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## „The North Korean Security Dilemma in Sino-US Relations “

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Oliver Grünbacher, BSc (WU)

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## Abstract

The Security Dilemma on the Korean Peninsula has been existing for decades, and remains unsolved due to the highly complex geopolitical situation surrounding it. Furthermore, the Korean Peninsula is one of the focal points of Sino-US rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region, and plays a highly important role in the regional balance of power. Therefore, shifts on the stage of international politics often have immediate effects on the political situation upon the Korean Peninsula and vice versa. Consequently, it makes sense to examine the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula in a broader political context, which this paper aims to do so by analyzing the security predicament in the past as well as previous attempts to solve it within the interplay of Sino-US relations. This was done by taking an interdisciplinary approach from an international law/political science perspective, by first focusing on the research question of how to deal with a nuclear rogue state within a complex security environment. Then the interests of the most influential stakeholders in the region were examined and evaluated, with a concluding chapter concerning the recent Trump-Kim Summit in Singapore. By doing so, this paper found that past and also current policy approaches towards North Korea have been/are insufficient meaning that a new approach is required.

Das Sicherheitsdilemma auf der Koreanischen Halbinsel existiert bereits seit Jahrzehnten und ist aufgrund der es umgebenden komplexen geopolitischen Situation bis heute ungelöst. Darüber hinaus ist die Koreanische Halbinsel einer der Brennpunkte der Rivalität zwischen den USA und China im Fernen Osten sowie Südostasien und spielt somit eine wichtige Rolle im regionalen Kräftegleichgewicht. Aus diesem Grund haben Geschehnisse auf der politischen Weltbühne oftmals direkte Effekte auf die politische Situation auf der Koreanischen Halbinsel und vice versa. Konsequenterweise macht es daher Sinn, sich des Themas in einem breiteren politischen Kontext anzunehmen und vergangene sowie aktuelle Lösungsversuche des Dilemmas im Lichte der Amerikanischen-Chinesischen Beziehungen näher zu betrachten. Dies wurde in der vorliegenden Arbeit mit einem interdisziplinär angelegten völkerrechtlichem bzw. politikwissenschaftlichem Ansatz bewerkstelligt, indem zuerst mögliche Umgangsweisen mit einem nuklear aufgerüstetem Schurkenstaat in einer komplexen sicherheitspolitischen Umgebung untersucht wurden. Im Anschluss wurden die Interessen der einflussreichsten Stakeholder in der Region analysiert und gegeneinander

abgewogen, inklusive eines abschließenden Kapitels über den kürzlich stattgefundenen Trump-Kim Gipfel in Singapur. Durch die dabei gewonnen Erkenntnisse kommt die vorliegende Arbeit zum Schluss, dass vergangene und aktuelle Zugänge zum Nordkoreanischen Regime ungenügend waren bzw. sind und ein neuer Ansatz vonnöten ist.

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'C' followed by a horizontal line that tapers to the right.

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# Introduction

## Title:

The North Korean Security Dilemma in Sino-American Relations.

## Relevance of the Paper:

Sino-American relations are undoubtedly of global importance and might well be the decisive factor of the 21st century. The roles between the USA and China used to be clearly distributed. The United States is the world's leading power, decisively shaping the international system we live in and is able to project its power all over the world. China, on the other hand, used to have no comparable status. While its economic influence has already made it a key player on world stage, its ability to enforce its interests by the projection of hard power has lagged behind. However, with Donald Trump as President of the United States and China increasingly becoming a more assertive actor on the international stage, the roles are not distributed that clearly anymore.

China's military capacities are rapidly growing and it might only be a matter of time until they reach a level comparable to that of the United States. The more China catches up, the more assertive its foreign policy becomes. This correlation can currently be observed at various island disputes with neighbors, but also in regards to initiatives like the "One Belt One Road" initiative.

One key area of Chinese foreign policy has always been North Korea and the Korean Peninsula in general. Its interests there directly oppose those of the United States. China wants as little American influence as possible in its backyard, while the USA fears what the destabilization a totalitarian regime armed with nuclear weapons could cause to the region and the world. These opposing interests in the background make a peaceful resolution of the North Korean security dilemma difficult and can be seen as the main reason for the inability of the international community to deal with the situation.

Although there have been conflicts for decades on how to deal with the North Korean regime, the topic has not lost any relevance. It is one of the main potential sources of serious conflicts worldwide and is particularly of interest due to its role in the highly important Sino-American relations. Consequently, examining the North Korean security dilemma is not only

of general interest but is also crucial to assess and understand past, present and future Sino-American relations.

### Research Questions:

- How did the North Korean security dilemma develop and why is it so difficult to overcome?
- What role does it play in Sino-American relations?
- What are the reactions of China and the USA to the security dilemma?

### Hypothesis:

Past and current measures against the North Korean regime have proven to be ineffective and a new approach is needed.

### Methodology:

This paper seeks to determine whether the measures undertaken against the North Korean regime have proven to be ineffective or not. Therefore, the background of the North Korean security dilemma will be examined and its role in Sino-US relations will be assessed from a legal and political science perspective. Thereby, findings gained will be used to determine whether the formulated hypothesis holds true or not.

The research will be conducted by reviewing recent literature. First, the development of the North Korean security dilemma will be assessed. Then, its consequences for Sino- American relations and the United Nations Security Council will be examined. Furthermore, the role of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and targeted sanctions against North Korea will be factored into the findings. Finally, the results in light of the research questions and hypothesis will be stated.

The research will be conducted by literature review only. It will include journal articles, policy papers, books and online sources. Official documents, like resolutions adopted by the UNSC, and relevant juridical publications will be taken into account as well. The literature used will mostly be in English and to a lesser degree in German, while some of the literature might be translated from Chinese or Korean into English.



### Theoretical Framework:

The basis for this master thesis will be the International Relations Theory of Neoclassical Realism, as originally formulated by Gideon Rose<sup>1</sup> in 1998. This theory not only allows one to look at the North Korean security dilemma from a classical realist perspective on a systemic level, but also takes cognitive components into account, such as domestic institutions, elites and societal actors within society. While this theory stresses the principle concept of the balance of power, it adds the possibilities that states fail to perceive one another accurately or fail to mobilize state power and public support. This failure may result in under- or overbalancing behavior, leading to imbalances within the international system.

A positivist and policy-oriented approach will serve as the basis for the legal part.

### The Security Dilemma:

The entire research is based upon the assumption of a security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula. This security dilemma exists due to the fact that North Korea possesses nuclear weapons and is not willing to give them up, despite the fact that the international community wants it to. By not giving up its nuclear agenda, North Korea creates unresolvable uncertainty in the international community and particularly in the perception of the US. Ever since the introduction of the nuclear program, the US has been struggling to find an adequate response to it and this inability has had an effect not only on North Korean-US relations but also on Sino-US relations, which will be the topic of this paper.

### Structure of the Paper:

The paper will consist of four parts. The first part will give an overview of North Korea and the Kim family. It will explain the Kims' survival strategy and briefly address North Korean history and state ideology.

Part II will continue by examining North Korea's policies against the background of international law and point out its problematic role in the international system.

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<sup>1</sup> Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, 51 (October 1998), pp.144-172

Furthermore, it will cover the legal aspects within this paper and address the issue of North Korea's possession of weapons of mass destruction from a legal perspective.

After assessing North Korea's setting in the international system and what can be seen as its survival strategy, part III will take a look at the interests of the US and China. Their diversified interests on the Korean Peninsula result in a constant oscillation between cooperation and confrontation in regards to North Korea. What complicates the topic further, is the uncertainty about the unpredictability of some of the countries' leaders.

Part IV will concern the summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, which took place on June 12 in Singapore.

Part V will sum up the substance of the paper and present the results in the light of the initially formulated research questions. In conclusion, the hypothesis will be found to either hold true or not.

## Part I: North Korea

Before the interests and policies of the US and China regarding North Korea can be examined, it is necessary to address North Korea itself. North Korea with its leader Kim Jong-Un, is by no means the irrational and completely unpredictable actor he is usually portrayed as in Western media. Due to the often reckless nature of his policies and the policies of his predecessors it is easy, but nevertheless wrong, to get the impression that the international community is dealing with a madman.

Kim Jong-Un simply operates by fundamentally different principles than other states in the world, particularly when compared to the standards of modern Western democracies. These principles, however, make perfect sense when moral aspects are set aside and the top priority is the survival of your regime. This top priority in combination with several other factors has created the difficult situation the Korean Peninsula now finds itself in.

## The Foundation of North Korea

Many of the roots of North Korea's patterns of behavior can be explained by taking a look at its history. North Korea is one of the few countries that never experienced "*reform, that is, a government-initiated and government-controlled chain of systematic changes*"<sup>2</sup>. This means, despite some changes of mostly superficial nature, that North Korea is to a large extent still the country its founder Kim Il Sung created. His reign has determined most of the features we attribute to North Korea and its society and set the direction for most future developments.<sup>3</sup>

After World War II, the Soviets found themselves in control of the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. As Korea was a Japanese colony at that time, they were prepared to fight the Japanese army and initially had no clear vision for the area when they entered Korea in August 1945. Furthermore, they lacked interpreters who spoke Korean and thus it took them until 1946 to develop a semblance of a vision for the future country. Eventually, they installed Kim Il Sung as their puppet in North Korea and nominally handed over some power to him.<sup>4</sup>

However, if judged from a Soviet perspective, they made a poor choice. Kim had no desire to be anybody's puppet and mainly followed his own interests. He was more nationalist than communist and did not want to sacrifice Korea's national interest in the name of other countries. This national interest also included in his opinion the unification of the two Koreas, for which he constantly lobbied Stalin. When the Soviet Union had finally managed to successfully test their own nuclear weapons in late 1949, Stalin gave in and allowed Kim to wage war against the South.<sup>5</sup>

The war itself was fought by American and UN forces on the South Korean side and Chinese soldiers - officially volunteers - on the North Korean side. The frontier shifted to the South in

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<sup>2</sup> Lankov, Andrei. *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 6-10.

the beginning, until a counteroffensive was launched and the frontier shifted far to the North. When almost the entire peninsula was controlled by the international coalition, China sent more irregular troops and the frontier shifted back to where it was in the beginning of the war and an armistice was signed.<sup>6</sup>

When the war ended in 1953, it was no success in regards to unification of the two Koreas, but it laid the foundation for Kim Il Sung's rise to absolute power in North Korea. While he was only a Soviet puppet before the war and far from being undisputed, he greatly strengthened his power afterwards. This newly gained power allowed him to promote friends and allies into important positions of power within the state, hence securing and stabilizing his own position.<sup>7</sup>

It was the Soviet decision not to get involved in the land that turned out to be of great importance for Kim Il Sung. Not only did it allow Kim to increase his standing among North Koreans, but also it caused the Chinese to support him during the war. From that time, it was possible for Kim Il Sung to counter the influence of the Soviets with the Chinese. Sino-Soviet relations have never been as good as described on paper and Kim quickly realized how he could exploit it to his own and North Korea's benefit. As a consequence, Kim was able to take incremental measures that reduced the Soviets' ability to mingle in North Korea's internal affairs.<sup>8</sup>

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea pursued a strategy of playing off China against the Soviet Union and vice versa. After the failed 1956 conspiracy, when a Soviet-Korean plot tried to overthrow him, Kim increasingly turned to China. Later, during the late 1960s during the time of the Cultural Revolution in China, North Korean-Chinese relations deteriorated<sup>9</sup> and Kim turned back to the Soviets.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 6-10.

<sup>7</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> Bernd Schaefer, *North Korean "Adventurism" and China's Long Shadow, 1966-1972* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2004), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 19.

In the early 1970s, Kim finally switched to an "*Equidistance Policy*"<sup>11</sup>, which essentially continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was a constant balancing between two mutually hostile sponsors that offered North Korea remarkable political opportunities. North Korea managed to successfully extract aid from both sides without giving much in return. Even though China and the Soviet Union knew that they were being exploited, they had no better alternative than providing aid to North Korea. First, they wanted to keep North Korea as a buffer against an increased US influence. Second, they wanted North Korea to remain neutral in their rivalry. Consequently, this policy tremendously helped to keep North Korea and its regime in power until the 1990s.<sup>12</sup>

### North Korea's State Ideology Juche

Another important factor to understand the North Korea of the past and present is Juche theory, officially the ruling creed of the country. Juche is seen as something uniquely Korean by North Korean leaders and is seen as the way the nation will move to "*chaju*" (independence) by promoting "*charip*" (self-sustainability) and "*chawi*" (self-defense).<sup>13</sup> Even though Juche was originally seen as a progression of Marxism, it soon focused on elevating Kim Il-Sung and his successors, the military and the Workers' Party of Korea to the highest positions in the social hierarchy. This personality cult is also the reason why Juche has never managed to establish itself anywhere else in the world besides in North Korea, despite certain efforts to promote it to developing countries.<sup>14</sup>

In North Korea, however, it is the totalitarian, dominating state ideology. It is often portrayed as a "*third way*"<sup>15</sup> between Maoism and Marxism-Leninism, even though it heavily draws from both of them. Basically, Juche started out as a creative application of Marxism-Leninism. While the principal correctness of Leninism in the USSR was accepted, Juche was seen to be more suitable for a country like North Korea, which had never experienced a capitalist period. This was a major revision of Marxism, as in practice this meant that the

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<sup>11</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 19-20.

