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A Taiwanese Perspective on the DPRK's Nuclear Test¹

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Abstract

Taiwan and North Korea have no formal diplomatic relations and their informal interactions are negligible. Nevertheless, Taiwan's security has always unavoidably intertwined with what happens on the Korean peninsula. Thanks to North Korea who initiated the Korean War in the 1950s, Taiwan was able to avoid being conquered by China. This sort of North Korea-Taiwan linkage has become more related but not necessarily positive to Taiwan as it was, given the growing China's influence in the Korean affairs since the collapse of the Soviet Union, subsequently rising China and China's successful diplomatic maneuvers.

This paper intends to explore Taiwan's perspective on North Korea's nuclear test on 9 October 2006. The author will first elucidate two competing security perspectives of the pan-green coalition and the pan-blue group in Taiwan and how North Korean nuclear issue fits in their respective strategic perspectives, then discuss implications for Taiwan.

The biggest worry for Taiwan is that China might take advantage of the North Korean nuclear crisis to reach some kind of secret deal with the U.S. and sacrifice Taiwan. This is not necessarily paranoia. This perspective is based upon China's grand strategic design immediately after the 1996 missile-testing incident against Taiwan. The stratagem is a mixture of traditional Communist united front and the western liberal approach focusing on multilateralism, preventive diplomacy and soft power. Under China's new security concept, Beijing actively pursues Sino-US condominium in an attempt to upgrade China's international status, to weaken US-Japan alliance, to prevent Taiwan independence, and eventually to emerge as the leader of Asia economic bloc vis-à-vis NAFTA and EU. Taiwan is China's primary enemy, while the U.S. is the secondary enemy.

Introduction

Both China and Korea have been divided countries since the end of World War II. As divided countries, their reunification policies and foreign

¹ The draft of this paper was presented in the Expert Workshop on North Korea and East Asian Security: Where To From Here? at Flinders University on 6 December 2006.

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policies can hardly be dealt with each other separately.³ Moreover, because of geographic proximity, their destinies are doomed to be intertwined. Belonging to opposing camps in the Cold War era of bipolar system, Taiwan and North Korea had almost no contacts at all during the period. Even now they still have no formal diplomatic relations and their informal interactions are also negligible. Bilateral trade between Taiwan and North Korea totalled US\$24 million in 2005. Taiwan imported some US\$4 million in goods from North Korea, mainly coal, magnesium, plants and foodstuffs, and textiles. In exchange, Taiwan exported US\$20 million to North Korea, mainly synthetic fibers and electronics.⁴

Nevertheless, from Taipei's perspective, Taiwan's security has always been unavoidably intertwined with what happens on the Korean peninsula. The most remarkable example is the Korean War in the 1950s. Both Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung attempted to get support from Stalin in order to accomplish their unfinished unification tasks. Stalin gave the nod to Kim Il Sung and disillusioned China's hope for reunification. Thanks to North Korea who initiated the Korean War in the 1950s, Taiwan was able to avoid being conquered by China. U.S. President Truman's decision to send the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Straits immediately after the burst out of the 1950 Korean War prevented Taiwan from being taken over by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The signing of the Mutual Defence in 1954 in the wake of the Korean War made Taiwan a formal ally of the United States until 1978 when the U.S. decided to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. Since the conclusion of World War II in 1945, the United States has witnessed eleven administrations, from Truman to Bush, and its relationship with Taiwan/Republic of China (ROC) has fluctuated. The honeymoon between the two countries from the wartime alliance plumped to the lowest point in 1949 when the Truman administration adopted its hand-off policy toward the Chinese civil war. After the Korean War in 1950, when the Seventh Fleet was dispatched to protect Taiwan, the American policy was unexpectedly reversed. The Taiwan-America relations turned into a military alliance and thus reached its peak when a Mutual Defence Treaty was signed in 1954.⁵

This sort of North Korea-Taiwan linkage has become more evident, given the growing China's influence in the Korean affairs since the collapse of the Soviet Union, subsequently rising China which has rapidly widened power gap between Beijing and Taipei in favour of the former and China's successful diplomatic manoeuvres.

Against this background, this paper intends to explore Taiwan's perspective on North Korea's nuclear test on 9 October 2006. Before

³ Regarding the linkage between foreign policy and unification policy of a divided nation, see Ralph N. Clough, *Embattled Korea: the Rivalry for International Support*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987 and Byung Chul Koh, *The Foreign Policy Systems of North and South Korea*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

⁴ Directorate General of Customs, Ministry of Finance R.O.C.
<http://cus93.trade.gov.tw/english/FSCE/FSC0011E.ASP>

⁵ Cheng-Feng Shih, "Emerging Taiwan-America-Japan Triangular Relations,"
<http://mail.tku.edu.tw/cfshih/seminar/20020817/20020817'.htm>

elucidating Taiwan's perspective on the detonation of a North Korean nuclear bomb, there is a need to first illustrate two competing security perspectives in Taiwan and how North Korean nuclear issue fits in the strategic perspectives and implications for Taiwan security and Northeast Asia's peace and stability.

Two Competing Security Perspectives in Taiwan

Current Taiwan politics can be largely divided into two camps, the pan-green coalition and the pan-blue group. One of the major dividing lines is how to deal with emerging China. The pan-green group including the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Taiwan Solidarity Union stresses Taiwan identity and favours Taiwan independence.⁶ As a result, they view the PRC as a threat as Beijing claims that Taiwan is a renegade province of China and it will not rule out the possibility of using force against Taiwan's announcement of independence.⁷ To counter China's military threat, they tend to seek security cooperation with the U.S. and Japan and support U.S. and Japan proposed democratic alliance of the U.S., Japan, Australia and India in the name of anti authoritarian Communism in addition to upgrading self-defence.

