



Significance of Relations Between the US and North Korea in the International Order

Význam vzťahov medzi USA a Severnou Kóreou v medzinárodnom poriadku

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The manuscript was received on 21. 04. 2023 and was accepted after revision for publication on 05. 06. 2023

Abstract:

One of the factors affecting the security dilemma in international relations, including interstate relations on a global scale, is nuclear weapons. This mechanism not only affects the multifaceted relations of the two states in international relations, but also carries a threat to global stability, posing a threat to the common international order. Given the recent trend towards globalization in world politics, from the perspective of both military, political and economic points of views, it can be argued that this situation creates a rather difficult situation for isolated states such as North Korea as to relations with other states. The main purpose of this article is to conceptualize the existing threat to the international order by analysing the strategic policy between North Korea and the United States, a global power that plays a threat to the global order in international relations and is isolated in global politics. The article first provides an overview of the relations between the United States and North Korea in the framework of the historical concept, which has existed for many years in the international order, and then analyses this historical concept. As the next process, the article analyses the nuclear weapons factor in the strategic policy between the United States and North Korea within the framework of this history of the two states, as well as the foreign policy arising from this factor.

Keywords: Security dilemma, international order, nuclear deterrence, USA and North Korea



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Abstrakt:

Jedným z faktorov ovplyvňujúcich bezpečnostnú dilemu v medzinárodných vzťahoch, vrátane medzištátnych vzťahov v celosvetovom meradle, sú jadrové zbrane. Tento mechanizmus ovplyvňuje nielen mnohostranné vzťahy oboch štátov v medzinárodných vzťahoch, ale predstavuje aj hrozbu pre globálnu stabilitu a predstavuje hrozbu pre spoločný medzinárodný poriadok. Vzhľadom na nedávny trend ku globalizácii vo svetovej politike, z hľadiska vojenského, politického aj ekonomického, možno tvrdiť, že táto situácia vytvára pre izolované štáty, ako je Severná Kórea pomerne zložitú situáciu vo vzťahoch s inými štátmi. Hlavným cieľom tohto článku je konceptualizovať existujúcu hrozbu pre medzinárodný poriadok analýzou strategickej politiky medzi Severnou Kóreou a Spojenými štátmi, globálnou mocnosťou, ktorá predstavuje hrozbu pre globálny poriadok v medzinárodných vzťahoch a je izolovaná v globálnej politike. Článok najskôr poskytuje prehľad vzťahov medzi USA a Severnou Kóreou v rámci historického konceptu, ktorý v medzinárodnom usporiadaní existuje už mnoho rokov a následne tento historický koncept analyzuje. Ako ďalší postup článok analyzuje faktor jadrových zbraní v strategickej politike medzi USA a Severnou Kóreou v rámci tejto histórie oboch štátov, ako aj zahraničnú politiku z tohto faktora vyplývajúcu.

Kľúčové slová: riziko, analýza rizik, metodika, údaje

Introduction

One of the obstacles that prevent global powers from scattering their values around the process of globalization is the isolated states that own nuclear weapons. Such states not only impede the multifaceted strategic policy of these states, but also form unorthodox threats to the system of international relations in which this state wants to spread a global vision. Therefore, while states with tangible and intangible advantages and superpowers want to extend their political line to more geographers and focus on all these processes, the existence of a state of this order, which has some kind of isolated and security weapon, creates a security dilemma for it. Therefore, it is mandatory for this state to direct part of its policy in relation to all international relations to this process. One of these states is the United States, and one of these processes is the one that exists between it and North Korea, which arises from the dilemma of nuclear weapons. Although political-strategic rivalry between the United States and North Korea has been going on for a long time, and relations between the two countries have sometimes been strained, but this has become an almost insoluble process. This article also aims to address this process from its historical beginnings to the present day, capturing the concept of the most political and historical course, analysing nuclear relations between the United States and North Korea and demonstrating the possible threats that may exist for the international order.