<sup>13</sup> French, Paul. *North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula: A Modern History*. Zed Books, 2007, 30.

<sup>14</sup> French, *North Korea*, 30-31.

<sup>15</sup> French, *North Korea*, 32.

important Marxist concept of class struggle between capitalists and workers was completely bypassed.<sup>16</sup>

Kim instead focused on adopting Stalin's tactic of purging and particularly on his notion of what Stalin referred to as War Communism. War Communism dictated the nationalization and complete subordination of all economic distribution and industry to the state and ideally suited the situation of North Korea. Hence it can be said that Kim included into Juche only what seemed feasible and suited his intentions.<sup>17</sup>

His borrowings from Maoism were more selective, yet of great importance and can still be observed today. For instance, the necessity of the leader leading the way at all levels is derived from that and the reason why the Kims are often seen on pictures providing on-the-spot guidance to their subordinates. The Kims are not only leaders at all levels, but are also hailed as the *"ever-victorious, iron-willed, brilliant commander"*<sup>18</sup> and *"respected and beloved Great Leader"*<sup>19</sup> *"with the destiny of the entire nation on his shoulders"*<sup>20</sup> along with many other honorific titles, which are other aspects derived from Maoism.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, Juche also borrowed elements from Confucianism. Confucianism added to the personality cult the Confucian concept of repaying debts of gratitude, which can be observed as one of the underlying principles of Juche. For the people of North Korea this means that they should repay Kim Il-Sung's benevolence of bequeathing them a nation with unquestioning loyalty and complete devotion to him and his successors. Therefore, Confucianism is used as a binding force for society in Juche. It provides a sense of belonging and creates the consensus that social order under the party is

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<sup>16</sup> French, *North Korea*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> French, *North Korea*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Adler, Irving. *Galileo Studies: Personality, Tradition, and Revolution*. JSTOR, 1972.

<sup>19</sup> French, *North Korea*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> Adler, *Galileo Studies*, 114.

<sup>21</sup> French, *North Korea*, 36.

in everybody's best interest. As a consequence, Confucianism helps to create a homogenous society that puts the group first and the individual second.<sup>22</sup>

According to this mindset, every attack on the nation, be it verbal or physical, becomes an attack on the whole society. This mindset is also the reason why the regime in Pyongyang easily manages to mobilize millions of people to spontaneous demonstrations every time there is a verbal attack against their regime from abroad. While of course there is an ubiquitous element of coercion in North Korea, this can not entirely explain the sincere outrage that can be observed in many citizens.<sup>23</sup>

It is this blend of Marxism-Leninism, Maoism and Confucianism that makes Juche an ideal state ideology for a country like North Korea. It carefully picks elements from already established ideologies and creates something new. Ideological coherence is only secondary to the needs of the leader and an ideology that is tailor-made for him. Only this approach can explain why Kim Il-Sung considered it necessary to introduce a caste-like class system into an ideology that heavily draws from other ideologies that are *per se* egalitarian. According to his classification, there are three main classes that divide Korean society. Around 25% of the population make up the core class, 50% the so-called wavering class and 25% are regarded as hostile. This classification is used to establish a hierarchy within the society and keep the ruling elite bound to the leader.<sup>24</sup>

The combination of the elements mentioned has allowed Kim Il-Sung to take aspects from several ideologies and turn them into "*an article of faith rather than a guide to practice*"<sup>25</sup>. While Juche is - as outlined - an efficient tool to control North Korean society, its rigidity makes it also difficult to change and adapt. Therefore, some creativity is needed to explain why Juche has not yet brought Communism to North Korea in the utopian nature it was initially promised to the citizens and for instance to explain why South Korean cities look so

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<sup>22</sup> French, *North Korea*, 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> French, *North Korea*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> French, *North Korea*, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Oh, Kong Dan, and Ralph C. Hassig. *North Korea through the Looking Glass*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2000.

wealthy. The KWP has identified three political factors as the reason for the former: *"lingering individualist tendencies of the masses; domestic agents spreading rumors; and imperialist agents working among the masses"*<sup>26</sup>, while for South Korea it claims that the prosperous looking cities only capture the life of a lucky few.<sup>27</sup>

Due its absoluteness and rigidity, Juche has fulfilled its purpose of serving as a tool for domestic control comparably well. The same elements that make it efficient as a tool for control, however, prevent any change. Ever since the collapse of the USSR and even for most of the time before it, North Korea has faced difficulties feeding its own population and is dependent on foreign aid, hence sharply contradicting Juche's underlying principle of self-reliance. In order to fulfill this self-imposed principle of self-reliance, it would be necessary to reform the economy, which, however, would be impossible without reforming Juche as well. Juche, however, *"has become, in effect, the state religion, and thus major revisions are unlikely."*<sup>28</sup>

As a consequence, North Korea has had to rely on foreign aid to make up for the insufficiencies due to Juche. Therefore, the necessity to maintain a certain inflow of foreign aid is a decisive factor of North Korea's foreign policy and is always taken into consideration by its leaders. As a result, it is necessary to take this dilemma North Korea faces with its ideology into account when analyzing its foreign policy.

### Foreign Policy of North Korea: Brinkmanship

North Korea's foreign policy is shaped by the dominating principle of regime survival. Not only must it maneuver between the interests of China and the US and its allies, but it must also make sure that the share of the population that is vital for regime survival is under control and has no subversive ideas. It is this share of the population - the military, police, government officials and their respective families – that North Korea's regime has to keep satisfied with the help of international aid.

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<sup>26</sup> French, *North Korea*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>28</sup> French, *North Korea*, 47.



International aid alone, however, is not enough. Aid, as many developing countries around the world receive it from more wealthy countries, is usually attached to certain conditions. One can easily observe that when taking a look at aid given by Western to many African countries. Contrary to that practice, North Korea needs international aid primarily to keep its elites happy and is not interested in introducing reforms of any kind.<sup>29</sup>

When taking North Korea's population (24.8 million) and GDP (PPP) (40 billion)<sup>30</sup> into account, it competes with countries like Mozambique (population 24.7 million GDP (PPP) 37.4 billion)<sup>31</sup> for international aid. When comparing the attention each country receives, North Korea wins by a large margin. Despite its average size and population, it regularly dominates newspaper headlines and is very high on the agenda of the great powers.

The reason for this is obviously its nuclear weapons. Nuclear research and nuclear capabilities have always been North Korea's major bargaining chip in international negotiations and the country has had several impressive diplomatic successes over the last decades using this bargaining chip.

The strategy North Korea uses to achieve its objectives is often described as Brinkmanship, a term originally formulated by John Foster Dulles, who served as Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959 and decisively shaped US policy in Asia. His policy approach contained the definition of what was later referred to as Brinkmanship: "*The ability to get to the verge without getting into war is the necessary art.*"<sup>32</sup> The US tried to apply this strategy by the threat of

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<sup>29</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 145.

<sup>30</sup> CIA, The CIA World Factbook 2016, Accessed June 10, 2018. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/au.html>

<sup>31</sup> IMF, Accessed June 10, 2018.

<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=51&pr.y=16&sy=2015&ey=2022&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=688&s=NGDPD%2CPPPGDP%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPPC&grp=0&a=>

<sup>32</sup> The New York Times, "Dulles Formulated and Conducted U.S. Foreign Policy for More Than Six Years", Accessed June 10, 2018.

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0225.html>

using nuclear weapons in order to deter the communist countries from entering Indochina and other areas in Asia. As history shows, only with limited success.

North Korea took this strategy and transformed it according to its needs. After the collapse of the USSR it suddenly found itself in the rather uncomfortable position of complete dependency from China, as they could no longer play out the big communist countries against each other. A regime collapse like in the countries of eastern Europe suddenly seemed all but unlikely and the North Korean regime had to find a way out of the dilemma. An alternative would have been market-oriented reforms, similar to the ones in Vietnam and China. This was, however, a rather unfavorable alternative for the North Korean regime, as it seemed like a substantial and possibly even life threatening step for the regime. As outlined, North Korea's state ideology is unable to reform towards a market-oriented economy without giving up on major principles that are synonymous with the Kim regime. Consequently, the regime had to look for another way out.<sup>33</sup>

The Kims have mastered the practice of nuclear brinkmanship over the last decades and have been relatively successful applying it. Unlike the US, Pyongyang's approach is not only driven by deterrence, but also by the necessity to attract enough foreign aid to keep its country stable and the inefficient economy afloat.<sup>34</sup>

### The Kim Dynasty

Before the international reactions to North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship will be analyzed in the next chapter, it is necessary to add another small, yet important supplement to the factors that play a role in North Korea's domestic and foreign policy. North Korea being the only communist dynasty in the world is notable for this paper due to one important reason: continuity.

When it became obvious that Kim Jong Il would not be ruling for a very long time anymore due to serious health problems, speculations started whether his successor might be willing

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<sup>33</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 117.

to open up the country in the near future.<sup>3536</sup> This was and is, however, not likely due to the focus of Juche ideology on the Kim dynasty. The North Korean elites have no interest in ending the cult around the Kims, as their own survival depends on it. Therefore, any speculations about future successors of the Kim family from outside or even substantial reforms that fundamentally change Juche are unrealistic.<sup>37</sup>

The lack of major domestic changes, however, will cause the inefficient North Korean economy to persist and thus also North Korea's dependency on foreign aid. Consequently, it is not far fetched to assume that Kim Jong Un will continue the foreign policy of his predecessors and that nuclear brinkmanship will remain the underlying principle of his foreign policy. This assumption is important for the following chapter, which will analyze North Korea's behavior in the international system after the collapse of the USSR from a legal perspective.

## Part II: North Korea in the International System

After analyzing the factors determining North Korea's foreign policy and pointing out the reasons why any changes to it are unlikely, the following section will examine the sanctions regime against North Korea from a legal perspective. First, the theoretical framework will be set and the security dilemma faced by the international community will be explained and defined. Subsequently, the sanctions imposed against North Korea due to its nuclear program will be assessed. In order to simplify the procedure, three major events important for understanding the current situation will be picked and examined separately.

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<sup>35</sup> Coonan, Clifford. "Kim Jong-Un: Successor Battling a Weight Problem – He's Too Thin." *The Independent*, December 20, 2011. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/kim-jong-un-successor-battling-a-weight-problem-hes-too-thin-6279483.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Phillips, Tom. "How the China Model Could Help North Korea – and Save Kim Jong-Un." *The Guardian*, October 8, 2015, sec. World news. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/08/china-north-korea-kim-jong-un>.

<sup>37</sup> Green, Michael J. "Pyongyang's Options After Kim Jong Il." *Foreign Affairs*, December 19, 2011. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2011-12-19/pyongyangs-options-after-kim-jong-il>.

## The North Korean Security Dilemma

The term Security Dilemma is used below as it was originally defined by John H. Herz in 1950<sup>38</sup>. Based on the assumption of a society that is constituted as a plurality of groups that interact with each other without being organized by a higher unity, Herz states that *"Wherever such anarchic society has existed--and it has existed in most periods of known history on some level--there has arisen what may be called the "security dilemma" of men, or groups, or their leaders. Groups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on."*<sup>39</sup>

North Korea finds itself in exactly such a dilemma with the rest of the world. No other state - not even its ally China - wants the North Korean regime to possess nuclear weapons. North Korea's withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) not only poses a threat to the stability of the entire region, but also sets a dangerous precedent and the international community has no interest in other states following North Korea's example. As can be easily observed from reading recent newspaper headlines<sup>40 41 42</sup>, however, the international community has still not been able to coerce North Korea into

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<sup>38</sup> Herz, John H. "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (January 1950): 157. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009187>.

<sup>39</sup> Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma."

<sup>40</sup> Warrick, Joby, and Julie Vitkovskaya. "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: What You Need to Know."

*Washington Post*, March 9, 2018, sec. WorldViews.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/03/06/5-things-to-know-about-north-koreas-nuclear-weapons/>.

<sup>41</sup> "How Advanced Is North Korea's Nuclear Programme?" *BBC News*, August 10, 2017, sec. Asia.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11813699>.

<sup>42</sup> Albert, Eleanor. "What's the Status of North Korea's Nuclear Program?" Council on Foreign Relations.

Accessed May 2, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/background/north-koreas-military-capabilities>.

giving up its nuclear weapons. As a result, North Korea has been the target of sanctions by the international community for decades.

### Targeted and Comprehensive Sanctions

These sanctions imposed by the international community vary in nature and effectiveness. The main differentiation is made between targeted sanctions and comprehensive sanctions. *"Comprehensive country sanctions restrict nearly all activities with the sanctioned country, the government of the sanctioned country, and non-governmental entities or individuals acting on behalf of, or controlled by, the government of the sanctioned country, wherever that entity or individual is located. They also apply to any private citizens or companies located in a sanctioned country, regardless of whether the company or individual is connected to the government."*<sup>43</sup> This way of sanctioning a country is the classic approach that has been in use for the longer period of time. There are, however, concerns regarding the relation of comprehensive sanctions and the deterioration of the human rights situation in the targeted countries<sup>44</sup>. The reason for these concerns is the - as the name already suggests - comprehensive effect of this type of sanction. They not only affect the elites of the respective country responsible for its actions, but also the ordinary citizens, who often already have difficult lives before the sanctions are introduced. In addition, they are often hit relatively harder by comprehensive sanctions than the elites and to an extent, that their rights to food, health and even life may be affected.

