

**U.S.-DPRK Relations in the 21st Century:
Ramifications of North Korea's Declaration of
Independence
from the International Community**

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Introduction

North Korea's July 4 launching of ballistic missiles declared its leader Kim Jong Il's determination to secure its nation's national defense irrespective of the international community's concerns and opposition. Initial international reaction ranged from stunned disbelief to rage. Japan was particularly outraged and took the initiative, with strong support from the United States, to press for UN Security Council passage of a resolution that called for economic sanctions against North Korea. Even China took the rare step of supporting a moderated version of the UN Security Council resolution that censured North Korea, but without reference to sanctions. Absent from most reactions was perspective. Rather than attempting to decipher the consequences, governments focused on punitive measures. How could North Korea and its leader Kim Jong Il be so audacious and foolhardy as to disregard the international community's warnings against launching a single ballistic missile. Here we pursue perspective to better understand Kim Jong Il's motives so that we might better know how to influence his future actions. Whether Kim acted in an appropriate or moral manner is not our concern. In matters of national security, morality, issues of right and wrong, are of secondary concern. Foremost must be the goal to better understand our adversaries so that we can deal most effectively with them. Otherwise, our security will be at greater risk in the future.

The Missiles' Messages

Kim Jong Il's launching of seven missiles, and the international reaction to it, illustrates several key points about the situation in Northeast Asia. Most obvious is the extent of the misunderstanding between North Korea, on the one hand, and

the United States and Japan on the other hand.¹ The launchings confirm that North Korea and its leader Kim Jong Il are determined to reject international pressure while pursuing its own priorities, including the building of a "nuclear deterrence" capability. Domestically, Kim Jong Il cannot bow to international pressure without risking the appearance of betraying his father's commitment to defend North Korea's sovereignty at all costs. For Kim, sustaining this commitment is vital for the survival of his regime. Also, Kim's defiant act confirms the fact that President Bush's "pre-emptive attack" strategy and reliance on pressure tactics rather than engaging in negotiations has achieved the opposite of their intended purposes. North Korea today is stronger, militarily and economically, and more hostile and defiant than when President Bush assumed office in 2001.

A Strategic Decision

President Bush has and continues to urge Kim Jong Il to make a "strategic decision;" either to give up his arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and cooperate with the international community, or face international isolation and condemnation. Integral to Bush's demand is the fact that the United States will not "reward" or "appease" North Korea by engaging it in negotiations or promising it anything in return for cooperation with the international community. Bush's demand is an "all or nothing" proposition void of the flexibility vital for negotiation. This has and continues to be the position of the United States in the Six Party Talk process.²

Kim Jong Il's decision to launch ballistic missiles vividly illustrates his strategic decision. It also is a response to the economic pressure and threats of the Bush Administration as well as the international community. Kim's actions followed mounting international pressure, even from Seoul and Beijing, aimed at deterring Pyongyang from breaking its 1999 self-imposed moratorium on the testing of ballistic missiles. South Korea backed up its pressure by threatening to discontinue humanitarian aid and the provision of fertilizer to North Korea if it tested its long range missiles. Beijing for the first time publicly expressed dissatisfaction with Pyongyang's missile

launch preparations.³ Numerous other nations also urged North Korea to maintain its moratorium.

The United States and Japan were most adamant in their warnings. They warned that international condemnation and more economic sanctions would follow the end of the missile moratorium.

Rather bizarrely, even former Clinton Administration Defense Secretary William Perry and his aide, Aston Carter, urged the Bush Administration in an essay for the *Washington Post* to launch a pre-emptive attack on North Korea's missile facilities. One can be certain that North Korea's generals quickly informed their "supreme commander" of this military threat.

The international community's recent warnings apparently confirmed to Kim Jong Il that the international community had united behind President Bush's demand that North Korea make a strategic choice between capitulation or isolation. The choice confronted Kim with a dilemma: would he submit to the international community and bow to its threats and pressure by canceling the missile tests, or would he assertively demonstrate his courage and resolve to defend his nation's "sovereignty" by disregarding the foreign pressure and carry out the test, even if it posed the possibility of a pre-emptive U.S. military strike?

