talks with North Korea. China could be uncooperative with any North Korea relevant issues, which North Korea could say nothing, since they were the ones disregarding the warning signs of China. In 2005 and 2012 as well, it was Japan who had nothing to say of uncooperative Chinese attitude if it is due to the public, who are already being a threat and a harm to Japanese. In addition, it is North Korea who is

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<sup>96</sup> 이정남, 「중국 대외정책 결정과정에서 인터넷 여론의 역할: 제 3차 북한 핵실험을 중심으로」, 『동아시아연구원』, (2014), pp.4

<sup>97</sup> 이정남(2014), pp.12

consistently seeking for chances to restore the relationship with China, when North Korea betrayed the China. As such, netizens allow China to have a political leverage. This leverage is not official, since China do not want official diplomatic ties to fall apart. However, by indirectly influencing and giving pressures to the other countries, China obtains the higher ground in negotiation. This is why netizens are crucial variable. Netizens can expand the political tool of the government.

Second, netizens are a time bomb. Online space can always deviate from the government control. In such open space where anyone can influence and join, anyone can organize a massive community within a second without any cost. It is a corridor that connects people where they cannot reach in person, and is also an open platform for open discussions. Already, various sectors of society have changed the way they operate, sale, and share information adjusting to the trend. Even the most conservative part of the governments have changed the way to talk with the public. Government is also adjusting to the changes online space is bringing and rapidly applying those changes in controlling the online space. In such space, if the negatively responding netizens towards the North Korea decides to take big movements, this may not be controlled. As in 2005 and 2012 case, there can be violent demonstrations taking place. Some Chinese may be harsh on the North Korean defectors, making the lives harsh for North Koreans. As such, if the speed of the change exceeds the speed of the government adjusting to the change, netizens can always go beyond the government's authority and control. This is why government has banned Twitter and Facebooks, which may expedite netizens' development. According to Guobin Yang (2003) this rampant expansion of internet accelerates the development of civil society. If the development online goes beyond the government control and becomes physical, this would demolish the solid institution and system of the Chinese Communist

Party.

In sum, netizens can set public opinion and lead the public sentiment under the stringent control of the government.<sup>98</sup> Online space is the government's space. However, it can always change into a social space. Netizens are the ones who can present the political leverage to the state, and netizens are the ones who can turn into a time bomb in any minute. In addition, netizens sometimes even indirectly influence the official foreign policy actors by giving them discussion topics.

Especially in foreign affairs, netizens have easy access to considerably large amount of information. For instance, North Korea's third nuclear test and the anti-Japanese protest cases are the cases that were induced by the government. But, as much as the netizen were able to get the information and set public issue, the responses and demonstrations got more though. As such, more and more netizens will be able to set the political agenda themselves. It is now time to focus on the possible roles netizens will be able to play in the near future. Already there is a high expectation for netizens to function as a checks and balances against the government. Also, it is not conventional media that gives information to netizens, but it is the conventional media that reports what the netizens are talking about online.

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<sup>98</sup> 이민자(2013), pp.210

## CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSION

### 5. Conclusion

Online space is a place where the government and netizen co-exist and compete to each other.<sup>99</sup> After the third nuclear test, making criticism on North Korea was allowed online, which later became the public opinion. The public issue of condemning North Korea led some offline demonstrations take place, and those demonstrations happened nationwide. Such expansion of online to offline area shows that online space can have influence to mobilize people and set political agenda.

Yet, this assertive voice of the public is new. Only after the 2005 criticism towards Japan did the online activism become rampant. This is because of the grown confidence in Chinese people, strengthened Chinese nationalism to defend the core interest of China, and developed technology that netizens react in assertive ways to foreign political disputes. And despite the government's stringent censorship via strong Firewall, offline demonstrations never ceased to exist. This in fact, pressures the diplomatic counterpart. North Korea and Japan indirectly feared the netizen's online activism.

