

The DPRK Nuclear Crisis and China's Response *

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Abstract

The DPRK nuclear crisis has lasted for more than two decades. In the past 20 years, the international community, especially countries such as China who were connected to DPRK, had tried their best to cope with the crisis. This article analyzes the reasons and real purposes for the DPRK's nuclear tests. Through examining the origin and development of the Six-Party talks, the article concludes that the Six-Party talks were not complete failures and should be revived in the future. The article also analyzes the characteristics of China's policy toward the Korean peninsula and examines the changing Sino-DPRK relationship, and ends by concluding that China should develop a long-term strategy toward the Korean peninsula and change its diplomatic policy toward the DPRK.

Key Words: DPRK Nuclear Crisis, Six-Party Talks, Sino-DPRK Relationship

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The first DPRK nuclear crisis broke out in 1992 and was died down with the signing of a Framework Agreement by the U.S. and DPRK in 1994. The second Korean nuclear crisis broke out in 2002 when DPRK violated this agreement, and the crisis reached a climax when the DPRK conducted its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006. Through much efforts made by the international community, the murky crisis has eased up, until the DPRK launched another so-called satellite or a long-range missile on April 5, 2009. When the international community condemned DPRK's activity as a provocation, DPRK retreated from the Six-Party talks as usual and conducted its second nuclear test on May 25, 2009. Following on the Cheonan incident and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010, the tensions on Korean peninsula increased sharply and once again the DPRK nuclear crisis caught the world's critical gaze.

In 2011, the world witnessed the death of the tough leader, Kim Jong Il and his son's subsequent rise to power. Since the successor Kim Jong-un is so young and had studied abroad, the international community anticipated that the young leader would change his father's hard line policies. Unfortunately, the young leader adopted an even tougher policy. He pushed aside his father's promise of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and declared that DPRK a nuclear state in its new constitution in 2012.¹⁾ According to the new strategy, DPRK launched another missile at the end of 2012, and conducted a third nuclear test. The DPRK nuclear crisis again peaked on the international stage.

The international community always wondered about the purposes that underlie these actions of the DPRK, which have increased tensions in such

1) http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/05/31/2012053102832.html.

a short term. However, whatever the political and economic consequences may be for Pyongyang, the most important goal for the international community is to focus on how to cope with the DPRK nuclear crisis. This article analyzes the reasons and purposes for the DPRK's nuclear tests, considers the origin and development of the Six-Party talks, and concludes that the Six-Party talks, while frustrating to various parties, have not been a total failure since they were moving in the right direction. The article also examines the changing Sino-DPRK relationship and concludes that China should develop a long-term strategy toward the Korean peninsula and change its diplomatic policy toward the DPRK.

I. DPRK Nuclear Crisis

1. The Reasons of DPRK for Developing Nuclear Weapons

People kept asking why the DPRK has carried out the nuclear test in defiance of the international community's opposition. From my point of view, there are two important types of factors, which should be taken into account. One is the objective factor and the other is the subjective. The objective factor is that the isolated DPRK will make any efforts to strengthen its forces and to deal with the threat of external hostile forces in order to maintain its safety. Basically, the protection of its national security and the need to deal with the United States' long pursued hostile policy drive the DPRK to launch missiles and conduct nuclear tests.²⁾ The subjective factor

is that the DPRK wants to maintain internal stability and hence, maintain the regime.

As we know, the Korean peninsula is the only place where the Cold War continues, and military confrontation has existed since the Korean War. Hence, the Korean nuclear issue is essentially the continuation of the Cold War.

There is a long history of military confrontation in the Korean peninsula between the United States and the DPRK. As early as during the Korean War, the United States repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons against the DPRK. After the Korean War, the two sides signed an Armistice Agreement rather than a peace treaty. The United States not only stationed a large quantity of troops in the ROK, but also provided a nuclear umbrella to the ROK. In addition, the United States has even deployed several kinds of tactical nuclear weapons in the Republic of Korea from 1958 to 1992.³⁾ It is the nuclear threat from the U.S. to DPRK that stimulated the latter to begin to seek its own nuclear program from the 1960s.⁴⁾

After the Cold War, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the normalization of Sino-ROK relations, the “north triangle alliances” disappeared, but at the same time, the “south triangle alliances” were enhanced.⁵⁾ The

²⁾ Jian Cai, “How will China to Cope with the Nuclear Crisis,” *World Affairs*, vol. 9 (2009), p. 27.

³⁾ Henry C K Liu, “China and the US: the DPRK perspective,” *Asia Times*, February 11, 2007.

⁴⁾ Bin Li, “The Developing Armament of DPRK,” *the Research and Development of Arms Control*, vol. 2 (2004), p. 8.

⁵⁾ During the Cold War, by three treaties, i.e. Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, The DPRK-Soviet Union Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, the Sino-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Alliance

DPRK's security environment deteriorated continuously. When George W. Bush took office, he pursued the notorious unilateralism worldwide and adopted a tough policy of containment towards the DPRK.⁶⁾ Though this tough policy eased up in the latter term of the Bush administration, the United States kept pressuring the DPRK to completely abandon its nuclear program.⁷⁾ It is this very hostile policy towards the DPRK consistently pursued by the United States for decades that posed a serious threat to DPRK's security, preventing the latter from abandoning its pursuit of military power, especially the possession of missiles and nuclear deterrence capability. DPRK repeatedly stated that it is precisely because of the United States' threat of war and sanctions that compelled them to start "launching missiles and conducting the necessary nuclear test."⁸⁾

Secondly, the launching of missiles and conducting of nuclear test is a product of DPRK's subjective needs. By carrying them out, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong-un aims to strengthen its political and social control of DPRK in order to maintain the stability of the regime.⁹⁾

and Mutual Assistance, China, Soviet Union and DPRK constructed a North triangle alliance against the South triangle alliance, which consisted of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, ROK-American Mutual Defense Treaty and the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea.

6) Stephen Hoadley, "President Bush's Foreign Policy: Innovation or consolidation?," *New Zealand International Review* vol. 27, no.2 (March-April 2002), pp. 6-8.

7) (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43660.htm>).

8) *Korean Central News Agency*, April 30, 2003.

