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**U.S.-China Cooperation  
during the Six Party Talks**

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### **Abstrakt**

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá americko-čínskou spoluprací během šestistranných rozhovorů o ukončení severokorejského jaderného programu v letech 2003 až 2009 a jejím cílem je rozbor hlavních zájmů a záměrů, se kterými USA a Čína přistupovaly k jednacímu stolu, a dále analýza problematických bodů mezi oběma zeměmi, jenž nejvíce komplikovaly celý průběh diskuzí. Ačkoliv obě země upřímně deklarovaly společný zájem na jaderném odzbrojení korejského poloostrova, jejich skutečné pořadí priorit se v rámci rozhovorů lišilo. Na rozdíl od USA, Čína upřednostňovala stabilitu regionu před jeho denuklearizací a velmi se snažila mírnit tvrdý americký postup vůči KLDR. Díky tomu však bylo prakticky nemožné efektivně donutit Severní Koreu k tomu, aby zanechala jaderného programu, což ale bylo bezpodmínečně požadováno Spojenými státy. Dlouhotrvající politické a strategické spojení mezi Pekingem a Pchjongjangem celý problém dále výrazně komplikovalo. Jakákoliv prohlášení nebo rezoluce, které byly přijaty, pak postrádaly dostatečnou razanci a nedonutily Severní Koreu ukončit jaderný program. Americko-čínská spolupráce tedy nebyla v tomto ohledu příliš úspěšná. Na základě těchto zjištění pak práce dochází k závěru, že hlavní překážkou k dosažení jaderného odzbrojení KLDR byl nekompromisní postoj Ameriky vůči Pchjongjangu a rovněž fakt, že USA mylně odhadly reálný postoj Pekingu vůči celému problému. Nepochopily, že Čína považuje stabilitu v KLDR za svůj životně důležitý strategický zájem, a tudíž pro ni bylo kontraproduktivní vyvíjet nátlak na Kimův režim v takové míře, v jaké Washington požadoval.

## **Abstract**

**This Master thesis deals with the Sino-American cooperation during the Six-Party Talks between 2003 and 2009 and it aims to analyze both the main interests and objectives, with which the US and China came in the negotiations, and the problematic issues between the US and China, most critically complicating a progress in the negotiations. Although both countries cordially declared common interest in denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, their real order of priorities within the Talks greatly differed. Contrary to the United States, China prioritized stability of the region to its denuclearization and was trying very hard to moderate the harsh US approach towards the DPRK's nuclear activities. In this way, it was, however, practically impossible to effectively force the North to abandon its nuclear program, which was something unconditionally demanded by the United States. What is more, the long-lasting political and strategic alliance between Beijing and Pyongyang considerably complicated the problem. In consequence, any statements or resolutions, which were adopted during the Talks, lacked sufficient strength and did not force North Korea to start dismantlement of its nuclear program. Thus, the US-China cooperation was not very fruitful. Based on these findings, the thesis concludes that the primary obstacle to reach the objective of the Talks was Washington's uncompromising stance and the fact that the US dramatically misjudged Beijing's position towards the nuclear issue and the DPRK. It failed to realize that China considers the North's stability its strategically and vitally important priority, therefore it was counterproductive for it to pressure Kim's regime to the degree, to which Washington had wished.**

## **Klíčová slova**

**Spojené státy americké, Čína, americko-čínské vztahy, severokorejský jaderný program, šestistranná jednání o ukončení severokorejského jaderného programu**

## **Keywords**

**United States, China, US-China Relations, North Korean Nuclear Program, Six-Party Talks**

**Rozsah práce: 116 294 znaků**

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V Praze dne 16. května 2014

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Kristýna Hladíková

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## Introduction

The Sino-American relationship has been considered by many scholars and policymakers alike as the most important bilateral partnership of the world. The two countries are major trade partners to each other and constitute the second largest trade relation in the world.<sup>1</sup> In the international relations sphere, they have common interests in several significant areas such as the prevention of terrorism or nuclear proliferation and can thus dramatically affect the overall development of the world affairs. One of the most important spheres where the US and Chinese interests overlapped and brought the countries together was the complicated question of the North Korean nuclear program. Although the United States and China have historically very different relations with the regime in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK), they managed to overcome the greatest differences and engaged in intensive discussions over the nuclear issue.

The negotiations, known as the Six-Party Talks, were highly praised not only for bringing together all the countries with interests in the north Asia region<sup>2</sup> but also for the unprecedented US-China cooperation. Beijing and Washington collaborated with each other on such an important international problem for the first time ever and many officials had great expectations of them. China acquired a completely new role on the international level, mediated the whole process, and appeared to be as determined to a solution to the problem as the United States. The statements and resolutions adopted during the Talks were often celebrated as the best example of the Chinese-American cooperation so far.

However, the discussions were rather complicated and, in the end, did not achieve nor approached the declared objective of the negotiations, i.e. denuclearization of North Korea. The Talks have been suspended for five years now and the nuclear issue is far from settled.

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<sup>1</sup> China is the US' largest supplier of goods imports and its largest foreign creditor,<sup>[1]</sup> whereas the United States the PRC's main destination of its export. US-China mutual trade relationship is overall the second largest in the world.

See "US-China Trade Facts 2013," April 4, 2014, *Office of the United States Trade Representative*, accessed May 12, 2014, <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/china-mongolia-taiwan/peoples-republic-china> or "Top Trading Partners," March 2014, *United States Census Bureau*, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/topcurmon.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the US and China, it was Japan, South Korea, Russia, and North Korea.

The thesis is a case study in the US-China cooperation based on the example of the Six-Party negotiations. It attempts to reconsider the whole process between 2003 and 2009 and examines sides' national interests and priorities as well as their objectives within the Six-Party framework. The work then analyzes the most problematic matters between China and the US, which made a progress difficult, and the degree, to which were the objectives eventually achieved.

The work is divided into three major chapters. In order to better understand the unique US-China cooperation on the nuclear issue in the 2000s, the first chapter traces the overall development of the Chinese-American relationship in the 1990s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The relations were rather unstable at the time and several tensions occurred as the two countries were trying to find a new definition of their partnership. After the USSR collapsed, their strategic cooperation against the USSR suddenly became needless. The United States was the only world superpower and dealt alone with basically all international crises, including the first North Korean nuclear one, in which China did not want to intervene. Beijing concentrated on other issues, which it perceived as more dangerous to its national security. Most of all, however, it strongly opposed American dominant power in the northeast Asian region and was ready to resolutely challenge it. It was reflected particularly in provocative military exercises and the subsequent 1995 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Nevertheless, when the Chinese realized that the tensions in the relationship could be eventually counterproductive for them, for example in the form of intensified arms race of Japan or South Korea, they decided to respect the US presence in the region and ceased their quarrelsome behavior at the end of the 1990s. This is approximately the time of a move towards China's pragmatic moderate international policy, which gradually developed into the constructive cooperation with the US during the Talks in the 2000s.

The second chapter is split into seven subchapters, which chronologically follow the development of the Six-Party Talks as such. It is the main part of the thesis and systematically examines the US and Chinese main interests, expectations, and objectives, which were subsequently reflected in their strategies they resorted to. First of all, it explains how the second North Korean nuclear crisis erupted and the way the whole Six-Party process started. Then, it tracks all the turbulences of the complicated negotiations between

2003 and 2009, including the frequent North Korean obstructions, China's dilemma between the protection of its ally and pressure on him, or internationally increased hopes when perceived breakthrough statements were achieved. The chapter ends in 2009 when the DPRK withdrew from the Talks and the remaining partners were left without a solution or a satisfying result to the nuclear issue.

The third chapter aims to provide a final assessment of the Chinese-American cooperation and an overall analysis of the biggest obstacles in reaching a consensus and making a progress in the denuclearization process. The thesis proposes that the US-China partnership during the Talks was not very effective and provides key arguments for this hypothesis.

## **Literature**

Except for the primary sources such as the Six-Party Talks statements and draft statements or UN Security Council resolutions, which are publicly easily accessible on government or organizations' websites, I got most of the secondary sources during my stay at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA. There I obtained several useful books and recent publications, which I would not probably be able to get in the Czech Republic. I gained access to various academic databases and found journal articles, again rarely available in Prague.

Among the essential sources providing valuable and detailed information about the post-Cold War era and the US-China relationship at the time is *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security* by Denny Roy,<sup>3</sup> an American expert on Asia-Pacific security issues, involving China. Although the book devoted most of its content to the security impact of rising China on the present-day world, it also tracks the historical development of China and its relations with the regional powers. The author provides an interesting overview of the northeast Asian region history after the Cold War and gave me a thorough knowledge of the complicated US-China relations from the security perspective, which proved to be helpful for the first chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Denny Roy, *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Another useful book I used a lot for the first part of the work is *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War* by Robert Sutter,<sup>4</sup> an American Harvard professor. The publication presents Chinese foreign policy objectives since the end of the Cold War and impartially explains Chinese motives for their certain behavior in the era.

I also used findings from book, or more precisely chapter, *China and the United States: Cooperation and Competition in Northeast Asia* by two authors, Bonnie S. Glaser and Liang Wang.<sup>5</sup> The authors are experts on China's foreign policy, the US-China relations, and Glaser even specializes on Chinese assessments of the Korean Peninsula. The chapter from their book focuses specifically on the process of the Six-Party Talks and provides a lot of interesting information and a clear overview of the course of events, allowing a reader a very thorough insight into the Sino-American form of cooperation. However, their work seems to be rather uncritical to the outcome of the Talks and the text sometimes gives the impression that it was published before 2009 when the negotiations got suspended. It focuses on potential successes of the US-China cooperation and fails to mention a bit more problematic issues, emerging during the negotiations. Moreover, besides that, I had to use this source carefully also for the reason that the authors at times provide undependable information on China-DPRK meetings, which are generally not fully reliable as neither Beijing nor Pyongyang are so transparent on such things, especially when security issues are concerned. Therefore, I had to be a little skeptical to some of their assumptions or suggestions. On the other hand, when I found unverifiable information also in another source and it all made sense, I decided to use it in the thesis, when appropriate.

I had to take a similar approach also when reading articles by some other authors, usually from Chinese universities, such as Michele Acuto<sup>6</sup> or Jianwei Wang.<sup>7</sup> Some information they provide is unverifiable. However, some of their findings were interesting when assessing Chinese argumentation and real position towards certain issue.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*. Plymouth: Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser and Liang Wang, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and U.S.-China Cooperation," in *China and the United States: Cooperation and Competition in Northeast Asia*. Bonnie S. Glaser and Liang Wang, 144 – 169. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Acuto, Michele. "Not Quite the Dragon: A Chinese View on the Six-Party Talks, 2002-8." *The International History Review*, Vol.34, No. 1 (March 2012): 1-17.

<sup>7</sup> Wang, Jianwei. "Building a New Conceptual Framework for U.S.-China Relations." *The Journal of Comparative Asian Development*, Vol.5, No.1 (Spring 2006): 29-48.

*Negotiating with North Korea: The Six Party Talks and the Nuclear Issue* by Leszek Buszynski<sup>8</sup> is probably the most valuable source that I used. The work is a very detailed case study of negotiation and provides a thorough insight into negotiating positions of each partner of the Six-Party Talks. It helps a reader to familiarize with the whole discussion process and analyze the Talks from a broader perspective. Buszynski's study seems to be balanced as he works with a lot of unusual and rarely used primary sources, including unofficial, closed-door comments, made by negotiators from all parties, which he himself collected,. Then he compares them with the parties' official positions and statements, trying to find a likely reason of the partners' behavior. I used the book for most of my thesis and find it an extremely helpful source.

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<sup>8</sup> Leszek Buszynski, *Negotiating with North Korea: The Six Party Talks and the Nuclear Issue*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

## 1. US-China Relations in the Post-Cold War Era

The US-China cooperation on the North Korean nuclear issue within the Six Party framework was highly influenced by the general trajectory of Sino-American relations, but was at same time an important factor in the overall bilateral ties between the two countries at the time. In this chapter, I will therefore examine the cooperation between Washington and Beijing in the context of the broader development of their relations. This chapter first analyzes the evolution of general US-China partnership and their potential cooperation on North Korea, if there was any, after the Cold War and the dissolution of the bipolar world. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant for both China and the US that the anti-Soviet strategic framework created for the purpose of hindering the Soviet threat obviously did not make sense anymore. Contrary to the Cold War era when both nations were very careful not to let tensions in any area damage the predominant common strategic interests, now the countries did not necessarily have to control conflicts of values or interests. Therefore, uncertainty in the relationship increased and tensions could easily emerge. As new foreign policy strategy on either side was just being formulated and reconsidered now and then, Sino-American relations were fluctuating in the 1990s. There were episodes of frictions and complicated crises hard to manage (such as the 1995-1996 Taiwan crisis or the Belgrade Embassy bombing of 1999), as well as relatively smooth and positive engagements (presidential summits of 1997 and 1998). The process of “normalizing” the relations was not easy.

### 1.1 *Visions of Each Other in the 1990s*

The way the United States perceived China’s interests and vice versa had great implications on the Sino-American relationship and potential cooperation, which at the time was rather tricky. Both governments were well aware of the US-China strategic, political, and economic differences, and held strong suspicions about each other’s intentions. As a consequence, both Washington and Beijing remained on alert for issues

such as the Taiwan Strait or North Korea, which had the potential to easily complicate the US-China bilateral relations.<sup>9</sup>

The distrust between Washington and Beijing started more than sixty years ago in the 1940s when Washington backed the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek against Japan in World War II and later against the forces of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the Chinese civil war. After Chiang's defeat by the Communists in 1949, the US refused to recognize the newly-established People's Republic of China, hereby applying its containment policy to prevent the spread of communism. The Korean War between 1950 and 1953, in which Washington and Beijing supported opposing parties, intensified tensions among them and ended any remaining hope to normalize US-China relations. They stayed frozen for next more than twenty years.<sup>10</sup> Since the 1950s, the two nations have continued to share geopolitical ambitions in the Northeast Asia region as a consequence of the Cold War era.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1990s, the US-China relationship remained complicated. The Clinton administration was relatively clear about the US differences with China and resolutely conditioned an improvement in the partnership by progress in several key areas. For example, in his first term, Clinton tried to use human rights as the key principle to define the American relations with Beijing and conditioned most-favorite nation (MFN)<sup>12</sup> status for China on China's significant progress in human rights issues.<sup>13</sup> However, to take a tough position on the problem could then have been short-sighted for the United States. Due to the Chinese rapid economic growth, an increasing number of new economic opportunities for the US businessmen, and American growing economic dependence on China, Clinton found himself under the pressure of significant business groups that warned that conditions on MFN could jeopardize the US economy and access to the Chinese market. By 1994, the proponents of continuing the human rights conditions on MFN

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<sup>9</sup> Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 131-132.

<sup>10</sup> However, the Korean War was not the only confrontation between the US and the PRC which harmed the mutual relations. It was coupled with other difficult issues, mostly Taiwan or the Indochina conflict.

<sup>11</sup> Xiaohui Anne Wu, "China and the U.S. Beyond the Korean Peninsula," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol.13, No. 2, (July 2006), 318.

<sup>12</sup> Most-favorite nation status is given to a country by another nation if it is interested in increasing trade with that country. That country is then given specific trade advantages such as reduced tariffs on imported goods. The MFN is enforced by the World Trade Organization. *Investopedia*, accessed April 17, 2014, <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mostfavorednation.asp>.