1. The United States of America's Policy on North Korea

International challenges precipitated by North Korea's nuclear programs began to manifest themselves after the Cold War's conclusion, prior to North Korea declaring that it had nuclear weapons. North Korea, which became isolated as a consequence of the demise of the Soviet Union and China's economic restructuring, stepped up its nuclear efforts in response to a heightened feeling of cyclical danger, undermining the US strategy of avoiding nuclear proliferation. [1]

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North Korea has always desired nuclear weapons, despite worldwide condemnation. North Korea sparked international tensions multiple times throughout the development of nuclear weapons, most notably when it announced that it had nuclear weapons after its formal withdrawal from the NPT and conducted its first nuclear test. These were watershed moments in the US-North Korean relationship, precipitating worldwide crises. [2]

Taking this into account, it is possible to characterize one of the primary goals of US policy toward North Korea as the total eradication of North Korean nuclear weapons, which are seen as a danger to the US's global hegemony, and the proliferation of weapons of mass devastation. [3] Additionally, an unstable North Korea equipped with nuclear weapons and missiles might provoke Japan and South Korea to seek nuclear weapons. [4] Nevertheless, the US wishes to avert China from exerting pressure on US allies and undermining US regional dominance via its influence on North Korea's global and regional policies. In keeping with its military presence on the Korean peninsula and its interests in Northeast Asia, the US seeks to balance China without allowing it to utilize North Korea as a trump card. [5]

China has historically seen North Korea as a buffer zone for its national security in this context. Chinese policy with North Korea is aimed at defending China's national interests. This emphasises the critical importance of a military-strategic environment, border security and stability, economic growth, and political stability in neighbouring North Korean provinces. As a result, China desires the continuation of North Korea's existence for political strategic reasons and to protect its national interests. [6] Nonetheless, China's approach toward North Korea varied depending on the circumstances. For example, when North Korea declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT in 1993–1994, China replied rather gently and preferred to remain neutral in the first phase. However, when North Korea formally withdrew from the NPT in 2003, China demonstrated a different approach, aggressively intervening and cooperating with the international community to settle the problem. [7]

On the issue of how to denuclearize North Korea, which has been the primary topic of discussion at bilateral summits between the United States and North Korea since 2018, China believes that a conditional, mutual, and gradual approach should be taken, in contrast to the United States' fully verifiable and irreversible denuclearization approach. Furthermore, China perceives the denuclearization of North Korea as a process rather than an aim to be completed within a set time period. [8]

For the US, North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons and the development, testing, deployment, and export of long-range missiles would jeopardize the Korean Peninsula's deterrent stability, a necessary condition for long-term sustainable peace. Due to the catastrophic regional and global ramifications of North Korea's operations, which jeopardize the USA's vital interests, the USA's objective is to put a halt to these activities. Indeed, although the means of the USA's North Korea policy have varied over time, the policy's objective has been constant: to entirely halt North Korea's non-peaceful nuclear programs. [9]

Within the context of the USA's North Korea policy objectives, among the primary tools for implementing this policy were multilateral negotiations in the 1990s

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with the goal of other states in the international system, particularly regional states, taking responsibility for establishing a dialogue with North Korea. The bilateral meetings between the US and North Korean presidents in 2018 and 2019 marked a turning point in the USA's North Korea policy, which has maintained its efforts to reconcile with North Korea via several accords during the 2000s. [10]

Additionally, the US's ties with South Korea and Japan might be cited as instruments for enforcing the North Korea strategy. South Korea and Japan's failure to fully support US policy and cooperate in its execution would have a detrimental effect on the success of US strategy against North Korea. Although the three parties' interests are not identical, tripartite cooperation is feasible because they coincide on critical and particular aspects. [11]

Moreover, the United Nations Security Council's sanctions might be characterized in terms of the USA acting as an intermediary in implementing North Korean policy in line with its stated objectives. With additional sanctions imposed in 2016 and 2017, the UNSC has targeted the entire North Korean economy. On the contrary to the scorfal secondary measures imposed by the US in 2017, the efficacy of these penalties has improved dramatically in recent years as nations such as China have begun to use them more consistently. [12]

UNSC sanctions continue to be a weapon for the US to execute and enforce its North Korea policy. In this environment, even if sanctions were maintained by increasing their intensity, North Korea's nuclear operations could not be deterred. Additionally, China has prioritized the Korean Peninsula's stability in general while voting on UNSC sanctions measures against North Korea. [13] China's objective on the Korean Peninsula is to maintain the political status quo and to promote denuclearization. While the American military presence on the peninsula is cause for concern, China's strategic plans for the Korean Peninsula, and thus the status quo and denuclearization policy, are affected by the uncertainties in Sino-American relations, the conflicts between China and Japan, and the Taiwan issue. [14]