9) Jinwook Choi, "The North Korean Domestic Situation and its Impact on the Nuclear Crisis," *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies*, vol. 5 (2006), p. 1.

As a result of long-term international sanctions, domestic natural disasters, and also the rigidity of its economy, DPRK's economic base is very fragile.¹⁰⁾ The DPRK leader believes that a moderate economic reform is necessary, but an economic reform coupled with an open door policy may lead to social and political reforms, which may create doubts among his people about the legitimacy of his rule, and may finally shake its foundation. That is an outcome which the leaders of DPRK may be unable to face. Therefore, implementing military-first politics, launching missiles and conducting nuclear tests is the effective means to consolidate Kim's political power and to bolster the spirit and morale of the people. And this is just because nuclear weapons are regarded as a symbol of national strength as well as scientific and technological prowess. For example, on April 9, 2009, DPRK held the Plenary Meeting of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly, during which Kim Jong-Il was re-elected as chairman of DPRK's National Defense Commission.¹¹⁾ It is not difficult to see that DPRK chose to launch the missile or "satellite" on April 5, just a few days before the convening of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly, to encourage its people, boost national morale, raise the prestige of the ruling party and thus enhance the stability of the regime. It is no secret that the young leader Kim Jong-un fully inherited his father's strategy.

But what are the real purposes of missile launches and nuclear tests? Does the DPRK actually want to possess nuclear weapons or is it merely a means of achieving its political goals?

¹⁰⁾ Liu Ming and Liu Amin, "Korean Nuclear Crisis: Assessment and Prospect," Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' International Review (January 2007).

¹¹⁾ (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/09/kim-jong-il-north-korea>).

2. The Purposes of DPRK's Nuclear Tests

For a long time there has been a theory that the DPRK's claim about developing nuclear weapons was just a bluff, that it had neither the desire nor the ability to carry it through,¹²⁾ and that it was only wielding the political card. Later, the progress that the DPRK made in the field led to the theory that its development of nuclear weapons was aimed at discouraging invasion, since the United States has labeled it as part of the "axis of evil"¹³⁾ and threatened its security. But after the DPRK conducted its second nuclear test, we can see clearly that the theories are neither accurate nor correct. The DPRK not only has the desire but also has the ability to possess nuclear weapons.

From the development of the DPRK nuclear crisis during the past decade, it is easy to see that possession of nuclear weapon was a strategic decision of DPRK and to claim abandonment of its nuclear program or denuclearization was just a tactic. DPRK sincerely wants to become a nuclear power, but because of the adverse environment in the international community, DPRK had to make full use of the so-called "nuclear card" tactically in order to achieve its main objectives: regime security, sovereignty recognition and non-aggression pact, all to end the United States' hostile policy and to gain reliable security guarantees from the United States. Launching missiles and

¹²⁾ Liangui Zhang, "Coping with a Nuclear NK," *China Security* (Autumn 2006), p. 3.

¹³⁾ "Axis of evil" is a term initially used by the former United States President George W. Bush in his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002 and often repeated throughout the rest of his stay in office, in order to describe governments that he accused of helping terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction.

testing nuclear weapons serve as a tactical means for the purpose of “taking the brinkmanship policy and pulling the United States’ concessions on the negotiating table.”¹⁴⁾ After Obama took office, the United States adopted the “strategic patience” policy toward DPRK, which, to DPRK, was a sign that the United States is still insisting Bush’s policy. Once again, it resorted to his trump card, i.e. launching the “Satellite”, retreating from the six-party talks and resuming its nuclear facilities and even threatening to use nuclear weapon in order to lead the United States to make a concession.

The three nuclear tests conducted by the DPRK revealed that DPRK’s true aim is “to master a powerful instrument in order to constrain the surrounding big powers and work to transform its strategic relations with them.”¹⁵⁾ It is unlikely that it will give them up because nuclear weapons can offer great benefits.

The first benefit that the nuclear weapons can offer is to deter a potential adversary from invading or threatening its core national interests. Faced with external pressures, DPRK wants to possess nuclear weapons for protecting its own national security. For them, possession of nuclear weapons and the deterrence seem more reliable than giving up the development of nuclear weapons and exchanging them for uncertain or empty security assurances.

The second benefit is that nuclear weapons may restore the strategic balance between North and South Korea. With the formation of two separate Koreas in 1948, there existed an acute struggle over inheritance of the Korean Peninsula. But the balance of aggregate national strength began

¹⁴⁾ Jian Cai, “How will China to Deal with the Nuclear Crisis,” p. 28.

¹⁵⁾ Liangui Zhang, “Coping with a Nuclear NK,” pp. 3~4.

to tip in the early 1970s, and widened dramatically with the increase of South Korea's economic power, which became 30 times greater than that of the North. What frustrates the North the most is that there is almost no conceivable reversal in the near future. DPRK leaders consider mastering nuclear weapons as the only possible measure to dispel the fear of failure in this competition and, even possibly to take the initiative in unifying the Korean Peninsula through force.

The third advantage is that nuclear weapons may help alleviate the massive input of resources required for conventional weaponry and shift them to economic development.¹⁶⁾ Though a significant outlay is necessary in the initial stages of nuclear development, DPRK has made this investment and can now reap the economic benefits of its nuclear effort.

In addition to these benefits, DPRK's bold move to develop nuclear weapon also makes war on the Korean Peninsula more unlikely. DPRK leaders have always lacked confidence in their own security, and the uncertainty was exacerbated by the American invasion of Iraq. They believe that if Saddam Hussein had nuclear weapons at his disposal, the United States would not have dared to attack and topple his regime. Though DPRK has sufficient artillery and short-range missiles to cause massive casualties to the U.S. forces in South Korea, the nuclear weapons constitute an additional deterrent, aimed at making the United States to take DPRK more seriously. The balance of troops between DPRK and the United States, as well as the destructive force of nuclear weapons simply makes it hard for the United States to take military action against DPRK.

¹⁶⁾ Dingli Shen, "DPRK's Strategic Significance to China," *China Security* (Autumn, 2006), p. 25.