<sup>13</sup> Jianwei Wang, "Building a New Conceptual Framework," 30-31.

treatment for China had become isolated and Clinton's initial China policy soon proved unattainable. The stakes in the US-China trade and the pressure from the US business community were "too important to be compromised for value purposes."<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the Chinese also played an active role in the human rights case. Despite being aware of the importance of good and stable relations with Washington and the need to restore the partnership after the Tiananmen incident in 1989, the Chinese leaders were very defiant as to US human rights requirements and vehemently urged the Americans to alter their human rights policy. Especially during the US Secretary of State Christopher's visit in March 1994, China adopted a tough stance, using the division among the Clinton administration leaders and the business groups. It managed to force them to moderate their policy while warning them of losing the considerable economic opportunities in the Chinese market. Consequently, Washington reconsidered both costs and benefits and eventually decided in May 1994 to "delink" the MFN treatment from US consideration of Chinese human rights practices.<sup>15</sup>

The United States and China also developed conflicting visions of the new world order. Despite overall military cuts and major reductions in the defense spending,<sup>16</sup> the United States aimed to remain the region's dominant player in the 1990s.<sup>17</sup> It managed to retain a high state of military readiness and a strong deterrence posture in the world, including the area along the Chinese border in eastern Asia, such as the Taiwan Strait.<sup>18</sup> By maintaining a wide network of advanced defense alliances with China's neighbors,<sup>19</sup> Washington wanted to make sure that it would be prepared for a potential conflict with an adversary, albeit not exactly with China. The American alliances were not openly anti-Chinese and did not intend to pose a serious threat against Beijing. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the Americans were well aware of the increasing trade with Beijing and did not

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 42.

<sup>15</sup> Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 138.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, defense spending as a portion of GDP declined by 1.8 points and military personnel was cut by 15 percent more than the previous administration had planned. Michael O'Hanlon, "Clinton's Strong Defense Legacy," *Foreign Affairs*, November 2003, accessed April 1, 2014, [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59374/michael-ohanlon/clintons-strong-defense-legacy](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59374/michael-ohanlon/clintons-strong-defense-legacy). For more detailed defense budget, see Charles F. Hermann, edit., *American Defense Annual 1994*, 48.

<sup>17</sup> Sutter, 133.

<sup>18</sup> For example, the US continued to support Taiwan by arms sales.

<sup>19</sup> Such as Japan or South Korea.



want to put the relationship at risk.<sup>20</sup> However, the United States frustrated the Chinese policymakers considerably because they believed the US behavior was just part of a broader American policy to contain China.<sup>21</sup>

Beijing was convinced that the unspoken objective of the United States policy was to preserve US domination in the region and to keep China weak so that the Chinese cannot challenge America's power in Asia. The US continuing arms sale to Taiwan or upgrading American cooperation with China's neighbors such as India was perceived as one of the greatest threats to China's national security as well as stability in the region.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the USA again became the main target of Chinese international concern and its "main enemy."<sup>23</sup> The official line considered Washington as the "mainstay of hostile forces that try to destabilize China," threatening global and China's security.<sup>24</sup> In response, Beijing endeavored to weaken the influence of the United States in eastern Asia and introduced the idea of a "new security concept," under which countries should rally in opposition to the US, "rise above one-sided security," and instead seek their common security.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese fought for a multipolar post-Cold War world, in which China would be one of the poles and would have greater opportunity for maneuvers than in a unipolar system dominated by the US superpower. As one of the Chinese officials put it: "We promote multilateralism to hold back US unilateralism."<sup>26</sup>

However, almost all regional countries respected the US interests in the region, saw American presence as beneficial, or felt too weak to challenge it, and the lonely Chinese soon realized they should better moderate their approach towards the Americans. They abandoned the policy of rejecting the Washington's power and gradually took steps to pursue a more balanced and pragmatic approach to the US.<sup>27</sup> What is more, the United

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<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Washington aimed to persuade the Chinese to join it and use their power to uphold peace in the Northeast Asia region. Such a behavior implied that preventing China from becoming strong was not an American vital interest. Denny Roy, *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 41.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 90.

<sup>22</sup> Roy, *Return*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Sutter, 57.

<sup>24</sup> These fears were reinforced after the US-led NATO military intervention in Yugoslavia in 1999 and the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Sutter, 52.

<sup>25</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Roy, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Sutter, 36 and 135.

States was a significant trading partner, necessary for China's modernization and economic growth,<sup>28</sup> and a working bilateral relationship and good economic ties with Washington were vitally important for Beijing. Therefore, the Chinese finally accepted the American presence in eastern Asia and declared they "welcome the US playing a positive and constructive role in the region."<sup>29</sup>

Another evidence of the necessity to reconsider priorities and overcome the differences, which the two nations had, was also reflected in the outcome of the 1995 Taiwan crisis. In 1995, Clinton, under the great pressure of the US Congress, reversed a fifteen-year old US policy against granting visas to Taiwan leaders and permitted Taiwanese president Lee to pay a visit to Cornell University in the USA. Beijing became extremely furious and responded with recalling its ambassador from Washington, cancellations of several important meetings with US officials, and mainly with publicized military exercises and a series of missile tests near Taiwan.<sup>30</sup>

Washington responded by the biggest display of its military might in Asia since the Vietnam War, hereby showing its readiness to protect its ally and fight if necessary.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the Chinese attempts to put pressure on Taiwan proved to be counterproductive. The military exercises only strengthened military ties between the US and Japan or between the US and Taiwan in the form of increased arms sales. Moreover, Lee's popularity in Taiwan had risen since the eruption of the crisis. Thus, China recognized that to provoke the US and its allies was not very productive and reconsidered the costs and benefits of its hard line policy. Eventually, it decided to respect the American presence in eastern Asia and resorted to a peaceful relationship with the US, finding it the best available option so far to get along with it.

The Clinton cabinet appreciated such a move and started to emphasize a policy of engagement through high-level contacts and summits, which was highlighted by two

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Andrew Scobell is one of the experts who claim the US actually "has done more than any other nation to contribute to China's modernization." It provided markets, capital, and technology, or avoided a war over Taiwan. Nathan and Scobell, 90.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover, it was accompanied by Chinese warnings of what it could do if Taiwan moved toward independence. For more details, see Sutter, 135-137.

<sup>31</sup> The US deployed a great number of additional ships to the region, including two aircraft carriers USS Nimitz and USS Independence. Roy, 54.

successful presidential summits in 1997 and 1998.<sup>32</sup> In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the US-China relationship started to be more stable and pragmatic than in the most of the 1990s.

To sum it up, over the course of the 1990s, the US gradually modified its value-centered policy toward China because it realized that the stakes in US-China trade relations ranked higher than US human rights conception.<sup>33</sup> It could not afford to press China very much in the issue as the US economy was becoming heavily dependent on the China's and potential Chinese prevention of American access to economic opportunities could be very harmful for the US markets.

Beijing at first did not welcome the US hegemony and its defense alliances in the eastern Asia region, but when it realized other regional countries were not willing to join China and jointly oppose Washington, the Chinese leaders eventually moderated their approach towards the US. Moreover, there was a great number of economic opportunities in the United States and China eventually settled on promoting pragmatic relations with Washington. Overall, being pragmatic, respecting each other, and keeping good relations proved to be the best available option for both the countries. However, no real cooperation on any issue occurred.

## **1.2 US-China Cooperation over North Korea in the 1990s**

North Korea and its development of nuclear program has been perceived as the most challenging security problem in Northeast Asia and still represents a great challenge for the Sino-American partnership. Possible nuclear North Korea, for which the Kim regime has been striving, poses a great threat for US security as it could endanger American global security interests and encourage other potential nuclear powers such as Iran to acquire nuclear weapons as well. On the other hand, China has been Korea's long-time protector, the biggest trade partner, and Pyongyang's vital source of foreign exchange, hereby ensuring the North's regime stability and survival.<sup>34</sup> In this way, Beijing also

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<sup>32</sup> Leszek Buszynski, *Negotiating with North Korea*, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the issue did not fully disappear. It continued to be considered crucial but due to the abovementioned economic priorities the US resorted to different methods (closer-door meetings) of pressing China in the problem.

<sup>34</sup> China accounts for 70 percent of North Korea's trade, runs many of the North's mines and hosts thousands of its North Korean workers. If the border was closed, the economic disruption would destabilize the Kim

secures overall stability in the region, its major national interest. Therefore, North Korea has the potential to generate tensions between the US and China and could have profound implications for their overall bilateral relationship. As Anne Wu suggests, China-US cooperation in denuclearizing Pyongyang may either produce „lasting stability for the region or create a lot of damage.“<sup>35</sup>

### 1.2.1 The Origins of the North Korean Nuclear Program

Both North Korean crises (in 1993-1994 and in 2003) have roots in programs to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles that North Korea started in the 1960s with the help of the Soviet Union. Through the nuclear program, the DPRK sought to hold loyalty of the regime elites, particularly of military officers, effectively deter the US, and acquire commercial ventures, hereby bringing million of dollars.<sup>36</sup> By means of the Soviet „Atoms for Peace“ initiative, created after President Eisenhower’s program of the same name, the North Koreans had a chance to be trained and educated in Soviet nuclear centers. Further, the Soviets provided a small research reactor and by the 1970s, North Korea was able to launch a nuclear program without external assistance.<sup>37</sup> The DPRK quickly mastered all aspects of the gas-graphite reactor fuel cycle and built fuel fabrication facilities, which enabled extraction of plutonium from spent fuel. But unlike the Soviet facilities, these ones were constructed without being declared to or inspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On the other hand, Pyongyang did not have any obligation to declare them as it was not a member of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>38</sup> The nuclear activity was captured only by the American satellites in the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> In 1985, North Korea, under the Soviet pressure and in exchange for Moscow’s promise to deliver light-water reactors (LWRs), signed the NPT and agreed to the IAEA inspections. For some time, concerns waned. But for a variety of reasons, most importantly due to an

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regime and endanger stability of the region, which is China’s major national interest. “Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?,” Special Report on the Koreas, *Economist*, October 26, 2013, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Xiaohui, “*China and the US Beyond*,” 317.

<sup>36</sup> The commercial use of the nuclear program could bring millions of dollars though sales of ballistic missiles or nuclear technology, which is the only source of North Korean foreign exchange. Nathan and Scobell, 129.

<sup>37</sup> Siegfried S. Hecker, “Lessons Learned From the North Korean Nuclear Crises,” *American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, (Winter 2010), 44.

<sup>38</sup> Hecker, “*The Lessons*,” 46.

<sup>39</sup> To be more accurate, Americans caught signals of the reactor construction in the early 1980s and of the reprocessing facility in the late 1980s. Hecker, “*The Lessons*,” 45.

IAEA paperwork mistake, the inspections were not formalized for almost 3 years, which allowed the DPRK to avoid international scrutiny.<sup>40</sup> It was not before 1989, when South Korea leaked American data of the reprocessing facility.<sup>41</sup> The international community then became concerned about the fact that North Korean gas-graphite reactors were capable not only to generate electrical power but also to produce weapons-grade plutonium.<sup>42</sup>

Finally in 1992, North Korea allowed IAEA inspectors to monitor its nuclear facilities. The inspections soon uncovered discrepancies between Pyongyang's declarations and IAEA's own nuclear measurements, to which the Koreans responded by threatening to withdraw from the NPT, hereby causing the first North Korean nuclear crisis.

### **1.2.2 American and Chinese Reactions to the North Korean Nuclear Program**

The Korean Peninsula's geostrategic significance drew China and the USA into the Korean affairs. But despite China's interest in stability and security on the Peninsula, Beijing kept away from the nuclear issue-related negotiations. The DPRK was perceived as its long-standing and important trade and strategic ally with the traditional role as a buffer zone against the US and it did not want to put its relationship with it at risk. Moreover, nonproliferation had never been Beijing's major concern due to its cordial relations with the DPRK and very low probability that the North would transfer potential nuclear weapons to groups or countries that could seriously threaten China's security.<sup>43</sup> As asserted by Wang, „DPRK's nuclear program imposes great threat to the US, not to China.“<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, the problem of the North Korean nuclear program was mostly addressed by the United States. The US was at the peak of its regional and global dominance at the time and focused heavily on the danger of proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> Terence Roehrig, Lara A. Wessel, "Congress and U.S-North Korean Relations: The Role of the Entrepreneur," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 38, No.1 (2011), 94.

<sup>41</sup> Hecker, "The Lessons," 46.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>43</sup> Ji-Hyun Kim, "Toward Comprehensive Understanding of North Korea's Nuclear Conundrum: The Six Parties in Complex Interdependence from 2002 to 2008," *Asian Politics and Policy*, Vol.3, No. 2 (2011), 266.

<sup>44</sup> Kim, 267.

<sup>45</sup> Gilbert Rozman, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and U.S. Strategy in Northeast Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (2007), 602.

capability of the NPT regime was considered to be vital for international nuclear security management and consequently for the national security of the US.

In the particular case of North Korea, the Clinton administration initially hesitated what strategy to adopt towards North Korea's nuclear activities but it eventually directly engaged Pyongyang in dealing with the crisis.<sup>46</sup>

However, when North Korea removed fuel rods from their storage site at the nuclear reactor in Yongbyon in 1994, which is considered a violation of the NPT, the situation got critical. In the United Nations, 28 countries supported the IAEA-proposed resolution and economic sanctions against Pyongyang, which North Korea denounced as a „declaration of war.“<sup>47</sup> The US was seeking more votes in the UN Security Council but was not capable to get China on its side. China openly opposed imposing sanctions on North Korea and was not willing to press Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear activities. Jiang Zemin himself made clear that Beijing would veto any UN resolution imposing sanctions.<sup>48</sup> Similar approach prevailed also several years later at the beginning of the second North Korea crisis.

Therefore, according to Fred Kaplan, Clinton broached the idea of pushing the international forum to finally impose sanctions by the means of a military strike threat and went to discuss an operation very similar to the Israeli strike on the Osirak reactor in Iraq in 1981.<sup>49</sup> The Pentagon then presented a detailed plan of a military action against North Korea, including bombing of the reactor in Yongbyon. According to this plan, the president should send 50,000 troops to South Korea (adding to 37,000 already stationed there), 50 ships, 400 combat jets, or Patriot air-defense missiles close to the North's borders, signalling that the US was willing to go to war to keep the Pyongyang's nuclear program

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<sup>46</sup> Strategies in how to deal with the North were quite varied, and it took most of Clinton's first term to find a balance in the US relationship with the DPRK. At first, it pursued coercive diplomacy or the so called "crime-and-punishment" approach when it kept setting preconditions for high-level talks and insisted that the North take the first step. But due to the growing concern that Pyongyang could really develop nuclear weapons, Clinton decided to try to engage rather than isolate Korea. It seemed to be the best of the bad situation as it could prevent Korea from producing even more plutonium. Virginie Grzelczyk, "Failure to Relaunch?: The United States, Nuclear North Korea, and the Future of the Six Party Talks," *North Korean Review*, Vol.8, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 12-13.

<sup>47</sup> Leon V. Sigal: *The North Korean Nuclear Crisis: Understanding the Failure of the 'Crime-and-Punishment' Strategy*, *Arms Control Today*, May 1997, accessed April 2, 2014, [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997\\_05/sigal](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997_05/sigal).

<sup>48</sup> Sigal, *The North Korean*.

<sup>49</sup> Fred Kaplan, "Rolling Blunder: How the Bush Administration Let North Korea Get Nukes," *Washington Monthly*, May 4, 2004, accessed April 3, 2014, [www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2004/0405.kaplan.html](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2004/0405.kaplan.html).

under the international control.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the US media exploded with war talks. For instance, Wall Street Journal's Karen Elliot insisted Washington should not be afraid of putting US-China relationship on the line and risking war with Beijing.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, however, the Clinton cabinet was setting up a diplomatic back-channel to end the crisis peacefully. Most of the administration was convinced that Kim Jong-il painted himself into a corner and needed an escape hatch without losing face. Therefore, Clinton secretly recruited former president Jimmy Carter to go to Pyongyang to determine if North Korea favored conflict or resolution, alternatively to let the Kim regime back down without losing face.<sup>52</sup> Clinton blessed Carter as he was respected by the Kim regime when he was in office for his efforts to remove all US troops from the Korean peninsula or for signature of a legislation permitting Americans to travel to the DPRK.<sup>53</sup> Jimmy Carter then traveled to North Korea and dramatically changed the course of events. He negotiated a compromise, known as the Agreed Framework, in which Pyongyang agreed to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear facilities for the promise of high-level talks with Washington and for US supplies of 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil per year.<sup>54</sup>

Overall, the 1994 confrontation over the North Korean nuclear program provided lessons for the US and the international forum as well. The Clinton administration eventually stopped its coercive policy towards the North and decided to engage Pyongyang in talks and this allowed to peacefully resolve the first nuclear stalemate in North Korea. The Agreed Framework (AF) was the example of building confidence between the DPRK and several other countries, including the US, in order to reduce tensions and move toward a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. The AF also served as a precedent for future

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<sup>50</sup> Kaplan, "Rolling Blunder."