Kim Jong Il is a very determined and purposeful man. His actions since inheriting his father's mandate to rule North Korea make this clear. He is neither crazy nor irrational. On the contrary, during the past decade, he has led his country away from the brink of famine, financial collapse and diplomatic isolation. This is quite evident in the fact that China and Russia moved quickly to strike a balance between Washington's and Tokyo's call for UN sanctions and much less strident UN action.

Declaration of Independence

Kim's choice of July 4 clearly was intentional. It recalled the date that South and North Korea issued their first joint statement after talks between Korea's two dictators, Pak Chong-hee in Seoul and Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang. In this statement, they agreed the two Koreas would not allow "foreign influence"

to interfere in their efforts to achieve national reconciliation. Thirty-five years later North Korea's "Supreme Commander" Kim Jong Il commemorated this anniversary with a display of military might by launching three kinds of ballistic missiles.

The kind of missiles launched was also significant. Three kinds of missiles were tested on July 4: the short range Scud C missile, the medium range *Nodong* and the long range *Taepodong*. The Scud can hit any U.S. military base in South Korea, the medium range missile is designed to destroy U.S. military bases throughout the Japanese islands, and the multiple-stage *Taepodong* is designed to hit U.S. military bases on Guam Island, and possibly as far away as Alaska and Hawaii.⁵ (I am grateful to Professor Hiraiwa of Shizuoka Prefecture University for this insight which he expressed during a July 6 interview with NHK news.)⁶

Domestically, Kim demonstrated his determination to defend North Korea's sovereignty at all costs, even if it means alienating the international community. This is of particular importance to him politically. Lacking his father's long record of having taken up arms to fight the Japanese and American "imperialists," Kim Jong Il must repeatedly demonstrate through his policy decisions that he is his father's equal when it comes to fending off international pressure, particularly when it emanates from American and Japanese "imperialists." Such conduct assures his nation's powerful generals and party leaders that he has the courage and determination to fulfill his pledge to them to defend the nation's sovereignty. Integral to this commitment is Kim's continuing pursuit of a "nuclear deterrence capability" consisting of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. As Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry declared on July 6, the missile tests were part of a routine military exercise.⁷ Such statements are valid when viewed in the context of Kim Jong Il's decision to continue building his nation's deterrence capability.

Pyongyang's Consistency

The end of North Korea's missile test moratorium and its defiance of international pressure should not have surprised the international community. If anything, Kim Jong Il has been consistent in his goals and negotiating demands. Beginning in

1998, Kim Jong Il proclaimed his determination to transform his weak and starving domain into a “strong and great nation” (*kangsong taekuk*), a phrase that echoes Japan’s 1868 Meiji Restoration goal of “*fukoku kyōhei*” or “prosperous nation and strong army.” The international community greeted Kim’s announcement with skepticism. But North Korea’s economic revitalization continues to make impressive progress, and famine no longer haunts the land. Kim has restored good relations with his nation’s two closest allies, China and Russia, and made significant strides toward reconciliation with South Korea. North Korea today has broken out of its isolation and, as a member of the United Nations, has been able to normalize diplomatic and commercial relations with most members of the European Union, Canada, and several South American nations.

Achieving normal bilateral diplomatic and commercial relations with the United States and Japan, however, remain elusive goals. Toward this end, Pyongyang insists upon a *quid pro quo* agreement with the United States that would exchange the normalization of relations for an end to Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons programs and possibly also its ballistic missile exports and development program. Pending the attainment of this goal, Kim has also pursued a “military first” (*songun chongchi*) campaign to characterize his domestic priorities. This puts national defense before all else, and ensures the military that it will receive first priority in the allocation of national resources.⁸ Kim explained, and continues to claim, that his “military first” policy is a consequence of perceived United States “hostile policy” as evidenced by U.S. economic sanctions and the virtual encirclement of North Korea by U.S. military forces and those of its allies.