For example, the DPP Government under Chen Shui bian repeatedly urged the Legislative Yuan to approve multi-billions-of-US dollars budget for purchasing weapons offered by the U.S., given the mounting military threat from China, in particular its ground-based missiles.⁸ Former Mainland Affairs Council Chairman Joseph Wu indicated that "China continues to prepare for an invasion of Taiwan and now has more than 900 missiles targeted on the island and located in five bases in nearby Fujian Province plus eleven military satellites in orbit." Furthermore, President Chen Shui bian also pointed out that "Despite China's impressive economic rise, it has become more authoritarian, posing a grave threat to our sovereignty...".⁹ With the passage of China's so-called Anti-Secession Law codifying non-peaceful measures against Taiwan in March 2005, China was interpreted by the DPP Government as a deliberate action to unilaterally change the status quo. To be more specific, anti-China sentiment and anti-unification position are primary sources of the DPP's legitimacy claiming as the first indigenous regime and the integral element for the pan-green camp to justify its rationale for Taiwan independence based on Taiwan identity.¹⁰ In March 2007, President Chen has accelerated his drive to edge the island towards formal independence from China by saying "Taiwan must seek independence in a pro-independence group, the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA). In the previous month, he has adopted the policy of de-sinification aimed at

⁶ Lowell Dittmer, "Taiwan and the Issue of National Identity," *Asian Survey*, August 2004, Vol. 44, No. 4: 477.

⁷ Phillip C. Saunders, "Long-term Trends in China-Taiwan Relations: Implications for U.S. Taiwan Policy," *Asian Survey*, December 2005, Vol. 45, No. 6: 974.

⁸ Initially, the total sum was US\$19 billion in 2001. Steve Chan, "Taiwan in 2005: Strategic Interaction in Two-Level Games," *Asian Survey*, February 2006, Vol. 46, No. 1: 66.

⁹ "Taiwan: China targeting island with 900 missiles on 5 bases," November 16, 2006 <http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/06/front2454056.070138889.html>

¹⁰ Yu-Shan Wu, "Taiwan in 2001: Stalemated on All Fronts," *Asian Survey*, February 2002, Vol. 42, No. 1: 42-43.

severing ties between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. His government deliberately replaced the word China with Taiwan on postage stamps on February 28 which was the 60th anniversary of a Taiwanese uprising against Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek Nationalists. The DPP government has also encouraged state enterprises to drop China in their titles. Consequently, the Chinese Petroleum Corporation became CPC Corporation, Taiwan, while China Shipbuilding Corp is to change its name to CSBC Corporation, Taiwan.¹¹

Alternatively, in view of the emerging importance of economic interest in the post-Cold War period and the increasing dependence of Taiwan's economic prosperity on China,¹² the pan-blue group consisting of Kuomintang (KMT), the People First Party and the New Party is convinced that Mainland affairs and foreign policy cannot be dealt with separately, hence relations with China should be put as the nation's first priority. Taiwan-China trade has increased at an average annual rate of 25% since the start of this decade. According to Taiwan's Bureau of Foreign Trade, total trade stood at US\$88.1 billion in 2006, with a trade surplus of US\$38.5 billion favorable to Taiwan.¹³ As a result, China is now Taiwan's the largest trading partner, the largest export market with largest trade surplus and second largest source of imports. More than forty percent of Taiwan's exports are heading for China and Hong Kong.¹⁴ In addition, according to Taiwan's Investment Commission, approved investment to Mainland China by Taiwanese businesses reached a recorded high of US\$7.64 billion in 2006.¹⁵ Taiwan's investment in China accounted for 71.4% of the island's total overseas investment (US\$8.45 billion) in 2005. This makes China the top destination for Taiwanese outbound investment.

Against this background, the pan-blue group views cross-straits relations as a matter of peace or war, emphasize the importance of economic cooperation between Taiwan and China and seek to work out a modus vivendi with China. As rising China presents both a huge threat and an enormous opportunity, former KMT Chairman and KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou asserts that Taiwan has to adopt a policy that can strike a

¹¹ "China fury after call for independence," *The Australian*, March 6, 2007, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21333905-2703,00.html>

¹² Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "If Taiwan Chooses Unification, Should the U.S. Care?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2002, Vol. 25, No. 3: 18.

¹³ "Mainland China emerges as our second largest source of imports," *The Economic Daily*, March 4, 2007, <http://udn.com/NEWS/FINANCE/FIN7/3746491.shtml>

¹⁴ "Mainland China market accounts for forty percent of our total exports," *The Commercial Times*, April 10, 2007, <http://news.chinatimes.com/2007Cti/2007Cti-News/2007Cti-News-Content/0,4521,120505+122007041000415,00.html>

¹⁵ "US\$7.64 billion Taiwanese investment in Mainland China reached record high last year," *The Economic Daily*, January 20, 2007, <http://udn.com/NEWS/FINANCE/FIN7/3695901.shtml>

balance between security interest and economic interest.¹⁶ He also said that the KMT would not pursue formal independence to avoid conflict in the Taiwan Strait and internal confrontation in Taiwan.¹⁷ With support of the business sector and major media in Taiwan,¹⁸ the pan-blue group has promoted three direct links of trade and transport by air and sea.¹⁹ They regard unification as a policy option but largely prefer maintaining status quo across the Taiwan Straits.²⁰ The unprecedented unofficial visits to China by KMT's Lien Chan and People First Party's James Soong the following month in 2005 marked a major transformation of Taiwan politics, from the unification versus independence to the security threat versus economic collaboration.²¹ Before starting his China trip, Lien Chan said that "it is the common aspiration of all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Straits to seek reconciliation and dialog for the building of a win-win future. He also mentioned a poll conducted in Taiwan indicated that 66 percent of the Taiwan people support cross-Straits reconciliation and dialogue."²²

Linkage between Taiwan and North Korea Nuclear Crisis

With regard to North Korean nuclear crisis, both the pan-green coalition and the pan-blue opposition group focus their attention on the evolving China's role and influence in the Korean affairs and implications for Taiwan. The biggest worry for Taiwan is that China might take advantage of the North Korean nuclear crisis to reach some kind of secret deal with the U.S. and sacrifice Taiwan. This is not necessarily paranoia. The perspective is based upon China's grand strategy immediately after the 1996 missiles-testing incident against Taiwan.²³ The stratagem is a mixture of traditional

¹⁶ Ma Ying-jeou, "60 Anniversary-Taiwan: A Responsible Stakeholder," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 2006, Vol.169, Iss.9, p. 40.