<sup>51</sup> Karen Elliott House, "The Lesson of North Korea," *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 1994, accessed April 10, 2014, [www.online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10415585699354553](http://www.online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10415585699354553).

<sup>52</sup> . Marion Creekmore, Jr., *A Moment of Crisis: Jimmy Carter, the Power of a Peacemaker, and North Korea's Ambition* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 22.

<sup>53</sup> What is more, he was a nuclear engineer who was very knowledgeable about the matter. Creekmore, *A Moment of Crisis*, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the treaty established the so called KEDO (The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) to finance and supply 2 light water reactors to the DPRK. When the first LWR was finished, the North was required to begin dismantling its nuclear facilities, a task to be completed when the second LWR was finished. Buszynski, *Negotiating*, 22. Also, within 3 months of concluding the AF, the US and the DPRK were to begin improving bilateral relations, and the US was supposed to assure that it would not threaten to use nuclear weapons against the North. Roehring and Wessel, "Congress," 94-95.

agreements and for subsequent efforts to deal with North Korea as it set parameters for possible negotiations with Pyongyang, which could be later extended.

Regarding China, it did not cooperate with Washington over the nuclear issue at all because it perceived the situation as not to be threatening for its national security.

The US-China cooperation over North Korea did not emerge sooner than in the late 1990s. Although Pyongyang pledged to halt its plutonium program under the AF, it continued to expand its missile program and even transferred nuclear technology to Pakistan, which forced Washington to impose a new round of sanctions. Subsequently, North Korea threatened it would declare a war if the US did not give up its „hostile policy.“<sup>55</sup> However, Washington did not have many policy alternatives because military operations in Korea would not get wide public support, nor any strong support of US allies in the region, i.e. South Korea and Japan.<sup>56</sup> President Clinton thus decided to follow the so-called Perry Report and engage in the de-escalation process.<sup>57</sup> The Perry report suggested that engaging with North Korea instead of alienating it would be more likely to avert war. Nevertheless, the Perry recommendations included not only incentives for the Koreans to engage in talks but also adequate threats, by which Clinton tried to get greater support from the Congress. Contrary to the wide-spread convictions that the Kim regime collapses within a few years due to domestic problems with food supplies or leadership transition, the system survived, and support for the AF and Clinton’s policy was strongly diminishing, mostly in the US Congress.<sup>58</sup>

The United States then invited South Korea and China to reduce tensions on the peninsula and join the negotiations with Pyongyang. Whereas Seoul joined immediately, China was at first reluctant as it had little interest in talks at this stage and stressed bilateral dialogue between the US and North Korea. However, Washington continued to press it to participate because it considered it to be crucial for the negotiations, holding a key leverage over North Korea. Finally after Pyongyang accepted the talks offer, China decided to participate as well.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Buszynski, 54.

<sup>56</sup> Kaplan, “Rolling Blunder.”

<sup>57</sup> The US Department of State, *Unclassified Review of the United States Policy toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations*, William J. Perry, October 12, 1999.

<sup>58</sup> Reinhard Drifte: *The Perry Report and US-North Korea Relations*, *ASIEN*, Vol. 79, No.1 (April 2001), 55.

<sup>59</sup> Buszynski, 55.



The Four-Party talks, as they were called, were held between 1997 and 1999. Washington mostly pressed for tension reduction measures (such as confidence building measures or ending missile program) but North Korea had demands that the US could not meet. China seemed to be unimpressed as well as relatively indifferent to the situation and was particularly dismissive of any further talks. Moreover, it still preferred bilateral talks between the US and North Korea and decided not play a major role.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Four-party talks never brought about a permanent conclusion to the Korean crisis and did not achieve a breakthrough over the North Korean nuclear program, they were a model for the later Six-Party Talks of the 2000s. On the other hand, they also revealed the tensions that would arise in any subsequent multilateral negotiations involving North Korea, heralding complications and stalemates that emerged a few years later.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, 55.

## 2. U.S.-China Cooperation in the Six Party Talks

The Six Party Talks to resolve the second North Korean nuclear crisis has been presented as the best example of US-China cooperation so far. Although both Washington and Beijing had tried hard to reduce tensions and avoid direct confrontation in the late 1990s and subsequently in the War on Terror, only the Talks brought the two countries closer together. As US Assistant Secretary of State and the chief negotiator at the Talks Christopher Hill stated, „this whole Six Party process has done more to bring the United States and China together than any other process I’m aware of.“<sup>61</sup>

But considering the main goals of the process, primarily the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and achieving settlement of the North’s nuclear issue, it is debatable whether the Talks and the US-China cooperation were really so fruitful as suggested by some scholars and majority of US government officials. Pyongyang conducted two nuclear tests between 2006 and 2009 and the Six Party negotiations have been suspended for five years. The US now does not trust the DPRK and conditions further talks by Korea’s absolute acceptance of the terms of complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear dismantlement.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the US has decided never to „buy the same horse twice.“ Moreover, Washington apparently lost confidence in the US-China cooperation as a means of significantly changing North Korea’s behavior. It eventually realized that China’s interests and motives diverge much from those of the US. Therefore, it cannot fully rely on China in pressing the North Korean regime to the degree it would want it and persuade the North to completely abandon its nuclear program.

In the next chapter, I will thus examine the above-mentioned considerations and attempt to prove them. First, I will explain how and why the second North Korean nuclear crisis occurred in spite of the existing Agreed Framework, and the way the US and the Chinese reacted to the Pyongyang’s continuing nuclear program. Then, I will analyze common and conflicting interests of the US and China during the Six Party Talks and

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<sup>61</sup> U.S. Embassy Beijing Public Affairs Office, “Christopher Hill, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Interview with ABC,” February 13, 2007, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2007/80784.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> Feng Zhu, “Flawed Mediation and Compelling Mission: Chinese Diplomacy in the Six-Party Talks to Denuclearize North Korea,” *East Asia*, Vol. 28, No. 191 (May 2011), 215.

expectations, with which they entered the individual rounds of negotiations. Next, I will take a closer look at the evolution of Beijing's and Washington's strategies and policies within the Six-Party framework between 2003 and the end of the Talks in 2009. Although the Chinese and Americans did not admit it, they had widely different views and approaches toward the Korean Peninsula, preventing the nuclear issue to be solved.

## **2.1 The North Korean Nuclear Program and Eruption of the Second Nuclear Crisis**

As mentioned in the previous chapters, in 1994, North Korea concluded the Agreed Framework agreement with the United States, in which it promised to freeze its plutonium program and gradually abandon all its nuclear activities. But in reality, Pyongyang secretly continued to develop a highly-enriched-uranium (HEU) program, which can be used for making nuclear bombs without having a nuclear reactor.<sup>63</sup> By means of the HEU, it was going to remove the supposed US threat and force Washington to conclude a new deal with it.<sup>64</sup>

Korea had established plutonium nuclear program and been collaborating with Pakistan over the HEU program before the Agreed Framework. It continued in this cooperation even after 1994, in violation of the AF. For instance, in 2000, it received the HEU technology through Pakistani A.Q. Khan network, for which Pakistan got Nodong ballistic missile designs.<sup>65</sup> The United States, however, was not aware of the program's existence as demonstrated by Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visit to Pyongyang in 2000 to debate possible advancement of bilateral relations, having no clue that the DPRK was continuing in its nuclear activities.<sup>66</sup>

Only in the summer of 2002, US intelligence uncovered evidence that North Korea was procuring equipment, hereby proving Korea's intention to build a covert nuclear

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<sup>63</sup> Enriching uranium is more difficult for producing nuclear weapons than using nuclear reactors but it is much easier to hide the HEU gas centrifuges, enriching uranium, than nuclear reactors. "Nuclear North Korea: Bad or Mad?," *Economist*, 6.

<sup>64</sup> The development of the HEU program also ignored the logic of the AF, which was concluded, to a certain extent, to convince the DPRK that the US did not want to threaten the regime by any means. Buszynski, 30.

<sup>65</sup> A.Q. Khan admitted selling nuclear technology to North Korea or Iran in 2004. Buszynski, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser and Liang Wang, the North Korea Nuclear Crisis and U.S.-China Cooperation, in: Zhao Suisheng, China and the United States, *Cooperation and Competition in Northeast Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 146.

program based on uranium enrichment. Thus, then US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly visited Pyongyang in October 2002 to confront DPRK's officials with the US findings and offer an approach to improve mutual relations under the condition that North Korea fully complied with the Agreed Framework.<sup>67</sup> Pyongyang was shocked but indirectly admitted it was operating a clandestine uranium-enrichment program.<sup>68</sup> In reaction, the Bush administration suspended US delivery of heavy fuel oil shipments under the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)<sup>69</sup> and openly condemned North Korea by labeling it as the violator of the AF, the NPT, and the IAEA's Safeguard Agreement.<sup>70</sup> President Bush also demanded complete termination of Korea's nuclear program and full verification before concluding any future deal or delivering an economic aid.

Korea's leader Kim Jong-il, however, restarted a nuclear reactor in Yongbyon and expelled the IAEA's inspectors, making the Agreed Framework practically dead. In January 2003, North Korea withdrew from the NPT.

## ***2.2 The Early Years of the Bush Administration: Getting China Involved in the Talks***

The Bush administration adopted a different approach to deal with North Korea than the previous Clinton cabinet. It engaged in a hard line policy, advocated by influential neoconservatives such as Dick Cheney, and ran against the recommendations that had been presented in the Perry Report. Bush labeled the DPRK part of an „axis of evil,“ sponsoring terrorism, „while starving its citizens,“ and refused to talk to the North Korean regime directly.<sup>71</sup> As Buszynski claims, the US could have replaced the Agreed Framework with another, more comprehensive deal that would have removed some of the AF's deficiencies,

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<sup>67</sup> Glaser and Wang, „The North Korea“, 146.

<sup>68</sup> A North Korean diplomat acknowledged the existence of the HEU program by saying that North Korea „... is entitled to own nuclear weapons.“ However, it was a great precedent, which sufficiently convinced the international community about the existence of the North's clandestine nuclear program. Rozman, „The North Korean“, 605.

<sup>69</sup> The KEDO was established in 1995 to implement the AF. It was supposed to provide for the financing and supply of LWRs or heavy-fuel oil to the DPRK. More information in US-DPRK Agreed Framework, October 21, 1994, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://cns.miis.edu/inventory/pdfs/agframe.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> Buszynski, 25.

<sup>71</sup> George W. Bush, „State of the Union Address,“ January 29, 2002, accessed April 29, 2014, [http://nssarchive.us/?page\\_id=32](http://nssarchive.us/?page_id=32).

but largely because of the prevailing neoconservative agenda, the Bush government aimed to isolate the North and was no longer willing to engage it in bilateral negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

Instead, President Bush decided to approach the North's nuclear issue through a multilateral framework, in this way increasing the pressure on Pyongyang. He favored consensus of several regional powers versus one so that the leverage over the North would be much bigger. However, it should be noted that Bush understood multilateralism as a support from US trusted friends and allies for American unilateral initiatives and an extension of American security policy.<sup>73</sup> For example, he stressed in the National Security Strategy Policy from September 2002 the importance of coalitions to support American „proactive counterproliferation efforts.“<sup>74</sup> In the case of North Korea, he judged that the United States lacked sufficient leverage to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear program and searched for a united front and strategy over the Korean Peninsula.<sup>75</sup>

In line with that, the Americans started in late 2002 and early 2003 to push Beijing to play a constructive role in the North Korean nuclear crisis as they were convinced that they could not bring about North Korean denuclearization without Beijing's cooperation. Although they were developing strategies to counter the rise of China and both American media and the public feared China as such,<sup>76</sup> they perceived Beijing as the most important partner for negotiations with North Korea. Only the Chinese were capable to effectively press Pyongyang and persuade it to abandon its nuclear program as they were the only ally of the North, having a substantial leverage and influence over North Korea.<sup>77</sup> But as suggested above, the US wanted the Chinese to put forward Washington's vision of how the crisis should be resolved.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Buszynski, 58.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, 26.

<sup>74</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, “September 2002, accessed April 2, 2014, [http://nssarchive.us/?page\\_id=32](http://nssarchive.us/?page_id=32).

<sup>75</sup> Glaser and Wang, “The North Korea,” 147.

<sup>76</sup> For instance, the unions were convinced that China's harsh labor conditions were a form of unfair competition that destroyed American jobs. Further, defense hawks felt threatened by China's rising military budget and its accelerating military build-up. “The Dragon Comes Calling,” *Economist*, September 1, 2005, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/node/4343325>.

<sup>77</sup> Buszynski, 28.

<sup>78</sup> The US vision of resolving the crisis was primarily to jointly press the North to completely abandon all nuclear activities, let the IAEA's inspectors to monitor the nuclear facilities, and possibly to remove the Kim regime. Thomas J. Christensen, “Will China Become a ‘Responsible Stakeholder’? The Six Party Talks, Taiwan Sales, and Sino-Japanese Relations,” *China Leadership Monitor*, Vol. 28, No. 16 (2007), 3.

However, it is necessary to note at this point that the United States never seriously questioned Chinese conformity with the US aims. Despite its own efforts to counter China, Washington maintained the view that Beijing shared the proliferation concern with the States and was wholly supportive of US objective to denuclearize the North.<sup>79</sup> As I will explain later, Washington was certain it would get China to its side by words of appreciation and for that purpose, it created the image of China willing to work with Washington to prevent Korea's proliferation of nuclear weapons. But Chinese reluctance to fully support the denuclearization objective actually suggested otherwise. China was hesitating to openly side with the US on the North Korean nuclear issue, and did not reliably promise that it would help mediate a dialogue.<sup>80</sup> That all suggests that Washington caught itself in a diplomatic trap already before any talks began.

### **2.2.1 Chinese Evolving Position Between 2002 and 2003**

The process to get China involved was not very smooth. Beijing was cautious and reluctant to actively engage in talks to denuclearize its long-standing strategic ally, for which it „sacrificed blood“ in the Korean war.<sup>81</sup> In addition, it did not want to play a too active role as it considered it to be contrary to Deng Xiaoping's guideline to assume a low profile in international affairs and not to interfere in other states' affairs.<sup>82</sup> At the same time, the Chinese were worried that Washington was not sincere about its real intentions, i.e. to dismantle Korean's nuclear facilities, and was actually going to change the regime in the DPRK by any means available.<sup>83</sup>

Most importantly, however, China had regarded the nuclear issue as a bilateral problem between the United States and North Korea. As Chinese president stated in the fall of 2002: „China does not associate itself with North Korea's nuclear weapons program at all.“<sup>84</sup> Beijing even blamed Washington for causing the crisis by its hard line policy toward Pyongyang, hereby supporting the theory that the situation should be resolved only through direct US-DPRK bilateral talks. China continued to be highly indifferent even when

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<sup>79</sup> Buszynski, 26.

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem, 30.

<sup>81</sup> Zhu, „*Flawed Mediation*,“ 207.

<sup>82</sup> Sutter, 147.

<sup>83</sup> Glaser and Wang, „The North Korea,“ 147.