Due this difficulty, various think tanks, UN agencies and NGOs started to look for a different approach in the second half of the 1990s. They came up with the concept of targeted (smart) sanctions, which differ from comprehensive sanctions in two ways:

*"Smart sanctions, in theory, differ from conventional sanctions in two major ways. First, they more effectively target and penalize - via arms embargoes, financial sanctions, travel restrictions and bans on luxury goods - the political elites espousing policies and*

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<sup>43</sup> Bhasin, Rajika. "What You May Not Know About Sanctions" American International Group. Accessed May 2, 2018, 4. <https://www.aig.com/content/dam/aig/america-canada/us/documents/brochure/0604d-aig-mn-sanctions-whitepaper-final-3-26-13-brochure.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Peksen, Dursun. "Better or Worse? The Effect of Economic Sanctions on Human Rights." *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 59–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308098404>.

*committing actions deemed reprehensible by the international community. Second, smart sanctions protect vulnerable social groups (for example, children, women, and the elderly) from so-called collateral damage by exempting specified commodities (such as food and medical supply) from the embargo.*"<sup>45</sup>

Due to these favorable features, targeted sanctions have increasingly been used both by international organizations and unilaterally by states.

According to Hufbauer and Oegg, empirical evidence seems to suggest that the success rate in terms of coercing the targeted country into doing what the sanction imposing entity wants might be lower with targeted sanctions than with comprehensive ones.<sup>46</sup> They examined 20 cases where targeted sanctions were imposed and found only 5 of them (25%) at least partially successful, while they found 34% of general sanctions to be successful.<sup>47</sup>

Hovi, Huseby and Sprinz therefore conclude, that an increased use of targeted *"will likely not improve the success rate of economic sanctions."*<sup>48</sup> They are, however, less costly for the imposing side, as they do not affect the economy as much as comprehensive sanctions do. Furthermore, they have less severe consequences for the average citizen. Consequently, targeted sanctions might still be better when all aspects are taken into account.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Tostensen, Arne, and Beate Bull. "Are Smart Sanctions Feasible?" *World Politics* 54, no. 3 (2002): 373–374.

<sup>46</sup> Hufbauer, Gary Clyde, and Barbara Oegg. 2000. Targeted Sanctions: A Policy Alternative? Paper presented at the Symposium on "Sanctions Reform? Evaluating the Economic Weapon in Asia and the World" 23. February 2000. Institute for International Economics. Accessed May 2, 2018. <http://www.iie.com/papers/hufbauer-oegg0200.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> Hufbauer, Gary Clyde, Jeffrey J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott. 1990: *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy*. 2d ed. Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics.

<sup>48</sup> Hovi, Jon, Robert Huseby and Detlef F. Sprinz. "Are Targeted Sanctions More Effective than Comprehensive Sanctions?" The Graduate Institute Geneva. Accessed May 2, 2018. [http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/political\\_science/shared/political\\_science/7804/Hovi\\_Huseby\\_Sprinz.Targeted\\_Sanctions.pdf](http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/political_science/shared/political_science/7804/Hovi_Huseby_Sprinz.Targeted_Sanctions.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Hovi et al., *Are Targeted Sanctions More Effective than Comprehensive Sanctions?*, 4-5.

## Unilateral and Multilateral Sanctions

Another factor in which the imposed sanctions against North Korea differ from each other is whether they are imposed on a unilateral or multilateral basis. There is currently a large quantity of both unilateral and multilateral sanctions in effect against North Korea. While the multilateral sanctions are adopted - in particular - in resolutions by the Security Council of the United Nations according to Article 39ff of the Charter of the United Nations<sup>50</sup>, the unilateral sanctions are imposed by countries themselves and often go beyond the scope of the sanctions of the UN.

Chapter VII of the Charter of the UN provides the framework from within the UNSC may take enforcement action. The Council may "*determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression*"<sup>51</sup> and make recommendations or resort to military or non-military action. Particularly relevant for the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula is Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>52</sup> It concerns measures not involving the use of armed force - which are usually referred to as sanctions. "*They can be imposed on any combination of states, groups or individuals. The range of sanctions has included comprehensive economic and trade sanctions and more targeted measures such as arms embargoes, travel bans, financial or diplomatic restrictions.*"<sup>53</sup>

The ratio between the sanctions imposed unilaterally and multilaterally can be used as an indicator for Sino-US relations at the time of their implementation. China is often referred to as North Korea's main ally, which is, however, only true to a limited extent and with certain restrictions.<sup>54</sup> China supports North Korea economically but, similarly to the US, has no interest in North Korea possessing nuclear weapons.<sup>55</sup> As a consequence, China's careful

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<sup>50</sup> Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Art. 39.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/actions.shtml>. Accessed June 10, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Art. 41.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/actions.shtml>. Accessed June 10, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Schwarz, Tim. "Have North Korea and China Patched Things Up?" CNN. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/02/asia/north-korea-china-friends/index.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Albert, Eleanor. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/background/china-north-korea-relationship>.

consideration of its interests is reflected in the nature of the sanctions that are imposed against North Korea.

### History of Sanctions against North Korea

Even though the nuclear issue has only become relevant after the collapse of the USSR, North Korea already has a long history of sanctions being imposed against it and partially lifted again. Analyzing the past pattern of North Korea's brinkmanship and the international community going back and forth on sanctions, will not only allow us to assess the dilemma the US and China find themselves in with North Korea, but also allow us to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of their sanctions. Furthermore, lessons learned from sanctions regimes against North Korea in the past might also help to make assumptions about the development of the current situation with and the relations of North Korea and with the international community.

### The First Nuclear Crisis

Before the collapse of the USSR, North Korea found itself embedded in the communist bloc and could thus rely on other communist countries to provide for its safety. In fact, the Soviet Union not only guaranteed North Korea's safety with its own nuclear capabilities, similar to the US with South Korea, but also kept it from developing nuclear weapons. The USSR made its continuous aid to the North Korean regime dependent on nuclear cooperation and took non-proliferation in the rest of the communist bloc seriously. North Korea had to accept that, even though it had serious ambitions to develop nuclear weapons in the 1970s, to balance out the South Korean ambitions to acquire its own nuclear weapons. This potentially dangerous situation was resolved by the Soviet Union exercising pressure on North Korea to stop its proliferation and the USA doing the same with North Korea's southern brother.<sup>56</sup>

Approximately 10 years later, in 1985, North Korea even bowed to Soviet pressure as far as signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons<sup>57</sup>. Naturally, this pressure

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<sup>56</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 148.

<sup>57</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. Accessed May 3, 2018.

<http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt>.



that made North Korea comply only lasted as long as the Soviet Union. When the USSR ceased to exist, so did its influence on North Korea. The end of the USSR also meant the end of aid deliveries and bilateral trade based on fixed price regimes. This trade based on price regimes was in essence aid in disguise to North Korea, as North Korea's goods were overvalued compared to their real value. Consequently, North Korea-Russian trade decreased from \$2.56 billion to \$0.14 billion within four years after the collapse.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the diminishing aid deliveries from the USSR and North Korea's already inherent structural inefficiencies the country was hit by a famine due to floods from 1995-1996. The harvest of 1996 merely accounted for 2.5 - 2.8 tons of grain, while the country needs approximately 5.0 - 5.5 tons in order to feed its population. It is estimated that around 2.5% of the entire North Korean population died in the famine, making it comparable as expressed in percentage to the number of Chinese that died during Mao's Great Leap Forwards. It was obvious that the North Korean regime needed to find a solution as soon as possible if it did not want to take the risk of a revolution.<sup>59</sup>

This difficult situation North Korea suddenly found itself in caused it to speed up its nuclear program. It not only wanted nuclear weapons as a deterrent to deal with the security vacuum the collapse of the USSR left, but also for diplomatic purposes. This was the point when North Korea started its first nuclear blackmail campaign. Already starting from the 1990s there was evidence that North Korea was working on nuclear weapons and North Korean diplomats eventually managed to exploit the situation to the country's benefit.<sup>60</sup>

In the course of action North Korea took, it intended to withdraw from the NPT by giving notice of its intentions to the UNSC. According to the NPT - and practice in arms control treaties in general - North Korea was obliged to give notice of its intention to the UNSC. In the case of the NPT this period of time was set at 3 months. One day before the 3 months were over, North Korea reached a compromise with the US and pulled back the notice to leave the NPT. This situation led to severe controversy later, in 2003, when North Korea took

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<sup>58</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 76.

<sup>59</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 78-79.

<sup>60</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 150-151.

the point of view that it was only resurrecting its prior notice so that this time only one day of notice was required.<sup>61</sup>

North Korea's brinkmanship eventually proved to be successful. In 1994, the Clinton administration concluded the Agreed Framework Treaty with North Korea<sup>62</sup>. For the implementation of the stipulated details an international consortium called KEDO (Korean Energy Development Organization)<sup>63</sup> was created. Over a period of 10 years the three main funders, the USA, Japan and South Korea provided sums of \$405, \$498 and \$1.450 million, respectively. Furthermore, North Korea would receive assistance in building light water reactors and regularly receive shipments of heavy fuel oil.<sup>64</sup>

From a US perspective it was easy to be so generous, as it was commonly assumed that the North Korean regime would collapse very soon.<sup>65</sup> It was seen only as a matter of time until there would be a revolution and KEDO consequently was an investment that would pay off eventually. This thinking is also the reason why there were not many strings attached to the aid programs and the monitoring of the implementation was generally lax.<sup>66</sup> In addition, North Korea received generous amounts of food aid from 1996-2001. It received a total of 5.94 million tons of aid, the majority of it coming again from South Korea, the US and Japan.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Armscontrol Association "NPT Withdrawal: Time for the Security Council to step in", Accessed June 14, 2018. [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005\\_05/Bunn\\_Rhineland](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_05/Bunn_Rhineland)

<sup>62</sup> Agreed Framework of 21 October 1994 between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1994. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/20031217175315/http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc457.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> KEDO (Korean Energy Development Organization). Accessed May 3, 2018. <http://www.kedo.org>.

<sup>64</sup> Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, *2005 Annual Report* (New York: KEDO, 2005), 13.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, R. Jeffrey. "U.S. ACCORD WITH NORTH KOREA MAY OPEN COUNTRY TO CHANGE." *Washington Post*, October 23, 1994. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/10/23/us-accord-with-north-korea-may-open-country-to-change/32f98486-a074-49a3-9967-eed24ac5f6a8/>.

<sup>66</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 151-153.

<sup>67</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 152.

Even though at least the food aid was officially purely of humanitarian nature and not sent because of North Korea's cooperation in regard to its nuclear research, North Korean officials might have easily seen it as a kind of tribute. This assumption is supported by the fact that the food came with so few strings attached and that the supply even continued after relations to the US and its allies deteriorated.<sup>68</sup>

All aspects considered, the first nuclear crisis ended remarkably well for North Korea. It was successful with its brinkmanship and thus able to stabilize itself with the aid it received. The donating countries carelessly did not make sure that proper monitoring was implemented and only after almost a decade it became obvious that North Korea indeed had not given up altogether on its nuclear program. On top of that, the US even lifted a number of economic sanctions they had previously imposed, *"allowing a "wide range" of trade in commercial and consumer goods, easing restrictions on investment, and eliminating prohibitions on direct personal and commercial financial transactions."*<sup>69 70</sup>

### The Second Nuclear Crisis

The so-called second nuclear crisis started in 2002, when Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly visited Pyongyang and confronted North Koreans officials with the evidence US intelligence services had been collecting about North Korea's secret uranium enrichment program. According to Kelly, the North Koreans admitted the existence of such a program to him, while officially it was denied (until 2005) by the North Korean regime.<sup>71</sup>

It is unclear what North Korea intended to achieve with this secret program. It is possible that it simply wanted to increase aid in exchange for giving up on the uranium enrichment program, similar to the first deal. In 2002, however, George W. Bush already was president, and he took a harder stance on North Korea than the Clinton administration. The new US

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid,.

<sup>69</sup> Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.- North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy", April 2018. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>.

<sup>70</sup> Government Publishing Office. "Easing of Export Restrictions on North Korea". June 19, 2000. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2000-06-19/pdf/00-15168.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 153.

administration's reaction was to close down the KEDO consortium and eventually stop aid delivery altogether.<sup>72</sup>

In 2003, North Korea withdrew from the NPT, being the first country that ever did so and hence setting a dangerous precedent. North Korea also managed to compensate for the loss of US aid with increased aid deliveries from South Korea and China. Despite US expectations, North Korea continued its economic recovery from the famine.<sup>73</sup>

Reacting to North Korea's withdrawal, the US started to impose targeted sanctions against the North Korea regime. In 2005 a bank called Banco Delta Asia was found to be a money laundering facility of the Kim family<sup>74</sup> and the US administration decided to sanction it. This sanction produced a strong reaction from the regime, as the money was probably part of the Kim family's private treasure.<sup>75</sup>

Since the Kim regime seemed to be unable to get the same kind of concessions from the new US administration as from the previous one, they decided to raise the stakes. As a result, North Korea conducted its first missile tests in July 2006<sup>76</sup> and finally a nuclear test in October 2006.<sup>77</sup> Both times, the UN Security Council was swift in its reaction and both times unanimously adopted Resolution 1695<sup>78</sup> in June and Resolution 1718<sup>79</sup> in October.