¹⁷ Opposition leader rules out Taiwan independence
<http://english.rti.org.tw/Content/GetSingleNews.aspx?ContentID=30267>

¹⁸ "Facing Mainland China's Soft Offence, Where is Taiwan's Strategy?" editorial, *The China Times*, May 1, 2007, <http://news.chinatimes.com/2007Cti/2007Cti-News/2007Cti-News-Content/0,4521,110514+112007050100302,00.html>; "Without Mainland China Market, Four-Ports-One-Airport will be Nil," editorial, *The Commercial Times*, April 22, 2007, <http://news.chinatimes.com/2007Cti/2007Cti-News/2007Cti-News-Content/0,4521,120514+122007042200266,00.html>; "Political Suicide: Purging Blue in Society, Moving toward Blue in Cross-Straits Relations," editorial, *The United Daily*, March 19, 2007, <http://udn.com/NEWS/OPINION/OPI1/3766542.shtml>; "In the era of focusing on regional economic cooperation, Taiwan must cooperate with Mainland China so as to survive and prosper." in "Love Taiwan, Do not be Absent in Regional Economic Cooperation," editorial, *The Economic Daily*, March 1, 2007,3/01, <http://udn.com/NEWS/OPINION/OPI1/3742496.shtml>

¹⁹ "DPP and TSU Block Easing of Investments," *The China Post*, December 5, 2006, <http://www.taiwansecurity.org/CP/2006/CP-051206.htm>; Gunter Schubert, "Taiwan's Political Parties and National Identity: The Rise of an Overarching Consensus," *Asian Survey*, August 2004, Vol. 44, No. 4: 542-546.

²⁰ Yu-Shan Wu, "Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario," *Asian Survey*, August 2004, Vol. 44, No. 4: 617.

²¹ Lowell Dittmer, "Asia in 2005," *Asian Survey*, February 2006, Vol. 46, No. 1: 4.

²² http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/29/content_438624.htm

²³ Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Swaine, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present,*

Communist united front and the western liberal approach focusing on multilateralism, preventive diplomacy and soft power with economic priority in order to attain its realist goals of maximizing national interest and peacefully rising to a global power.

China emerges as a strong advocate of the new security concept. Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin in late 1996 first put forward the initiative that countries in the region jointly cultivate a new concept of security, which focuses on enhancing trust through dialogue and promoting security through cooperation. The new security concept corresponds with the so called comprehensive national strength (*conghe guoli*) in the early 1990s. Since then, the new security concept has become an important component of China's foreign policies. China maintains that cooperation under the new security concept should be flexible and diversified in form and model. It could be a multi-lateral security mechanism of relatively strong binding force or a forum-like multi-lateral security dialogue. It could also be a confidence-building bilateral security dialogue or a non-governmental dialogue of an academic nature. The promotion of greater interaction of economic interests is another effective means of safeguarding security.²⁴ According to *Jiefangjun Bao*, "There are three patterns to establish and develop the new security concept, namely international peace keeping, security dialogue and the security agreement...Strategic security coordination and comprehensive security cooperation in various fields will play an important role in preventing crises and checking the escalation of conflicts."²⁵ Since the new security concept was inaugurated after the 1995-96 Taiwan Straits crisis, it is very likely that the concept was targeted at Taiwan in an attempt to prevent it from seeking independence.

What is worth noting is China's adopting liberal multilateralism and preventive diplomacy. During the Cold War period, China saw multilateral approach as foreign to it. Beijing viewed international organizations as a means employed by the U.S. and other Western countries to maintain their global domination and as a grand alliance designed to contain China. However, China has completely reversed its perceptions towards multilateralism since the mid 1990s, by moving from negative to positive, from passive defense to active leadership. It has learnt that the multilateral bodies could be very helpful in establishing its own position under the new security concept. It now actively uses them to counter its challengers. It is worth mentioning that both China changed its behavior toward multilateralism in April 1996 when Beijing offered to co-chair with Manila the next ARF intersessional support group meeting on Confidence-building Measures less than one month after pro-independence Lee Teng-hui became Taiwan's first

and Future (RAND, 2000).

²⁴ "China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept," July 31, 2002, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjzzyhy/2612/2614/t15319.htm>

²⁵ Li Qinggong and Wei Wei, "Chinese Army paper on 'New Security Concept'," *Jiefangjun Bao*, December 24, 1997, p. 5; <http://www.shaps.hawaii.edu/security/china/jiefangjun-new-security-971224.html>

popularly elected President.²⁶ Likewise, Beijing also shifted its attitude toward its territorial dispute with ASEAN over the South China Sea after the Taiwan crisis of 1995-96.²⁷ All of these point to the fact that preventing Taiwan from independence has become China's first priority in forming its foreign policy and making its strategic design. Meanwhile, against its traditional stance of supporting North Korea's bilateral dialogue with Washington, China accepted US and South Korea's proposed multilateral mechanism to seek permanent peace on the Korean peninsula in the form of four party talks in 1996. China even moved further from being a participant in multilateral settings to the position of convener in multilateral mechanism. This is exemplified by China assuming the key position in organizing multilateral forums since 2003, a marked departure from China's traditional passive attitude toward the Korea affairs to actively facilitating the tri-party talks and later six-party talks since 2003 aimed at defusing the North Korean nuclear crisis.