Still, the capacity of netizens to mobilize people, set the political agenda, and threaten foreign countries indirectly, cannot influence the foreign policy directly. The anti-Japanese cases of 2005 and 2012 tell the limited scope and influence of netizens in foreign policy making. Even though massive and violent demonstrations were initiated by several netizens, China and Japan's diplomatic relationship worsened not because of the netizen-initiated public opinion but

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<sup>99</sup> 이민자(2013), pp.224



because of the government's intentions. Except for the territorial and historical issues, still economic relations between the China and Japan during this period were tight and robust. Anti-Japanese sentiment was just aroused for Chinese government's functional uses for foreign policy negotiations. Chinese government has allowed such voice to be heard worldwide to let the world know what China is thinking and to give warnings. In other words, netizens' various abilities including mobilizing the public sentiment is also dependant on the government's decisions.

North Korean third nuclear test also tell that netizens assertive voices and offline demonstrations are result of government inducement. Netizens could freely discuss on anti-North Korea sentiment, not on anti-government policy on North Korea. Netizens are still in a birdcage, flapping feathers as if it is an open air.

What is important is the durability of the system. In fact, netizens are highly aware of the stringent censorship in Chinese online space. Netizens pursue free discussion and political agenda setting acknowledging the fact that they are controlled by the government. If such control collapses, then netizens may enormously and directly influence the foreign policy. As of current, due to the current system of give and take, the online culture is being continued on smoothly. Though under control, netizens have certain amount of freedom to talk. Netizens are also capable of setting the agenda. Compared to the past when netizens could only receive information through official newspapers and state-backed media, netizens of now can feel the enlarged freedom to their skin. This slight amount of freedom, being able to let their real voice be heard and sometimes even solve disadvantageous situations, make netizens satisfied. In other words, online space is a limited area, yet at the same time an endless area of competition.

All in all, as of current, netizens will not influence the foreign policy

decision making directly. However, its indirect influence and future prospect makes it hard to just ignore. For sure, it has become an important foreign policy actors on the margins, and thus the path netizens walk should continuously be studied.

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## 국 문 초 록

시진핑 정부 출범 이후 북중관계의 이상 기온이 감지되고 있다. 한중 정상회담이 이미 몇 차례 진행 됐음에도 불구하고 북중 정상회담은 아직 한번도 개최되지 않은 것이 이의 단적인 예이다. 이러한 상황에 대해 일부 학자 및 언론은 중국의 북한정책의 변화를 말하며 그 원인으로 중국의 여론을 지목했다. 즉, 여론, 그 중에서도 인터넷 여론인 ‘네티즌’의 영향력이 중국 대외 정책에 큰 영향력을 미치는 변수임을 주장하는 것이다.

그러나, 네티즌에 의한 여론의 중요성이 확대되었다고 해서 네티즌들이 직접적으로 대외정책 결정과정에 영향력을 행사할 수 있는 행위자로 부상한 것은 아니다. 2005년과 2012년 있었던 대 규모 반일 시위를 살펴보면, 네티즌에 의해 반일 감정이라는 의제가 설정되고 대규모 시위가 열렸지만 결국 국가에 의해 시위 및 반일 여론이 해산되었다. 이처럼 중국 네티즌들에게 아무리 한 가지 이슈를 공론화 시킬 수 있는 능력이 있다고 해도 결국 인터넷 공간도 국가의 공간이라는 한계점이 있기 때문에, 네티즌이 대외정책 결정과정의 결정적 행위자로 부상되는 데에는 한계가 있다.

그렇다면, 이렇게 통제된 자유 속에서 인터넷 여론이 중국의 대외정책에 영향을 미칠 수 있는지, 그리고 나아가 그러한 영향력이 갖는 의미는 무엇인지 밝히는 것이 본 논문의 목적이다. 연구 방법으로는 북한의 3차 핵실험 이후 발생하였던 중국 내 반북여론과 2005년/2012년에 있었던 반일시위 등의 실제 사례를 비교/분석하는 방법을 사용하였다.

**주요어 :** 네티즌, 인터넷 만리장성, 북한 핵 실험, 공세적 여론,  
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