For these reasons and purposes, DPRK has obscured its real intentions and has deluded all the concerned countries into believing that it could be persuaded to give up its nuclear program during the past years of negotiations. In this way, DPRK has bought itself more than a decade, safely passing unscathed through the period of tense security crisis, and successfully stepping over the nuclear threshold. For the same reasons, the DPRK will not likely abandon its nuclear weapons, so how to cope with the nuclear crisis?

II. How to Cope with the DPRK Nuclear Crisis

1. Six-Party Talks

For a long time, the question of how to solve the peace and security problem on the Korean peninsula has been one of the key problems in the minds of the leaders of northeastern Asian countries. The international community has made a lot of diplomatic efforts and attempts in past years, the Six-Party talks being the most recent achievement. But when DPRK launched its “satellite” on April 5, 2009, conducted its second nuclear test on May 25, 2009 and quit the Six-Party talks, the international community began to consider the Six-Party talks as a total failure. But in my point of view, the Six-Party talks were not a failure, but rather, simply a disappointment, because the direction of the Six-Party talks is correct. In fact, these talks have provided a powerful means to resolve the DPRK

nuclear crisis and promoted the establishment of security mechanisms in Northeast Asia.

2. Six-Party Talks as a Historical Choice

During the Cold War, there was a large scale hot war taking place on the Korean peninsula. Since the end of the Cold War, the Korean peninsula is the only place where the Cold War mechanism is maintained. The United States have not realized the normalization of relations with DPRK from the perspective of international jurisprudence; DPRK and the United States are still in a state of war. Both sides maintain a large quantity of military forces along the military demarcation line. After “the north triangle alliance” disappeared, in order to safeguard its security, DPRK began to quicken its nuclear research and development, which has finally resulted in a nuclear crisis. The nuclear crisis greatly intensified the security dilemma in northeast Asia. Consequently, the Korean peninsula issue is the key problem that hinders peace and security in northeast Asia. During the past decades, those concerned countries continuously tried to establish a peace and security mechanism in this area. The six-party talks were the most recent achievement towards this direction and it was also a historical choice.

The interrelated countries have put forward to a lot of proposals and assumptions to solve the problem of building a security framework in northeast Asia. During the 1970s, “Nixonism” initiated a pull back from Asia and U.S. president Nixon put forward to a proposal in the UN to hold a four-party talk involving China, DPRK, ROK and the United States.¹⁷⁾ Also

in the 1970s, Kim Dae Jung put forward a proposal to set up a six-party framework which included China, USA, USSR, Japan, DPRK and ROK.¹⁸⁾ In June 1979, U.S. president Jimmy Carter suggested holding three-party talks by the United States, ROK and DPRK. In 1988, Korean president Roh Tae-Woo put forward a proposal at the General Assembly of UN to hold a peace consultation conference including the U.S., China, USSR, DPRK, Japan and ROK, namely the 4+2 plan, in order to sign a Peace Agreement to replace the Korean Armistice Agreement.¹⁹⁾ When the first DPRK nuclear crisis broke out, U.S. president Clinton suggested holding four-party talks by the U.S., China, DPRK and ROK.²⁰⁾ Following this suggestion, the four countries held six rounds of four-party talks in Geneva.²¹⁾ There were two objects of the four-party talks: one was to ease up the intensity of the Korean peninsula and the other was to establish a peace mechanism in northeast Asia. However, for various reasons, the four-party talks did not end in any tangible achievements. Though the four-party talks failed, they were significant. Holding the multilateral talks meant that the first step in establishing the peace and security mechanism in northeast Asia had been taken.

17) Liping Xia, "The Peaceful Unification Process and the Security Mechanism in Northeast Asia," *International Observer*, the second issue (2005), p. 2

18) Xiao Ren, "Six-Party Talks and the Possibility of Founding the Multilateral Security Mechanism," *International Studies*, the first issue (2005), p. 40.

19) James L. Schoff, "Political Fences and Bad neighbors: DPRK Policy Making in Japan and Implications for the United States" (the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2006), p. 1.

20) Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, "North east Asia: DPRK, ROK and Japan"; <<http://www.idds.org/issNucProlifNEA.html>>.

21) *People's Daily*, December 3, 1997.

Japan and Russia were displeased by the four-party talks since they were excluded. After DPRK launched a missile in 1998, Japan's Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi put forward a clear suggestion to hold six-party talks which would include Japan and Russia.²²⁾ In 2001, after Russian president Vladimir Putin paid a political visit to ROK, in the association announcement he also requested a six-party talk. In October 2002, when the second DPRK nuclear crisis broke out, U.S. president George W. Bush insisted on not holding a bilateral conversation with DPRK, but stuck to multilateral negotiations which resulted in a serious crisis on the Korean peninsula. This crisis severely challenged China's diplomatic strategy which aims to create a peaceful outside environment for domestic economic construction. For China, solving the DPRK nuclear crisis through a peaceful conversation, maintaining the peace and stability of Korean peninsula and realizing a nuclear-free Korean peninsula is a necessity for seizing the 20 years strategic opportunity period of the new century, as well as for creating a favorable peripheral environment for domestic economic construction. China has made a lot of diplomatic efforts between U.S. and DPRK and the three-party talks held in Beijing in April 2003. With the 'shuttle diplomacy' of China and other countries in effect, in August 2003, the six-party talks involving China, USA, Russia, Japan, DPRK and Korea were held in Beijing.²³⁾

The Six-Party talks were the result of sustained exploration and struggle by northeast countries, and it was a historical choice. The Six-Party talks not only provided a diplomatic platform for resolving the DPRK nuclear crisis,

²²⁾ Christopher B. Johnstone, "Paradigms Lost: Japan's Asia Policy in a Time of Growing Chinese Power," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 21 (1999).

²³⁾ *People's Daily*, August 27, 2003.

but also promoted the establishment of a security mechanism in northeast Asia.