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<sup>72</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 154.

<sup>73</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 154.

<sup>74</sup> Federal Register. "Finding that Banco Delta Asia SARL Is a Financial Institution of Primary Money Laundering Concern". September 20, 2005. Accessed May 3, 2018.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/09/20/05-18660/finding-that-banco-delta-asia-sarl-is-a-financial-institution-of-primary-money-laundering-concern>.

<sup>75</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 154-155.

<sup>76</sup> Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.- North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy", April 2018. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>

<sup>77</sup> Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.- North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy", April 2018. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>

<sup>78</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1695 (2006).

<sup>79</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1718 (2006).

Resolution 1695 expressed - among other points - *"grave concern at the launch of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), given the potential of such systems to be used as a means to deliver nuclear, chemical or biological payloads,"<sup>80</sup>, "Requires all Member States (...) to exercise vigilance and prevent missile and missile-related items, materials, goods and technology being transferred to DPRK's missile or WMD programmes;" and "to exercise vigilance and prevent the procurement of missiles or missile related-items, materials, goods and technology from the DPRK, and the transfer of any financial resources in relation to DPRK's missile or WMD programmes;"<sup>81</sup>.*

Resolution 1718 reconfirms most of the content of Resolution 1695 and extends the scope of multilateral sanctions to North Korea's nuclear capabilities. Resolution 1718 focused on *"Expressing the gravest concern at the claim by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that it has conducted a test of a nuclear weapon on 9 October 2006, and at the challenge such a test constitutes to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to international efforts aimed at strengthening the global regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the danger it poses to peace and stability in the region and beyond,"<sup>82</sup>.*

The resolution required from North Korea not to *"conduct any further nuclear test or launch of a ballistic missile", "suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme" and "abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner".<sup>83</sup> In addition, North Korea must "return immediately to the Six-Party Talks without precondition", which were a series of meetings in Beijing including North Korea, South Korea, Japan, the USA, China and Russia and aimed to resolve security concerns of the participating countries.<sup>84</sup> Finally, the export of luxury goods to North Korea was banned, cargo shipments going to North Korea may be inspected for weapons of mass destruction and a ban was placed on *"Any battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large**

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<sup>80</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1695 (2006).

<sup>81</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1695 (2006).

<sup>82</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1718 (2006).

<sup>83</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1718 (2006).

<sup>84</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, August 27, 003. Accessed May 3, 2018.

<http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/ch/t25488.htm>

*calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems as defined for the purpose of the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms, or related materiel including spare parts, or items as determined by the Security Council or the Committee established by paragraph 12 below (the Committee)".<sup>85</sup>*

Furthermore, the UN Security Council (UNSC) made use of the possibility to invoke Art. 41 Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which states the following: "*The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.*"<sup>86</sup> By doing so, the UNSC technically allows UN members the enforcement of the banned goods, even though the resolution says nothing about the provision of any military force to back up these demands, freeze on funds for North Korean Weapons of Mass Destruction, ballistic missiles programs and travel bans against persons responsible for banned activities.

Both of these resolutions were adopted unanimously by the UNSC, meaning that China voted in favor of it. While international media was cheering that China finally followed the position of the Western countries on North Korea, China also increased aid deliveries to North Korea and extended economic cooperation.<sup>87</sup> This ambiguity is a good example of China's policy towards Korea. It does not want North Korea to possess nuclear weapons and sides with the West on this issue. China also does not, however, have any interest in a US orchestrated regime change in North Korea due to obvious reasons.

The Bush administration finally realized that the sanctions imposed on North Korea did not achieve the desired result. As a result, the six-party talks issued a joint statement promising the resumption of US aid to North Korea in exchange for North Korea's commitment to eventually denuclearize. In addition, the State Department stopped the execution of the

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<sup>85</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1718 (2006).

<sup>86</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Chapter VII, Art. 41.

<sup>87</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 156.

sanctions against Banco Delta Asia and halted operations against North Korean money laundering activities in general.<sup>88</sup>

From a North Korean view this statement was a huge success. It showed that their strategy of brinkmanship and escalation had worked and confirmed the efficiency of its applied tactics. Pyongyang started by creating a crisis, then escalated tensions, and eventually extracted payments and concessions to return to the status quo.

### North Korea raises the stakes once more

North Korea found itself in a comfortable position at the end of 2007, with aid deliveries continuing and the perspective of the KEDO consortium being reinstated after its shutdown a few years earlier. North Korea also had to deal with two potential sources of problems: upcoming elections in both the US and South Korea. Indeed, their results were not favorable for North Korea. In South Korea the left-leaning, North Korea friendly government was replaced by a more hostile right-wing one and in the US Barack Obama took office, who was assumed to pay little attention to North Korea.<sup>89</sup>

Observing this, North Korea decided to raise the stakes once more and follow the same pattern as before. Aiming at the new South Korean government, it restricted the activities of the Kaesong industrial zone, which was erected during the time of the Sunshine Policy (see part III of this paper) and jointly run by North and South Korea. Success, however, was limited, as Kaesong only makes up for a marginal share of the South's industrial output.<sup>90</sup>

Directed at the new US administration, North Korea first conducted a long-distance missile test with devices that could potentially hit Alaska or Hawaii - which failed. Then, North Korea again went one step further and conducted a second nuclear test in May 2009, which was successful.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 157.

<sup>89</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 175.

<sup>90</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 176.

<sup>91</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 176.

The reaction of the international community followed a few weeks later, in June 2009. Resolution 1874 of the United Nations Security Council reconfirms Resolution 1695 and Resolution 1718, while additionally deciding that *"the measures in paragraph 8 (a) of resolution 1718 (2006) shall also apply to all arms and related materiel, as well as to financial transactions, technical training, advice, services or assistance related to the provision, manufacture, maintenance or use of such arms, except for small arms and light weapons and their related materiel, and calls upon States to exercise vigilance over the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK of small arms or light weapons, and further decides that States shall notify the Committee at least five days prior to selling, supplying or transferring small arms or light weapons to the DPRK"* and called upon *" all Member States and international financial and credit institutions not to enter into new commitments for grants, financial assistance, or concessional loans to the DPRK, except for humanitarian and developmental purposes directly addressing the needs of the civilian population, or the promotion of denuclearization"*.<sup>92</sup>

The resolution again was adopted with the support of the Chinese, who again in return increased their aid deliveries to North Korea. Additionally, North Korean-Chinese trade almost tripled between 2006 and 2011. Everything seemed to work according to North Korea's brinkmanship strategy and North Korea consequently entered a charm offensive towards its adversaries to extract aid from them as well and then return to status quo.<sup>93</sup>

This time, however, both South Korea and the US did not act as North Korea wanted them to. They refused to make any concessions, realizing that North Korea could keep playing this game for an indefinite period of time without actually denuclearizing. Consequently, the US took an approach described as benign neglect<sup>94</sup>, which means that they will not undertake any further steps until North Korea credibly demonstrates its commitment to denuclearize.

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<sup>92</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/1874 (2009).

<sup>93</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 176.

<sup>94</sup> Lankov, Andrei. "The 'Benign Neglect' of North Korea." Accessed May 4, 2018.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/benign-neglect-north-korea-201442655025785142.html>.



North Korea's southern brethren took a very similar stance and also neglected the North Korean ambitions.<sup>95</sup>

North Korea realized that its charm offensive would probably remain unanswered and switched back to provocations. In order to demonstrate that getting ignored and neglected by South Korea and the US is more costly for them than simply paying North Korea off, North Korea adopted a new strategy. In dealing with South Korea, it aimed at the South's economy. The South Korean economy is heavily dependent on the foreign markets and any major incidents on the Korean Peninsula can potentially scare foreign investors. In the light of these considerations, North Korean military torpedoed a South Korean naval corvette, the Cheonan. On top of that, the North Korean military shelled the island Yeongpyeong, which is located in waters between the two Koreas.<sup>96</sup>

As for the US, North Korea targeted the its fear of nuclear proliferation. The regime openly started admitting that it was indeed pursuing a uranium enrichment program and even invited an American scientist, Dr. Hecker, to visit their nuclear facilities. He was shown a modern and fully operating uranium enrichment facility.<sup>97</sup>

It is unclear for how long North Korea wanted to pursue this strategy and how far it wanted to take the escalation, but sometime during this period Kim Jong Il's health worsened and North Korea had to undertake steps to ensure a smooth transition of power within the Kim dynasty. After being in power for 17 years, Kim Jong Il passed away in December 2011 and was succeeded by his youngest son, Kim Jong Un.<sup>98</sup>

### Kim Jong Un Takes Power

The beginning of Kim Jong Un's time as the leader of North Korea was overshadowed by increasing tensions between North Korea and the international community. During Kim Jong

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<sup>95</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 177.

<sup>96</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 178-179.

<sup>97</sup> Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 179.

<sup>98</sup> Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.- North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy", April 2018.

Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>

Un's reign North Korea conducted the majority of its nuclear tests and launched numerous missiles and satellites and further sanctions were imposed against the country.

When Kim Jong Un became leader of North Korea, he was confronted with a difficult situation. The Obama administration opposed previous engagement policy approaches towards North Korea and followed a policy approach called "Strategic Patience" (see chapter III), which in essence is a form of benign neglect. Following the strategy of his predecessors, Kim Jong Un nevertheless kept escalating the situation. After first agreeing to suspend operations at Yongbyon uranium enrichment plant in February 2012 in exchange for aid from the US, he was quick to violate the agreement only 2 weeks later by launching a satellite.<sup>99</sup>

In 2013 he restarted the facilities at Yongbyon and conducted a third nuclear test in 2013, followed by two more nuclear tests, several launched missiles - including a successful launch from a submarine - and a satellite launch in 2016. The US in return kept trying to raise the costs of this behavior by imposing more sanctions against entities and individuals.<sup>100</sup>

On March 2 in 2016 the UNSC unanimously adopts Resolution 2270. In comparison to previous sanctions by the UNSC it contains exceptionally comprehensive sanctions against North Korea. The main provisions regard weapons transactions, maritime and air transport, export control of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the proliferation of nuclear activities.<sup>101</sup> Unlike with previously adopted resolutions, China took a much tougher stance on North Korea, which is resembled in the content of the resolution. This is important to note, as China builds on these sanctions to exercise pressure on Kim later (see the following chapters).

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<sup>99</sup> Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.- North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy", April 2018. Accessed June 14, 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>

<sup>100</sup> Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.- North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy", April 2018. Accessed May 3, 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Security Council. S/RES/2270 (2016).

Tensions between North Korea and the international community were at a considerably high level and remained so until two important changes happened. One was the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States and the other one was the election of Moon Jae-in as President of South Korea. It set the scene for a process that culminated in the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore on June 12 2018, which will be assessed later in this paper.

## Part III: China and the USA

Understanding the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula is impossible without these two actors. The security dilemma is embedded in Sino-American rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region and hence its resolution is dependent on a variety of other factors. Therefore, the respective interests of the two great powers in the region and the Korean Peninsula will be examined in the following.

### China's Interests in the Korean Peninsula

North Korea's big neighbor China has always been heavily involved on the Korean Peninsula and traditionally regards the area as its backyard. The peninsula is indeed crucial from a security and geostrategic point of view for China's ambitions to become a power equaling the US. Consequently, any plan to resolve the dilemma on the Korean Peninsula has to involve China and keep China's interests in mind there.

### China's Grand Strategy and strategic approach towards North Korea

Until recently it has not been clear what China's grand strategy is exactly. This uncertainty does not mean that none existed, but rather that there has never been one comprehensive document in the past that comprehensively stated one. During Mao's rule, China did have certain strategic aims, which, however, rather focused on the interests of the "international proletariat"<sup>102</sup> than on strictly national ones. It certainly did a comparably poor job in serving the country's interests, as China was economically and socially completely isolated from the rest of the world. Mao partitioned the world into political camps and identified the US and

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<sup>102</sup> Jisi, Wang. "China's Search for a Grand Strategy." *Foreign Affairs*, February 20, 2011.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2011-02-20/chinas-search-grand-strategy>.

the USSR as China's main threats.<sup>103</sup> As outlined in the chapter about North Korea, this rivalry with the USSR was skillfully exploited by Kim Il Sung and part of the reason why the Kim regime survived during that time.

Under China's reformer Deng Xiaoping, China's underlying principle of its policies became economic growth. Economic growth dominated China's foreign relations and the country tried to establish trade links and cooperation around the world, regardless of its trading partners political system or ideological orientation.<sup>104</sup> Economic sanctions after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre caused China to strictly oppose international sanctions in the name of non-interference. Due to this reason, China did not actively engage itself in the first nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and remained on the sidelines.<sup>105</sup>

During the second nuclear crisis China took a more active position and initiated the six-party talks, comprised of representatives from North Korea, South Korea, Japan, the United States, China and Russia. The six-party talks took place in Beijing and aimed at finding a way out of the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>106</sup> During the six-party talks China continued to shield the Kim regime from tough sanctions, hoping that the country would eventually introduce economic reforms similar to its own and open up. China's mediation seemed to be successful in 2005, when a - short-lived - agreement was reached, in which North Korea agreed to denuclearize.<sup>107</sup>

Only when Xi Jinping rose to power, did China finally develop something that was in essence a grand strategy. Xi Jinping made a speech at the 19th Party Congress last year, in which he laid out a strategy for the coming decades. It includes goals like China becoming a "leading

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<sup>103</sup> Jisi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy."