With respect to the new form of the united front, Taiwan is China's primary enemy, while the U.S. is the secondary enemy.²⁸ Under China's new security concept, Beijing actively pursues Sino-US condominium in an attempt to upgrade China's international status, to weaken US-Japan alliance, to prevent Taiwan independence, and eventually to emerge as the leader of Asia economic bloc vis-à-vis NAFTA and EU. According to Dr. Jing-dong Yuan, research director of the East Asia non-proliferation program at the Center for Non-proliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, one of the most important factors that influences China's North Korea policy departing from its traditional low-profile diplomatic posture and long-held principle of non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs to swiftly joining the international community in condemning the North Korean nuclear test in the strongest terms and adopting United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 imposing sanctions on Pyongyang is how it will affect Sino-US relations. "Beijing has sought to maintain a good, stable bilateral relationship with Washington that serves China's interests. That includes US willingness to rein in any moves by Taiwan for independence."²⁹

While seeking to maintain rapport relations with Washington, Beijing has taken active economic diplomacy based on two pillars of WTO and FTA since the early 2000s.³⁰ China's FTA proposal to ASEAN in November 2000 also

²⁶ Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "Multilateralism in China's ASEAN Policy: Its Evolution, Characteristics, and Aspiration," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Singapore: April 2005. Vol. 27, Iss. 1; p. 108.

²⁷ Leszek Buszynski, "ASEAN, the Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Singapore: December 2003. Vol.25, No. 3; p. 343

²⁸ Ashley J. Tellis, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pointed out that China's increasing contacts with its neighboring states are designed to prevent those countries from forming a united front against China. Beijing intends to emerge as the only powerful country that can provide security to Asia. It is preparing for successfully replacing the U.S. position in Asia in the future. *Washington Observer Weekly*, 2005, No. 10, March 16, 2005,

<http://www.washingtonobserver.org/document.cfm?documentid=900&charid=2>

²⁹ Jing-dong Yuan, "China's new North Korea diplomacy," *Asian Times*, November 14, 2006, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HK14Ad02.html>

³⁰ Li Cheng, "China in 2000: a Year of Strategic Rethinking," *Asian Survey*, February 2001, Vol. 41, No. 1: 90; Dali L. Yang, "China in 2001: Economic Liberalization and Its Political Discontents," *Asian Survey*, February 2002, Vol. 42, No. 1: 15-18.

serves Beijing's purposes to isolate Taiwan, to displace Japan's economic leadership in East Asia and to drive the U.S. out of Asia. The remarkable example is the first East Asian economic summit in December 2005,³¹ a realization of East Asian Caucus (EAC) proposed by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in the early 1990s. From Washington's point of view, the EAC was an attempt by "anti-U.S." countries such as China and China's client states to exclude the U.S. from the new regional bloc. As C. Fred Bergsten, Director of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, indicated, the Asia-only model of trade agreements "appears to be on a collision course with that of the U.S." and there is the potential clash between a China-led Asia versus a U.S.-led West to compete the leadership of global economy in the future.³²

Chinese President Jiang Zemin attempted to form a Sino-US condominium through the Korea issue (the Four-Party Talks) and South Asia nuclear proliferation issue (US-China joint effort to force India to give up nuclear weapons) bypassing Taiwan and Japan. Japan was relegated to the second rate power in Asia after the realization of the four-party talks in 1997. The salient example is US President Bill Clinton's visit to China in June 1998. He declared his Administration's adherence to the "three no's" - no recognition of Taiwan independence, no two-China policy, no support for Taiwan's entry into international organizations reserved for sovereign nations.³³ China intends to persuade Washington to work together to eliminate the most probable cause for Sino-U.S. military confrontation, Taiwan independence. Taiwan is one of the most important factors in China's calculus, especially when it comes to cooperating with the U.S. As Jing-dong Yuan indicated, Beijing needs Washington's cooperation in reining in the independence elements in Taiwan.³⁴ As Yoichi Funabashi pointed out, when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited the U.S. in December 2003, he proposed a deal to his U.S. counterpart that China would try to rein in and bring North Korea to

³¹ Joseph Nye, "The Rise of China's Soft Power," *Wall Street Journal Asia*, December 29, 2005, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/ksgnews/Features/opeds/122905_nye.htm

³² C. Fred Bergsten, "[China and Economic Integration in East Asia: Implications for the United States](#)," *Policy Briefs in International Economics* (Peterson Institute, March 2007).

³³ "After Clinton's tactless pronouncements, the United States is now perceived as supporting China's uncompromising stance towards the quasi-annexation of Taiwan. Clinton's adherence to a "one China" policy on Beijing's terms provided the PRC leadership with a stunning diplomatic victory and disrupted efforts by those in China and Taiwan seeking peaceful resolution of the always-delicate unification question." Julian Weiss, "A New Asian Agenda," *The Washington Quarterly*, 2000, Vol. 23, No. 1: 23. In response to the perceived Clinton's retreat from the traditional stance toward Taiwan, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui in July 1999 responded by telling German journalists that relations between Taiwan and China are "nation-to-nation, or at least special state-to-state," effectively abandoning the one-China policy. <http://www.pathfinder.com/asiaweek/99/0730/nat1.html> In addition, Clinton did not accept Japan's request to visit Japan following his China's trip. What even worse is that he accused Japan in China for not opening its market enough. This made Japanese feel that he was playing China card against Japan and a Sino-US condominium was loomed large.