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem, 148.

Secretary of State Colin Powell himself traveled to Beijing and called for Chinese support in the issue. China remained unimpressed and refused to send a delegation to North Korea, claiming that it had only limited influence on Pyongyang.<sup>85</sup>

On the other hand, the US decision to deal with North Korean nuclear issue multilaterally with China as the mediator of the negotiations provided an exceptional opportunity for China to bolster its ties with Washington in the important time of the War on Terror, gain international prestige and show that Beijing grew to a responsible regional power.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the US offer to mediate talks among the involved countries seemed to be a great chance for China.

But ultimately, only unfavorable development of events on the Korean peninsula made China so worried that it eventually altered its attitude to the nuclear DPRK. When the North expelled the IAEA's inspectors, withdrew from the NPT, and Washington became tougher on the Kim regime, Beijing realized that the problem was turning into a crisis. It seemed that the gap between Washington and Pyongyang was getting more serious and proved that China's original plan to support bilateral US-North Korea negotiations was not working.

Last but not least, the fear of American military action against North Korea also played a role in Chinese rethinking of the situation. Beijing seriously took into account the abovementioned National Security Strategy of the United States of America from 2002, outlining the doctrine of preemptive military action and including North Korea in the „Axis of Evil“ list.<sup>87</sup> Considering US determination to wage wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, China worried that the United States might launch similar preemptive strike on the North, which would result in chaos, a flood of refugees into Northeast China, and lead to instability of the eastern Asia region.<sup>88</sup>

Moreover, Chinese concerns considerably mounted when President Bush stressed in the American press that all options were on the table when dealing with North Korea, then

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<sup>85</sup> Hui Zhang, "Ending North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions: The Need for Stronger Chinese Action," *Arms Control Today* (July/August 2009), accessed April 14, 2014, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009\\_07-08/zhang](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_07-08/zhang).

<sup>86</sup> Part of its "peaceful rise" policy, aiming to persuade other powers that China does not seek to challenge other states and its rise is not dangerous to them. Beijing is ready to take responsibility over from other nations if necessary. Roy, 53.

<sup>87</sup> "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," September 2002, accessed April 2, 2014, [http://nssarchive.us/?page\\_id=32](http://nssarchive.us/?page_id=32).

<sup>88</sup> Glaser and Wang, "The North Korea," 150.

called military strike the „last choice“ if diplomacy failed to stop Pyongyang’s nuclear program, and finally deployed twelve B-52 and twelve B-1 bombers from the US to Guam.<sup>89</sup> Even though China was obliged to defend Korea in case of a conflict with a foreign power,<sup>90</sup> it wanted to avoid such a situation as it did not want to provoke Washington or cause a setback in US-China relations, either. China, thus, was beyond any point where it could remain indifferent to the situation and began tilting towards some kind of mediation between the countries.

The first sign of China’s changing attitude occurred at the press briefing in Beijing in January 2003 where Chinese officials first offered to host talks. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Quye stated: „China has no problem in hosting talks ... if concerned parties are willing to consider such an option.“<sup>91</sup>

The final critical change in Beijing’s position came in February 2003 when Colin Powell visited again the Chinese capital. He managed to persuade the Chinese leadership that Bush was determined to resolve the nuclear crisis and repeatedly insisted that Korea must be pushed by China. After the visit, Beijing dispatched a special envoy to Pyongyang to make Kim Jong-il participate in talks. Probably for the same purpose, it also interrupted its oil supplies to North Korea for 3 days.<sup>92</sup>

### **2.3 *Three-Party Talks as the Prelude to the Six-Party Talks***

North Korea was efficiently pushed by the Chinese and eventually joined the trilateral negotiations with the US and China in April 2003, known as the Three-Party Talks. The meetings did not bring anything substantial but they were symptomatic for the later Six-Party Talks, and heralded their problematic process. Whereas the US was relatively hopeful about them, China maintained a reserved stance and sought a balanced approach that would harm no one. The Talks seemed to be working to a certain extent, which was demonstrated, for instance, by optimistic US comments and words of

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<sup>89</sup> Buszynski, 61.

<sup>90</sup> According to the 1961 Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. Buszynski, 27.

<sup>91</sup> Glaser and Wang, 150.

<sup>92</sup> Some scholars argue that there is no reliable proof that the interruption emerged to pressure the North to participate in the talks, pointing that China itself insisted it was due to technical maintenance. But considering that it occurred shortly after the North’s missile test and taking into account that Chinese oil deliveries were 1 million a year at the time, the temporary interruption must have had some reason and effect. Buszynski, 64.



appreciation towards Beijing.<sup>93</sup> However, the Chinese were highly reluctant to press the North and openly condemn its provocations or its incompletion with the IAEA's agreements, thus further complicating any progress in the issue.

The reasons behind China's approval to host the talks among the three countries vary but majority of them demonstrate that Beijing's motivation to negotiate with the DPRK actually differ from those of the US from the very beginning.

Whereas Washington wanted Pyongyang to get back to the NPT and cooperate with the international community, and demanded complete dismantlement of Korea's nuclear program,<sup>94</sup> Beijing joined the talks mostly to facilitate them and to moderate and reshape US position away from force and belligerence to a deal with the North.<sup>95</sup>

The Chinese were alarmed by US intentions and potential military strike on Korea, especially after the war in Iraq in March 2003. They were worried that their vital national interests were seriously threatened. Particularly Chinese conservatives were convinced that a strike on the North's regime would cause its collapse and subsequently fatally harm stability on the China's border. For Beijing, survival of Kim Jong-il's regime was crucial for its strategic and security reasons. The North is a special ally and an important buffer zone against the US military presence in Northeast Asia and Japan. It serves as a means of influence over potential reunification of Korea and guarantees that the North would not fall immediately under American control.<sup>96</sup> Further, the regime's fall would lead to widespread chaos, creating a considerable wave of refugees across the Korea-China border. That would destabilize at least China's northwest regions and endanger stability necessary for Chinese continuous economic growth and the survival of China's own political system.<sup>97</sup> At last, the chaos would bring American and South Korean troops to the North to secure the nuclear facilities and maintain order, hereby directly threatening China.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> For example, President Bush started to call China a "friend, not a foe" and welcomed the emergence of a "strong, peaceful, and prosperous China" to encourage it to engage in the negotiations as well as in a constructive relationship with the US. Glaser and Wang, 146.

<sup>94</sup> This was strongly supported by the IAEA and the International Crisis Group, i.e. the US international experts from top universities and think tanks. Buszynski, 27.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

<sup>96</sup> Taek Goo Kang, "Assessing China's Approach to Regional Multilateral Security Cooperation," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (August 2010), 412.

<sup>97</sup> Kang, "Assessing," 411.

<sup>98</sup> Buszynski, 28.

Therefore, Beijing's immediate goal in the Three-Party Talks was to head off the US pressure for a military strike if North Korea did not cooperate, and to stabilize the peninsula. At the same time, it was trying to separate the nuclear issue from the issue of stability and security and postpone the nuclear problem to the future when conditions would be more favorable for a resolution.<sup>99</sup> For this purpose, it was nudging the US and North Korea into a compromise, which would remove their mutual hostility.

The process of satisfying both parties, i.e. working with both of them while actually avoiding openly siding with either of them, required a difficult double game. On one hand, China sought to assure the US about their shared goals and pretended it desired to resolve the nuclear issue as soon as possible. On the other hand, it rushed to guarantee to Pyongyang that it sided with it and would protect it when necessary. In result, however, Beijing had to resist both Pyongyang's demands for assuring security from Washington and US pressures to attack Korea and remove the regime if diplomacy failed.<sup>100</sup>

At the same time, the strong US pressures on China to push the North show how unrealistic expectations the Bush administration maintained, and how little it understood China's interests. It continued to ignore Chinese suggestions to offer North Korea incentives such as economic aid or security assurances, which suggested that Beijing had, in reality, different motives than the US. For instance, James Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State, on his visit to China in April 2003, demanded inspections of the nuclear facilities in North Korea and opposed any economic assistance, which would keep the North afloat, and instead proposed, in the name of the United States, to work with the Chinese to remove the Korean regime.<sup>101</sup> He completely ignored the long, historic ties between the two nations, and wrongly supposed China would support the US in removing the North Korean regime.

But despite US misunderstanding of China's real motives and strategy, Beijing managed to relatively successfully balance the demands from both interested parties. It protected North Korea to a considerable extent when it prevented the US from raising the issue of the North's withdrawal from the NPT at the UN Security Council, or when it refused to publicly condemn Pyongyang's policies as the US had wished. Also, it

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<sup>99</sup> Ibidem, 30.

<sup>100</sup> Glaser and Wang, 152.

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem, 149.

succeeded to persuade the US that it shared the interests with it and had acted as Washington expected.<sup>102</sup>

In the end, however, the talks satisfied no one fully and both the United States and China were more or less disappointed by the absence of any concrete consensus. First, the Americans were angered by North Korean provocative remarks<sup>103</sup> during the negotiations that they became even more hardline over the nuclear issue. Bush rejected giving up its „hostile policy“ (whatever it could represent for the Koreans),<sup>104</sup> which is reflected in some of Colin Powell’s famous statements such as „we will not be blackmailed“ or „the US wouldn’t be intimidated by threats.“<sup>105</sup> As a consequence, the US doubted the value of continuing the Three-Party Talks and decided to never accept such a form of negotiations again.<sup>106</sup> Thus, it called for more countries to be involved to increase the pressure on the North.

Second, the Chinese did not manage to make the other two parties conclude a lasting agreement, thus making the undesirable nuclear issue critical also to them. When the US leaked into the press that it remained determined to resort to military force to pressure the North to surrender its nuclear program,<sup>107</sup> China came to realize that more activity and greater mediation efforts were necessary if it did not want to let tensions rise and tempt Washington into a military strike.<sup>108</sup>

On the other hand, the Three-Party Talks were a good start towards a broader dialogue over the nuclear issue and the first step towards a constructive US-China cooperation in the subsequent years.

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<sup>102</sup> Sutter, 143.

<sup>103</sup> For instance, Pyongyang often changed or modified its demands and preconditions to join the Talks, tactically avoiding any conclusion of the nuclear issue. First, it demanded security assurances from the US. When Washington promised some form of a written security guarantee, the DPRK then demanded abandoning of US “hostile policy” towards the North, without clarifying what the hostile policy really meant. Buszynski, 71.

<sup>104</sup> The term hostile policy is very vague as North Korea never really defined it. It can be anything, which pleases Pyongyang because it can use it to cover its negotiation position and elicit further protection from China anytime it chooses. Buszynski, 66.

<sup>105</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>106</sup> Meaning trilateral talks based on direct contact with the North. Glaser and Wang, 154.

<sup>107</sup> Buszynski, 67.

<sup>108</sup> Glaser and Wang, 155.

## **2.4. First Three Rounds of the Six-Party Talks: Many Expectations but No Progress**

Having achieved little during the Three-Party Talks and being strongly disappointed by the DPRK's unconstructive behavior, the United States decided to completely avoid bilateral negotiations with the DPRK in favor of forging consensus of five countries versus one and chose to definitely turn to multilateralism.<sup>109</sup> As Condoleezza Rice, the then US National Security Advisor, pointed out in her remarks, the North Koreans would be under greater pressure from the united front of five nations, making it more complicated for them to cheat as they had before: „...the North Koreans were cheating and finding another path to a nuclear weapon. And we're not going back down that road. ... So what we're doing this time is that any agreement is going to have to come in the context of what we're doing with China, what we're doing with Japan ... And the North Koreans are not going to be able to divide the international community on their nuclear program in the way they had before. So the Six-Party Talks are extremely important.“<sup>110</sup>

The United States was the predominant power in the Talks but as suggested above, it depended on other players, predominantly China, in dealings with Pyongyang. Based on the Three-Party Talks experience, Beijing's presence was actually required to make any progress in the denuclearization process. China was perceived by the Bush cabinet as a broker in the nuclear issue that was needed to organize the diplomatic process and resolve the North Korean problem, hereby ensuring major American interests, i.e. preventing the imminent proliferation of nuclear weapons and consequently maintaining the security in the Asia-Pacific and in the world.<sup>111</sup> Thus, the US emphasized good relations and positive engagement with Beijing that represented a crucial strategic partner in the Six-Party process. To encourage the Chinese in their mediation efforts, Americans often praised

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<sup>109</sup> The decision to turn to multilateralism was not abrupt but based on the US previous bad experience with the DPRK, as shown above. Also, the decision not to “negotiate with terrorists,” who possibly possess or aim to possess nuclear weapons, corresponded well with the US War on Terror. Therefore, most of the US officials perceived the multilateral approach in the North Korean nuclear issue as the most favorable to the US.

<sup>110</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Stalemate in Six-Party Talks on North Korean Nuclear Non-Proliferation,” Remarks before the Committee on International Relations. February 28, 2004, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/D?d108:60:./temp/~bdb0xk>.

<sup>111</sup> Wang, “*Building a New Conceptual*,” 35.

China and called it „a great country, not an enemy of the United States,“ hereby moving towards an improvement in the US-China relationship.<sup>112</sup>

In September 2003, Secretary of State Powell appreciated „the leadership role that the Chinese have played in trying to find a solution to this [North Korean] problem“ and stressed the transformation of „our common interests with China into solid and productive cooperation over the challenges posed by North Korea.“<sup>113</sup> Moreover, he described Sino-American relations as „the best they have been since President Nixon’s first visit to China in 1972“, implying that the US-China ties dramatically improved at the time.<sup>114</sup>

China agreed with Americans that North Korea’s nuclear program was a menace and sided with them that the Kim regime should be pressed to abandon the nuclear weapons program. Beijing, then, responded to American encouragement and affirmed a constructive role in the North Korean nuclear affair. It arranged the first three rounds of meetings between August 2003 and June 2004 in Beijing and expanded them by representatives of Japan, South Korea, and Russia, joining the original three partners.<sup>115</sup> Contrary to the first Korean nuclear crisis in the 1990s or the Three-Party Talks in April 2003, China became more involved in the negotiations. It emerged as the key, pivotal player in the process, marking the „defining moment for Chinese diplomacy“<sup>116</sup> because this was the first time it had taken such a responsible role on itself.<sup>117</sup> It acted as the mediator in the nuclear issue, trying to bring all partners together and find a compromise.

China’s primary motivation, however, differed from the American one. Beijing still feared that the US might turn to a military operation to deal with North Korea. Chinese policymakers kept in mind Colin Powell’s words, said right between the first two rounds of the Talks, when he repeated that the Americans „keep all options on the table because we,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibidem, 34.

<sup>113</sup> Glaser and Wang, 151.

<sup>114</sup> Rozman, 608.

<sup>115</sup> All included partners had a stake in the security on the Korean Peninsula. The US, thus, considered the Six-Party format finally as more promising in forming a working bloc against the nuclear threat posed by North Korea. Pang Zhongying, *“The Six Party Process, Regional Security Mechanisms, and US-China Cooperation,”* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2009), 7.

<sup>116</sup> The words said by Chinese President Hu Jintao. Buszynski, 70.

<sup>117</sup> China’s performance in the Six-Party Talks differed from its past patterns of behavior, breaking from its former model of participation. Beijing helped ease an explosive issue and guided negotiations towards an international solution. It had been a rare case in China’s diplomatic history. Kang, *Assessing*, 421.

we have to do that.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, Chinese leaders were trying to convey to Pyongyang the pros and cons of different policies so that it realized what it should do to avoid a military conflict in the region.<sup>119</sup> Beijing also invested a lot of energy and money in the Talks while frequently pressuring Pyongyang to rejoin negotiations. For example, between the first and the second round when Pyongyang threatened to leave the Talks, they paid North Korea 50 million US dollars to ensure its attendance in the next round of the Talks, scheduled for February 2004.<sup>120</sup>

As we can see, China was committed to the Six-Party Talks. Moreover, besides avoiding the American opting for a more coercive policy and military confrontation and maintaining good relationship with Americans, it realized that failure of the Talks would harm its international prestige. If there were no concrete results, its reputation could be blemished.<sup>121</sup> The negotiations over North Korea had been lauded both domestically and internationally as a big achievement in China’s foreign policy and a failure would reduce confidence in Beijing’s capability to manage regional affairs.