Washington’s Inconsistency

President Bush’s election at the end of 2000 ended a decade of rapprochement between the United States and North Korea. The new president surrounded himself with so-called “neo-conservatives” (neo-cons) who accused the Clinton Administration of a policy of appeasing and propping up the Kim Jong Il regime. Their hostility and distrust of North Korea echoed a half century of mutual misunderstanding, military

rivalry and intense distrust that is dated from the Korean War of 1950-53. These neo-conservatives include Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, former Deputy Defense Secretary and current World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Bolton and several other ranking officials still serving the Bush Administration. They insisted that North Korea is unworthy of diplomatic dialogue with the United States, and that its breaking of promises to the international community should not be “rewarded” with bilateral negotiations. Their priority was and remains “regime change,” which means to bring about the end of the Kim Jong Il regime either using a combination of diplomatic and economic pressure, or using force if ultimately necessary.

Bush's Dual Track North Korea Policy

Bush personally favored their point of view, but nevertheless sought to strike a balance in his policy toward the DPRK because of South Korea's and China's concerns. These nations fear that "regime change" could create political chaos on the Korean Peninsula that might result in a second Korean War. Bush sought to appease his conservative supporters by using tough rhetoric to belittle Kim Jong Il as a "tyrant who starves his people," etc. Shortly after the September 11, 2002, Al Qaeda attack on the United States, Bush declared in December the "sovereign right" of "pre-emptive attack" on any nation that threatened the United States. He listed North Korea as a potential target. A month later in January 2002, Bush included North Korea in the "axis of evil" along with Iraq and Iran. Within a few weeks, he invaded Iraq for the avowed purpose of overthrowing its leader to destroy his arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. North Korea promptly concluded that it might be next on Bush's pre-emptive attack list. The North Korean people were told to prepare for possible war with the United States, and Kim Jong Il went into hiding for several weeks.⁹

China Intervenes

China for the first time in modern history launched an unprecedented diplomatic campaign to head off an armed confrontation between the United States and its close ally and neighbor North Korea. The immediate cause for China's concerns was President Bush's rejection of Pyongyang's offer to engage in bilateral negotiations to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Intense Chinese diplomacy initiated the Six Party Talks which brought together the two Koreas, Russia, Japan, the United States and China at a meeting in Beijing in July 2003. North Korea reluctantly participated because of China's diplomatic pressure and considerable economic inducements. The participants quickly agreed to pursue a negotiated end to North Korea's nuclear weapons programs. It was led by China and centered in the Six Party Talks followed.

But within a few months, the talks had stalled. On February 10, 2005, North Korea claimed in a Foreign Ministry statement

that had developed a "nuclear deterrence capability" that consisted of a "self defense nuclear arsenal" because of the United States' "hostile policy" and that Pyongyang had "suspended participation in the Six Party Talks." The DPRK Foreign Ministry in a March 3, 2005 "memorandum" elaborated on Pyongyang's stance. The memorandum stated that,¹⁰

We are also not bound to any international treaty or law as far as the missile issue is concerned. Some forces claim that the DPRK's moratorium on the missile launch still remains valid. In September 1999 . . . we announced the moratorium on missile launch while dialogue was under way but the DPRK-US dialogue was totally suspended when the Bush administration took office in 2001. *Accordingly, we are not bound to the moratorium on the missile launch at present.*

Subsequent intense diplomacy by China and South Korea convinced North Korea to return to the Six Party Talks. The international community cheered when on September 19, 2005, the participants in the Six Party Talks signed a joint statement that seemed to outline the path to a diplomatic end of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Two significant issues, however, remained unresolved: North Korea's insistence that it be allowed to acquire at least one light water nuclear reactor to continue its peaceful nuclear program, and the removal by the United States of the financial sanctions it had imposed on North Korea's banking transactions just before the joint statement's signing.