³⁴ Jing-dong Yuan, "China's new North Korea diplomacy," *Asian Times*, November 14, 2006, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HK14Ad02.html>

the negotiation table while the U.S. should be self-restrained in its treatment of Taiwan.³⁵ Both Professor David Shambaugh at George Washington University (GWU) and Former US Ambassador to China James Lilley echoed this analysis. While attending a conference on East Asian Security and Taiwan held by the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University in December 2006, Shambaugh and Lilley assert that Sino-US relations have reached a mature stage. Taiwan is no longer a core issue on Sino-US Agenda. "Since Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met US President Bush in December 2003, both countries have dealt with the Taiwan issue in a proper way and have put the issue under control." Shambaugh explained.³⁶ Furthermore, Jing-dong Yuan at Monterey Institute of International Studies also indicated that one of the most important factors influencing China's North Korea policy is how it will affect Sino-US relations. Beijing has sought to maintain a good, stable bilateral relationship with Washington that serves China's interests including US willingness to restrain Taiwan from seeking for independence.³⁷

Taiwan's Perspective on North Korea's Nuclear Test

The ruling DPP elite have tried to take advantage of the North Korean case to sell their vision to the world. In his initial response to North Korea's nuclear test on 9 October, President Chen Shui-bian in greeting a group of Japanese said as a long term partner with the same democratic values and security ally of Japan, Taiwan would join Japan and the democratic community to take further sanction measures against North Korea without fail. He also expressed his hope that Taiwan would like to stand side by side with Japan and the democratic camp in the future and stressed that Japan and the U.S. are Taiwan's best security partners. "Even without formal diplomatic relations, Taiwan is willing to contribute to military interchange and cooperation and eventually some sort of quasi-military alliance of the three countries will be realized," he added.³⁸ On the second day (10 October), while condemning North Korea's nuclear test for posing a severe threat to the regional peace, President Chen urged the international community to pay equal attention to the potential military confrontation across the Taiwan Straits and to promote multilateral dialogue similar to the six-way talks. He stated that the international community should seriously review deficiency and defects of the East Asia collective security mechanism. Taiwan should be included in the East Asian collective security system or mechanism, so that cross- Taiwan

³⁵ Yoichi Funabashi, "China's New Thinking on North Korea Policy?," July 12, 2005, <http://northkorea.ssrc.org/Funabashi/>

³⁶ "David Shambaugh : Taiwan No Longer a Core Issue on Sino-US Agenda," *The United Daily*, December 3, 2006, <http://udn.com/NEWS/WORLD/WOR1/3631341.shtml>

³⁷ Dr. Yuan is research director of the East Asia non-proliferation program at the Center for Non-proliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies. Jing-dong Yuan, "China's new North Korea diplomacy," *Asia Times*, November 14, 2006, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HK14Ad02.html>

³⁸ "North Korea's Nuclear Test: Representing Taiwan, President Chen Strongly Condemned North Korea," *The Epoch Times*, October 9, 2006, <http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/6/10/9/n1481440.htm>

straits relations and peace and stability in Asia Pacific as a whole can be maintained.³⁹ Later, on October 30, President Chen in a videoconference with Japanese academics and reporters suggested this could be done in preparation for the establishment of a trilateral security mechanism involving Taiwan, Japan and the United States, given that high tension on the Korean Peninsula resulting from North Korea's recent missile test and nuclear detonation.⁴⁰ In the same vein, David Tawei Lee, who was Taiwan's Representative to the U.S. at the time, in December 2006 reminded the world that "North Korea is not the only security problem in East Asia, China's continuously rapid military buildup is another equally important security problem which not only poses a threat to Taiwan's survival and development but also to security and stability in Northeast Asia." He cited examples of the recent China's submarine secretly following a U.S. aircraft carrier, another submarine's intrusion into Japan's territorial sea and so far China's refusal of announcing no intrusion into Taiwan by force.⁴¹ Professor Chen (Vincent) Wen-hsien at Graduate Institute of Taiwan History, National Chengchi University suggested that Taiwan should take advantage of global focus on peace in East Asia in the wake of North Korean nuclear test and urged Beijing authorities not to blame North Korea for nuclear detonation on the one hand, while increase its own military deployment against Taiwan on the other hand. This might strengthen North Korea's resolve and increase its bargaining chips.⁴²

In addition, an editorial of the ROC Ministry of Defense indicated that North Korea's nuclear test reveals the fact that China has not made serious efforts in assisting in solving the Northeast Asia problem in the past ten years. Lee Wen-Chung, Former DPP Legislator and member of the National Defense Committee, the Legislative Yuan, was quoted saying Beijing's rejecting strict sanctions against North Korea proposed by the U.S. and Japan was aiming at extracting concessions from Washington and Tokyo on another diplomatic front. He said when U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing held a joint press conference after their talks over the implementation of the United Nation's 1817 Resolution, Dr. Rice hoped that China would follow the resolution to examine if there is any dangerous illegal materials in its trade with North Korea. Not responding to the call directly, Minister Li instead said that Beijing wanted the U.S. to honor its commitments to 'One China Policy', the three joint communiqués and opposition to Taiwan independence. Ostensibly, China was using North Korean nuclear crisis to attack another target (Taiwan). The editorial concluded by stating that "What we can learn from this crisis is that

³⁹ "North Korea's Nuclear Test: President Chen Said Taiwan Should Be Included in East Asian Security System," October 11, 2006, <http://news.epochtimes.com.tw/6/10/11/38544.htm>

⁴⁰ "Chen calls for Japanese Taiwan Relations Act," November 3, 2006, <http://taiwanjournal.nat.gov.tw/ct.asp?CtNode=122&xItem=23435>

⁴¹ "China's Military Buildup Threats East Asian Security," The Liberty Times, December 3, 2006, <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2006/new/dec/3/today-p8.htm>

⁴² "North Korea's Nuclear Test: Scholars Concern about Interactions in Northeast Asia and their Implications for Taiwan," *Central New Agency*, October 12, 2006, http://www.wretch.cc/blog/chaomaru&article_id=8315823

differences in resolving North Korean issue among the related parties can be employed by China to maneuver against us (Taiwan). We should watch development of the North Korean crisis closely with extra carefulness. In particular, last year when the crisis was getting serious and the arrangement of six-way talks was underway, China requested the U.S. to stop arms sales to Taiwan in exchange for its cooperation with Washington in the North Korea issue. Fortunately, the U.S. did not respond accordingly.”⁴³

One of Taiwan’s biggest concerns is the emergence of Sino-US condominium through their collaboration over North Korean crisis. According to Bill Chang, Former Deputy Director of the DPP’s Chinese Affairs Department, North Korea’s first nuclear test has a negative impact on security and stability in Northeast Asia as well as cross-strait relations. He warned that “the world is watching to see if the US will take military action and if Beijing will stand aside or maybe even use its geographical advantage and longstanding relationship with North Korea to assist the US. This will be crucial to the success of any military action. If that happens, Taiwan’s interests may once again be sacrificed. If the US decides to go to war, that could create a situation in East Asia that would give the People’s Liberation Army an opportunity to invade Taiwan.”⁴⁴ Others worry if the U.S. insists on taking military actions against Pyongyang, China might invade Taiwan for the U.S. does not want to involve in two wars at the same time.