3. From Three-party Talks to Six-Party Talks

The Six-Party Talks originated from the three-party talks held in 2003. After the United States accused DPRK of engaging in secret the highly enriched uranium (HEU) program, the second DPRK nuclear crisis broke up in 2002. As usual, the DPRK demanded a solution to the emerging highly enriched uranium (HEU) crisis bilaterally with the United States, but the United States refused to deal with Pyongyang directly and preferred to broaden the field of players. The George W. Bush Administration did not want to repeat the 'failure' of the Clinton Administration's Agreed Framework.²⁴⁾

In February 2003 when US Secretary of State Colin Powell went to ROK to attend the inauguration of President Roh Moo Hyun, he stopped in Beijing and suggested that Beijing would be well positioned to organize and host multilateral talks involving the United States, China, Japan, and North and South Korea. The Chinese did not respond directly to his suggestion. They

²⁴⁾ The Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was signed on October 21, 1994 between DPRK and the United States. The objective of the agreement was the freezing and replacement of DPRK's indigenous nuclear power plant program with more nuclear proliferation resistant light water reactor power plants, and the step-by-step normalization of relations between the U.S. and the DPRK. It was broken down in 2003.

remembered the failure of the four-party talks in Geneva. When the former Foreign Minister and Vice Premier Qian Qichen went to Pyongyang in early March of 2002 and offered five-party talks to DPRK, DPRK rejected that proposal at once, so Vice Premier Qian revised his suggestion on the spot and offered three-party talks instead. However, Pyongyang continued to request bilateral talks between the US and the DPRK. Concurrently, China tried to convince Washington that the talks truly would be trilateral in every sense of the word and not simply an excuse for the DPRK and the United States to meet bilaterally. Given the fact that Pyongyang and Washington were exchanging information through the New York channel, China needed to take part in the conversation to prevent their deception. China stressed that the trilateral talks would be the official and only channel of communications dealing with the nuclear crisis. But because the United States did not want to negotiate with DPRK directly, when DPRK sent comments or requests through its UN Mission in New York, the United States replied through China. This arrangement of communications concerning trilateral talks served Beijing's purposes well and brought the DPRK and United States together in Beijing in April 2003 at last for an initial round of talks aimed at resolving the emerging second nuclear crisis.

But when the three parties met in late April 2003 in Beijing, the DPRK's delegation head still insisted on meeting with the United States delegation bilaterally. The United States delegation, on strict instructions, refused to meet the DPRK. Based on that refusal, DPRK ended their participation and returned to Pyongyang. What China had hoped for did not occur at the end of the three-party talks.

Almost immediately after the failure of the April session, the Chinese

began to resurrect the three-party talks, but this time, the United States insisted that any future rounds should include the ROK and Japan. Upon Moscow's insistence, the United States quickly added Russia to the list of future participants in any multilateral talks. In late July 2003, Chinese Vice Minister Dai Bingguo suggested another round of three-party talks to Secretary Powell because Pyongyang insisted that it would not attend any five- or six-party talks. After a compromise, the United States agreed that it could attend an initial three-party session if a full six-party round of talks followed it immediately.

In late August 2003, the first round of Six-Party Talks was held in Beijing. According to the agreement the US and DPRK delegations held a brief talk for approximately thirty minutes. However, in the end, the plenary talks could not arrive at an agreement on a joint statement but ended with the following statement by the chairman:

“The major result coming out of the talks is that all parties share a consensus with the following main points: All parties are willing to work for peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue, and to work to safeguard peace and stability that brings about lasting peace on the Peninsula; All parties maintain that while a nuclear-free Peninsula should be realized, the DPRK's security concerns and other areas should be considered and resolved; All parties agree, in principle, to explore and decide on an overall plan for solving the nuclear issue in stages and through synchronous or parallel implementation in a just and reasonable manner; All parties agree that in the process of peace talks, any action and word that may escalate or intensify the situation should be avoided; All parties agree that dialogue should continue to establish trust, reduce differences, and broaden common ground; All parties agree that the six-party talks should continue, and the date and venue for the

next round of talks should be decided through diplomatic channels as soon as possible.”²⁵⁾

When Wang Yi, the chairman of the six-party talks, was asked by reporters in Manila a few days later what he thought was the biggest obstacle to achieving a next round of Beijing talks, he responded frankly, “The American policy towards DPRK, this is the main problem we are facing.”²⁶⁾

Through February 25~28, 2004, the second round of Six Party talks were held in Beijing. this time, however, the six parties could not gain a joint statement and Beijing had to issue a Chairman's Statement once again: “The Parties agreed that the second round of the six-party talks had launched the discussion on substantive issues, which was beneficial and positive, and that the attitudes of all parties were serious in the discussion. While differences remained, the Parties enhanced their understanding of each others' position through the talks. The Parties expressed their commitment to a nuclear weapon-free Korean Peninsula, and to resolving the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect and consultation on an equal basis, so as to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the region at large. The Parties expressed their willingness to coexist peacefully. They agreed to take coordinated steps to address the nuclear issue and the related concerns. The Parties agreed to continue the process of the talks and agreed in principle to hold the third round of the six-party talks in Beijing no later than the end of the second quarter of 2004. They agreed to set up a working group in preparation for the plenary session. The terms of reference

²⁵⁾ *People's Daily*, August 29, 2003.

²⁶⁾ *Manila Chinese Commercial News*, September 2, 2003.

for the working group will be established through diplomatic channels.”²⁷⁾

After the end of the second round of Six-Party talks the United States and Russia expressed their dissatisfaction for this kind of idle negotiation. The Russian head of the delegation said, “If the negotiating process is stalled, a number of countries could take certain measures against DPRK, for example, a blockade, which could further exacerbate the political and even military atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula.”²⁸⁾ The United States also threatened that if Pyongyang did not admit to its HEU program and “commitment to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its program”, all options were still on the table — a not so subtle threat that military action was possible.²⁹⁾ In a response, Chinese vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that all parties should make concerted efforts in three areas. First, they should carefully study key standpoints of substantial issues and solutions proposed during the talks, from which they could summarize positive factors. Second, a working group should be formed as soon as possible to prepare for the third round talks. Third, the parties should maintain a peaceful environment throughout the process of the talks and avoid words or actions that might intensify differences or provoke other parties.³⁰⁾ These remarks criticized the United States and Russia indirectly.

The third round of Six-Party Talks in late June 2004 proved to be an important session. Many observer believed that if the third round talks

²⁷⁾ *Xinhua News Agency*, February 28, 2004.

²⁸⁾ Charles L. Pritchard, “The Korean Peninsula and the Role of Multilateral Talks,” *North-East Asian Security*, second issue (2005), p. 31.