Slippery Slope

No sooner had the statement been issued than Washington directed US chief negotiator Chris Hill was directed by Washington to qualify the Bush Administration's acceptance of the Six Party Talks' joint statement. The Bush Administration claimed that North Korea could not acquire a nuclear reactor even after it returned to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).¹¹ The Administration's position however is This was inconsistent with the NPT. According to the treaty's Article IV, paragraph 1:¹²

Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of the Treaty.

The Bush Administration, however, ever since has maintained that this provision cannot be applied to North Korea's case because of Pyongyang's previous record of not fulfilling its commitments to the international community regarding its nuclear program. The Bush Administration insists that it will not remove the financial sanctions imposed in September 2005 until North Korea halts its counterfeiting of U.S. currency. To justify its position, Washington in October 2005 intensified its campaign to label North Korea guilty of a wide range of international crimes that encompass drug smuggling and the counterfeiting of U.S. currency. Ever since, the Bush Administration has rejected as insufficient North Korea's efforts to address Washington's concerns.¹³

Simultaneously, Japan-DPRK relations worsened primarily because of Pyongyang's refusal to address effectively Tokyo's concerns regarding the abduction issue. Tokyo consequently aligned its strategy toward Pyongyang more closely with that of the Bush Administration. In May and June, 2006, the two allies repeatedly re-affirmed support for each other's commitment to use economic pressure to compel North Korea's return to the Six Party Talks. North Korea, in its July 6, 2006 Foreign Ministry statement declared that it was not bound by the 2003 Japan-DPRK joint statement to maintain its missile test moratorium. The DPRK's July 6 statement paraphrased the United States' long maintained definition of "deterrence" by declaring,¹⁴

The DPRK's missile development, test fire, manufacture and deployment, therefore serve as a key to keeping the balance of force and preserving peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

Losing Face

The joint effort by the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and then Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe to push

for UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on North Korea backfired. Both officials have long viewed economic pressure as the key to resolving the "North Korea" problem. Their impatience caused President Bush to restrain his ambassador and the Chinese government to threaten a veto if the Japanese draft resolution was rushed to a vote. Russia and South Korea also objected. President Bush was compelled to announce publicly that diplomacy in the United Nations "takes time," and called for patience. His stance was the exact opposite of the one he assumed on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

A humbled Ambassador John Bolton appeared before the international press on July 10 and admitted that Japan's resolution was "dead." Instead, Bolton continued, the United States and Japan would study the draft resolution submitted by China and Russia.¹⁵ Abe and Japanese Foreign Minister Aso, however, vented their frustrations by publicly suggesting that perhaps Japan should consider strengthening its defense capability to include a "pre-emptive" option.¹⁶ Abe and Aso's provocative comments were to no avail. The "hardliners" in Washington and Tokyo ultimately had to accept a joint China-Russia resolution that made no mention of the UN Charter's Chapter 7 which is the legal basis for mandatory economic sanctions.¹⁷

The political damage caused by the rush for a UNSC vote and effort to punish Pyongyang could also have a lingering adverse impact on the Six Party Talks, if they ever resume. China, Russia and South Korea are certain to be less conciliatory toward the United States and Japan, given their preference to punish rather than negotiate with Pyongyang. This could embolden Pyongyang as it strives to press China, Russia and South Korea for more inducements to return to the talks.

The Price of Unilateralism

Pyongyang obviously sustained the greatest damage because of its missile tests. Once again, its provocative unilateral conduct outraged and rallied the international community. Most noticeably, China, Russia and South Korea publicly expressed keen displeasure. Pyongyang could have repaired much of the damage by accepting China's overture to return to the Six Party

Talks, but its rejection of this offer only reinforced the international community's determination to condemn North Korea and to isolate it diplomatically. North Korea's leader has made his generals proud of him, but at a substantial cost.