Furthermore, Dr. Parris Chang, former Deputy Secretary-general of Taiwan’s National Security Council, believes that North Korea’s nuclear test made China and the U.S. the biggest losers. The test completely destroyed the Six-Party talks, the China-dominated strategic platform, and China’s credibility as a reliable mediator. Alternatively, U.S. President Bush’s approach of no war and no peace in the past six years turned out to be a disaster and his reliance on China to persuade Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons via the Six-Party talks proved to be a wrong policy. North Korea’s detonation of nuclear bombs would consolidate Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s stance to accelerate Japan’s military buildup and make Japan a normal state.⁴⁵ That North Korea openly defied Beijing’s advice not to resort to provocative act and embarrassed China by going ahead with the missile tests in July and the nuclear test in October 2006 has alarmed Japan and provided it with the convenient justification for bolstering military capability such as missile defenses, spy-satellite launches and the strengthening US-Japan security alliance. Chih-Cheng Lo, Chairman of Political Science Department at Soochow University and Former Chairperson of the Research and Planning Committee, the ROC’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, opined that North Korea’s nuclear detonation, an overt opposition to China’s request, was targeted at Beijing. Japanese Prime Minister Abe who was in his trip to

⁴³ Editorial: It is Obvious that Communist China is Using the North Korean Issue to Conduct Diplomatic Blackmail,” October 24, 2006, <http://www.mnd.gov.tw/modnews/mininews/matter.aspx?PublicID=5045>

⁴⁴ Bill Chang, “North Korea’s Nuclear Test is Bad for Everyone,” *Taipei Times*, October 19, 2006, p. 8; <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2006/10/19/2003332447>

⁴⁵ Parris Chang, “North Korea’s Nuclear Test: Brinkmanship,” *Liberty Time*, October 11, 2006, <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2006/new/oct/11/today-o4.htm>

Beijing was the beneficiary of North Korea's diplomatic coup against China. He was able to relieve Japan's dispute with China over Yasukuni Shrine's visits. What is more, the nuclear detonation gave Japanese conservatives ammunition to justify its desire to possess nuclear weapons in the future.⁴⁶ With mounting North Korea's threat to its security, Japan revised its law upgrading the Defense Agency to the ministerial level. The ongoing modification of its defense policy may lead to the relaxation of its weapons exports ban. In an interview with a Canadian magazine in February 2007, Vice Defense Minister Ker Chen-heng mentioned that Taiwan would welcome and looks forward to seeing Japan adjust its national defense policy regarding the export of military techniques and weapons sales to Taiwan. He said that "It would be very helpful to Taiwan's national defense if Japan agreed to sell weapons to us." Ker specified that "Taiwan especially hopes to acquire Japan's anti-submarine techniques...."⁴⁷ In sum, for pan-green camp, North Korea's nuclear detonation in fact provided Taiwan a better chance to be incorporated into US-Japan alliance against China at least informally and increase its ammunition to check and balance rising China and in turn to provide a better environment for seeking independence. China's losing credibility of course perfectly fits in the pan-green camp's anti-China rationale.

Moreover, taking advantage of North Korea's nuclear test, DPP elite also attempted to alleviate domestic campaign to oust President Chen for his family involving in a series of scandals by calling for focusing on national security. Chih-Cheng Lo urged Taiwan people to focus their attention to ever-changing regional security situation rather than domestic dispute over whether President Chen should be ousted or not, because the former will affect Taiwan's survival more than the latter. In particular, they should pay attention to interactions between the U.S., China and Japan and their implications for the possible marginalization of Taiwan's interest.⁴⁸ Similarly, Mr. Bill Chang pointed out "although North Korea's test in the eyes of the US and Japan has dealt a blow to China, this cannot be translated into a gain for Taiwan, for Taipei is equally unable to influence Pyongyang's actions. The conflict surrounding the campaign to oust President Chen Shui-bian, the lack of national unity and the government's weakness leaves little room for optimism concerning Taiwan's security."⁴⁹

In view of Taiwan's emergence as China's primary target of its grand strategy and President Chen's propensity for provocative policies, the Pan-blue group argues what Taiwan should learn from the North Korean nuclear

⁴⁶ "North Korea's Nuclear Test: Scholars Concern about Interactions in Northeast Asia and their Implications for Taiwan," *Central New Agency*, October 12, 2006, http://www.wretch.cc/blog/chaomaru&article_id=8315823

⁴⁷ "MND official says Taiwan seeking Japan military trade," *Taiwan News*, February 2, 2007, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=380407&lang=eng_news&cate_img=83.jpg&cate_rss=news_Politics_TAIWAN

⁴⁸ "North Korea's Nuclear Test: Scholars Concern about Interactions in Northeast Asia and their Implications for Taiwan," *Central New Agency*, October 12, 2006, http://www.wretch.cc/blog/chaomaru&article_id=8315823