<sup>104</sup> Jisi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy."

<sup>105</sup> Kim, Patricia. "How China sees North Korea: Three critical moments in history and future directions". *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, January 17, 2018. Accessed June 12, 2018.

<https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/how-china-sees-north-korea-three-critical-moments-history-and-future-directions>

<sup>106</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN. "The Six-party talks kicked off", August 27, 2003. Accessed June 12, 2018. <http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/ch/t25488.htm>

<sup>107</sup> Kim, Patricia. "How China sees North Korea: Three critical moments in history and future directions"

world power"<sup>108</sup> by 2035 and acquiring a new and more confident self-understanding by then.

This development is notable, because it also means that China will be ready to take on a much more assertive role in future attempts to resolve the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula. This could already be observed during the second nuclear crisis and much more so during the recent summit between Trump and Kim, where China is suspected to have been pulling strings in the background.<sup>109</sup> The more time it takes to find a way out of the dilemma- under the assumption this will eventually happen - the more the eventual solution will resemble China's interests rather than those of the US.

### China's Security Policy and Geography

In order to become the global power China aims to be, it needs to secure energy, metals, trade routes etc. and be able to project power even in regions that are far from its mainland, mainly by a well functioning navy, which China is currently building up. However, it faces considerable obstacles at its maritime boundaries. China is encircled by what it calls the first island chain and the second island chain. The first island chain consists of the Korean Peninsula, the Kuril Islands, Japan and the Ryukyu Island, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, while the second island chain is located farther to the East and including the US controlled islands of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Particularly the first island chain is an obstacle to Chinese ambitions to be able to project power farther away than in its immediate neighborhood.<sup>110</sup> The first island is for this reason sometimes referred to as "*a kind of "Great Wall in reverse": a well-organized line of U.S. allies that serve as a sort of guard tower to monitor and possibly block China's access to the Pacific Ocean.*"<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Diplomat, Dingding Chen, The. "China Has a New Grand Strategy and the West Should Be Ready." The Diplomat. Accessed June 12, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/china-has-a-new-grand-strategy-and-the-west-should-be-ready/>.

<sup>109</sup> Harrison, Virginia. "Who's Pulling the Strings of the North Korean Breakthrough?" *BBC News*, June 9, 2018, sec. Asia. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44351707>.

<sup>110</sup> Kaplan, Robert D. "The Geography of Chinese Power." *Foreign Affairs*, May 1, 2010. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2010-05-01/geography-chinese-power>.

<sup>111</sup> Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power."

In the first island chain, the Korean Peninsula is particularly important from a geostrategic point of view, as it controls all the maritime traffic to and from northeastern China, while being geographically close to Beijing as well. Therefore, China has a vital interest in maintaining stability there, while making sure that it is able to exercise enough control over the sea routes that run through this area.<sup>112</sup> Consequently, China is unwilling to accept any kind of constellation on the Korean Peninsula that could harm these interests. This includes any kind of American presence on the peninsula as well as the presence of nuclear weapons.

### The Security Implications of China's Relationship with North Korea

Achieving both of these goals simultaneously, however, is nearly impossible under the current geopolitical circumstances. Instead, China faces the choice between keeping the regime in North Korea alive by continuing its aid deliveries and trade activities or letting it collapse, with all the risky and unforeseeable consequences that this might entail. Both options have considerable downsides and China therefore has to make trade-offs. It is essentially a cost-benefit analysis China has to make and so far China has opted for keeping the Kim regime in place.

This is due to several reasons. The most obvious one regards North Korea's function as a buffer against an increased American influence in the region. If the Kim regime collapses it is uncertain what would happen to North Korea and how South Korea and its ally, the US, would react to it. A unified Korea allied to the US and having US troops deployed in its territory would be a geostrategic nightmare for China and its ambitions. The Kim regime, with all its downsides, is effectively preventing such a scenario.<sup>113</sup>

By being the guarantor of the Kim regime, China also gains considerable leverage over the US and its allies in the region. Any deal that the US and its allies want to strike with North Korea has to get Chinese approval first.<sup>114</sup> This was the case in the second nuclear crisis,

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<sup>112</sup> Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power."

<sup>113</sup> Jian, Chen. *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 276.

<sup>114</sup> Beauchamp-Mustafaga, Nathan. "Bargaining over North Korea," *China-US Focus*, May 21, 2013, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/bargaining-over-north-korea/>.

when China initiated the six-party talks, and recently during the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore (see the chapter about the summit for more details). China hence might not be able to solve the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula, but by keeping the Kim regime in place it at least keeps the control over the current situation.

Moreover, China uses the leverage it has gained when dealing with other security issues involving the US. An example would be Taiwan, where "*From China's strategic perspective, Taiwan and North Korea are intrinsically linked*"<sup>115</sup>. In case the US does something that hurts China's interests in North Korea, China could use the threat of taking action on Taiwan as retaliation in its favor, and vice versa.

There are, however, considerable disadvantages to China for holding onto the Kim regime in North Korea. In the worst-case scenario, the regime could drag China into a war it does not want. The two countries concluded the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance during the Cold War in 1961, which renews itself every 20 years unless one of the parties chooses to withdraw. North Korea is the only country China has ever concluded such a treaty with, besides with the USSR when Sino-Soviet relations were still fairly intact. Due to this treaty, China would be technically obliged to support North Korea in case of an armed conflict.<sup>116</sup>

While China let the treaty be renewed both in 1981 and 2001, at the same time it looked at reasons not to get involved in case North Korea takes military action that China does not approve. Therefore, "*since the mid-1990s Beijing has made clear to Pyongyang that China will not come to North Korea's aid if Kim Jong-il gets himself in hot water.*"<sup>117</sup> It also looked at ways "*of eliminating the automaticity of the security and military commitments in a way that would not severely anger the DPRK*"<sup>118</sup>. There are also considerations that North Korea's

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<sup>115</sup> Dingli, Shen. "NorthKorea'sStrategicSignificancetoChina,"ChinaSecurity, Autumn (2006), 21.

<sup>116</sup> Sunny Lee, "China, North Korea: Unlikely Friends," Asia Times, July 21, 2011, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/MG21Dg02.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Scobell, Andrew. *China and North Korea: From Comrades-in-Arms to Allies at Arm's Length*. Carlisle Barracks PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004, 19.

<sup>118</sup> "Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea." Crisis Group, November 2, 2009. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/north-east-asia/korean-peninsula/shades-red-china-s-debate-over-north-korea>, 8.

nuclear program voided the treaty altogether and that China is thus not obliged to honor it anyway.<sup>119</sup>

By creating this backdoor for itself, China limited the risk of being dragged into a war by North Korea it does not want. North Korea's nuclear weapons, however, are not only a threat to Chinese interests because they might make North Korea feel more confident about its warfare capabilities towards third countries, but also because they could threaten China directly. Either because they could get into the wrong hands if the Kim regime collapses or because North Korea decides to sell technology or knowledge to countries/other actors that might use it against China.<sup>120</sup> An incident in 2012 shows that North Korea does not refrain from using force in order to convey political messages to China. In the border area in the Yellow Sea it kidnapped 28 Chinese fishermen, who were then kept hostage for 13 days.<sup>121</sup> Such incidents indicate that North Korea is ready to resort to comparably extreme measures and create uncertainty over what the regime might do in order to ensure its own survival.

An indirect negative consequence the Kim regime has for China, is its use as justification for other countries to increase their military capabilities in the region. Japan puts forward the North Korean threat as one of the main reasons why it increases military spending and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe uses North Korea to influence Japanese public opinion in favor of changing Japan's post-war pacifist constitution.<sup>122</sup><sup>123</sup> Likewise, North Korea serves as a

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<sup>119</sup> "China 'Not Obligated to Defend North Korea from an Attack.'" Text. The Straits Times, April 14, 2017. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-not-obliged-to-defend-north-korea-from-an-attack>.

<sup>120</sup> Diplomat, Richard Weitz, The. "China's Proliferation Problem." The Diplomat. Accessed June 13, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2011/05/chinas-proliferation-problem/>.

<sup>121</sup> Richburg, Keith B. "Kidnapped Fishermen's Case Angers Chinese Public." *Washington Post*, May 23, 2012, sec. World. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/kidnapped-fishermens-case-raise-chinese-publics-ire/2012/05/23/gJQAJrDWkU\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/kidnapped-fishermens-case-raise-chinese-publics-ire/2012/05/23/gJQAJrDWkU_story.html).

<sup>122</sup> CNN, Brad Lendon and Yoko Wakatsuki. "Japan's Prime Minister Sets 2020 Deadline for Changing Pacifist Constitution." CNN. Accessed June 13, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/03/asia/japan-abe-pacifist-constitution/index.html>.

<sup>123</sup> Tabuchi, Hiroko. "Japan Warns of China and North Korea as Security Threats." *The New York Times*, July 9, 2013, sec. Asia Pacific. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/10/world/asia/japan-warns-of-threats-from-china-and-north-korea.html>.



reason for South Korea and the US to conduct joint military maneuvers<sup>124</sup> - which are currently paused due to the agreement between Trump and Kim at the recent summit - and the deployment of missile defense systems in South Korea.<sup>125</sup>

### Allies or enemies?

China and North Korea are by no means the inseparable allies that they are sometimes portrayed as in Western media. China holds onto the Kim regime mainly due to rational reasons and because it fears the implications for its security policy that might emerge otherwise. China's goal is certainly not to keep the Kim regime in power but rather to maintain stability in its immediate neighborhood. Therefore, if China's security stakes in the Korean Peninsula would cost the country more than it would benefit, China would not hesitate to dump Kim. Under the current circumstances, however, North Korea's value as strategic buffer against the US still outweighs the costs. As a result, China is unlikely to change its strategic approach towards North Korea in the near future. It will do everything to contain North Korea's nuclear capabilities, while making sure that the regime survives at the same time.

### The United States' Interests in the Korean Peninsula

The US has long-standing and well-established security commitments in the Korean Peninsula and the region as a whole. Ever since the end of the Korean War 1953, the US has acted as the guarantor of South Korea's independence and security. Likewise, the US has had a similar treaty in place with Japan since the end of the allied occupation of Japan, which was the result of the Pacific War. Furthermore, the US naturally opposes the North Korean regime for systemic and ideological reasons. North Korea's nuclear ambitions and its withdrawal from the NPT put the post World War II world order into question, which the US considers intolerable.

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<sup>124</sup> Diplomat, Franz-Stefan Gady, The. "US, South Korea Kick Off Annual Military Drill Without US 'Strategic Assets.'" The Diplomat. Accessed June 13, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/04/us-south-korea-kick-off-annual-military-drill-without-us-strategic-assets/>.

<sup>125</sup> CNN, Taehoon Lee and James Griffiths. "South Korea Expects North to Launch ICBM on Saturday, Prime Minister Says." CNN. Accessed June 13, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/07/asia/south-korea-thaad-north-korea/index.html>.

## The Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific

Maintaining the balance of power is one of the core pillars of American grand strategy and security policy. This includes containing the influence of nuclear autocracies and integrating them into the world order. While post-Soviet Russia still poses a threat to liberalism, the far greater danger to liberalism and American unipolarity comes from China. Chinese policymakers openly speak about revising the global order and shifting it towards multipolarity.<sup>126</sup>

This opposition to American values in combination with China's rise results in an increased risk of confrontation between the two powers. One of the focal points of the Sino-US rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region is certainly the Korean Peninsula, of great importance from a geostrategic perspective and where the US has long standing security commitments with South Korea<sup>127</sup> and Japan<sup>128</sup>. These alliances bind the countries together and form the foundation for the American rebalancing strategy for the entire region.<sup>129</sup>

The security dilemma in the Korean Peninsula as embodied by North Korea is embedded in the Sino-US rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region. As outlined in the previous chapter, China and North Korea are entangled in a relatively complex relationship. While China shares the US's goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, a solution to the problem has always been prevented by the rivalry of the two countries in other regards.

## From Strategic Patience to Maximum Pressure

Throughout the years a broad variety of approaches have been tried by US administration to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions. The attempts by the Clinton and Bush administrations for reconciliation with North Korea ended in two nuclear crises and were unsuccessful - as previously outlined.

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<sup>126</sup> Miller, Paul D. "Five Pillars of American Grand Strategy." *Survival* 54, no. 5 (November 2012): 7–44.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.728343>.

<sup>127</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea; October 1, 1953.

<sup>128</sup> Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States of America and Japan (January 19, 1960)

<sup>129</sup> Miller, "Five Pillars of American Grand Strategy."