²⁹⁾ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁾ *Xinhua News Agency*, March 5, 2004.

followed the pattern of the previous two sessions, it could be the end of the multilateral process. But this time, the situation changed somewhat, and the talks between the two Koreas made progress. Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi made a second trip to Pyongyang. China made public comments about the need for additional U.S. flexibility in dealing with DPRK. The US administration also faced problems such as continued criticism from the international community and the upcoming election, which influenced the United States to make its first concrete proposal to resolve the nuclear crisis during the third round of talks. In the initial three months period, the DPRK would provide a complete listing of all its nuclear activities, and cease operations of all its nuclear activities, permit the securing of all fissile material and the monitoring of all fuel rods and permit the publicly disclosed and observable disablement of all nuclear weapons/weapon components and key centrifuge parts. In return, other parties would take corresponding steps such as providing the heavy fuel to DPRK. DPRK eventually rejected the US proposal and said, "the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is our ultimate goal, we once again made it clear that if the United States gives up its hostile policy against us through action, we will transparently renounce all our nuclear weapons-related programs. We presented a concrete plan on nuclear freeze, on the premise that if the United States withdraws the CVID demand and accepts our demand for reward."³¹⁾ Though the third round talks did not produce any tangible outcomes, compared with the former two rounds of talks, it had made

³¹⁾ DPRK Spokesman's 25 June press conference at Six-party Talks in Beijing; (<http://www.xignite.com>).

progress in which both the United States and the DPRK made proposals.

4. The Six-Party Talks Greatly Promoted the Establishment of Security Mechanism in Northeast Asia

As we know, at first the aim of the six-party talks was strictly to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis. They were simply a mechanism for solving a crisis, but this mechanism kept developing with additional rounds of talks. This mechanism may not only develop into a realistic and feasible form to solve the DPRK nuclear crisis, but even solve the security issues of northeast Asia. First of all, the Six-Party talks seized the sticking point (DPRK nuclear issue) which affects the security of Korean peninsula and northeast Asia, and therefore, solving the DPRK nuclear issue has a huge significance for maintaining peace in the Korean peninsula as well as in northeast Asia. Secondly, the Six-Party talks have included all of the countries that have important interests in this area. These countries negotiated on an equal basis and consulted sufficiently to gain some agreement or consensus which will no doubt lay a solid foundation for future security cooperation in northeast Asia.

In the past 6 years, the six-party talks held six rounds successively, and though the formula was unchanged, the content and topics for discussion kept developing and deepening. During the three earliest rounds of talks, the direction of the discussion had changed.

From July 26th to August 7th, and from September 13th to 19th, 2005, the fourth round of the Six-Party talks was held in Beijing again. Unlike the

previous three rounds of Six-Party talks, the fourth round of talks ended with a Joint Statement. In this joint statement, “the Six Parties unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the Six-Party Talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner,” and “the DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards.” In return, the United States affirmed “that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons.” The ROK then “reaffirmed its commitment not to receive or deploy nuclear weapons in accordance with the 1992 Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, while affirming that there exist no nuclear weapons within its territory. The 1992 Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should be observed and implemented.” Other terms of the statement explained, “the DPRK stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of light water reactor to the DPRK” and “the Six Parties undertook promotion of economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and investment, bilaterally and/or multilaterally. China, Japan, ROK, Russia and the US stated their willingness to provide energy assistance to the DPRK. The ROK reaffirmed its proposal of July 12th, 2005 concerning the provision of 2 million kilowatts of electric power to the DPRK.”³²⁾

³²⁾ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China; <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t212707.htm>.

Perhaps these terms are all too familiar. In fact, almost all of these terms had been written in the Framework Agreement in 1994 reached by the United States and DPRK. Nonetheless, the 9-19 Joint Statement is different from the Framework Agreement in many aspects. It also included the following points:

- The DPRK and the United States undertook to respect each other's sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations subject to their respective bilateral policies.
- The DPRK and Japan undertook to take steps to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of the settlement of unfortunate past and the outstanding issues of concern.
- The Six Parties committed to joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum. The Six Parties agreed to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.³³⁾

These three terms proved to be a milestone. Though the United States has regarded DPRK as one of the "axis of evil," significant progress was made for peace in Northeast Asia as both nations agreed to "respect each other's sovereignty and exist peacefully together."(For the U.S., this is promised

³³⁾ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China; <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t212707.htm>>.

upon the North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear pursuits.) Japan's promise to normalize relations with DPRK in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration of September 2002 is equally significant as it came about through a multilateral framework. Apart from the relation normalization, the joint statement also brought forward clearly for the first time that "a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula" should be established to keep the "lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia." This statement pointed out the correct direction for solving the Korean nuclear crisis by establishing security mechanism in northeast Asia.

The 9-19 joint statement is just a stepping stone, and fulfilling what has been outlined in the joint statement is now crucial. But in October 2006, the nuclear test put the nuclear crisis to a climax. The confrontation between the United States and DPRK intensified rapidly and seriously threatened the peace of northeast Asia. Some people began to suspect the validity of the Six-Party talks. However, those countries did not give up hopes and continued to put in further effects to promote solving this crisis. From February 8th to 13th 2007, the third session of the fifth round of Six-Party talks held in Beijing ended with the formation of Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement.

The beginning of the statement announced that the Parties had held serious and productive discussions on the actions that each party will take in the initial phase for the implementation of the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005, and that all the Parties had reaffirmed their common goal and will to achieve early denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. It reiterated that they would earnestly fulfill their commitments in the Joint Statement, and the Parties agreed to "take coordinated steps to implement the Joint Statement in a phased manner in

line with the principle of 'action for action'.”³⁴⁾

Those kinds of steps to implement the Joint Statement included:

- The DPRK will shut down and seal the Yongbyon nuclear facility and will discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs.
- The US and the DPRK will start bilateral talks and moving toward full diplomatic relations. The US will remove the DPRK from the list of the state-sponsor of terrorism and terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act to the DPRK.
- Japan and the DPRK will start bilateral talks and normalize their relations.
- the Parties agreed to cooperate in economic, energy and humanitarian assistance to the DPRK and will provide emergency energy assistance to the DPRK, that is 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil (HFO) within next 60 days.
- The Parties agreed to establish five Working Groups: 1. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula 2. Normalization of DPRK-US relations 3. Normalization of DPRK-Japan relations 4. Economy and Energy Cooperation 5. Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism. For carrying out the initial actions and all these five working groups will meet within next 30 days.
- Once the initial actions are implemented, the Six Parties will hold a ministerial meeting to confirm implementation of the Joint Statement and explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in

³⁴⁾ *The Washington Post*; <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/13/AR2007021300508.html>>.