Thus, when during the second round of the Talks the Americans urged China to press North Korea even more, Beijing prepared a draft statement on its own, in which it tried to balance the requirements of all parties and hoped that some countries would make concessions. According to the proposal, Pyongyang was supposed to freeze its nuclear program as a step towards its full elimination in exchange for energy and food compensation.<sup>122</sup> Russia and South Korea immediately agreed to the proposal but Washington refused it as the draft did not mention the need to dismantle the nuclear program first as the US had insisted. Instead, the US preferred the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization that had to be passed before the North could get any rewards.<sup>123</sup> Thus, the only thing the parties agreed on was the continuation of the Talks.<sup>124</sup> The third round confirmed the inability to compromise. The US introduced a seven-page proposal, which was intended to break the impasse. It called for a complete uncovering of

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<sup>118</sup> Department of State Press Release, January 9, 2004, in: *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Stalemate in Six-Party Talks on North Korean Nuclear Non-Proliferation (Spring 2005), 170.

<sup>119</sup> Glaser and Wang, 152.

<sup>120</sup> Buszynski, 90.

<sup>121</sup> Glaser and Wang, 152.

<sup>122</sup> Rozman, 607.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>124</sup> The other four countries did not fully share US objections to the draft and showed open frustration with American conditions. Rozman, 607.

North Korean nuclear program and for submitting it to inspections of the IAEA, for which Pyongyang would receive heavy oil and a security guarantee.<sup>125</sup> But Washington would not introduce any incentives until North Korea agreed to dismantle its nuclear program and allow inspections. Thus, in essence, US position did not dramatically change. The DPRK also held its ground and did not accept anything from the proposal.<sup>126</sup>

In consequence, North Korea was losing interest in the Talks and attended them only because of Chinese insistence. It continued to develop its nuclear program while ignoring US objections, claiming it had the right to a peaceful, civilian program.<sup>127</sup>

To get both of the main parties agree on a deal, China pressed them to be more open and flexible. For instance, Chinese leaders openly prodded the US to adopt a „more flexible and practical attitude“ to the issue and expected Washington to offer some concessions.<sup>128</sup> In reaction, Washington was willing to offer North Korea concessions in the form of security guarantees but conditioned them by the so-called CVID, i.e. complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of the nuclear program.<sup>129</sup> Pyongyang, however, first required security guarantees and delivery of US heavy oil, food aid, energy compensation, only after which it would freeze its nuclear facilities.<sup>130</sup>

Consequently, Beijing became more impatient. To move forward with the process, it insisted that the US had to withdraw the CVID precondition and offer incentives to the North as a reward for a potential freeze.<sup>131</sup> Later, the Chinese even publicly labeled US policy „the main obstacle to reaching a breakthrough in negotiations.“<sup>132</sup>

This behavior evidences the difference between Chinese and American priorities and tactics. Whereas Washington considered the denuclearization to be the top goal of the Six-Party Talks and was determined to pressure the North as much as possible, Beijing was moderate and focused on narrowing the gap between the DPRK and the US rather than on resolving the problem under any circumstances. Therefore, it was, in reality, not very tough on Pyongyang and was not willing use all of its leverage over the North. For instance, it

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<sup>125</sup> Other countries were also willing to offer energy compensation for a freeze. Buszynski, 90.

<sup>126</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>127</sup> Christensen, 3.

<sup>128</sup> Glaser and Wang, 153.

<sup>129</sup> If the CVID promise is broken, sanctions and military option could be involved. Glaser and Wang, 152.

<sup>130</sup> Buszynski, 88.

<sup>131</sup> Glaser and Wang, 153.

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem, 154.

refused to follow US advises to shut off its oil supplies to North Korea to make it cooperate, as it once did before the Three-Party Talks.<sup>133</sup> Obviously, China used its influence over the North to achieve denuclearization but not at the expense of the stability as its top national interest. Hu Jintao's following statement supports the view: „China stresses the need to stick to the objective of a nuclear-free peninsula, and stick to a course of dialogue and peaceful resolution so as to preserve peace and stability on the peninsula and in the region.“<sup>134</sup>

Moreover, Beijing stayed reluctant because it knew that the US basically relied on them to further the process. Thus, they could afford to remain relatively inactive in spite of the fact that there was no tangible progress so far and everyone involved in the negotiations was becoming increasingly impatient and nervous.<sup>135</sup> China basically ignored the US statements that Beijing was not nearly as active in the negotiations as Washington wanted it to be,<sup>136</sup> and indirectly refused to push the North more resolutely and use its leverage over the DPRK more decisively.<sup>137</sup>

Further, the Chinese were well aware of the United States problems. Washington was dealing with increasing number of insurgencies and overall worsening state of security in Iraq as well as with opposing divisions within the administration, i.e. the Pentagon and the State Department, advancing different strategies towards North Korea.<sup>138</sup> Such a situation then allowed China to blame mostly the US, not the DPRK, for the lack of progress or for causing tensions on the peninsula. Once, it even directly accused

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<sup>133</sup> North Korea was and still is heavily dependent on Chinese oil supplies as they constitute 90 percent of all its oil supplies. China reports an estimated 1 million tonnes of oil each year to the North. Joseph Kahn, China May Be Using Oil to Press North Korea, *New York Times*, October 31, 2004, accessed April 20, 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/world/asia/31korea.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/world/asia/31korea.html?_r=0).

<sup>134</sup> Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution 2007), 112.

<sup>135</sup> For instance, Russians openly noted that they are concerned by “the lack of any practical movement forward so far.” Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, 104.

<sup>136</sup> For instance, President Bush suggested in an interview in 2005 that he would like to see China move more aggressively to push the North to abandon its nuclear weapons program. “Bush Urges China to Push North Korea on Nukes,” *Washington Post*, June 9, 2005, accessed April 2, 2014, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/06/AR2005100900419.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/06/AR2005100900419.html).

<sup>137</sup> Glaser and Wang, 153.

<sup>138</sup> The Pentagon insisted on the DPRK's isolation, leading to the Kim regime's collapse, whereas the State Department pressured for softer position and supported incentives to resolve the issue. Glaser and Wang, 152.



Washington of blocking any progress in the nuclear issue, thus indirectly siding with Pyongyang.<sup>139</sup>

It implies that the US-China cooperation worked only to a certain extent. The Talks were frequently suspended, even though the two countries declared the same goal, i.e. denuclearization of North Korea. The reason for that was the fact that Washington and Beijing gave denuclearization a different priority and adopted different strategies. In addition, the US and North Korea had high demands, to which neither side was willing to make concessions.<sup>140</sup> But Washington increasingly relied on China as there were essentially no other realistic options available to manage the North Korean nuclear issue, and did not dare to push China too much and risk a good and advantageous relationship with it. It decided not to create tensions in the US-China relationship, and remained hopeful about its cooperation with Beijing on the nuclear issue.

Overall, the situation did not lead to any progress in the Talks, and only prolonged their suspensions until the summer of 2005. Contrary to Chinese as well as American expectations, the first three rounds of the negotiations remained largely indecisive and did not bring any concrete solution to the problem.

## **2.5 The 2005 Joint Statement: The Long-Desired Breakthrough?**

Before the next round of the Talks, in February 2005, North Korea declared it had manufactured nuclear weapons and threatened to withdraw from the Six-Party negotiations. To resume to the denuclearization process, it demanded that the US would have to drop the CVID condition and accept the North as a nuclear power, stating that if Washington got used to nuclear India and Pakistan, it could get used to a nuclear North Korea as well.<sup>141</sup> China, however, got dismayed by possible failure of the Talks, which could threaten its reputation, and by potential reactions in Japan or South Korea that might turn to nuclear proliferation in fear of future blackmail from Pyongyang.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, Beijing was trying hard to avoid another deadlock and eventually made a successful effort to restart the Talks:

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<sup>139</sup> Buszynski, 75.

<sup>140</sup> Ibidem, 85.

<sup>141</sup> Buszynski, 94.

<sup>142</sup> Michele Acuto, "Not Quite the Dragon: A Chinese View on the Six-Party Talks, 2002-8," *The International History Review*, Vol.34, No. 1 (March 2012), 12.

it sent a delegation of altogether 200 officials to Pyongyang which managed to push the North to engage in the denuclearization process again.<sup>143</sup>

The Chinese behavior reflects not only the seriousness of the situation and growing Chinese frustration over North Korea, but, compared to the its strategy up to now, also Beijing's modified approach to the issue. From late 2004, there had been an intensified discussion among the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members and professors from the CCP Central Party School on Beijing's continuing policy towards the Six-Party Talks. There was a series of articles, recommending China to push the Talks forward and produce concrete outcomes before the whole project became irrelevant.<sup>144</sup> Because the United States and North Korea kept rejecting each other's proposals, majority of scholars now advocated a more assertive role of China in forging compromise between the two nations and suggested to develop a practical action plan based on the reasonable requests from both sides, acceptable for all partners.<sup>145</sup>

This modified Chinese approach to the Six-Party Talks coincided with a change within the Bush administration in late 2004. Re-elected president Bush changed his close advisors and chief negotiators for the Talks, appointing Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State and Christopher Hill as Assistant Secretary of State and the head of the Six-Party discussions.<sup>146</sup> Moderate Rice had worked in the Bush team already in his first term but now, in this position, had more influence over the president. Hill was an experienced diplomat who attended the complicated negotiations of the Dayton peace accord in the Balkans in the mid-1990s and was adept at getting opposing parties together. The newly-appointed Rice-Hill tandem reassessed previous US policy, and resorted to a more pragmatic and balanced approach towards Pyongyang, mixing the hardliners' cracking down on Pyongyang and Hill's softened, cooperative approach towards the North.<sup>147</sup> The administration then spoke less and less about the „deep-rooted“ desire for regime change in North Korea so that Pyongyang could easily abandon or at least moderate its anti-American

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<sup>143</sup> Acuto, 13.

<sup>144</sup> Glaser and Wang, 153.

<sup>145</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>146</sup> Pritchard, 108.

<sup>147</sup> The policy is also called the two-track approach. Grzelczyk, 16.

deterrent theory and lift some of its demands.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, Hill openly admitted that by insisting on the unconditional CVID, Washington had alienated some of its allies, further complicating the denuclearization process and blocking resolution to the nuclear issue.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, in late 2004, the United States became more flexible and open to some concessions to the North.

Given the new circumstances, the Talks were resumed relatively soon. Beijing managed to bring the Koreans back to the negotiation table and carefully drafted a deal that took into account concerns of all parties.<sup>150</sup> The Chinese were so determined to the goal of producing a concrete outcome that they even dared to include the problematic light-water reactors (LWRs) issue in the draft, with which Washington originally did not agree at all.<sup>151</sup> To move forward and effectively press the US to accept the proposal, Chinese officials made clear to Washington that if it refused to sign the proposed statement, it would have to take responsibility for a breakdown in the Talks. They threatened the American side that they would inform the media that it was the US that sank the agreement.<sup>152</sup>

Even though the United States was ready to walk out without a deal, it eventually yielded to the Chinese pressure and made a major concession from its demands. It dropped its insistence that North Korea had no right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and agreed on placing the LWRs in the agreement. Also, Buszynski suggests that the Bush administration took into account the difficulties it was facing at home, i.e. primarily the hurricane Katrina, as well as abroad, mostly in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>153</sup> The US, thus,

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<sup>148</sup> Besides overall reconsideration of the previous policy and concluding it was dysfunctional, the US also realized it did not make much sense to continue the regime change approach in the subsequent years. The DPRK was essentially the oldest regime in eastern Asia and had managed to survive for decades, including the collapse of the Soviet Union and planned economy or huge famine in the 1990s. Ralph A. Cossa, "Six Party Talks: Will/Should They Resume?" *American Foreign Policy*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2012), 28.

<sup>149</sup> It had alienated primarily South Korea and Japan, hereby further losing allies also in its operations abroad, mostly in Iraq. Grzelczyk, 16.

<sup>150</sup> Grzelczyk, 17.

<sup>151</sup> The LWRs are related to the problem of the North Korea's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. Pyongyang argued that provision of LWRs by the US would be a proof of American respect for the North's sovereignty. Consequently, North Korea exploited the LWRs and portrayed them as the deal breaker, hereby overemphasizing its position. On the other hand, Washington stated that by pursuing the LWRs the North would forgo sources of conventional energy, which could be supplied much more quickly. Pritchard, 119.

<sup>152</sup> One of the main reasons for US acceptance the Chinese draft was the fact that all the other interested parties in the negotiations had already approved the draft and Washington became isolated over the LWRs issue. By rejecting the draft, it would place itself at risk of being blamed by the Chinese for destroying the accord, as threatened earlier by Beijing. Christensen, 4.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem*, 97.

decided to postpone the most problematic issues in the North Korean nuclear deal and accepted the agreement.<sup>154</sup>

Finally, on September 19, 2005, all parties signed the Joint Statement, hereby settling the two-year-long discussions on the North Korean nuclear issue.<sup>155</sup> The deal was perceived as a major success of the US-China cooperation in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue so far<sup>156</sup> and celebratory words were often directed to China. Washington acknowledged the importance of the Chinese mediation efforts for the breakthrough and appreciated Beijing's role in drafting the statement. In hearing before the US Congress, Christopher Hill lauded China for "the important role China played in this round of Talks. China was a full participant. ... China circulated five drafts of the joint agreement during the fourth round, and I must say the Chinese drafting was deft. ... The document allows us to move closer to the goal of denuclearization."<sup>157</sup> Also, on a one-day visit to Beijing, president Bush himself publicly thanked China and underscored that „the fact that China and the United States can work on this North Korean issue as equal partners is important for the stability of this region and the world.“<sup>158</sup>

### **2.5.1 Closer Look at the 2005 Joint Statement: Reconsidering Its Effects**

The 2005 Joint Statement was the first of its kind reached at the Six-Party Talks, and is considered to be the major breakthrough of the negotiations. North Korea promised to abandon nuclear weapons and weapons-related programs, completely dismantle its nuclear facilities, and return to the NPT as well as allow IAEA's inspections. In exchange for that, Washington affirmed that it had no intention to attack North Korea, promised to

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<sup>154</sup> However, Hill managed to negotiate the inclusion of the term "at an appropriate time" in the statement, when delivery of the LWRs was concerned. By this strategic dodge, Hill made sure that still more conditions would have to be arranged in the future. I will elaborate on this issue later in the chapter.

<sup>155</sup> Because of US persistent unwillingness to agree on the LWRs and readiness to leave the Talks, the deal was also dubbed the "last minute agreement." As Buszynski describes in his book, the deal was reached literally as "US delegation was packing up its stuff." Buszynski, 96-97.

<sup>156</sup> See, for example, Scott Snyder, Ralph Cossa, Brad Glosserman, "Whither the Six-Party Talks?," *United States Institute of Peace*, May 17, 2006, accessed April 30, 2014, [www.uisp.org/publications/whither/the/six/paty/talks](http://www.uisp.org/publications/whither/the/six/paty/talks).

<sup>157</sup> Christopher Hill, "The Six-Party Talks and the North Korean Nuclear Issue," Hearing before the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 109th Congress, First Session, October 6, 2005, accessed March 13, 2014, <http://www.house.gov/international—relations>.