China did not support UN sanctions that might hasten North Korea's economic collapse and destabilize the country in this scenario. Additionally, the US has reacted to the issues created by North Korean nuclear weapons in a number of ways, including military cooperation with regional allies, non-proliferation procedures such as broad sanctions and export bans, and economic penalties. [15] Along with these approaches, the US has attempted two significant diplomatic initiatives to persuade North Korea to relinquish its nuclear weapons program in exchange for assistance. These two monumental diplomatic attempts, the Agreed Framework and Six-Party Talks, detail the aid promised in exchange for North Korea's nuclear disarmament. [16]

When the United States' approach toward North Korea is seen through this lens, a nuclear balance exists between them as nuclear weapons states and nuclear deterrence. However, the fact that both sides possess nuclear weapons does not eliminate the likelihood of smaller clashes or conventional wars. States, on the other hand, will attempt to avert nuclear war by considering how these situations may deteriorate. [17]

From another vantage point, while the US sought to contain North Korea's nuclear activities for years and made efforts to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons, the US military presence in South Korea and Japan, as well as the US

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military presence in these two states, actually contributed to North Korea's development of nuclear weapons. Again, North Korea's nuclear strategy is the primary cause for its need on it. North Korea's nuclear weapons also serve to justify the US presence in Northeast Asia, since South Korea and Japan are safeguarded by the US nuclear security pledge. [18]

2. Consistency and Switches in Us-North Korea Policy

2.1. The United States' Policy Toward North Korea in the 1990s

In the broadest sense of the United States' strategy toward North Korea; articulated in terms of military containment, diplomatic isolation, and economic sanctions. However, as South Korea and Communist nations' political climates shifted in the 1990s, the US strategy toward North Korea envisioned pursuing global agreements to limit nuclear operations. Additionally, the US sought diplomatic reconciliation with North Korea while retaining its security commitments to South Korea and Japan. [19] The broad agreement achieved during the Clinton administration came dangerously close to coming to an end with George W. Bush's election victory in 2000. Rather of continuing Clinton's North Korea strategy, Bush amended it altogether in 2001. [19]

Fundamentally, multilateral agreements have been reached in light of North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons, the US's false predictions about North Korea, the ineffectiveness of its allies South Korea and Japan, and China and Russia's failure to shoulder necessary responsibilities for enforcing UN sanctions. US strategy throughout the Bush and Obama administrations was unable to accomplish the aim of denuclearizing North Korea. [20]

In the 1990s, the United States maintained a stable North Korea policy; moreover, the US strategy toward North Korea was essentially conciliatory in nature in order to maintain monitoring of North Korea's nuclear programs. As an illustration of this circumstance, in 1991, the United States announced its withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea, a decision that indicated an attempt to encourage North Korea to reorganize its worldwide nuclear posture and to accept international oversight over its nuclear territories. [21]

Apart from that, the US and South Korea announced the cancellation of their annual joint military drills, which drew a rebuke from North Korea. Although North Korea joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985, it posed challenges for the International Atomic Energy Agency in inspecting nuclear installations until 1992. Indeed, once the IAEA stated that North Korea may not conduct nuclear operations only for peaceful reasons, the North Korean regime dismissed these accusations and refused to allow inspections of reportedly suspicious installations. North Korea then declared its withdrawal from the NPT in 1993. [22]

When formal conversations came to a halt after this declaration, the US strategy toward North Korea anticipated a second approach based on multilateral negotiations. North Korea's plan to withdraw from the NPT was deferred in this context as a

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consequence of former US President Jimmy Carter's involvement and discussions with North Korean officials inside the UN in Geneva in June 1993. [23]

The Agreed Framework was signed in Geneva in 1994, with the involvement of the US, South Korea, and the IAEA, as a result of discussions between US and North Korean officials. As a consequence of the deal, the US has assured North Korea that in exchange for deactivating its nuclear reactors, it would satisfy South Korea's energy requirements mostly via water reactors and will provide fuel until the water reactors come online. [24]

Furthermore, normalization efforts may be seen in the US approach toward North Korea. In the context of normalizing relations with North Korea, and in support of the USA's policy of progressing in accordance with multinational negotiations, the US, Japan, and South Korea established the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization in 1995 to implement the Agreed Framework and supervise the financing and construction of two light-water reactors. [20]

In 1999, as part of the moves toward diplomatic normalization, North Korea decided to cease long-range missile testing after negotiations with the US, prompting the US to ease economic sanctions for the first time since the 1950s. [25]