After these failures permanently damaged North Korea's credibility in negotiations, the Obama administration adopted a strategic approach it described as *"Strategic Patience"*.<sup>130</sup> From the beginning of his term onward, Obama declared that his administration would *"not fall into the same pattern as previous administrations with North Korea"*, rather it is *"incumbent upon all of us to insist that nations like Iran and North Korea do not game the system... Those who seek peace cannot stand idly by as nations arm themselves for nuclear war"*<sup>131</sup>. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton added that *"the international community failed to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons. We are now engaged in diplomatic efforts to roll back this development"*<sup>132</sup>. These statements describe the situation in which the Obama administration found itself in quite well. Obama had to deal with the aftermath of the two crises and present a new approach to the public.

The result was the policy of Strategic Patience, which *contained "a continued commitment to denuclearization, dedication to the six-party process (which is still paused), willingness to engage and efforts to work within multilateral frameworks to sanction and pressure North Korea"*.<sup>133</sup> In reality this meant counting on sanctions to build up enough pressure to make North Korea return to the six-party talks and resume the negotiations on denuclearization.

But even coming back to the negotiation table would not automatically mean a relaxation of the sanction regime. Rather, Clinton stated that *"within the framework of the Six Party Talks, we are prepared to meet bilaterally with North Korea, but North Korea's return to the negotiation table is not enough. Current sanctions will not be relaxed until Pyongyang takes verifiable, irreversible steps toward complete denuclearization. Its leaders should be under no*

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<sup>130</sup> Ahn, Taehyung. "Patience or Lethargy?: U.S. Policy toward North Korea under the Obama Administration." *North Korean Review* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2012): 68.

<sup>131</sup> "Remarks by President Obama and President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea in the Joint Press Availability," White House Office of Press Secretary, June 16, 2009, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-President-Lee-of-the-Republic-of-Korea-in-Joint-Press-Availability](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-President-Lee-of-the-Republic-of-Korea-in-Joint-Press-Availability)

<sup>132</sup> Sanger, David E. "U.S. Weighs Intercepting North Korean Shipments." *The New York Times*, June 7, 2009, sec. Asia Pacific. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/08/world/asia/08korea.html>.

<sup>133</sup> Pritchard, Charles L., John H. Tilelli, and Scott Snyder. *US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula*. 64. Council on Foreign Relations, 2010: 9.

*illusion that the United States will ever have normal, sanctions-free relations with a nuclear armed North Korea.*<sup>134</sup> While the policy approach of Strategic Patience stated which requirements would have to be fulfilled by North Korea in order to have the sanctions regime lifted, the approach lacked a time frame and provided little incentive for North Korea to act.

As a result, only a few years after its implementation, the policy approach was criticized as ineffective and with *"no clear evidence that these discrete missions are backed by a sense of urgency or priority at senior levels in the administration"* and *"that there is a significant risk that Strategic Patience will result in acquiescence to North Korea's nuclear status as a fait accompli"*.<sup>135</sup> North Korea indeed was not on top of the agenda, as Obama had to deal with the aftermath of two wars in the Middle East and an economic crisis.<sup>136</sup> Meanwhile, not even North Korea's continuing nuclear tests - which can also be seen as a vehicle to attract attention - elevated it back to the status of a top priority.<sup>137</sup>

Looking in retrospect, Obama's policy approach was largely seen as insufficient and not successful.<sup>138</sup><sup>139</sup> Obama's Strategic Patience was exchanged with "Maximum Pressure"<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> "Remarks at the United States Institute of Peace." U.S. Department of State. Accessed June 14, 2018.

[//2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/10/130806.htm](https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/10/130806.htm).

<sup>135</sup> Pritchard, Tilelli, and Snyder, *US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula*, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Ahn, "Patience or Lethargy?", 69.

<sup>137</sup> Ahn, "Patience or Lethargy?", 69.

<sup>138</sup> Board, Editorial. "Opinion | 'Strategic Patience' with North Korea Is Over. Here's What Should Replace It." *Washington Post*, March 22, 2017, sec. The Post's View Opinion Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/strategic-patience-with-north-korea-is-over-heres-what-should-replace-it/2017/03/22/a230fff4-0e69-11e7-ab07-07d9f521f6b5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/strategic-patience-with-north-korea-is-over-heres-what-should-replace-it/2017/03/22/a230fff4-0e69-11e7-ab07-07d9f521f6b5_story.html).

<sup>139</sup> Diplomat, Daniel DePetris, The. "Enough Strategic Patience: Time for a New US North Korea Policy." *The Diplomat*. Accessed June 14, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/09/enough-strategic-patience-time-for-a-new-us-north-korea-policy/>.

<sup>140</sup> Rogin, Josh. "Opinion | Trump's North Korea Policy Is 'maximum Pressure' but Not 'regime Change.'" *Washington Post*, April 14, 2017, sec. Josh Rogin Opinion Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2017/04/14/trumps-north-korea-policy-is-massive-pressure-but-not-regime-change/>.

when Trump took office. Maximum Pressure was the result of a two-month comprehensive review of North Korea conducted by the Trump administration and first mentioned in April 2017.<sup>141</sup> Like Strategic Patience, it focuses on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula but adds an important detail. The policy provides the potential of secondary sanctions on Chinese companies and banks that aid the North Korean regime.<sup>142</sup> While the Trump administration did not call for these kinds of sanctions to be imposed upfront and counted instead on Chinese voluntary cooperation, it eventually applied the new policy and imposed sanctions against several Chinese and Russian entities that helped finance North Korean front companies.<sup>143</sup>

It remains unclear whether it happened due to the threat of more sanctions on Chinese companies or not, but it is true that China started putting more pressure on North Korea at the end of 2017. By the end of February 2018, Chinese imports from North Korea dropped by 86,1% in value and Chinese exports to North Korea by 34%. These high figures can easily become life threatening for a country that is heavily dependent on one trading partner.<sup>144</sup> The timing of Chinese pressure on North Korea also coincides with statements US-government officials were making at the same time. US Vice-President Pence said at the beginning of February that the US *"will continue to intensify our maximum pressure campaign until North Korea takes concrete steps toward complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization"*<sup>145</sup>, which was interpreted by analysts that more Chinese companies could be targeted for doing business with North Korea.<sup>146</sup>

Of course the view of the Trump administration is that it was indeed this new approach that forced North Korea to the negotiation table in Singapore. It remains silent about the possibility that China might have simply chosen this moment to put pressure on North Korea

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<sup>141</sup> Rogin, "Opinion | Trump's North Korea Policy Is 'maximum Pressure' but Not 'regime Change.'"

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>143</sup> Albert, "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship."

<sup>144</sup> Talmadge, Eric. "China Goes beyond U.N. Sanctions to Apply Its Own Maximum Pressure Policy on Pyongyang." *chicagotribune.com*. Accessed June 14, 2018.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-china-pressures-north-korea-20180406-story.html>.

<sup>145</sup> Talmadge, "China Goes beyond U.N. Sanctions to Apply Its Own Maximum Pressure Policy on Pyongyang."

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.,

because it deemed the timing as promising. China had a lot to gain in a potential denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and has every incentive to push forward a process that takes place on Chinese terms. There are already speculations that China is rewarding North Korea for its behavior by loosening its enforcement of the sanctions.<sup>147</sup> This can hardly be in the interest of the US administration, as it removes the incentive for North Korea to return to the negotiation table for future talks about denuclearization and gives China its leverage over North Korea back. Consequently, it has yet to be seen whether Maximum Pressure can be considered successful or not.

Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that Trump's actions are not necessarily in line with his administration's policy approach. By agreeing to the summit without any serious preconditions on the North Korean side, he lightheartedly gave away important leverage. Even though he claims that the US can return to Maximum Pressure at any time it pleases to, it is certainly not that easy in practice, as a successful sanction regime takes a lot of time and effort to be created and in this case is dependent on China and the US's regional allies.<sup>148</sup> Joseph DeThomas, a former State Department non-proliferation official, states that *"You just can't turn the maximum-pressure switch back on unless you can persuade the South Koreans and the Chinese to do that. By the end of last year, time was on our side, and what Kim has done is that he's flipped us. Time is no longer on our side."*<sup>149</sup>

## The Allies of the US

Whenever dealing with North Korea, the US has to keep the interests of its major allies in the region in mind: those of South Korea and Japan. As mentioned, they have been close allies of the US for decades and play an important role in maintaining the balance of power in the region. Due to these reasons, their own policy approaches and interests with regards to North Korea have to be briefly addressed, even though this thesis focuses on North Korea

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<sup>147</sup> Diplomat, Shannon Tiezzi, The. "The Trump-Kim Summit: Good News for China." The Diplomat. Accessed June 14, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/the-trump-kim-summit-good-news-for-china/>.

<sup>148</sup> Rogin, Josh. "Opinion | Maximum Pressure on North Korea Is Gone, and It Isn't Coming Back." *Washington Post*, May 17, 2018, sec. Opinions. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/maximum-pressure-on-north-korea-is-gone-and-it-isnt-coming-back/2018/05/17/e52f7ac6-5a10-11e8-b656-a5f8c2a9295d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/maximum-pressure-on-north-korea-is-gone-and-it-isnt-coming-back/2018/05/17/e52f7ac6-5a10-11e8-b656-a5f8c2a9295d_story.html).

<sup>149</sup> Rogin, "Opinion | Maximum Pressure on North Korea Is Gone, and It Isn't Coming Back."

in Sino-US relations. While for the US, North Korea has only recently come to close to being a direct threat<sup>150</sup>, Japan and South Korea as immediate neighbors, have far greater security concerns.

### *South Korea*

South and North Korea seem to be fundamentally separated on almost every subject of importance but one: reunification. Ever since the division of the Korean Peninsula into two countries, the overarching goal of each entity has been to reunify with the other part. When it comes to the details however, the countries take fundamentally different approaches. Both want reunification only on their respective terms, which would mean a communist-stalinist united Korea from a northern perspective and a capitalist democratic Korea from the southern one.<sup>151</sup>

This ideological division has existed since the surrender of Japan in World War 2 and is rooted in the two occupation zones that were established in the Korean Peninsula. One cruel war and decades of antagonism later, the initial problem remains still unsolved and is perpetuated by the geopolitical situation the two Koreas are surrounded by. The circumstances, however, have changed drastically. The USSR no longer exists and the South exponentially outperforms the North in terms of wealth and economic development.

When the USSR ceased to exist and the collapse of the North seemed inevitable, the South prepared for reunification. When it became clear that the Kim regime in North Korea not only escaped a collapse but also started to have nuclear ambitions, South Korea had to find new policy approaches to deal with its hostile and eventually nuclear neighbor. The policy

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<sup>150</sup> "North Korea Missile Now 'Capable of Hitting Guam.'" *The Independent*, September 15, 2017.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-missiles-guam-japan-us-territory-pacific-ocean-island-pyongyang-military-base-donald-a7947741.html>.

<sup>151</sup> Revere, Evans J. R. "Korean Reunification and U.S. Interests: Preparing for One Korea." *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 2001. <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/korean-reunification-and-u-s-interests-preparing-for-one-korea/>.

approaches ranged from sanctioning to attempts to ease tensions by providing economic assistance during the time of the so-called Sunshine Policy.<sup>152</sup>

South Korea's room for maneuver, however, is limited due to the involvement of much bigger powers than itself. South Korea is highly dependent on its alliance with the US and relies heavily on its security guarantees. There is practically no way for it to solve the security dilemma by itself and even the interest in doing so has been falling for a long time. While reunification officially remains a top priority for every South Korean government, elections are usually decided by other issues. South Koreans increasingly care more about their country's economic wellbeing, than reunification. Reunification would most likely mean hefty transfer payments to the North for decades, making the South worse off overall.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, North Korea only makes it to newspaper headlines in the South when something unusual happens. This has certainly been the case when the spiral of escalation started between Trump and Kim<sup>154</sup>. But also in a far more positive way when South Korea's newly elected president Moon Jae-in met his North Korean counterpart in the third inter-Korean summit in April 2018.<sup>155</sup>

Moon Jae-in's softer policy approach towards the North has enabled Kim to go on the charm offensive he has been on since the beginning of 2018 and culminated in the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore. Yet, what initially seemed like a great diplomatic success for him and South Korea, might turn out to be exactly the opposite. At the summit, Trump made a commitment to end joint military maneuvers between the US and South Korea without notifying his Korean allies and even surprising his own Secretary of Defense.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Revere, "Korean Reunification and U.S. Interests."

<sup>153</sup> Revere, "Korean Reunification and U.S. Interests."

<sup>154</sup> CNN, "All the Times Trump Has Insulted North Korea."

<sup>155</sup> Diplomat, "Moon on a Mission."

<sup>156</sup> Schmitt, Eric. "Pentagon and Seoul Surprised by Trump Pledge to Halt Military Exercises." *The New York Times*, June 13, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/12/world/asia/trump-military-exercises-north-south-korea.html>.



If this commitment was seriously meant, the entire security structure in the region could be put into question and would probably have a severe effect on American-South Korean relations. By making this commitment, Trump certainly added an additional factor of insecurity to the region and it remains to be seen how this will affect the regional power balance.