North Korea's unilateralism continues to estrange it from the international community, including its allies. China's firm public condemnation of Pyongyang is unprecedented, but may be more a consequence of its displeasure with North Korea's refusal to return to the Six Party Talks than because of the missile launchings. China promptly dispatched a high-ranking delegation to Pyongyang immediately after the missiles were launched. The delegation's public mission was to commemorate the 41st anniversary of the China-North Korea Treaty of Friendship. According to well-placed diplomatic sources, China hoped its Deputy Premier could deliver a message from China's leadership that offered North Korean leader Kim Jong Il a deal: return to the Six Party Talks and China would oppose passage of a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution aimed at North Korea, and instead press for negotiate a much less humiliating UNSC Presidential Statement.

Instead, the Chinese delegation had to wait several days in Pyongyang before they were granted an appointment. Unable to meet Instead of meeting with Supreme Commander Kim Jong Il, they met his deputy, Kim Yong-nam. He then lectured his Chinese colleagues, according to diplomatic sources, pointing out that China had sternly criticized Pyongyang for having launched missiles, but said nothing when a few days later India launched a long range ballistic missile. Pyongyang's bottom line was that it would not return to the Six Party Talks until it had convinced the United States to drop its new sanctions against North Korea.

Stunned once again, Beijing's officials withdrew from Pyongyang thoroughly humiliated. This loss of face may have convinced Beijing to support a moderately-worded UNSC resolution that censured North Korea. But there are limits to how far China is willing to go to punish its audacious small neighbor. China's Korea policy remains firmly committed to maintaining stability on the Korean Peninsula. For Beijing, this means preserving both the Democratic People's Republic of

Korea and the Republic of Korea. If confronted by the dilemma of choosing between achieving a nuclear free Korean Peninsula or preserving the two Korean governments, China's apparent preference is the latter. Beijing is not opposed to Korea's unification. Rather, its greater priority is to prevent chaos, political and otherwise, on the Korean Peninsula to sustain a buffer between China and its potential adversaries, the United States and Japan.

The United States may have read too much into the July disagreement between Beijing and Pyongyang. Washington in August resumed pressuring China to end its aid to North Korea. At the end of August, Washington imposed more economic sanctions on North Korea. Then U.S. Chief Negotiator Christopher Hill was dispatched in early September to Northeast Asia to assess the situation. In Beijing, the Chinese drew the line on Washington by urging an end to U.S. coercive economic pressure and refused to shut down economic assistance to Pyongyang.

North Korea's missile launchings damaged Pyongyang's relations with China, but time is certain to heal the wounds. Beijing knows that Pyongyang needs its diplomatic and economic assistance to survive. At the same time, Pyongyang knows that Beijing remains committed to preserving the political status quo on the Korean Peninsula. It previously took almost eight years for Pyongyang to recover from China's diplomatic recognition of South Korea. Beijing possibly will recover much more quickly from this recent clash with Pyongyang. The price, however, could be a long pause in the Six Party Talks.

Six Party Talks

In any event, the fall-out from North Korea's missile launches has not changed China's position regarding the Six Party Talks. Despite Washington's intensifying economic pressure, Beijing is confident that there are only two potentially effective options for convincing North Korea to halt the development of its arsenal of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles: confront it militarily or negotiate with it. Beijing is convinced that economic pressure alone cannot compel North Korea to disarm. Nor is North Korea likely to soon collapse so long as China continues to assist its neighbor with economic assistance and investment.

China, in short, remains committed to seeing the Six Party Talks continue but at the same time it recognizes that resumption is not likely any time soon. Beijing believes its interests are best served until everyone returns by stabilizing the situation on the Korean Peninsula while continuing to the Six Party Talks by stabilizing the situation. This means maintaining a remaining in the middle position between Washington and Pyongyang while attempting to induce in either or both sides to become more flexible. Meanwhile, Pyongyang can be expected to continue demanding that China pressure Washington to end its financial sanctions while at the same time Washington continues to push Beijing to pressure Pyongyang to remain in the Six Party Talks. Obviously, the situation is not just a stand off; it is a dead lock.