In summary, throughout the 1990s, ties between the United States and North Korea progressed in the direction of the United States developing its overall North Korean strategy via the Agreed Framework. Additionally, when Bill Clinton was President of the United States, he attempted to rein in North Korea's nuclear program via multilateral accords. In contrast to the discussions with China and Russia during the 2000s Six-Party Talks, the USA pushed its strategy in South Korea and Japan throughout the 1990s. [23]

Additionally, during the time when the United Nations had not yet put sanctions on North Korea, the US did not abandon its diplomatic normalization measures, despite the economic penalties it imposed unilaterally. Given that the USA's North Korea strategy in the 1990s was predicated on halting North Korea's nuclear operations and entirely dissuading it, it is impossible to state that this policy was effective, despite the fact that certain activities were temporarily stopped. [26]

2.2. The United States' Policy Toward North Korea in the 2000s

The US policy toward North Korea in the 2000s, coinciding with the Bush administration; The postponement of the discussions adopted a harder tone, expressing reservations about North Korea's compliance with the Agreed Framework's responsibilities. In this regard, Bush singled out North Korea in 2002 as one of the three nations he defined as the axis of evil, accusing it of developing weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorism. [27]

Following this, the US's strategy toward North Korea, secondly, came to an end with the suspension of petroleum supplies mandated under the Agreed Framework, which was implemented during President Clinton's administration. Subsequently, when ties between North Korea and the United States deteriorated under the George W. Bush administration, the North Korean regime resumed the missile testing it had suspended. [28]

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At the end of 2002, the North Korean government issued a statement demanding the departure of IAEA monitors from its Yongbyon nuclear facility. As international pressure mounted day by day, North Korea declared its withdrawal from the NPT on January 10, 2003. Apart from the economic sanctions implemented in the 1990s, the UN Security Council sanctions became effective as a third strategy within the framework of US policy. [29]

North Korea's 2003 withdrawal from the NPT, missile testing and first nuclear test in 2006 caused the United Nations Security Council to convene, and resolutions criticizing North Korea's conduct and applying sanctions were solidly accepted. The UN Security Council strengthened sanctions on a regular basis. Despite the escalation of sanctions, which became a component of the US strategy toward North Korea, multilateral accords were included, as they were in the 1990s, owing to North Korea's refusal to abandon nuclear operations. [30]

In this context, North Korea's departure from the NPT in 2003 served as a tipping point, initiating the process leading to the Six-Party Talks, which, unlike the 1990s negotiations, included Russia. The talks' first session was hosted by China. [31]

North Korea started to use the phrase nuclear deterrence during the close of the Bush administration, in January 2008. In general, 2008 has been a pivotal year for the Six-Party Negotiation process, especially in the context of US-North Korean connexions; nonetheless, none of the governments participating in the Six-Party Talks have tried reconciliation. [31] In this context, the discussions ceased with North Korea's second nuclear test in 2009, along with a shift in North Korea's stance of disrupting rather than upholding the status quo, and the 2008 impasse the Six-Party Talks.

2.3. The US Policy Under Obama

In response to North Korea's persistence and provocations about its nuclear program, the US policy toward North Korea under President Barack Obama's administration in 2009 initially conceived the "strategic patience" approach. The critical aspect of this strategy is that it impacts US policy by requiring North Korea to provide solid proof of its commitment to disarmament before engaging in dialogue. [32]

North Korea, on the other hand, announced its withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks, citing a UN Security Council statement criticizing the missile test it conducted on April 5, 2009. North Korea no longer saw nuclear deterrence just as a method of guaranteeing national security and regime continuity, but also as a way of altering the peninsula's military balance and subjugating South Korea. [33]

President Obama's approach, dubbed strategic patience, was focused on the maintenance of economic sanctions while maintaining diplomatic and political pressure on North Korea, with the ultimate goal of regime change from inside. This policy was formed by the fear that the US's direct involvement plan would result in a military clash with North Korea, and perhaps a nuclear war. [34]

By avoiding a direct response to North Korea's provocations and mobilizing the international community, it intended to influence the regime's posture through

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economic sanctions and political pressure. While some questioned the effectiveness of this tactic, the majority of analysts agreed that both the carrot and stick strategies previously used against North Korea failed. [35] Additionally, Obama administration officials ranked North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear programs as the most serious possible crisis area and national security danger, while delegating responsibility to the Trump administration.