Northeast Asia.

- The Parties will take positive steps and make joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.³⁵⁾

Compared with 9-19 Joint Statement, the 2-13 Joint Statement revealed a bigger progress. One of the important differences between the two Joint Statements was that the six-party talks no longer take “the lasting peace of Korean peninsula” as an affiliated object or a bait for realizing the nuclear-free of the Korean Peninsula, but clearly indicated that the strategic goal of the Six-Party talks is not solely to realize the denuclearization of Korean peninsula, but also to establish a permanent peace regime in the Korean peninsula and set up a security cooperative mechanism in northeast Asia.³⁶⁾ The concerned countries realized gradually that it is the lack of peace and security mechanisms in northeast Asia that resulted in the lasting intensity of Korean peninsula. Only when peace becomes a clear goal, can DPRK give up their nuclear weapons. From this point of view, 2-13 Joint Statement is a real milestone.

From 18th to 20th of July, 2007, the sixth round of Six Party talks were held in Beijing. In the press communiqué, it was stated that the Parties would earnestly fulfill their commitments in the Joint Statement of 19

³⁵⁾ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China; (<http://www1.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t297463.htm>).

³⁶⁾ Jian Cai, “The Six-Party Talks and the Northeast Asian Security Mechanism,” *Northeast Asia Forum*, issue 6 (2008), p. 12.

September 2005 and the agreement of 13 February 2007. To fulfill the goals such as denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, normalization of relations between the countries concerned and lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia, the Six Parties would take three steps: firstly, the five working groups will convene their respective meetings within August; secondly, the Parties will hold the Second Session of the Sixth Round of the Six-Party Talks in early September; thirdly, following the Second Session of the Sixth Round of the Six-Party Talks, the Parties will hold a ministerial meeting to confirm and promote the implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement, the February 13 agreement and the general consensus, and explore ways and means to enhance security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

From 2003 to 2007, the Six-Party talks gradually developed from a mere mechanism for solving a specific crisis to a forum for discussion and establishment of the security cooperation mechanism of northeast Asia. Scanning the world, we can find that almost every region in the world has their own regional security and cooperative mechanism such as the EU, ASEAN, AU, and etc., but there is no similar mechanism to deal with the outburst of bilateral and regional conflicts in northeast Asia, a conflict-prone area where a lot of great powers had broken up conflicts throughout the history of the region and poses as a significant potential threat to international security. Setting up the working group of Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism according to the 2·13 Joint Statements is an important breakthrough; it will no doubt promote the establishment of the security mechanism in northeast Asia. It will also affect the peace and stability of northeast Asia and bears a long-range strategic meaning.

Though the Six-Party talks achieved a lot of progress, before the world

could celebrate the achievements, they bogged down once again at the end of 2007 when DPRK refused to describe its nuclear program thoroughly. When DPRK launched its “satellite” on April 5, 2009 and conducted its second nuclear test on May 25, 2009, the international community considered the Six-Party talks as a complete failure and the mission of the Six-Party talks finished. It believed it was time to face to a nuclearized DPRK. But shall we? Moreover, as a chairman nation in the Six-Party talks and a country which has a great interest in the Korean peninsula, how will China respond in this atmosphere of failure?

III. China's Response to the DPRK Nuclear Crisis

China has kept close relationship with Korean peninsula throughout a long span of history. Because of the geopolitical reasons, China's policy toward Korean peninsula has a vivid characteristic, namely, continuity. At the same time, it has another characteristic—flexibility.

1. The Continuity of China's Policy toward DPRK

The Korean Peninsula is located in the Northeast Asian hub where the mainland and the sea powers meet each other. The special location of the Korean peninsula gives it a particular strategic significance in international politics. Since Korean peninsula is adjacent to China, when the emperor of

Ming dynasty moved his capital to Beijing five hundred years ago, the Korean Peninsula has been of particular importance in China's security during the past few centuries for a special geo-political reason. As a result, China's policy toward the Korean peninsula has a consistent characteristic. That's why the Ming Dynasty used its army to help the Korean Lee Dynasty to fight against Japan in 1592, why the Qing government sent troops to the Korean peninsula for fighting against Japan in 1894, why Chiang Kai-shek supported the Republic of Korea's independence movement and why the newly founded China was involved in the Korean War in the 1950s. Geopolitics made these choices inevitable.

Nowadays, the DPRK still serves as China's strategic buffer zone in Northeast Asia. With a shared border of 1,400 kilometers, DPRK acts as a guard post for China, keeping at bay the tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea. This allows China to reduce its military deployment in Northeastern China regions and focus more directly on the issue of Taiwanese independence. To a certain extent, DPRK shares the security threat posed by U.S. military forces in South Korea and Japan. Therefore, the cooperation and assistance between China and DPRK is, at a minimum, mutual. There is an argument that China has helped DPRK without getting anything in return.³⁷⁾ This statement is partially wrong. There is no altruism in international relations, and in fact, by providing aid to DPRK, China is in essence helping itself. It is said that "for approximately no more than a few billion dollars a year, China has been provided with

³⁷⁾ Nam Ju Lee, "Changes of DPRK and Sino-North Korean Relations," *Contemporary International Relations*, Issue 9 (2005).

more than 50 years of peace.”³⁸⁾

China's policy toward the Korean peninsula was based on its own national interests in that area. Currently, China's interests in the Korean Peninsula are based on these two factors: to keep the stability of the Korean Peninsula and to establish the denuclearization of the peninsula.