Japan's Options

Japan needs to adjust its foreign policy and priorities to the shifting balance of power in Northeast Asia. China and South Korea are emerging from a century of domestic turmoil and economic reconstruction. Their newly-forged economic prosperity and international prestige fosters self confidence and a desire to assert themselves on the international stage. North Korea's development of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities has nurtured its self confidence and assertiveness after a decade of economic decline and diplomatic estrangement. At the same time, President Bush since 2002 has shifted the United States' diplomatic and military focus from East Asia to the Middle East.

The Japanese people have uneasily watched these developments while its government has clings to its Cold War strategy of relying on the US-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of its diplomacy and defense posture. Prime Minister Koizumi maintained a foreign policy that essentially subordinated Japan to the United States. Japan has been a supporting participant in the Six Party Talks, accommodated Washington's reduction of US troops in Japan, sent its own troops to Iraq, and responded positively to Washington's call for assistance in the war on terrorism. Koizumi, under substantial public pressure, demonstrated initiative only toward North Korea in addressing the Japanese abduction issue.

But Japan's new Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet are under public pressure to adopt a more assertive foreign affairs and defense posture. His choice is between multilateralism, which is vital for the Six Party Talks' resumption, a continued commitment to the U.S.-Japan alliance, or the pursuit of a unilateral policy. In the wake of North Korea's missile launches in July 2006, Abe clearly prefers to appear to prefer continuing the alliance with Washington. Pyongyang's October 2006 nuclear test reinforced this commitment. Abe has made it clear that Japan need not develop its own nuclear capability so long as it can rely on the United States' nuclear umbrella to deter a nuclear attack from North Korea. At the same time, however, Abe and Aso are attempting to project a more with increasing emphasis on unilateralism in their foreign policy. Japan, however, should proceed with caution because unilateralism on its part could escalate regional tensions far beyond anyone's ability to restrain them. More Japanese sanctions on North Korea are not likely to compel North Korea to bow to Tokyo's demands. Continuing diplomatic confrontations with North Korea over the abduction issue, with China and the two Koreas over visits to Yasukuni Shrine, and with South Korea over Takeshima Island will only deflect Japan's energies from what should be its priority – improving its anti-ballistic missile defense capability.¹⁸

Given the choice between unilateralism and multilateralism, and between bilateral disputes versus security needs, Japan's interests would appear to be best served by pursuing a

multilateral foreign policy that accents a balance between rapprochement with its neighbors and an improved national defense, particularly its anti-ballistic missile posture. Improving relations with China and South Korea could prove more effective than unilateral sanctions to focus diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang to return to the Six Party Talks. Restraining rhetoric and working quietly through diplomatic channels with China, the United States, Russia and South Korea are more likely to get the Six Party Talks restarted than a strategy of unilateral rhetoric and pressure. After all, one of the best ways for Japan to ensure its national defense and continuing prosperity is to promote peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

Conclusion

As stated in the September 19, 2005 Six Party Talks' Joint Statement, the nations of Northeast Asia, including North Korea, clearly prefer to preserve peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Given Reinforcing Washington's commitment to the region's stability is the Bush Administration's preoccupation with the Middle East, particularly Iraq and Iran, China, South Korea and Japan assume play greater roles in halting nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia while sustaining the region's peace and prosperity. Another North Korean nuclear test could excite unilateral action on Japan's part, but this could estrange it from its neighbors China and South Korea who share Tokyo's goals despite their disagreement over how best to achieve them. At the same time, Washinbgton's focus on the Middle East and Seoul and Tokyo's shared preference for diplomacy over any "military option" to deal with North Korea should sustain peace in Northeast Asia for the foreseeable future. As for North Korea, it is certain to continue refining its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities.

Nevertheless, war does not appear to be the next level of escalation even if the Six Party Talks collapse entirely.