⁴⁹ Bill Chang, "North Korea's Nuclear Test is Bad for Everyone," *Taipei Times*, October 19, 2006, p. 8; <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2006/10/19/2003332447>

crisis is that minor power diplomacy has its limitations. Brinkmanship of a minor power could end up with the worst scenario of confronting a coalition of major powers. China's shifting its stance to support the U.S. hardline approach to North Korea since North Korea's testing missiles since July 2006 is a warning to Pyongyang. President Chen's provocative approach in recent years not only irritated China but also annoyed the U.S. Taiwan was in a danger similar to what North Korea was facing, perhaps even worse. There was a strong evidence of existing a sort of Sino-US Condominium against Taiwanese independence in the President Chen's second term (2005-2008) , given growing accusations of Taiwan's independence from both Washington and Beijing. This was a sharp contrast with US President Bush's emphasis on increasing support to Taiwan and unprecedentedly claiming defending Taiwan as the US could in public in March 2001.⁵⁰ As Professor Michael Wesley pointed out that Taiwan and North Korea were regarded as the two most destabilizing actors in Northeast Asia as both of them were taking brinkmanship. As a result, big powers in this area had converging interest and growing interdependence.⁵¹ In July 2004, Vice President of Cato Institute Ted Galen Carpenter asserted that the US must tell Taiwan its future depended on Taiwanese themselves, no matter they wanted to reunify with China or to seeking for independence or status quo. Taiwanese should take all the risks for their own decision. Taking this kind of crystal clear policy toward Taiwan as the first priority, the US can avoid a war with China years ahead because big powers should not fight a war for something irrelevant of their vital interest.⁵² Another article by Ted Carpenter mentioned because the US needed China's assistance in many international issues, North Korea and Iran's nuclear crises in particular, Washington became more and more unsatisfied with the Chen Shui bian Government's touch measures against Beijing. From the Bush Administration's perspective, Taiwan was attempting to raise tension between China and the US.⁵³ An open accusation of President Chen of promoting provocative policies and failing to take advantage of the Bush administration's goodwill over the past six years by Robert Sutter, a visiting professor of Asian studies at Georgetown University, in an academic conference at GWU in December 2006 proves that their worries are not groundless.⁵⁴

Arms race and nuclear proliferation

⁵⁰ Kenneth Lieberthal, "The United States and Asia in 2001: Changing agendas," *Asian Survey*, January/February 2002. Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 4.

⁵¹ Michael Wesley, "The Emerging Security Environment in the Asia Pacific," *Regional Outlook*, Volume 1, 2004, <http://www.griffith.edu.au/business/griffith-asia-institute/publications/regional-outlook>

⁵² "US Expert : America should tell Taiwan specifically that Taiwan's future is in its hands and it should take all risks," *The China Times*, July 18, 2004, <http://news.chinatimes.com/Chinatimes/newslist/newslist-content/0,3546,110505+112004071800055,00.html>

⁵³ Ted Galen Carpenter, "Wild Card: A Democratic Taiwan," *China Security*, Vol. 4 No. 1, Winter 2008, pp. 47-48, <http://www.cato.org/people/ted-galen-carpenter>

⁵⁴ Academic warns of pan-blues' impact on Taiwan-US ties Dec 03, 2006, p 1 <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2006/12/03/2003338882>

Taiwan is frequently mentioned as one of the most potential countries to follow North Korea's nuclear path. Even though both the pan-blue group and the pan-green coalition claim that Taiwan will not seek for nuclear weapons. Bill Chang said that he does not think North Korea's test will trigger a domino effect in the region, causing Tokyo and Seoul to develop nuclear capabilities.⁵⁵ Lin Chong-pin, a Tamkang University professor and Former Deputy Defense Minister, during an interview with the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper said "the number of Taiwan's military personnel who are supporters of the pro-China unification opposition parties is higher than that of those who are supporters of the ruling pro-independence DPP, while Taiwan has become increasingly reliant on China in terms of the economy. Taiwan's military, therefore, will not opt for owning or developing nuclear weapons as it does not want to widen the rift with China."⁵⁶ However, the pan-blue group privately is worried that radical pro-independence elements might resort to nuclear options. If that is the case, China would be forced to take military actions against Taiwan for it is one of conditions that Beijing has publicly specified to resort to force.⁵⁷

Most Taiwanese scholars hold a pessimistic view about Washington's effort of the denuclearization of the DPRK and believe that North Korea eventually will be recognized as a nuclear power. They also agree that Japan will go for nuclear weapons and it is a matter of time. Dong-Ching Day, Adjunct assistant professor at Chihlee Institute of Technology, predicts that the Japanese Government will not abandon non-nuclear policy in the short term, however "if North Korea tests nuclear bombs again, the possibility for Japan to go nuclear will be highly increasing."⁵⁸ The pan-blue camp's perspective is based upon rising radical rightists who claim that Japan should possess nuclear weapons and Japan's ambition for the big power status equivalent to the U.S. and China, exemplified by Tokyo's eagerness to become a member of the permanent seat of the UN Security Council. The pan-blue camp regards this is going to complicate the security environment in Northeast Asia and this development in particular might help pro-independence elements gather momentum in Taiwan for Japan has clandestinely supported Taiwan independence movement. Japan might even assist radical pan-green people in developing nuclear weapons after its acquisition of nuclear weapons. Alternatively, the pan-green group is privately welcome a nuclear Japan because Japan with nuclear weapons will increase its counterweight against China's threat.

⁵⁵ Bill Chang, "North Korea's Nuclear Test is Bad for Everyone," *Taipei Times*, October 19, 2006, p. 8; <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2006/10/19/2003332447>

⁵⁶ "Taiwan Willing to Cooperate with U.S., Japan on Sanctioning N. Korea," October 20, 2006, <http://cna.com.tw/eng/cepread.php?id=200610200020>

⁵⁷ The Chinese government has repeatedly pronounced that it would attack Taiwan under several conditions: If Taiwan declares independence; If foreign troops are present on Taiwan; If Taiwan develops a nuclear device; If Taiwan delays "reunification". Daniel McCarthy, "Ignore the rhetoric, China won't attack Taiwan," *Asia Times*, February 11, 2004, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FB11Ad06.html>

⁵⁸ Dong-Ching Day, "North Korean Nuclear Test and the Power Balance in East Asia," *Peace Forum e-Newsletter*, No.201, December 4, 2006, http://www.peaceforum.org.tw/onweb.jsp?webno=3333333132&webitem_no=1826

Conclusion

Both the pan-green camp and the pan-blue group in Taiwan have followed the North Korean nuclear crisis closely for they believe that peace and stability on the Korean peninsula is inevitably interwoven with cross-Strait relations. However, they interpret the crisis through different sets of ideological lenses. With China's military threat in mind, the DPP Government under Chen Shui-bian tried to take advantage of North Korean nuclear detonation by calling the world's attention to cross-straits tension, expecting to be included in future multilateral mechanism and strategic alliance against China in Northeast Asia. They were pleased to see Japan's military buildup in response to mounting North Korean threat and did not oppose Japan's possession of nuclear weapons, believing that a strong Japan can contribute to counterbalancing rising China and Taiwan's independence in the future eventually.