<sup>158</sup> Glaser and Wang, 153.

take steps to normalize relations with the North, provide energy assistance to it, and deliver the LWRs „at an appropriate time.“<sup>159</sup>

Nevertheless, the agreement lacked specificity. The issue of the LWRs and their transfers remained vaguely worded and created new disputes among the parties in the future. There was no provision for timing and scheduling of the LWRs delivery as well as no stipulation if the LWRs follow or precede the nuclear disarmament. For the United States, the „appropriate time“ (as stated in the Joint Statement) for delivering the LWRs came only after North Korea completely and verifiably dismantled its nuclear program and returned to the NPT. On the other hand, Pyongyang was convinced that the light-water reactors be provided before it would abandon its nuclear activities.<sup>160</sup> China thought that the problem would be discussed later in the next round of the Talks and basically remained silent about the issue.<sup>161</sup>

In consequence, only a day after the approval of the 2005 statement, North Korea publicly rejected the American interpretation and insisted on the transfer of the LWRS before any disarmament started.<sup>162</sup>

Pyongyang's reaction thus calls the entire round of the Talks into question and suggests that no progress was actually made. The Bush administration stayed inflexible thereafter and strongly refused calls from the North to hold bilateral meetings to resolve the problem. It continued to ignore objections from Pyongyang even though there was a high probability of a repeated stalemate of the Talks.<sup>163</sup> Despite these risks, Americans decided to wait for another phase of the Talks, scheduled for November 2005, because they expected that North Korea would eventually return to the negotiating table with the help of China and details would be negotiated.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> “Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six Party Talks,” September 19, 2005, accessed on March 15, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm>.

<sup>160</sup> Grzelczyk, 17.

<sup>161</sup> The 2005 Joint Statement was silent about punishment for failure to follow the letter of the statement, hereby allowing the partners to protest or avoid the fulfillment of the agreed points without penalty. See Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six Party Talks, September 19, 2005, accessed on March 15, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm>.

<sup>162</sup> However, Japan and Russia supported the US position, and the Talks got stalled again. Christensen, 4.

<sup>163</sup> Pritchard suggests that hardline approach prevailed in this situation again. Hereby, the twist in the American attitude reflects the complicated two-track policy, described above. Pritchard, 135.

<sup>164</sup> Grzelczyk, 16.

However, despite the above-mentioned disputes about the interpretation of the timing of the LWRs transfer, the September agreement provides a basis, to which both the US and China has often referred when trying to proceed with the denuclearization process.<sup>165</sup> As mentioned earlier, the US was willing to make first real concessions in the agreement, and withdrew the most problematic condition by agreeing to put the LWRs issue on the agenda.

Besides the appointment of new officials to the Bush administration, bringing about the softened approach in 2004, the agreement was possible because the Chinese modified their strategy for the Six-Party negotiations as well. China assumed the responsibility for the outcome of the process and consequently resorted to more assertive tactics. It became more active in authoring draft statements or in mediating North Korean and American differences, as demonstrated above. It feared failure of the Talks, which could harm its international reputation or lead to an American military strike in the region.

One sign of Beijing's enthusiasm is that some US critics had shifted from worrying that China was doing too little to solve the nuclear issue to worrying that Beijing was taking the lead at the expense of the United States. For instance, Charles Krauthammer said in the *Washington Post* that China might accelerate its rise as the major rival of the US in the region and endanger Washington's prestige.<sup>166</sup>

However, majority of the top US officials were positive about Chinese efforts to push the Talks forward. They appreciated the crucial role the Chinese played during this phase of the negotiations and rejected expressions like those mentioned above. In harmony with the Robert Zoellick's "responsible stakeholder" theory, they welcomed China as a new strategic partner that was integrating itself into the international system.<sup>167</sup> Due to direct

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<sup>165</sup> See, for instance, "China Urges Resumption of Six Party Talks," *China Daily*, May 14, 2009, accessed March 21, 2014, [www.usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-05/14/content\\_16980254.htm](http://www.usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-05/14/content_16980254.htm) or "China, Japan, US call for Resuming Six-Party Talks," *China Daily*, July 17, 2006, accessed April 30, 2014, [www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-07/17/content\\_642099.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-07/17/content_642099.htm).

<sup>166</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "China's Moment," *Washington Post*, September 23, 2005, accessed April 1, 2014, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/22/AR2005092202257.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/22/AR2005092202257.html).

<sup>167</sup> In his speeches, Zoellick pointed out that China was not an enemy for the US as it did not have any radical ideology, and actually had benefited from the existing international system that Washington created. The goal of the US policy should be, then, to integrate Beijing into the system and make it a "responsible stakeholder" that could share responsibility for the world affairs with the White House. See Wang, 39 or Robert Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" Remarks to National Committee on US-China Relations, September 21, 2005, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>.

cooperation with the Chinese, Washington could have much to gain as China could use its rising influence in „responsible ways“ in accord with the US interests.<sup>168</sup> The Bush administration was aware that a constructive US-China cooperation was essential for the successful Six-Party Talks, and admitted for the first time that concessions were necessary to move closer towards the main objective. For that purpose, the US cabinet resorted to a smart strategy when it often expressed appreciation for Beijing’s contribution to the positive development of the Talks, hereby increasing China’s stake in a successful conclusion of the denuclearization process.<sup>169</sup>

The Chinese, consequently, felt invested in the issue and took a special pride in the 2005 agreement. The Chinese news media discussed how the China’s role was praised around the world and hailed Beijing’s diplomatic influence and prestige.<sup>170</sup> It is interesting to notice that some of the Chinese officials even rejected the North Korean interpretation of the controversial LWRs transfer, labeling the move as stupid because the agreement would be now „criticized by all parties, not just the United States.“<sup>171</sup>

Nevertheless, the real, important issues, such as the timing and scheduling of the LWRs transfer or the dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear issue, were vaguely defined and postponed, creating the potential to bring the parties into a conflict again. The problematic parts remained unresolved and still complicated the path towards the the North’s denuclearization. Therefore, the 2005 Joint Statement could be considered only a limited success with mixed results.

### **2.5.2 The Six-Party Talks Getting Complicated**

Despite the above-mentioned problematic parts, the 2005 Joint Statement had a good potential to bring the included partners closer to the denuclearization if they agreed on discussion and further worked on the most disputed points of the deal. However, the Talks got stalled rather soon. Reaching a consensus was complicated by the US announcement, made just after signing of the agreement, that its Department of the Treasury had taken

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<sup>168</sup> Sutter, 148.

<sup>169</sup> Christensen, 5.

<sup>170</sup> See, for example, “China’s Emerging Influence in the Six-Party North Korean Nuclear Talks,” *China Daily*, September 26, 2005, accessed March 20, 2014, [europe.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2005/26/09/content\\_17748599.htm](http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2005/26/09/content_17748599.htm).

<sup>171</sup> Christensen, 6.

measures to freeze illegally obtained North Korean funds at Banco Delta Asia (BDA), located in Macao under Chinese sovereignty. Finally, financial sanctions were announced against North Korea for counterfeiting US currency and money laundering, first targeted at the bank in Macao, and then spreading to banks around the whole world.<sup>172</sup>

Pyongyang objected to the sanctions and claimed that they violated the September 2005 agreement and refused American claims that the sanctions were unrelated to the nuclear crisis.<sup>173</sup> In consequence, the DPRK did not want to participate in the Six-Party negotiations unless the US lifted its sanctions imposed on Banco Delta Asia. The denuclearization process was again suspended for the remainder of 2005 and 2006.<sup>174</sup>

Washington insisted on the sanctions but at the same time expected China to use its leverage over the North Koreans to push them to return to the Talks. The Bush administration continued to believe that the Chinese shared American interests to resolve the nuclear issue and encouraged them to play “a more assertive role in breaking the deadlock.”<sup>175</sup> But Beijing tried to protect its stable relationship with the DPRK and instead called for greater flexibility on the part of the US.

Despite the stalemate in the Talks, however, the US-China cooperation continued. The Chinese were well aware of the importance of good relations with the US and were eager to demonstrate their determination to the Six-Party process. For that reason, Chinese president Hu visited Pyongyang at the end of 2005 and received Kim Jong-il in Beijing in January 2006, which was a trip Washington was particularly hopeful about.<sup>176</sup> However, this visit only showed Beijing’s effective double game that it played to be on good terms with either side as well as to ensure its own national interests, including preserving the regional status quo. During the visit, China prodded Kim Jong-il to refrain from further provocations and consider economic reforms.<sup>177</sup> Hereby, the Chinese, on one hand, assured the US that they were committed to the denuclearization for they talked to the North, but the only thing, on the other hand, they actually discussed with Pyongyang was giving up

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<sup>172</sup> The US Department of the Treasury froze about \$24 million in North Korea funds under Section 311 of the US PATRIOT Act. Rozman, 610.

<sup>173</sup> Buszynski, 105.

<sup>174</sup> Suk-Hyun Lee, “From Multilateralism to Bilateralism: Negotiating the Second Nuclear Crisis,” *University of Washington East Asia Journal* (Winter 2009), 60.

<sup>175</sup> Buszynski, 112.

<sup>176</sup> It expected that the Chinese could press the Koreans and link the economic help to Pyongyang’s return to the Six-Party Talks as the North was then in bigger economic troubles than usual. Suk-Hyun Lee, 62.

<sup>177</sup> Glaser and Wang, 154.



further provocations, not giving up its nuclear program.<sup>178</sup> The fundamentals of both Sino-American and Sino-North Korean relationship remained more or less stable and good. Nevertheless, the potential the 2005 Joint Statement offered was not used and no progress forward had been made thereafter.

## **2.6 The Year of 2006: A Drastic Change in the Six-Party Talks?**

For some scholars and policymakers as well, the year of 2006 represents a dramatic modification of China's behavior within the international community and subsequent transformation of the Sino-North Korean relationship, hereby changing the circumstances, in which the Six-Party Talks were led. As Glaser, Wang, or Schneider suggest, due to the perceived shift in the Chinese policy, Beijing and Washington could finally overcome their mutual differences and easily cooperate on the nuclear issue.<sup>179</sup> However, in this chapter, I will attempt to point out that such claims may be inaccurate and disputable.

### **Arguments for the policy change on the part of China**

The reason for the change was Pyongyang's missile launch in July 2006<sup>180</sup> and, most importantly, nuclear test in October 2006.<sup>181</sup> Jones Schneider suggests in his work that the tests brought China and the US much closer and encouraged them to coordinate their actions more carefully than before, hereby threatening the North Korean position as well as its relationship with China.<sup>182</sup> For example, Bush and Hu had a long phone call immediately after the nuclear test on how to respond to the event. The Chinese president

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<sup>178</sup> Buszynski, 113.

<sup>179</sup> Glaser and Wang, 154, and Jones Schneider, *The Change toward Cooperation in the George W. Bush Administration's nuclear nonproliferation policy towards North Korea*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2010), 98.

<sup>180</sup> North Korea launched short-range missiles as well as one long-range Taepodong-2 missile. According to the US experts, the North Korean short range missiles had improved but the launch revealed that Pyongyang had not been able to overcome the technological problems in constructing the long range missiles as the Taepodong-2 failed only a few seconds after the launch. C.P. Vick, "Build-Up to the Taepodong-2C/3 Satellite Launch Attempt," *Global Security*, July 17, 2006, accessed April 21, 2014, [www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/dprk/2006/060710-nkir2627.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/dprk/2006/060710-nkir2627.htm).

<sup>181</sup> Because of low seismic readings after the perceived nuclear test, the US first assumed the action was a North Korea's bluff. But it later detected signs of radiation off the North's coast and confirmed it really was a nuclear test, although with partial success. See, for example, Jeff Bliss, "North Korea Nuclear Tests Confirmed by US Intelligence Agency," *Bloomberg*, October 16, 2006, accessed April 21, 2014, [www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aO7kW.RjqqaE&refer=japan](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aO7kW.RjqqaE&refer=japan).

<sup>182</sup> Schneider, 106.

agreed with the White House that the response should be tough this time and was willing to openly support punitive measures against the North for the first time ever.<sup>183</sup>

Glaser and Wang similarly argue that Washington and Beijing stood closer when working together in the United Nations on the “anti-North Korean resolutions.”<sup>184</sup> China became more active in pressing the DPRK and joined the US and other members of the UN Security Council in voting to condemn Pyongyang’s behavior under UN Security Council Resolutions 1695 and 1718.

Further, due to the tests and the changing Chinese attitude towards the North, Secretary Rice was convinced that the Americans had suddenly greater leverage over Pyongyang. According to her, Beijing was about to finally leave its long-time ally, ready to punish it, and cooperate with the US more closely in pressing the North.<sup>185</sup>

By conducting the tests, North Koreans had probably different motives. First, they wanted to signal to Washington that they would refuse the Six-Party Talks unless the US changed its „hostile policy“ and lifted the financial sanctions. Further, they intended to demonstrate that they had a legitimate right as a sovereign state to exercise any nuclear tests.<sup>186</sup> The tests were also used as a inward signal towards the people in the DPRK, aiming to consolidate the political elite’s power. Finally, the North sought to press the US into bilateral talks, which, however, Bush rejected.<sup>187</sup>

Interestingly, Buszynski points out to the North Korean suicidal mentality, not hesitating to use a nuclear weapons threat to get what it wants. Even China was caught by surprise by the tests and responded angrily. Besides the above-mentioned unprecedented support for the UN resolutions, it issued an unusually strongly worded statement on its own and openly demonstrated its displeasure with Pyongyang’s actions. Beijing stated that North Korea had “defied the universal opposition of international society and flagrantly conducted the nuclear tests.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>184</sup> Glaser and Wang, 154.

<sup>185</sup> Rice literary said that the situation was “a rare window for opportunities for effective diplomacy.” Schneider, *“The Change,”* 106.

<sup>186</sup> Suk-Hyun Lee, 62.

<sup>187</sup> By negotiating directly with the North, Washington would basically accept the North Korean “way of diplomacy” as well as break its principles “to not negotiate with the terrorists.” Buszynski, 115.

<sup>188</sup> Interestingly, the term “flagrantly” was previously used to express only a very high degree of Chinese anger, such as after the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Schneider, *“The Change,”* 106.

Moreover, Schneider supports the „change view“ by China’s temporary suspension of its economic cooperation with the North Korean through exceptional instructions to the four largest Chinese banks to freeze financial transactions with them.<sup>189</sup>

### **Counter-arguments**

There is, however, a significant number of scholars who argue that the Chinese reaction to the tests was not so dramatic and the overall problematic course of the Six-Party Talks was not significantly reversed in 2006.

From their perspective, Beijing was angry at Pyongyang and its response was tougher than before but, in a sense, it did not ruin the fundamentals of the Sino-North Korean relationship. Scholars such as Buszynski or Ji-Hyun Kim are convinced that the Chinese remained reluctant to effectively punish the North by imposing harsh economic sanctions on it as such punitive measures could lead to serious economic problems of the Kim regime and threaten the regional status quo and stability, i.e. Beijing’s core national interests.

### **The July Missile Test**

For example, Buszynski claims that China remained rather passive particularly after the first missile test in July 2006. It was not willing to resort to punitive actions despite the fact that its image of a responsible power suffered by the Korea’s test.<sup>190</sup> It only joined the other Security Council members in their collective outrage over North Korea’s actions but it did not agree on any effective punishment such as economic sanctions.<sup>191</sup>

Buszynski’s assumption seems to be plausible. When North Korea conducted the missile test, Japan and the United States turned to the UN and proposed a resolution, which contained tough economic sanctions.<sup>192</sup> The Chinese, however, labeled the draft an

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<sup>189</sup> Allegedly, China also began to inspect truck cargo to and from North Korea at the key border crossing for bilateral trade. Schneider, 100.

<sup>190</sup> Buszynski, 115.

<sup>191</sup> See “UN Resolution 1695,” available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm>.