Firstly, China's diplomatic strategy determines its interest in Korean Peninsula. After adopting reform and the open door policy, China set up a grand development strategy which mainly focused on economic construction. According to the principle that diplomatic policy should serve domestic affairs, China has been insisting on independent and peaceful diplomatic policy during the past thirty years. This kind of diplomatic policy aims to create a peaceful and benign external political environment that does not hinder China's domestic economic reforms. China is not only concerned with Europe, the United States, and other developed countries, but particularly to its neighbor countries, because the peace and security of its surrounding region is directly related to its domestic economic construction and development. As a result, China's first concern about the Korean peninsula is to avoid any war and to maintain peace and stability of Korean peninsula. This is why China has always resolutely opposed the resolution of the Korean nuclear crisis by force from the beginning to the end.

Any military strike could lead to a comprehensive Korean War, leading to regional instability which would undoubtedly affect China's economic construction hugely. If a war breaks out on the Korean Peninsula again, in

³⁸⁾ Philip Pan, "China Treads Carefully Around DPRK," *The Washington Post*, January 10, 2003, A14.

accordance with the Sino-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance signed in 1961, China will face very difficult choices.

The outbreak of war would bring some striking consequences. First, since China has very deep economic ties with South Korea, Japan and the United States, the outbreak of war would destroy the prospects of China's economic development. Secondly, the outbreak of war is likely to lead to the collapse of the DPRK regime. The sudden collapse of the DPRK regime will not only bring tremendous economic and security consequences to China, but at the same time, it will lead to the rapid reunification of the Korean Peninsula, making the future of the Korean peninsula uncertain. Thirdly, the war would present a serious refugee problem. At present, there are tens of thousands illegal border violators from DPRK living in China due to sustained famine. It has increased China's economic and social burdens, and if there is a war, the refugee problem will indeed become a very serious problem.³⁹⁾ The most important thing for China is to try its best to keep the peace and stability of Korean peninsula.

China's other concern in this area is the denuclearization of Korean peninsula. China does not want DPRK to become a nuclear power for three reasons: first, a nuclearized DPRK may not serve its desire for safety, but may greatly increase the instability in the region and the possibility of military conflict. Secondly, DPRK's development of nuclear weapons would undermine the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty system, leading to a regional arms competition and nuclear proliferation. This will pose a serious threat to the stability of the international community, and the subsequent acquisition of nuclear weapons

³⁹⁾ Jian Cai, "How will China to Cope with the Nuclear Crisis," p. 28.

by Japan, South Korea and even Taiwan will be fatal to China's interests. Finally, the DPRK nuclear crisis has caused China to experience tremendous diplomatic pressure. China is DPRK's traditional ally and the largest aid donor. In the past decade, the United States has repeatedly hoped for and asked for China to use its political and economic leverage to force DPRK not to play with dangerous brinkmanship. Therefore, the outbreak of the DPRK nuclear crisis not only increases the difficulty for China to maintain the balance between the United States and DPRK, but also the difficulty in handling the balance between the ROK and DPRK.⁴⁰⁾

We can find that it is China's vital interests in the Korean Peninsula that make China carry on a consistent policy. However, while China had adhered to the policy consistency, with the developing of the crisis, it can also exercise a certain degree of flexibility in its policies.

2. The Flexibility of China's Policy toward DPRK

For a long time, China has consistently supported DPRK, but this does not mean that this kind of support would be guaranteed to continue under any conditions. As the situation changes, China's national interest also changes, and so does China's policy toward DPRK.

On the Korean issue, China faces a difficult tradeoff. These difficulties not only come from the relations between China and other great powers, but also from Sino-DPRK relations. On the road to the rise of China, the level

⁴⁰⁾ Jian Cai, "Korea Nuclear Crisis Tests the Consistency and Flexibility of China's Policy toward Korea," *China and World Affairs*, vol. 2 (2009), p. 147.

of cooperation between China and the United States is increasing, but at the same time, because of lacking of mutual trust between China and the United States, the conflicts are also gradually increasing. Recently, as the United States adopted a “pivot to Asia” or “rebalancing toward Asia” policy and further strengthened its ties with Japan and ROK, China felt more strategic pressure and came to regard the DPRK’s existence and stability necessary in order to keep the strategic balance on Korean peninsula. DPRK knows well about China’s concerns on the Korean peninsula, and also knows well about the differing interests between China and the United States on the DPRK nuclear issue. Therefore DPRK often took advantage of China, and perhaps we could go so far as to call China a “hostage” of DPRK. In the years of the DPRK nuclear crisis, China has been trying everything to influence DPRK and hoping that DPRK will stand together with China. But the basis of this is that DPRK’s brinkmanship would not violate China’s interests in the stability and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. If DPRK’s activities hurt the national interests of China, China will also say “No” to DPRK.

Therefore, when DPRK launched its missiles in July 2006, China with stood the pressure of the international community and even threatened to use its veto in the UN to protect DPRK. However, when DPRK conducted the nuclear test on October 2006, China carried out a strongly worded condemnation ahead of other countries and then supported the sanction resolution made by the UN because DPRK’s action was starting to provoke China.

First, DPRK’s possession of nuclear weapons will hurt China’s national interests. No matter how the Sino-DPRK relations may develop in the future,

once the DPRK has nuclear weapons, from the experience of the international community, it would likely be permanent possession. The United States and DPRK do not have much direct conflict in geopolitical interest. Only when the U.S. interests step up in northeast Asia, would there be a conflict of interest between them. However, China and DPRK are eternally close neighbors; DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons will no doubt constitute constraints or even a threat to China's national interests at a geopolitical level.

Secondly, the DPRK's nuclear test would trigger the nuclear arms competition in Northeast Asia. Once DPRK actually possesses nuclear weapons, the nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia and nuclear proliferation is almost inevitable, and Japan and South Korea are likely to follow the suit. Japan already has been clamoring to become a "normal country" and has made many efforts to do so. Since Japan has acquired the nuclear technology, the money and nuclear materials, the manufacture of nuclear weapons is very easy. Once Japan and South Korea have nuclear weapons, China will become the only country in the world which will be completely surrounded by nations with nuclear weapons, and China's national security will be seriously threatened.

Therefore, China must know where its national interests lie, and when anyone violates these interests it should clearly say "No." That is the degree flexibility of China's policy toward DPRK.