### *Japan*

Japan is the other major regional stakeholder and US ally in the region. Like South Korea, it has a strong interest in a solution to the security dilemma in the Korean Peninsula. Japan is located in the immediate range of North Korea's missiles, which has been frequently demonstrated by the North Korean regime.<sup>157</sup>

*As there is "a high degree of convergence between Japan's global interests and those of the United States – the foundation of the expanding scope of the bilateral alliance – means that the US regional policy is still highly consistent with Japanese interests"<sup>158</sup>. Consequently, Japan in general supports the US's efforts to deal with North Korea.*

In the recent events around the summit, however, Japan was less enthusiastic than one would expect. The reason for its relative reluctance can be found in the policy objectives of its prime minister, Shinzo Abe. For years Abe has been pursuing an agenda of changing Japan's constitution to being less pacifist, and is reportedly planning to do so by 2020. Changing the constitution would allow Japan to build up greater military capabilities in order to balance the growing Chinese influence. As public opinion in Japan is divided on this this topic, and a constitutional change would make a referendum necessary, Abe counts on North Korea as an enemy image.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> "North Korea Just Fired a Ballistic Missile." The Independent, November 28, 2017.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-latest-missile-test-ballistic-launch-trump-kim-jong-un-news-updates-a8080946.html>.

<sup>158</sup> Hagström, Linus, and Marie Söderberg, eds. *North Korea Policy: Japan and the Great Powers*. European Institute of Japanese Studies East Asian Economics & Business Series 9. London ; New York: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>159</sup> Tabuchi, "Japan Warns of China and North Korea as Security Threats."

Another factor that might play into the current events around North Korea, is Trump's commitment to halt military maneuvers with South Korea. Japan conducts similar exercises with the US forces and now fears that Trump's unwillingness to host these kinds of exercises results will negatively affect its own security as well, and is concerned that Trump might question American-Japanese exercises next.<sup>160</sup>

## Part IV: The Trump-Kim Summit

After assessing North Korea's relevant internal and external factors that contribute to the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula as well as examining the USA's and China's interests and policies in regard to North Korea, this chapter will be dedicated to the current events on the Korean Peninsula. The holding of the summit between Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump on the 12th of June 2018 in Singapore took the world by surprise. Due to the very short time interval between the summit and the due date of this thesis, it is furthermore only possible to analyze the immediate results of the summit. Therefore, the impact of the summit in the long term and the execution of what the two parties agreed on cannot be taken into account.

As previous deals with North Korea show, however, the country does not necessarily stick to the stipulated content of the deals it agrees on. This tendency of breaking promises made to the world - as outlined in the chapter about North Korea - makes it incredibly difficult to make well-grounded predictions about the success of this summit in the long term. It will take years of close observation to verify the execution of the stipulated measures in the agreement by North Korea. Only then could the summit be declared successful or not.

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<sup>160</sup> "Japan's Defence Minister Says U.S.-South Korean Military Drills..." *Reuters*, June 13, 2018.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-northkorea-usa-japan/japans-defence-minister-says-u-s-south-korean-military-drills-vital-idUKKBN1J904K>.

Compared to past agreements there were several novelties this time. It was "*a historic first meeting between a sitting US president and North Korean leader*"<sup>161</sup>, as past agreements had always been reached on a lower level. Both leaders of their respective countries are comparably new to office, as Trump has only been in office since the beginning of 2017<sup>162</sup> and Kim Jong Un came to power in 2011<sup>163</sup> after his father's death. Therefore, they were not involved in the failed agreements of the past. What is more, is that there have been reports about the Kim regime having decided that Trump is a president unlike any other they have encountered so far<sup>164</sup>. Consequently, it makes sense to take a closer look at the relation between Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump and how exactly this summit came about.

### Before the Summit

As outlined in the chapter about the US' interests in the Korean Peninsula, the Trump's personal strategy towards North Korea has not always been clear. It is true that his administration worked out the policy approach of Maximum Pressure towards North Korea, but Trump's behavior has not necessarily always been in line with it. Instead, it reached from the commitment of taking a tougher stance on North Korea than the Obama administration<sup>165</sup> to Trump's willingness to "*eat a hamburger*"<sup>166</sup> with Kim Jong Un. These two not necessarily aligned policy approaches left a wide array for speculation about the US' future approach towards North Korea. When Trump first threatened Kim with "*fire and fury*

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<sup>161</sup> CNN, Jeremy Diamond and James Griffiths. "Trump and Kim Could Meet for Second Day in Singapore." CNN. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/06/politics/donald-trump-potential-second-day-meeting-kim-jong-un/index.html>.

<sup>162</sup> "Donald Trump | Biography & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump>.

<sup>163</sup> "Kim Jong-Un | Facts, Biography, & Nuclear Program." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kim-Jong-Eun>.

<sup>164</sup> "Talks between America and North Korea Might Succeed—at a Terrible Price." *The Economist*, June 7, 2018. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/06/07/talks-between-america-and-north-korea-might-succeed-at-a-terrible-price>.

<sup>165</sup> Landler, Mark. "Pence, Returning to Tough Stance on North Korea, Announces New Sanctions." *The New York Times*, February 8, 2018, sec. U.S. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/07/us/politics/pence-north-korea-sanctions.html>.

<sup>166</sup> Gass, Nick. "Trump: I'll Meet with Kim Jong Un in the U.S." POLITICO. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://politi.co/2siPVTY>.

like the world has never seen"<sup>167</sup> and later called him a "rocket man"<sup>168</sup> who is "on a suicide mission for himself"<sup>169</sup>, however, it seemed unthinkable that the American president would execute his plans to have a burger with the North Korean leader anytime soon and the course of his policy approach towards North seemed pre-determined.

Not very long after that, Trump astonished the world and his advisors when he accepted Kim Jong Un's invitation to hold a summit, delivered to him by the South Korean security advisor and diplomat Chung Eui-yong. It was an invitation Kim Jong Un made when Chung Eui-yong was sent to North Korea, as part of South Korea's newly elected president Moon Jae-in's revival of Sunshine Policy<sup>170</sup>. Trump accepted the invitation on the spot, without consulting his advisors.<sup>171</sup>

Another seemingly erratic decision that Trump made during the run-up to the summit was cancelling it, only to agree to it again after a short period of time. On May 24, Trump cancelled the summit after a North Korean official warned that North Korea might have second thoughts about the summit due to statements the US' Vice President Mike Pence made<sup>172</sup>, which she called "*ignorant and stupid*"<sup>173</sup>. Pence had previously made remarks that North Korea might end up like Libya if it did not agree to eventual denuclearization. But only

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<sup>167</sup> CNN, Saba Hamedy and Joyce Tseng. "All the Times Trump Has Insulted North Korea." CNN. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/22/politics/donald-trump-north-korea-insults-timeline/index.html>.

<sup>168</sup> CNN, "All the Times Trump Has Insulted North Korea."

<sup>169</sup> CNN, "All the Times Trump Has Insulted North Korea."

<sup>170</sup> Fifield, Anna. "South Korea's Likely next President Asks the U.S. to Respect Its Democracy." *Washington Post*, May 2, 2017, sec. World. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/south-koreas-likely-next-president-warns-the-us-not-to-meddle-in-its-democracy/2017/05/02/2295255e-29c1-11e7-9081-f5405f56d3e4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/south-koreas-likely-next-president-warns-the-us-not-to-meddle-in-its-democracy/2017/05/02/2295255e-29c1-11e7-9081-f5405f56d3e4_story.html).

<sup>171</sup> Baker, Peter. "Unpredictable as Ever, Trump Stuns with a Gamble on North Korea." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 11, 2018. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/unpredictable-as-ever-trump-stuns-with-a-gamble-on-north-korea-20180311-p4z3tr.html>.

<sup>172</sup> Sang-Hun, Choe. "North Korea, Calling Pence Remarks 'Ignorant and Stupid,' Issues New Warning on Summit." *The New York Times*, May 24, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/23/world/asia/north-korea-trump-pence-summit.html>.

<sup>173</sup> Sang-Hun, "North Korea, Calling Pence Remarks 'Ignorant and Stupid,' Issues New Warning on Summit."

one day later Trump sounded optimistic about a possible meeting again<sup>174</sup> and three days later<sup>175</sup> US officials travelled to prepare a summit that had been officially cancelled. This ambiguous situation lasted for 8 days, after which Trump finally announced that the summit was back on the agenda.<sup>176</sup>

The reasons for Trump's behavior can only be subjects of speculation. The New York Times found that "*Mr. Trump approached Mr. Kim, the North Korean leader, as if he were a competing property developer haggling over a prized asset*"<sup>177</sup> and the newspaper assumes that Trump relies on his abilities as a deal-maker in the business world. This assumption is backed up by Trump showing similar behavior when he was a businessman, which could be best described by the terms "*hard-nosed brinkmanship*", "*trying to cow businessmen*" and showing a "*refusal to compromise*"<sup>178</sup>. A blueprint for his behavior in the business world can be found in Trump's book "Trump: The Art of the Deal" - a book Trump is immensely proud of and which he claims is his second-favorite book after the bible.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Gearan, Anne, John Wagner, and John Hudson. "Trump Sounds Optimistic Tone about Future North Korea Talks Day after Canceling Summit." *Washington Post*, May 25, 2018, sec. Politics. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-sounds-note-of-optimism-on-north-korea-claims-democrats-rooting-against-him/2018/05/25/e3c1767a-6001-11e8-9ee3-49d6d4814c4c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-sounds-note-of-optimism-on-north-korea-claims-democrats-rooting-against-him/2018/05/25/e3c1767a-6001-11e8-9ee3-49d6d4814c4c_story.html).

<sup>175</sup> Fifield, Anna, and Joby Warrick. "U.S. Officials Meet with North Koreans despite Uncertainty Surrounding Trump-Kim Summit." *Washington Post*, May 27, 2018, sec. Asia & Pacific. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/us-officials-hold-summit-preparation-talks-despite-uncertainty-surrounding-meeting/2018/05/27/870c8196-61ae-11e8-b166-fea8410bcded\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-officials-hold-summit-preparation-talks-despite-uncertainty-surrounding-meeting/2018/05/27/870c8196-61ae-11e8-b166-fea8410bcded_story.html).

<sup>176</sup> "Trump Announces North Korea Summit Is Back on for June 12." *Axios*. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://www.axios.com/trump-announces-north-korea-summit-will-go-on-as-scheduled-1527878593-ac0de392-f112-4614-b76a-fb21bcdb5613.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Sanger, David E. "Trump's Negotiating Playbook Faced Test in North Korea." *The New York Times*, May 25, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/world/asia/trumps-gamble-hits-reality-check-in-north-korea-negotiations.html>.

<sup>178</sup> Stevenson, Jonathan. "Opinion | The Madness Behind Trump's 'Madman' Strategy." *The New York Times*, January 20, 2018, sec. Opinion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/26/opinion/the-madness-behind-trumps-madman-strategy.html>.

<sup>179</sup> "Donald Trump's Favorite Book." *NBC News*. Accessed June 9, 2018. <https://www.msnbc.com/all-in/watch/donald-trumps-favorite-book-505029187689>.

There are also speculations that Trump applies his own version of Nixon's Madman Strategy<sup>180</sup>, which included the tactic of trying to make the leaders of the Communist Bloc think that Nixon was irrational and volatile. This strategy, however, also included the attempt to make the communist world think he would end this behavior once they gave in. Since Trump has acted erratically towards other actors besides North Korea, it is unclear whether he includes a similar approach in his behavior.

Far more unsettling than any of the previous, or similar explanations, would be the possibility that Trump's seemingly erratic behavior simply is what it seems to be: erratic. Obviously this kind of attitude is harmful to any agreement between Trump and Kim. The North Korean leader cannot be completely sure that Trump does not change his mind again in the future, when doing so would seem convenient for the US-president. This is another factor that adds to uncertainty over the fulfillment of what they agreed on at the summit.

On the contrary, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un's behavior seems more target-oriented. He used the window of opportunity that presented itself, when South Korea's president Moon Jae-in took office in May 2017. Moon does not share his predecessor's policy approach towards North Korea and takes a much softer approach instead<sup>181</sup>. Starting with a New Year's Eve speech Kim Jong Un gave at the beginning of this year, he has managed to facilitate a rapprochement between North Korea and South Korea. He first sent his sister to the Winter Olympics<sup>182</sup>, which took place at the beginning of the year and had North and South Koreans march in together in the opening ceremony<sup>183</sup>. Then, after a series of high-level meetings between North and South Koreans, Kim Jong Un and his South Korean

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<sup>180</sup> Stevenson, "Opinion | The Madness Behind Trump's 'Madman' Strategy."

<sup>181</sup> Diplomat, Ramon Pacheco Pardo, The. "Moon on a Mission: South Korea's New Approach to the North." The Diplomat. Accessed June 10, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/moon-on-a-mission-south-koreas-new-approach-to-the-north/>.

<sup>182</sup> Haas, Benjamin. "Kim Jong-Un's Sister Invites South Korean President to Pyongyang." *The Guardian*, February 10, 2018, sec. World news. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/10/kim-yo-jong-meets-south-korean-president-in-seoul-as-thaw-continues>.

<sup>183</sup> Rich, Motoko. "Olympics Open With Koreas Marching Together, Offering Hope for Peace." *The New York Times*, February 12, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/world/asia/olympics-opening-ceremony-north-korea.html>.

counterpart meet at Panmunjom, at the third inter-Korean meeting that has taken place since the peninsula had been divided.<sup>184</sup> The pictures taken at this inter-Korean summit went around the world and put further pressure on the American president to make a move.