Given the options available to all the concerned parties, continuation of the Six Party Talks remains their best option for avoiding war, sustaining prosperity and achieving a diplomatic resolution to the current impasse between Washington and Pyongyang over the latter's nuclear ambitions. Fortunately

China remains firmly committed to working with all the concerned parties, including North Korea. Russia and South Korea also remain just as firmly committed to the talks. Ultimately, however, if a peaceful negotiated settlement is to be achieved, the United States and Japan will have to restrain their rhetoric and shift from their current coercive tactics, i.e. economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, to negotiations that involve trading concessions with North Korea. Otherwise, China's efforts could eventually fail completely and the risk of confrontation in the region will rise. As for North Korea, it would still be able to retain its "nuclear deterrent capability."

undermine this self-imposed restraint on the part of its neighbors. But if Pyongyang presses forward with its self-proclaimed goal of increasing its "nuclear deterrent capability," Washington will be hard pressed to convince South Korea and Japan to support military action against North Korea. The consequences for Seoul and Tokyo will be far more adverse than the United States.

War, in other words, does not appear to be the next level of escalation in Northeast Asia were Pyongyang to conduct more ballistic missile launches and even a nuclear test. But if the Bush Administration were to press for UN sanctions against North Korea, that could push the situation to the brink of war. Pyongyang, as it did in 1994, would again declare that it considers UN sanctions an "act of war." China and Russia most likely would veto any such resolution in the UN Security Council while South Korea would make it adamantly clear to Washington that it would oppose both military action and UN sanctions.

Eventual resumption of the Six Party Talks thus remains the best available and potentially least destructive option for the concerned nations to preserve peace in Northeast Asia while continuing to pursue a diplomatic end to North Korea's weapons of mass destruction programs. Fortunately, China remains committed to working with all the parties, including North Korea, to restart the talks. Russia and South Korea also remain committed to the talks' resumption. The United States and Japan would do well to assist China by restraining their rhetoric and

coercive economic strategy aimed at North Korea. Instead, Washington and Tokyo should shift to emphasizing closer coordination and quiet diplomacy with Beijing. Otherwise, China's efforts to restart the Six Party Talks could fail completely and possible confrontation ensue. Patient determination, however, can help to make peace prevail.

End Notes:

¹ The international press reported extensively on preparations prior to and after the launchings. North Korea "watchers" seized on the event to express their views in numerous commentaries. International opposition to North Korea's ending its moratorium on the testing of ballistic missiles became a loud and profuse chorus by the end of June 2006. For example see: Choe Sang-hun, "Three Neighbors of North Korea Back U.S. Warning," *The New York Times and International Herald Tribune*, June 19, 2006. One of the most provocative was an op-ed essay by former Clinton Administration Defense Department officials Ashton Carter and Defense Secretary William Perry which appeared in the June 22, 2006, issue of the *Washington Post*, "If Necessary, Strike and Destroy – North Korea Cannot be Allowed to Test this Missile," p. A29. Former Clinton Administration chief coordinator for North Korea Affairs, Ambassador Charles Kartmen countered that the U.S. had "squandered" the deal he made with North Korea regarding its 1999 moratorium on testing ballistic missiles. "U.S. Squandered Deal on North Missile Moratorium: Ex-official," *The Japan Times*, June 24, 2006, p. 4. Bush Administration Vice President Dick Cheney promptly dismissed the possibility of a pre-emptive strike on North Korea by the U.S., "Cheney Plays Down N. Korea Strike Calls," CNN.worldnews.com, June 26, 2006.

² U.S. Chief Negotiator to the Six Party Talks between the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill summarized the Bush Administration's policy toward North Korea to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 20, 2006, "Recent Developments in U.S.- Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Relations, www.state.gov/p/eap, July 20, 2006.

³ For South Korea's reaction see: Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea's Ex-leader Won't Visit North," *International Herald Tribune*. June 21,

2006. "Seoul Warning on N. Korea Launch," *BBC New* (6/23/2006), <http://news.bbc.co.uk>. "South Korea Suspends North Food Aid," *BBC News*. July 7, 2006. Choe Sang-hun, "Korean Talks Collapse with North Rejecting Demands," *International Herald Tribune* (July 14, 2006). "North Halts Inter-Korean Reunions," *BBC News* (July 19, 2006). Moo-jin Yang, "North Korea's Missile Launches and South Korea's Response," *IFES Forum* (July 19, 2006). South Korea subsequently decided to reverse itself and to send 100,000 tons of rice and construction materials after North Korea sustained severe typhoon damage. "South Korean Flood Aid for North," *BBC News* (August 20, 2006).