3. The Changing Sino-DPRK Relationship

Though China's diplomatic strategy still adheres to traditional bilateralism used since the 1990s, with the changes of times, especially the improvement of its national strength, China's diplomatic strategy has become more inclined to multilateralism. China increasingly sees itself as a stakeholder in the international community and considers the anxieties and worries of international community from a higher level perspective. In this context, how China defines its own national interests, how it cooperates with the international community and pursues national interests, is becoming increasingly important. And the DPRK nuclear crisis has provided a lot of experiences and lessons for China.

As a large country, China must not only maintain its responsibility in the international arena, but more importantly, it must be able to recognize and protect its national interests. During the DPRK nuclear crisis, being a responsible great power and protecting its national interests have consistently been China's priorities. In fact, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is almost in accord with all of the involved countries' interests.

China and the United States interests regarding the Korean Peninsula are not always the same, but there are also some areas of common ground. For instance, the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a shared interest. The United States' pursuit of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is determined by its tremendous interests in East Asia. Though Japan is an ally of the United States, the United States does not want Japan to possess nuclear weapons. Japan, which living under the U.S. nuclear umbrella rather than possessing its own nuclear weapons, is more in line with U.S.

interests. At the beginning of the DPRK nuclear crisis, China believed that the crisis was caused by the United States, and therefore, tried to keep out of it. Many people accused the United States and even suspected that the nuclear crisis is just a conspiracy of the United States. However, with the deepening understanding of China's international status, as well as its national interests, China no longer merely acts as a bystander, but promotes peaceful talks and takes the initiative to adopt effective measures to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis. On one hand, China criticizes the United States continuously; on the other hand, it also condemns DPRK's extreme risk-taking behavior severely. While taking effective measures to protect its national interests, China maintained a large country's international obligations as well. This fully reflects the combination of principle and flexibility of China's foreign policy.

China and DPRK used to carry the responsibility of a "blood-bound alliance." But the Sino-DPRK relationship has been sharply weakened, since China established diplomatic relations with South Korea without DPRK's understanding in 1992. Around the time of Kim Il Sung's death, ties and exchanges between the two countries' top officials decreased, and the two nations' relations became nothing more than mere friendly relations as China accelerated its open policies. When DPRK conducted its first nuclear test, China voted for the UN Security Council's sanction resolution on DPRK's test and Sino-DPRK relations reached rock bottom. The allied cooperation seems to have greatly dissipated, though it is not abolished under international law. China appears uninterested in sustaining Article II of its Treaty with DPRK signed in 1961, which assures mutual military assistance in the case of aggression by a third party against either one of them. An attack

launched by DPRK on South Korea or the United States, regardless of whether DPRK has nuclear weapons, would not fall within the scope of mutual assistance required under the China-DPRK Treaty. But China will still maintain a 'traditional friendship' with DPRK due to several common interests. Even though DPRK has conducted a nuclear test, it is still a security partner albeit a difficult one to China.⁴¹⁾ China needs DPRK, and DPRK understands that well.

IV. Conclusions

In the short term, a DPRK with nuclear weapons would not pose a direct threat to China because China has not threatened DPRK. Still, it is reasonable to ask what the long-term impact of a nuclear weapons-capable DPRK would be on China and on the region. In the long term, to deal with the DPRK nuclear issue, China should develop a long-term strategy. This strategy should build on its own international status and the profound national interest. And in order to use a variety of means to defend its own interests, China should think about these questions carefully and thoroughly.

First, China's interests in the Korean Peninsula are to keep the peace and stability of the peninsula and the denuclearization of the peninsula, so DPRK's extreme risk-taking policy cannot be tolerated or accommodated. China should cooperate with the international community more actively to

⁴¹⁾ Dingli Shen, "DPRK's Strategic Significance to China," *China Security* (Autumn, 2006), p. 27.

manage the DPRK nuclear crisis, but at the same time, China should also try its best to keep the balance on Korean peninsula carefully.

Second, from the historical experience and practical development, the unification of the Korean peninsula is inevitable in the future, and China must pay close attention to which of the two Koreas would dominate the reunifying process and in what ways. China could accept a unified Korean peninsula dominated by ROK, but on the premise that a reunified Korean peninsula should adopt a balancing policy between China and the United States.

Third, from a long-term view, the DPRK nuclear issue is not the conflict between DPRK and the United States, but China's developing strategy in response to the United States' Asia-Pacific strategy. Since the new type of relationship between China and the United States has not been established, and the two big powers have yet to form mutual trust, the Sino-DPRK relations should be subordinate to the Sino-America relation, meaning China should pay a high degree of attention on how to keep the balance between Sino-DPRK relations and the Sino-America relations.

Fourth, in the long run, China will become a great power. To be a responsible member of the international community, China should not prioritize its responsibilities and obligations to DPRK above those to the international community.

Only by thinking about these questions seriously can China work out a foreign policy on the stability, continuity as well as the flexibility to defend its national interests.

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북한 핵위기와 중국의 대응

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국문요약

북한 핵위기는 지난 20여 년간 지속되어 왔다. 지난 20년 간 북한과 밀접한 관계를 맺은 중국을 포함한 국제사회는 이 위기에 대처하기 위해 최선의 노력을 기울여 왔다. 본 논문은 북한이 핵실험을 하는 이유와 진짜 목적을 분석하는 것이다. 본 논문은 6자회담의 기원과 발전을 검토한 뒤, 6자회담이 완전히 실패한 것이 아니며 다시 부활되어야 한다고 주장한다. 또한 본 논문은 중국의 대 한반도 정책의 특징을 분석하고 중국과 북한의 관계 변화를 살펴본 뒤, 중국이 한반도에 대하여 장기 전략을 발전시킴으로써 대북 외교정책을 변화시켜야 한다는 결론을 내린다.

주제어: 북한 핵위기, 6자회담, 중조관계

蔡建 (Jian Cai).....

중국 푸단대학교에서 국제관계학으로 박사 학위를 취득하였다. 현재 푸단대학교에서 교수로 재직하고 있다. 주요 저작으로는 “The Korea Nuclear Crisis and the Changing Sino-DPRK Relationship” (2010), “Six Party Talks and the Establishment of Northeast Asian Security Mechanism” (2007), *The Diplomatic Relations between Late Qing Dynasty and Korean Empire* (2008) 등이 있다.