<sup>192</sup> Besides binding obligations on North Korea under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the draft resolution contained a strong condemnation of North Korea’s missile tests and sanctions in the form of a ban on exports of strategic materials to North Korea. Update Report No.3 on North Korea, *Security Council Report*, July 6, 2006, accessed April 21, 2014, [www.securitycouncilreport.org/update-report/lookup-c-glKWLeMTIsG-b-1838427.php](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/update-report/lookup-c-glKWLeMTIsG-b-1838427.php).

„overreaction,“ arguing that it would have negative implications on negotiating the revival of the Six-Party Talks, and were determined to veto the US-Japan proposal.<sup>193</sup>

Thus, China circulated its own proposal that moderated the original draft. Instead of a strong condemnation contained in the first proposal, the Chinese version expressed only „concerns“ over the missile launch, urged North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks, and demanded the US lifted its BDA-related financial sanctions.<sup>194</sup>

Final UN Resolution 1695 was adopted on July 15, 2006 after hot internal debates within the UN. It contained no binding principles as the US and other member states (such as Japan) yielded to China’s<sup>195</sup> and Russia’s pressure and accepted the Chinese draft.<sup>196</sup>

The Americans were, again, caught in their dilemma between their desire to punish China’s ally and at the same time keep Beijing involved. The US, in the end, decided to yet again praise China and encourage it in its role as a mediator in the Talks and expected the Chinese to move to the next step and convene the Six-Party Talks as they promised.<sup>197</sup> The missile launch and the subsequent UN resolution, thus, did not reverse the overall course of the denuclearization process.

### **The October Nuclear Test**

The nuclear test from October 2006 disturbed the interested parties much more than the missile launch. This time, China was also openly critical of the event and considered it to be its biggest foreign policy failure in the last fifty years and claimed that its „appeasement policy“ towards Pyongyang should be ended.<sup>198</sup> After several crisis meetings, Chinese officials concluded they were willing to join the US and support punitive measures against the DPRK in the UN.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Buszynski, 116.

<sup>194</sup> Warren Hoge and Joseph Kahn, “New North Korea Resolution Offered,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2006, accessed April 28, 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/world/asia/13korea.html?fta=y](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/world/asia/13korea.html?fta=y).

<sup>195</sup> Washington yielded and decided to believe in China’s determination to cordial denuclearization talks. In addition, there was no other available option for them.

<sup>196</sup> Besides the abovementioned Chinese suggestions, Resolution 1695 demanded all North Korean nuclear activities be suspended and urged the member states to prevent missile and missile-related items from being transferred to North Korea. United Nations, „United Nations Security Council Resolution 1695,“ July 15, 2006, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm>.

<sup>197</sup> Buszynski, 119.

<sup>198</sup> Zhu Feng, “Shifting Tides: China and North Korea,” *China Security*, Vol. 2, No.3 (Autumn 2010), 39-40.

<sup>199</sup> Zhu Feng, 42.

However, even though China did participate in the adoption of Resolution 1718, condemning the North Korean nuclear test, it was also China that pressured the Security Council to moderate some resolution measures. For instance, Beijing effectively persuaded the other Security Council members to leave out the possibility of using the threat of armed force against the Koreans if they fail to respond to the resolution.<sup>200</sup> Further, it significantly eased initial US proposals such as total embargo on North Korea's arms trade, ban on luxury goods, mandatory searches on the high seas of vessels entering the North's ports, or seizure of any goods that could be used to produce nuclear weapons. China wanted the sanctions to strictly target only North Korea's ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons programs and stated that it would openly oppose the US extensive measures if they remain in the form they were originally suggested by the White House.<sup>201</sup>

In the end, Resolution 1718 was more critical against North Korea than the previous Resolution 1695 but the sanctions imposed on Pyongyang were, in reality, symbolic or even toothless. States were left on their own to specify the nature of the sanctions by their internal laws. For example, the *Washington Post* reported soon after the adoption of Resolution 1718 that inspections of cargo, entering North Korean ports, and of the boarding of vessels<sup>202</sup> were perceived as unacceptable in the eyes of Beijing, and the Chinese claimed they would not do the inspections whatsoever.<sup>203</sup>

The resolution and the hot debates around the adoption of the UN resolution after the nuclear test are a good demonstration of the continuing differences in Washington's and Beijing's strategies in the North Korean issue, hereby disproving the claim that 2006 bridged the two countries.

When the Americans saw China's immediate reactions to both of the tests, they expected Beijing to finally side with them and abandon Pyongyang. They believed that Beijing shared their interests and would prioritize the denuclearization of North Korea

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<sup>200</sup> Ji-Hyun Kim, 268.

<sup>201</sup> David E. Sanger, "US Weights Sanctions against North Korea," *New York Times*, October 6, 2006, accessed April 22, 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2006/10/06/world/asia/06nuke.html?fta=y&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/06/world/asia/06nuke.html?fta=y&_r=0).

<sup>202</sup> Part of the ban on trade related to nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs with North Korea in Resolution 1718.

<sup>203</sup> Glenn Kessler, "US Officials Call on China to Help Enforce UN Resolution on North Korea," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2006, accessed April 20, 2014, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/15/AR2006101500612.htm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/15/AR2006101500612.htm).

above all else. As shown above, however, America failed to recognize from Beijing's behavior that maintenance of regional stability triumphed Chinese priorities.

On the other hand, it should be noted that to recognize real Chinese intentions might have not been very easy. Beijing signaled many times that it was ready to "talk to Pyongyang" and to persuade it to return to the Six-Party Talks, which implied that denuclearization was China's high priority.<sup>204</sup> Chinese officials made frequent visits to Pyongyang, hereby showing they were eagerly working for denuclearization of North Korea. In reality, however, they were probably playing their double game so as to balance the demands of both the US and North Korea and keep them both involved. The Chinese still protected North Korea and, at the same time, kept the US believe in their ability to press Pyongyang and bring about some results.<sup>205</sup> Only in this way, they could effectively preserve their major national interests, i.e. regional stability and status quo.

In November 2006, the DPRK agreed to participate again the Six-Party Talks. The real Pyongyang's motivation to return to the Talks, however, seems to be the financial sanctions imposed by the US in 2005, which were already having effect on the North Korean economy. From the very beginning of the resumed Talks, Kim's regime demanded the US lifted the sanctions before a discussion on a freeze of the nuclear program.<sup>206</sup> Washington rejected as it expected China to side with it again and persuade Pyongyang to resort to a more constructive dialogue. However, the US misjudged its position again. Beijing remained rather passive, waiting for the US to come around to its position, and the reconvened Talks were soon suspended again.

The repeated suspension of the Talks led the Bush administration to yet again reconsider the situation. In Washington's eyes, Beijing's behavior had been unconvincing and insufficient even after the missile and nuclear tests, and the US-China cooperation did not seem to be very fruitful for the Six-Party Talks progress.

The Rice-Hill tandem, therefore, decided to apply a different approach towards Pyongyang. From their perspective, a progress in the denuclearization process was possible mostly through direct contacts with North Korea (although they preferred closed-door talks

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<sup>204</sup> Drew Thompson and Nathalie Matthews, "Six Party Talks and China's Goldilocks Strategy: Getting North Korea Just Right," *US-Korea Academic Symposium*, Vol. 28, No.1. (May 2010), 185.

<sup>205</sup> Buszynski, 132.

<sup>206</sup> The North argued that Washington wanted too much in exchange for lifting the sanctions and suggested the freeze only when circumstances „matured.“ Thompson and Matthews, "*Six-Party Talks*," 182.

to avoid outrage in the media). They decided to fully soften US policy and press for Bush's approval to engage Pyongyang directly. Moreover, the changed political situation eventually led to a conclusion that a military operation on the Korean Peninsula was not realistic as the United States had already been militarily and financially heavily involved in Iraq and Afghanistan and could not afford another foreign war.<sup>207</sup>

Consequently, the US finally dropped its previous insistence on complete dismantlement of the North's nuclear program before a resolution could be negotiated. In mid-January 2007, Christopher Hill even met his North Korean counterpart Kim Kye-wan in Berlin and persuaded the Koreans to return to the Talks.<sup>208</sup> After the meeting, the Six-Party Talks were resumed for February 2007 in Berlin.

In sum, it is overall not accurate to claim that China significantly changed its attitude towards Pyongyang after the missile and nuclear tests in 2006, and that it actively negotiated within the UN with the aim to punish the North's actions. It was infuriated by the North Korean unexpected nuclear test and openly criticized it but, on the other hand, opposed US proposals of harsh punitive measures and worked eagerly on moderating them. By providing continuous protection to its neighbor even after it crossed China's previously declared "red line" and by preventing other states from imposing strict sanctions on it, the Chinese sent a clear message again that regional instability was its greater national security concern than a nuclear North Korea. Thus, there was still no reason for Beijing to change its behavior.

In the end, it was the US that was forced to reconsider its previous policy and make a change. Its strategy, which had been strictly based on multilateral approach towards North Korea, Chinese mediation of the Talks, and minimum concessions, proved to be a failure and Washington eventually resorted to a much softened approach. It was willing to make a considerable concession and admitted that complementary bilateral talks with Pyongyang were necessary to end the impasse in the Talks and to finally resolve the nuclear issue. Therefore, such a move could be considered as a big concession to China and North Korea

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<sup>207</sup> Kim, 267.

<sup>208</sup> Glaser and Wang, 155.

and a significant reversal of the American policy.<sup>209</sup> Due to the new American approach, which pleased both Beijing and Pyongyang, the Six-Party Talks could continue.

## **2.7 The February 2007 Agreement and Its Implementation**

New round of the Six-Party Talks was held in February 2007 in Berlin. The Chinese proposed a written agreement based on the Hill-Kim meeting in January, which aimed to implement the September 2005 agreement, albeit in a slightly modified manner. Most importantly, it contained North Korea's commitment to take steps to dismantle its nuclear program in two phases within 60 days. The steps included closure of the Yongbyon reactor, freeze of the nuclear program, and IAEA's international inspections in exchange for energy assistance, normalization of diplomatic relations with Washington and Tokyo, and removal of the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>210</sup>

China's draft proposal was accepted by all six partners. The deal was generally perceived as a success and the US-China cooperation was repeatedly praised for taking long-awaited steps towards denuclearization. However, the agreement did not cover all North Korean nuclear programs, nor did it mention the HEU program, because of which the whole Six-Party process in 2003 started. The deal covered only the first phase of North Korean nuclear dismantlement, leaving the second phase and its timing to be negotiated later, hereby leaving the room open for repeated disputes and potential exploit by Pyongyang.<sup>211</sup>

Some of the US congressmen, therefore, dramatically challenged the agreement for it reminded them of the previous 2005 Joint Statement, which failed to bring any result. For instance, congressman Ackerman did not believe the deal was a step forward and angrily asked: „Do we just begin the process of walking away and they walk away and demands start all over again and it goes on forever like that or what?“<sup>212</sup> Others argued that the deal

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<sup>209</sup> See Pritchard, 140-142 or Rozman, 613-614.

<sup>210</sup> Contrary to the September 2005 agreement, it focused more on action-for-action principle as there was no “before” and “after” requirement related to the dismantlement of the nuclear program and delivery of energy or food assistance. Buszynski, 141.

<sup>211</sup> Ibidem, 147.

<sup>212</sup> Michael Ackermann, “North Korea: The February 13 Agreement,” Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, February 28, 2007, p.57, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov>.



violated the principles, with which the US originally entered the Talks,<sup>213</sup> and demanded they should not be changed.

The deal was very troubling also for President Bush but reaching a consensus in the nuclear issue was necessary for his administration. It was preoccupied with Iraq and Afghanistan and needed to get the North Korean problem off its back to focus on the most important agenda at the time. Reaching at least any deal allowed Bush to say that the US cooperation with China over the issue was, in the end, fruitful and North Korea would no longer produce nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the 2007 February agreement is the culmination of the Bush's reversal of his previous policy of no negotiations with North Korea. In implementation of the agreement between 2007 and 2008, Washington focused on bilateral US-North Korea negotiations that would ideally precede meetings of the Six-Party Talks. The direct consultations with Pyongyang were widely seen as necessary to draw up a passable agenda for the Talks.

In result, the importance of a working US-China cooperation for a progress within the Talks greatly diminished. As the Americans put emphasis on common agenda with Pyongyang, the Chinese did not need to coordinate all their steps with the US, anymore. The continuous Sino-American cooperation was not crucial for them as their initial goal from the very beginning of the Talks in 2003 was finally achieved: Washington softened its approach and was finally willing to negotiate with Pyongyang. China could enjoy benefits of a solution without the need to press North Korea or to moderate US position. The fear from instability on the peninsula now greatly decreased. Therefore, China now did not see as many reasons as before in active participation in the Six-Party Talks or in enthusiastic cooperation with the US over North Korea.

The rest of 2007 and the year of 2008 were devoted to the implementation of the February agreement. The interested parties watched the partial shutdown and sealing of Yongbyon, as promised by the DPRK in the agreement, and dealt with the usual North Korean obstructions and new demands. For example, in March 2007, North Korea refused to continue with the shutdown of Yongbyon, demanding \$25 million to be transferred from

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<sup>213</sup> Meaning the HEU program.

the BDA in Macau, and missed deadline on December 31, 2007, to submit verification materials regarding its nuclear facilities.<sup>214</sup>

When the BDA issue was finally resolved, Kim Jong-il suddenly did not agree to full verification of the North's nuclear facilities and once again expelled IAEA inspectors from Yongbyon with the announcement that these facilities might restart their operations soon.<sup>215</sup>

In the second half of 2008, Buszynski argues that the Kim regime was just buying time and hoped a new US cabinet, which was supposed to hold office after the presidential elections in November 2008, would be easier to deal with. North Koreans wanted to wait until the elections were over, and in case Democratic candidate Obama was elected, they expected him to return to Clinton's policy.<sup>216</sup> Their expectations were based on Obama's presidential campaign, in which he offered dictatorial states to abandon adversarial relations and promised direct dialogue with leaders of all countries, including North Korea.<sup>217</sup>

However, no new policies were, in reality, enacted and no changes in the US Six-Party policy occurred when Barack Obama became the US president. His administration continued in the existing approach, i.e. that North Korea had to return to the Six-Party Talks first and denuclearize before any economic help could be provided. Moreover, many of the diplomats who had been working under Bush stayed in their posts, including Christopher Hill, and pursued the same policy toward the North Korean issue.<sup>218</sup>

When North Korea launched a multi-stage rocket in April 2009 and conducted another nuclear test in May 2009, the United States closely coordinated next steps with other countries and won support for Resolution 1874 in the UN Security Council. The resolution was supported by all permanent members of the Security Council, including China, and the US was very optimistic about it, hoping that the unanimous condemnation of North Korea's actions would lead the DPRK into isolation and force it to subsequent

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<sup>214</sup> Grzelczyk, 17.

<sup>215</sup> Acuto, "Not Quite the Dragon," 9.

<sup>216</sup> Buszynski, 159.

<sup>217</sup> Grzelczyk, 17.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibidem*, 19.

cooperation with the international forum.<sup>219</sup> The resolution condemned Pyongyang's actions, urged the North to return to the NPT, and strengthened sanctions against it.<sup>220</sup>

However, China remained determined to protect North Korea and regional stability, which was reflected in its continuing ambiguous behavior. Beijing pushed in the UN to dilute some of the mandatory sanctions and managed to reach a compromise on some of them.<sup>221</sup> Also, it stressed that "all parties should refrain from any words and deeds that may exacerbate the conflict," hereby basically saying that no country should use force when it came to imposing sanctions. Moreover, China was increasingly indifferent to the Talks and was unwilling to join the US-backed "united front" calling for halting nuclear proliferation.<sup>222</sup>

In the meantime, North Korea announced it would withdraw from the Six-Party Talks, and no country or alliance of countries has managed to persuade it to return to the negotiation table. The Six-Party Talks have been suspended since April 2009 and the US-China cooperation has remained very limited on the North Korean nuclear issue.