Kim not only managed to secure himself the backing of South Korea for a North Korean-American summit, but also made sure that China was involved in his plans. Consequently, he has met China's president Xi Jinping twice already since he started his charm offensive at the beginning of 2018. Kim travelled to Beijing once in March, after Trump accepted his invitation to hold a summit<sup>185</sup>, and once after Kim met Moon in Panmunjom<sup>186</sup>. What exactly Kim and Xi Jinping agreed on in detail remains the object of speculation. It is also unclear to what extent China is able to control the actions of North Korea's leader, as it is undoubtedly China that forced Kim to act, by executing the sanction regime more strictly.

## The Summit

The joint declaration of Trump and Kim at the end of the summit stated the following<sup>187</sup>:

- 1. The United States and the DPRK commit to establish new U.S.-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity.*
- 2. The United States and the DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.*
- 3. Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.*

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<sup>184</sup> "Full Text of Joint Declaration Issued at Inter-Korean Summit." Yonhap News Agency. Accessed June 10, 2018. <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2018/04/27/0200000000AEN20180427013900315.html>.

<sup>185</sup> "What Drives Kim Jong-Un?" *The New York Times*, March 9, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/admin/100000005790064.embedded.html?>

<sup>186</sup> Perlez, Jane. "Kim's Second Surprise Visit to China Heightens Diplomatic Drama." *The New York Times*, May 9, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/asia/kim-jong-un-xi-jinping-china-north-korea.html>.

<sup>187</sup> Times, The New York. "The Trump-Kim Summit Statement: Read the Full Text." *The New York Times*, June 13, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/12/world/asia/trump-kim-summit-statement.html>.

*4. The United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.*

Reading the exact wording, it becomes obvious that Kim Jong Un can be considered the winner of this summit. Not only he was elevated to the status of a "legitimate statesman"<sup>188</sup> by Trump, but also publicly praised as "very talented" and "worthy of trust"<sup>189</sup> by him. In return North Korea only "commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula". This phrasing leaves a wide space for interpretation, which certainly will become a major issue and obstacle in future rounds of talks.

On top of the considerable concessions already made by the US, Trump reportedly made another far reaching commitment during the summit with Kim. He announced that the US would stop military exercises with South Korea<sup>190</sup>, surprising both his ally and his own administration. If Trump was serious about this, then North Korea - and also China - can see this summit as a genuine victory.

### Will the Summit lead to eventual Denuclearization?

Even though the summit might have started a process towards denuclearization, as the two involved parties stated in their declaration, it remains unclear whether it will eventually happen or not. As outlined in Part I about North Korea, Kim Jong Un is still highly dependent on nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip. There is no way he can give up all of them immediately and irreversibly, as he would lose all of his bargaining power for future rounds of talk. Furthermore, the fates of Moammar Gaddafi in Libya<sup>191</sup> and that of Saddam Hussein

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<sup>188</sup> Board, Editorial. "Opinion | No More Concessions." *Washington Post*, June 12, 2018, sec. The Post's View Opinion Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-singapore-summit-was-a-victory-for-kim-jong-un/2018/06/12/3731e970-6e44-11e8-bd50-b80389a4e569\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-singapore-summit-was-a-victory-for-kim-jong-un/2018/06/12/3731e970-6e44-11e8-bd50-b80389a4e569_story.html).

<sup>189</sup> Board, "Opinion | No More Concessions."

<sup>190</sup> Schmitt, "Pentagon and Seoul Surprised by Trump Pledge to Halt Military Exercises."

<sup>191</sup> Noack, Rick. "Analysis | Trump Just Contradicted Bolton on North Korea. What's the 'Libya Model' They Disagree On?" *Washington Post*, May 17, 2018, sec. World Analysis Analysis Interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events.



in Iraq<sup>192</sup> serve as examples of what might happen to Kim Jong Un if he gave up his nuclear weapons. Both of them ended their nuclear ambitions under international pressure and received similar security assurances as North Korea did around the Trump-Kim Summit. Both of them, however, were killed in the process of Western led interventions. Trump being President of the US certainly does not help to make security assurances or security guarantees by the US any more credible, as his frequent erratic behavior shows. He also shows remarkable ignorance for international commitments, as his withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran<sup>193</sup> shows.

Nevertheless, both parties can sell this summit as a success. Kim Jong Un has been elevated by Trump to a status none of his predecessors had ever enjoyed, might get a pause of joint South Korean-American military exercises and only had to give little in return. The phrasing of the declaration also allows him to interpret denuclearization in the way he pleases. In a North Korean way of interpretation denuclearization could be connected to certain preconditions that have to be met by the US beforehand, like the end of American military presence in South Korea. Obviously, this bears no resemblance to the American understanding.<sup>194</sup>

There have always been many obstacles in the way towards a denuclearization of North Korea and another has been potentially added due to the face-to-face conversation of Kim and Trump. Professor Sung-Yoon Lee from Tufts University pointed out an interesting pattern he has observed in past rounds of negotiation with North Korean leaders in this

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/world/wp/2018/05/16/whats-this-libya-model-north-korea-is-so-angry-about/>.

<sup>192</sup> "North Korea Is Following the Saddam Hussein Playbook." *Foreign Policy* (blog). Accessed June 15, 2018. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/12/north-korea-is-following-the-saddam-hussein-playbook/>.

<sup>193</sup> Landler, Mark. "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned." *The New York Times*, May 14, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html>.

<sup>194</sup> Rosenfeld, Nyshka Chandran, Everett. "North Korea Commits to 'Complete Denuclearization,' Doesn't Define It," June 12, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/12/north-korea-commits-to-complete-denuclearization-doesnt-define-it.html>.

year's Milton Wolf Seminar in Vienna<sup>195</sup>, which is also resembled in recent interviews he has given about the summit<sup>196</sup>. He pointed out that there is a certain threat of misjudgment diplomats and politicians face when they encounter leaders like the Kims. This is due to the big contrast of anticipation and reality they experience when they finally meet the leader of North Korea in person. Before they meet the respective Kim, they are influenced by the image international media conveys of them, which usually portrays them as rather irrational and mad. When they meet them in person, however, they suddenly appear as rational and sane. This can easily lead foreign envoys to the assumption that they are dealing with a sincere and transparent opponent. This happened on numerous occasions in the past and may have also happened at the North Korean-American summit in Singapore.

## Part V: Conclusion

The security dilemma we are facing today on the Korean Peninsula has deep historic roots. The inception was the partition of the Korean Peninsula into northern and southern parts. After a brief period of relative prosperity in North Korea it soon fell behind after its southern brother. The regime started to rely on economic aid from its bigger communist allies China and the USSR, by playing them off against each other.

This dependence on aid put the North Korean regime into a highly difficult situation when the USSR collapsed. North Korea had to find a way to compensate for the loss of Soviet aid and faced the choice between reforming its economy or finding alternative ways out of the dilemma. Substantial reform, however, was impossible without reforming its internal state ideology of Juche. This ideology features a rigid and hard to reform system that centers on the personality cult around the Kim family, which has been vital to them staying in power but then proved to be a huge obstacle for necessary reforms.

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<sup>195</sup> Lee, Sung-Yoon. At a panel discussion at Milton Wolf Seminar with the topic "Geopolitical Hotspots". April 17, 2018. Vienna. <https://miltonwolfseminar.wordpress.com/about-the-seminar/2018-seminar/>

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Consequently, North Korea looked for and eventually found a different approach. It adopted the practice of brinkmanship as a foreign policy and applied it successfully in two events, to which the rest of the world now refers to as the two nuclear crises on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea used the nuclear capabilities it has been developing since the collapse of the USSR as a bargaining chip with world, by first facilitating a crisis and then putting the option of denuclearizing on the table in exchange for aid deliveries, without actually keeping its word in either case. These maneuvers together with an increase of Chinese aid have hitherto ensured the regime's survival.

Over the last decades North Korea's regime has not only survived but has also become a serious security threat for the region and the world. Its possession of nuclear weapon is something none of the major actors is willing to tolerate; yet they are unable to overcome it. The reason why the North Korean regime is still in power can be found in the geopolitical situation of the area. From a geographic perspective North Korea is close enough to China to be considered its backyard by its neighboring country. China wants to avoid American presence on the northern part of the Korean Peninsula by all means and is therefore willing to support the Kim regime, despite its condemnation of North Korea's nuclear program. Chinese protection is one of the main reasons why American pressure on North Korea to give up its nuclear program has been failing for decades. Sanctions imposed by the US failed to build up enough pressure on North Korea because China often did not participate in them or circumvented them. Whenever China did participate, it assured that the regime in North Korea would not collapse at the same time.

This constellation has been hard for the US to deal with for decades. On the one hand, it cannot allow North Korea to set a dangerous precedent by allowing the country to leave the NPT and develop nuclear capabilities without consequences. On the other hand, sanctions have always proved as insufficient to put enough pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. Some voices in the US consider a preemptive strike on North Korea as a potential way out of the dilemma. This, however, has always been unrealistic due to the high number of casualties the closest allies of the US in the region - South Korea and Japan - would likely suffer. Even before North Korea dramatically increased its threat potential by successfully building nuclear warheads, particularly the proximity of South Korea's capital

Seoul to the inner Korean border has always been a guarantee for an unacceptable high number of casualties in the hypothetical case of a nuclear conflict between North Korea and the US.

As a result, the US and China find themselves in a deadlock, when it comes to North Korea. Even though the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula constantly becomes more pressing, as the North Korean regime manages to increase its technical capabilities in deploying nuclear warheads, there is still no viable solution for it. Meanwhile, North Korea maintains with its well-tested strategy of brinkmanship.

The recent historic summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un has to be assessed in the light of these conclusions. It certainly is historic in a sense that it has been unique in history - never before has a sitting US-President and North Korean leader met. The results of the summit, however, are not. North Korea agreed on numerous occasions in the past to denuclearize/end its nuclear ambitions but it never has. Not only does North Korea's record of breaking agreements speak against an eventual success of the new agreement, but misunderstandings over the process of denuclearization and misjudgments in general pose a great risk to eventual success.

Consequently, no agreement reached with North Korea, however significant it may seem at the first glance, can be immediately considered as a solution to the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula. It first would need years of observation and verification in order to make sure North Korea honors its agreement. Only then could the security dilemma be considered resolved. This moment, however, is still out of sight and one successful summit between Trump and Kim certainly does not fulfill these criteria.

Consequently, the measures against the North Korean regime have still not produced a verifiable result and have proven to be ineffective. Therefore, the initially formulated hypothesis of this master thesis holds true for the time being.

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# Oliver Grünbacher

[oliver.gruenbacher@gmx.at](mailto:oliver.gruenbacher@gmx.at)

+43 699 10377093

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

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<b>2016 – 2018</b> Vienna, Austria <a href="http://www.da-vienna.ac.at">www.da-vienna.ac.at</a>	<b>Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, University of Vienna</b> Master of Advanced International Studies (MAIS) <i>Focus on Sino-US Relations in the Far East; Recipient of GPA based Tuition Waiver</i>
<b>2012 – 2015</b> Vienna, Austria <a href="http://www.wu.ac.at">www.wu.ac.at</a>	<b>Vienna University of Economics and Business</b> Bachelor of Science in Business, Economics and Social Sciences (BSc) <i>Focus on Public Management and Information Systems</i>
<b>2013 – ongoing</b> Linz, Austria <a href="http://www.jku.at">www.jku.at</a>	<b>Johannes Kepler University Linz</b> Magister Juris, graduate studies in law (Mag.iur.) <i>Focus on International Law</i>
<b>2017</b> Beijing, China <a href="http://www.en.edu.cfau.cn">www.en.edu.cfau.cn</a>	<b>China Foreign Affairs University</b> Exchange semester <i>Focus on China's Economy and International Relations</i>
<b>2014</b> Seoul, South Korea <a href="http://www.korea.edu">www.korea.edu</a>	<b>Korea University Business School</b> Exchange semester <i>Focus on Leadership Classes</i>

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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<b>08 2016 – 09 2016</b> Sofia, Bulgaria <a href="http://www.wko.at">www.wko.at</a>	<b>Commercial Section of the Austrian Embassy</b> Intern <i>Compilation and revision of industry reports and newsletters; database management and assistance in its reorganization; organizational support for major events of the Austrian Business Circle; research of business opportunities for Austrian companies</i>
<b>07 2015 – 08 2015</b> Linz, Austria <a href="http://www.wifi.at">www.wifi.at</a>	<b>Austrian Economic Chambers (WKO) - Institute for Economic Promotion</b> Intern <i>Assistance in the execution of education courses; support and German/English translation tasks for a Chinese delegation; database management</i>
<b>08 2014</b> Linz, Austria <a href="http://www.lkuf.at">www.lkuf.at</a>	<b>Teachers Health- and Accident Insurance (LKUF)</b> Intern <i>Postal mail presorting and distribution; archival storage tasks; customer support</i>

## KEY SKILLS

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<b>Languages</b>	German ( <i>native</i> ), English ( <i>fluency</i> ), Spanish ( <i>intermediate</i> ), French ( <i>intermediate</i> )
<b>Computer Skills</b>	Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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<b>UN Shadowing Day</b>	Shadow at IAEA – Department of Technical Cooperation
<b>UNIDO</b>	Volunteer, translator and guide during the event “One Belt One Road”
<b>Buddy Programme</b>	Assistance and support of incoming exchange students