Alternatively, the pan-blue group employed the North Korean nuclear adventure as an example to warn President Chen that his obsession with playing independence card would end up with a disaster. They were worried that President Chen Shui-bian's series of moves aimed at pushing for independence such as referendum on the application for UN membership under Taiwan in the presidential election in March 2008 would accelerate the realization of Sino-US condominium and further isolate Taiwan from the rest of world. China's grand strategy since 1996 has already targeted **specifically** at Taiwan and Beijing's collaboration with Washington over North Korean nuclear crisis has been deliberately used as a means to nurture Sino--US condominium. China's unusually tough stance toward North Korea's nuclear test attested to a growing convergence of Sino-US interest.⁵⁹ Furthermore, "Washington considers such antics a risk to peace in the region." Bush administration's China policy has further tilted toward cooperative dialogue with China since Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank and former deputy secretary of state encouraged China to behave as a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system in September 2005. This demonstrates the United States' acceptance of China's rightful place in the world, implies that China's growth is not threatening, and leads to cooperation on numerous global issues.⁶⁰ Some pan-blue people also worried that China might take advantage of the Korean War to attack Taiwan for the US did not want to fight two wars in Northeast Asia at the same time. They were also concerned that the growing evidence of Sino-US condominium on preventing Taiwan from seeking independence would further isolate Taiwan on the world stage.

As for the implications for North Korean nuclear crisis, future development of North Korean nuclear crisis will largely depend on how the crisis is resolved. From the pan-Green perspective, there are three possible

⁵⁹ Gregory J Moore. "How North Korea threatens China's interests: understanding Chinese 'duplicity' on the North Korean nuclear issue," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific*, January 2008. Vol. 8, No. 1; p. 11.

⁶⁰ Victor D. Cha. "Winning Asia; Washington's Untold Success Story," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007. Vol. 86, No. 6, p. 98.

scenarios, namely Sino-U.S. condominium, Sino-Japan-U.S. tripolarity, and U.S.-DPRK bilateralism. The first scenario is viewed by Taiwan as the worst case, while the second scenario is a better case and the third scenario is optimal. In the first scenario, even though the six-party talks are in a multilateral fashion, it is in reality tantamount to Sino-U.S. condominium. If the North Korean crisis is solved through the six-party talks, China's influence in Northeast Asia would be greatly enhanced. This will make Taiwan become further isolated and the six-party talks might evolve into a multilateral mechanism on Northeast Asian security which Taiwan is not included. What is more, with China's ballooning influence in Northeast Asia in the wake of resolving North Korean crisis, the U.S. might retreat from its support for Taiwan's survival.

As for the second scenario of Sino-Japan-U.S. tripolarity, if the U.S. and China fail to stop North Korea from becoming a nuclear power, Japan is likely to follow the suits to possess nuclear weapons. This will give Taiwan more room for maneuvers among the three major powers and increase its chances to survive. **The U.S. government's decision to remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism in October 2008 embarrassed Japan's Aso Government, who insists that Washington should not do so until Pyongyang resolves the Japanese abductee's issue.⁶¹ This policy change of the Bush Administration could accelerate Japan to detach itself from the U.S. and turn to an independent player.** The last scenario for solving the North Korean nuclear crisis through a sort of bilateral dialogue, is that China's influence is weakened by North Korea's independent move and the U.S. could use North Korea as a counterweight against rising China. Soon, North Korea will also set up diplomatic relations with Japan after its normalization with the U.S. In that case, Washington's influence in this region will greatly increase and China will be on the defence. Of course, this will be a better environment for Taiwan to survive. In the wake of North Korea's detonation of its nuclear bomb in October 2006, the Bush Administration has softened its policy toward North Korea and has started serious bilateral negotiations with Pyongyang. Since then, the Six-party talks have become no less than bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang. Other parties just endorse the result of their bilateral negotiations. This format is shown in reaching the agreement of the February 13 Document regarding North Korea's denuclearization in exchange for energy and economic aid in the Six-Party talks this year. Now, the second step of the Document is about to conclude. **The U.S. government's decision to take off North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and lifting of application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with regard to the DPRK demonstrates that the Bush Government concerns more about rising China than North Korea's nuclear proliferation.** Then, they could move to the final stage of denuclearization, "the dismantlement and abandonment" phase, followed by the normalization of their bilateral relations and establishing a new permanent mechanism to manage peace and stability of the Korean peninsula. However, if a verification protocol with respect to denuclearization fails to reach, then the North Korean nuclear crisis might turn

⁶¹ <http://sankei.jp.msn.com/politics/policy/081012/plc0810120133000-n1.htm>

again to the Sino-U.S. condominium scenario for the US might need to seek China's assistance.

Nevertheless, given that the KMT won the presidential election in March this year and President Ma Ying-jeou came to power since May the same year, cross-Straits relations have improved at a fast pace. Hence, chances for the Sino-U.S. condominium, what the pan-blue camp worried most, have been greatly reduced and negative implications of North Korean nuclear detonation as well as the Six-Party talks on Taiwan are also minimized.