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<sup>219</sup> Neil MacFarquaher, "UN Security Council Pushes North Korea by Pursuing Sanction," *New York Times*, June 12, 2009, accessed May 1, 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2009/06/12/world/asia/13nations.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/12/world/asia/13nations.html).

<sup>220</sup> For example, it eased weapons inspections, thanks to which it could continue with its exports of small weapons to North Korea. Also, it expanded arms embargo by banning import or export of weapons. See United Nations Security Council Resolution 1874, June 12, 2009, accessed May 1, 2014, [www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=)

<sup>221</sup> Scott A. Snyder, "US Policy towards North Korea," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2013, accessed May 1, 2014, [www.cfr.org/north-korea/us-policy-towards-north-korea/p29962](http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/us-policy-towards-north-korea/p29962).

<sup>222</sup> MacFarquaher, "UN Security Council Pushes North Korea by Pursuing Sanction."

### **3. Overall Analysis: The Biggest Obstacles**

This chapter aims to provide a final assessment of the Sino-American cooperation over the North Korean nuclear issue during the Six-Party Talks and analyzes the most problematic issues between Washington and Beijing, critically complicating progress in achieving the major objective of the Talks, i.e. denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

When Washington and Beijing convened the Six-Party Talks, they both declared that they shared common interest in a nuclear-free North Korea and publicly stated they were willing to overcome potential disputes in other areas so as to achieve the desired goal. Pyongyang's nuclear program could destabilize the regional security environment and dramatically endanger national security interests of both countries.

However, despite the stated common interests and words of appreciation towards each other, there emerged several critical points between the US and China, complicating the Six-Party process.

One of the most serious reasons for this outcome seems to be, first of all, the Bush administration's overestimation of Chinese intentions and misjudgement of China's order of priorities within the Six-Party framework. Although the Americans were aware of China's special relationship and strong ties to the DPRK, they were convinced Beijing would prioritize denuclearization to anything else and, thus, be willing to pressure the North to completely abandon its nuclear program.

China's incomparable influence over North Korea made the White House approach to the PRC and work with it closer than before. The Americans were convinced that if they persuaded China to participate in the Six-Party Talks, Beijing would easily make the DPRK agree to the negotiations. Hereby, the chance that the US would eventually achieve its primary goal would be significantly enhanced. However, the amazing Chinese leverage over the Koreans was also the biggest obstacle to approach the objective of the whole process, which the Americans overlooked.

China's relationship with the DPRK is very important for Beijing as Pyongyang provides a strategic buffer against South Korea, a strategic American ally. A collapse of North Korea would bring the US closer to Chinese border and create a potentially great wave of refugees, heading from the North to China across the common border. Such a

chaos in the region could significantly affect China's security, potentially complicating its internal stability and survival of the communist regime.

Contrary to the chaos situation, China's regime would not be immediately threatened by a potential development of the DPRK's nuclear program. In spite of that, they agreed to participate in the Talks and to push the important ally into what it did not want to do. That suggests that the denuclearization alone could not be the main motive why China participated in the negotiations. The most likely reason for the participation seems to be regional and China's stability. When the US presented its Security Strategy in 2002 and the policy of the "preemptive strike" and finally invaded Iraq for perceived possession of weapons of mass destruction in the March 2003, Beijing suddenly realized that a similar military operation could be carried out also on the Korean Peninsula. If Pyongyang did not engage in any diplomatic process over the nuclear issue, as the White House demanded, an American "preemptive" military strike would come next. Thus, China finally yielded to the US demands to mediate the Talks. For Beijing, engagement in the Talks could effectively eliminate the threat of a potential American strike, which could fatally endanger stability in the northeast Asian region.

As described in chapter 2.6, Beijing's behavior after North Korea's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 further evidence that Beijing's order of priorities greatly differed from that of the US. Unlike the Bush cabinet's harsh approach, the Chinese were reluctant to severely punish Pyongyang for its nuclear activities and tried very hard to moderate all UN Security Council draft resolutions, originally proposing tough economic sanctions against the Kim regime. As a consequence, Chinese officials managed to soften US approach and persuaded the White House to accept China's own versions of resolutions, leaving implementation of the most damaging sanctions against the DPRK dependent on individual states. In this way, China could continue in its economic support to Korea, hereby ensuring its survival and the regional stability. Interestingly, Beijing even increased volume of its trade with North Korea at a rate of 41 percent after the first nuclear tests<sup>223</sup> and eliminated Pyongyang's potential economic problems, which might have been caused by the sanctions.

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<sup>223</sup> James Przystup, "North Korea: Challenges, Interests, and Policy," *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, November 2009, 4.

Thanks to this approach, Beijing's primary interests remained more or less undisturbed, and the northeast Asia region stayed relatively stable.

Protecting the DPRK from sanctions prevented Pyongyang from taking more serious steps to cordially cooperate and stop its frequent obstructions within the Six-Party framework. Thus, we can assume that China's continuous protection of North Korea was the primary reason of suspensions of the Talks.

On the other hand, it would not be correct to blame only Beijing for complicated process of the negotiations. The Bush administration's hardline attitude, pursued mostly during Bush's first term, showed stubborn insistence on the CVID and no willingness to make concessions and offer incentives, which did not provide any room for constructive dialogue. By this policy, the US aimed to severely harm the Kim regime, an objective in absolute opposition to China's interests.

However, when no considerable progress was made, Washington was becoming increasingly nervous. For the Americans, the US-China cooperation in its existing form as well as China's efforts to pressure the North was insufficient. They decided to dramatically reverse the North Korea policy. They accepted the Chinese and the North's demands and agreed to talk to the DPRK, albeit behind closed doors.

The reorientation of the US policy affected the US-China cooperation. The Bush administration focused more on negotiations with the DPRK, and the Chinese suddenly did not consider their participation in the Talks vitally necessary for a progress in the issue or for protection of their major interests. For them, the biggest threat, the regional instability caused by US hardline policy or a military strike, had diminished. The constructive US-China cooperation, which was considered as a helpful tool to prevent disruption of regional security, became less important. The fact the Bush administration significantly softened its policy and was willing to negotiate bilaterally with the DPRK and essentially assume the responsibility for the outcome of the Talks allowed Beijing to get rid of its dilemma between pressuring and protecting the DPRK. Further, as mentioned in chapter 2.3, China had already perceived the nuclear issue as a problem mostly between the other two countries already since the beginning of the Talks. By direct US-DPRK talks, its other objective was, thus, achieved.

Based on the abovementioned considerations, the chapter concludes that the Talks have failed primarily because the Americans dramatically overestimated Beijing's intentions. They did not realize that Chinese relationship with the DPRK was so important for Beijing and that it was never willing to pressure North Korea to the degree, to which the US had wanted it. Pyongyang's nuclear activities were perceived as a threat to China's national interests but not as serious as the potential chaos, which could be caused by such a pressure the US wished. Then, when the US finally significantly softened its approach towards the DPRK in 2007, and the danger of instability disappeared, the Chinese were even less willing to press their ally as the Talks already averted instability and chaos in the region, China's primary concern.

To sum it up, the negotiations were a bittersweet experience for the US. On one hand, its intensive cooperation with the PRC, in which it placed a lot of hope, did not stop the North's nuclear program, nor did it bring any significant progress in the issue. The joint statements, reached in 2005 and 2007, which are sometimes presented as a breakthrough, never completely achieved the initial objective of the negotiations. They left critical points unspecified or vaguely defined, hereby creating space for future disputes. In result, the nuclear issue is far from settled. On the other hand, the intensive Sino-American cooperation demonstrated that the two countries were able to work together and coordinate their policies to reach a common interest, albeit with a very limited success.

## Conclusion

When North Korea withdrew from the Nonproliferation Treaty and indirectly admitted that it had been developing its nuclear program despite the existing Agreed Framework, the United States turned to the DPRK's closest ally, China, in hope that it would join it in its pressure on the Koreans and persuade them to cease their nuclear activities. The Chinese were at first reluctant as it considered the problem to be an issue strictly between the US and North Korea. However, when the US presented the National Strategy Security Policy in 2002 with the "preemptive military strike" and invaded Iraq in 2003 for perceived possession of weapons of mass destruction, the situation got very critical also for China. Beijing came to realize that if the North did not engage in any negotiations with the US, a military operation could be performed also on the Korean Peninsula and destabilize the whole northeast Asia region. A potential collapse of Kim's regime would bring American troops from South Korea to China's borders and the strategic buffer zone would, hereby, disappear. Also, a subsequent great wave of refugees from North Korea to China could further threaten internal Chinese stability, necessary for continuous economic growth or the regime's survival.

Furthermore, Chinese policymakers were concerned that if the DPRK went nuclear, Japan and South Korea might seriously consider their own nuclearization, too, or turn to modernization of their defense systems. Therefore, China's participation in the nuclear-issue-related talks was assessed by the PRC's elite as necessary to prevent all the above-mentioned threats.

The Six-Party Talks were first convened in April 2003 and words of appreciation towards China as a mediator of the negotiations could be often heard in the US. The Americans were heavily convinced that the role Beijing had just assumed was a start of China's new pro-active approach to world policy, i.e. that it was becoming a more responsible actor in international politics. The US believed that the Chinese shared their interest in denuclearization of the peninsula and were ready to jointly pressure the North in accord with American expectations. However, the negotiations proved to be rather problematic.



Although both China and the US declared their common interest in denuclearization of the DPRK, the thesis has shown that their real priorities greatly differed, which the White House, however, failed to realize. When the US entered the negotiations, its major objective was to denuclearize the DPRK by any means possible to decrease a threat to American national security. China, on the other hand, perceived the North Korean nuclear program as a less important issue than maintaining the strategic partnership with its neighbor. Nevertheless, Beijing was willing to push its neighbor to such an extent that it would be finally willing to engage in the diplomatic process with Washington. In this way, Beijing wished to calm down the Americans and avert the potential disruption of stability in the region.

Once the Chinese showed their determination to discuss the nuclear matter with the North Koreans, Washington considered the move to be irrefutable evidence that the PRC would be also willing to pressure the Kim regime until its end. Moreover, in line with its hardline policy, the Bush administration clearly defined its goals and was not open to any concessions on those. Such an approach also complicated the Six-Party process to a great extent.

The Bush cabinet failed to realize China's real motives even after the DPRK's missile and nuclear test in 2006. Although North Korea crossed the "red line" by conducting the nuclear test, Beijing refused to condemn resolutely the event and continued to protect Kim's regime, instead. As the thesis shows, China tried very hard to moderate US-proposed resolution in the UN Security Council, including strict economic sanctions against Pyongyang, and eventually managed to persuade the United States to accept China's own version of a resolution. The Chinese draft significantly eliminated the original punitive measures, suggested by the US, and significantly reduced the negative impacts on the North economy. What is more, Beijing even increased its trade with the DPRK after the tests.

Hereby, China sent a clear message that its top priority was not denuclearization of North Korea, but its protection. It was willing to pressure the North to a certain extent but it did not want to force it too much and endanger its existence. Such an approach would critically threaten China's real top priority, i.e. stability of the northeast Asian region. Therefore, applying more carrots than sticks made more sense for the Chinese.

The United States thus perceived Beijing's behavior as insufficient. In 2007, following a change in the administration after the 2004 elections, it significantly softened its approach towards North Korea. Newly appointed US officials Rice and Hill abandoned American hardline policy, focusing on isolation of the DPRK, and agreed to direct dealings with Pyongyang to move forward with the denuclearization process. Nevertheless, the talks with the DPRK were still perceived as complementary, and the Americans believed that China would be still there to push the Koreans to agree with US suggestions. For the Chinese, however, the Talks as such and the cooperation with the US were less important. Due to softened US approach and consequent elimination of the destabilization threat of northeast Asia, their major objective had been achieved.

In result, no long-lasting breakthrough was made during the negotiations and the desired dismantlement of the North's nuclear program was not achieved. The Talks have been suspended since 2009 and left the US embittered by the absent outcome.

To conclude, the US-China cooperation over the North Korean nuclear issue was not very fruitful. The Americans dramatically misjudged Beijing's priorities within the Six-Party Talks and considerably overestimated Chinese intentions. The PRC's real position towards the nuclear issue as well as the DPRK was rather different than Washington had expected, which influenced the overall problematic course of the negotiations, eventually bringing no major breakthrough and no tangible progress towards the desired objective. In a broader sense, however, the positive outcome of the Talks is the fact that Washington and Beijing demonstrated their ability to coordinate their approach in the areas where their interests overlapped. In this way, the Sino-American cooperation contributed to a greater confidence between them, providing a basis, on which they could build on in the future.

## Shrnutí

Když Severní Korea odstoupila od Smlouvy o nešíření jaderných zbraní a nepřímo připustila, že navzdory uzavřené smlouvě Agreed Framework pokračuje ve svém jaderném programu, USA se obrátily na nejbližšího severokorejského spojence, Čínu, v naději, že se k nim připojí a společně donutí KLDK, aby zanechala jaderných aktivit. Peking zpočátku váhal, protože považoval problém za čistě americko-korejskou záležitost. Když však Spojené státy začaly v Iráku v roce 2003 uplatňovat svoji politiku preventivního úderu, situace se stala kritickou také pro Čínu. Číňané si uvědomili, že pokud Pchjongjang nezahájí rozhovory s Washingtonem, k americké vojenské operaci by mohlo dojít i na korejském poloostrově, a tím by se narušila stabilita celého regionu, strategicky důležitá pro samotnou Čínu.

Peking tedy v dubnu 2003 souhlasil se zprostředkováním šestistranných rozhovorů. USA byly na základě tohoto čínského přístupu přesvědčeny, že Peking začíná uplatňovat svou novou proaktivní politiku a stává se zodpovědným aktérem na mezinárodním poli. Proto měly od jednání velká očekávání. Jak se ale později ukázalo, ta byla poměrně komplikovaná.

Práce ukázala, že hlavním důvodem problematického vývoje byly rozdílné americko-čínské priority, jež se odrážely v odlišném přístupu k jednání. Zatímco Washington požadoval co nejrychlejší jaderné odzbrojení KDLR za jakýchkoliv podmínek, Čína považovala jadernou Koreu za mnohem menší riziko než potencionální regionální chaos, způsobený nekompromisní americkou politikou. Proto byl Peking ochotný s USA spolupracovat jen do určité míry.

Skutečné čínské zájmy jsou evidentní například ze situace po jaderném testu KLDK v roce 2006. Ačkoliv Severní Korea provedením testu překročila tzv. červenou linii, již dříve stanovenou Čínou, čínští vyjednávači i tehdy bránili výraznějším postihům OSN proti severokorejskému státu. Snažili se tak zmenšit dopady na ekonomiku KLDK a zajistit tak přežití režimu.

Na základě toho Spojené státy vyhodnotily snahy čínské strany jako nedostatečné a přistoupily ke změně na její straně. V roce 2007 umírněné křídlo Bushova kabinetu prosadilo výrazný ústupek vůči Koreji a svolilo k bilaterálnímu styku se Severní Koreou.

Ačkoliv tímto význam Číny poklesl, USA s ní dále počítaly jako s pomocí v případě jejich neshod s režimem Kim Jong-ila. Peking však považoval problém za uzavřený. Umírněná americká politika již nepředstavovala hrozbu pro stabilitu severovýchodní Asie a hlavní důvod čínské účasti v jednáních polevil.

Během šestistranných jednání tedy k žádnému zásadnímu pokroku směrem k jadernému odzbrojení KLDR nedošlo a americko-čínská spolupráce nebyla příliš efektivní. USA přecenily zájmy Pekingu a špatně odhadly jeho reálný vztah k Severní Koreji i celé jaderné problematice. V širším slova smyslu ale spolupráce Spojených států a Číny přinesla alespoň jednu pozitivní zprávu. Washington a Peking byly schopny si v určitých fázích jednání vzájemně naslouchat a následně koordinovat své kroky, a čímž do jisté míry oboustranně prohloubili důvěru.

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