⁴ For China's basic position regarding North Korea see: Jian Xu, "China's Viewpoint Toward Peace Forum on the Korean Peninsula." Delivered at a conference in Seoul on June 9, 2006 and published by the Korean Institute for National Unification, *Online Series*. July 2006). For the Chinese Foreign Ministry's reaction to the North Korean missile launchings see: Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu's Press Conferences on June 22, July 5, 12 and 13, 2006. Joseph Kahn, "Cina Caught Off Guard, But Strong Rebuke is Unlikely," *International Herald Tribune* (July 5, 2006). Maggie Farley and Bruce Wallace, "U.S. and Japan Agree to a Delay on North Korea Sanctions Vote," *Los Angeles Times* (July 11, 2006). Edith M. Lederer, "China, Russia Introduce N. Korea Resolution," *Associated Press* (July 12, 2006). Warren Hoge and Joseph Kahn, "New North Korea Resolution Offered," *New York Times* (July 13, 2006).

⁵ Regarding the capabilities of North Korea's ballistic missiles see: Joseph Bermudez, *Shield of the Great Leader – the Armed Forces of North Korea*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Urwin, 2001. pp. 236-291.

⁶ NHK Interview, Tokyo, Japan, July 6, 2006. Professor Hiraiwa is a leading Japanese expert on Korean affairs who teaches at Shizuoka Prefecture University.

⁷ DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman's Statement, July 6, 2006, (DPR) Korea National Central News Agency (KCNA), July 7, 2006.

⁸C. Kenneth Quinones, “Kim Jong Il’s ‘Strong and Great National’ Campaign and the DPRK’s Deterrence of the U.S. ‘Imperialist’ Threat,” in: Alexandre Y. Mansourov, editor, *Bytes and Bullets: Information Technology Revolution and National Security on the Korean Peninsula*. Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2005. pp. 276-297.

⁹ C. Kenneth Quinones, “Dualism in the Bush Administration’s North Korea Policy,” *Asian Perspective* (2003) Vol. 27, No.1, pp. 197-224. Also see: C. Kenneth Quinones, “Six Party Rally in Tokyo: Much to do About Everything?” *IFES Forum* (April 24, 2006). forum@kyungnam.ac.kr.

¹⁰(DPR) Korea Central News Agency (March 4, 2005).

¹¹ Statement by Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill, September 20, 2005, U.S. Department of State.

¹²Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Articles I-III, and Article IV, paragraphs 6 and 7.

¹³ Glenn Kessler, “N. Korea Sets Terms for Return to Nuclear Talks,” *Washington Post* (March 9, 2006). “DPRK Foreign Ministry: DPRK’s Stand on Six Party Talks Reclarified (sic),” (DPR) Korea Central News Agency (June 1, 2006). U.S. Chief Negotiator to the Six Party Talks between the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill summarized the Bush Administration’s policy toward North Korea to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 20, 2006, “Recent Developments in U.S.-Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Relations, www.state.gov/p/eap, July 20, 2006.

¹⁴DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman’s Statement, July 6, 2006, (DPR) Korea National Central News Agency (KCNA), July 7, 2006.

¹⁵ CNN News broadcast.

¹⁶ NHK Sunday Morning program, July 9, 2006. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Conference with Deputy Press Secretary Tomohiko Taniguchi, July 11, 2006.

¹⁷ “Japan Won’t Change NK Resolution,” <http://cnn.worldnews> (July 12, 2006). Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Statement, “Japan-U.S. Summit Teleconference,” July 7, 2006. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Statement by Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the Adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1695 on the Launch of Missiles by North Korea,” July 16, 2006.

¹⁸ Hiroki Fukuda, “Consensus on Yasukuni Remains Elusive,” *Asahi Shimbun* (May 17, 2006) p. 30-31.