2.4. The US Policy Under Trump

As of Trump's administration in 2017, the United States' policy toward North Korea has advanced along deterrence lines within the context of hostile relations, owing largely to the harsh language and allegations of heads of state. [36]

In this context, after North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missile test in 2017, the US Defence Intelligence Agency said that North Korea built nuclear warheads small enough to put inside an intercontinental ballistic missile. [37] In US policy, a new North Korean strategy labelled "strategic accountability" has been implemented, focusing on "maximum pressure and engagement" to achieve North Korea's disarmament. North Korea's nuclear weapons program was deemed an "urgent national security concern" and a "top foreign policy priority" under this strategy. [38] Additionally, it has been said that the US policy toward North Korea's ultimate aim was complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization and the elimination of the regime's ballistic missile program.

With a policy of strategic accountability, it seeks to engage actively with China in order to increase pressure on North Korea via unilateral and multilateral economic sanctions, to put enough pressure on North Korea to change its nuclear stance, to strengthen the US defense against provocations in close cooperation with South Korea and Japan, and to establish conditional dialogues with the North Korean regime. [39]

Under Trump's strategy, the US intended to exert maximum pressure on North Korea through economic sanctions in order to coerce it into ceasing provocations and returning to dialogue within the framework of a strategic accountability policy. North Korea's non-cooperation and ongoing provocations are cited as the cause for the emphasis on maximum pressure via enhanced unilateral and international sanctions as part of the carrot and stick diplomacy deployed to hostile regimes. [40]

In this context, and as a tool of the US policy's fourth maximum pressure policy, multilateral sanctions against North Korea, particularly in relation to the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile tests conducted by North Korea in 2017, have been hardened and implemented through UN Security Council resolutions.

Additionally, Trump added North Korea to the list of nations that support terrorism in an effort to increase pressure on the North. North Korea's administration has been subjected to a number of financial and other restrictive measures in this regard, including a restriction on weapons exports and sales, a ban on economic assistance, and a freeze on loans from foreign financial institutions. [41] Therefore, under the Trump administration's North Korea policy, moves were made to abandon the repressive and international sanctions-based containment strategy in favour of bilateral negotiations with North Korea. In this backdrop, after months of North Korea's missile testing and fears that the Trump administration will launch a military

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attack in 2017, North Korea and South Korea have shifted their focus to establishing diplomatic relations in 2018. As a result, a watershed moment in the US-North Korean relationship has happened, altering the course of events. [42]

The discussion formed between North Korea and South Korea resulted in a diplomatic thaw in ties between the United States and North Korea, and Trump declared that he would meet with Kim Jong Un in response to Kim's request. This scenario is significantly different from prior conversations since, for the first time in the history of the United States and North Korea, Kim Jong Un and Trump have been granted direct interaction at the presidential level. [43]

The Singapore Declaration was signed on 12 June 2018, after Donald Trump's meeting with Kim Jong Un in Singapore. As a consequence of the statement, which calls for the eradication of North Korea's nuclear weapons and the establishment of lasting peace, no specifics regarding how these actions would be implemented are provided.

At the Singapore Summit, the United States and North Korea pledged to restarting ties in accordance with the two nations' peoples' wish for peace and prosperity, and it was announced that liaison offices might be created in each other's countries to facilitate this process. The US and North Korea both pledged to contribute to efforts to establish a durable and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. [44]

As a consequence, the North Korean regime warned at the Singapore Summit that it would not abandon nuclear weapons as long as threats against it persisted. Additionally, North Korea has made requests for sanctions relief in order to avert the normalization of its ties with the international community as a consequence of the sanctions placed on it. [8]

However, the US administration has asked that substantial actions toward disarmament be done prior to the lifting of these restrictions. Due to the failure of both parties to take significant actions after the Singapore Summit, a second conversation process began with the Hanoi Summit.

According to reports, the US agreed to partly relax sanctions and proclaim the end of the Korean War in exchange for the halting of activity at North Korea's nuclear facilities during the Hanoi Summit held in Hanoi, Vietnam on February in 2019. [45]

These moves included calls for sanctions easing and a declaration of peace. The US did not welcome North Korean demands, believing they would erode the US's leverage over North Korea, and there was no meaningful disarmament effort. Following two meetings between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, neither side has made significant moves toward a Korean peace regime devoid of nuclear weapons.

South Korea and the United States, in particular, placed sanctions and pressure on North Korea until 2018; nevertheless, these measures did not have the desired impact of modifying North Korea's nuclear posture. North Korea's regime, on the other hand, expedited the nuclear activity process and reacted with nuclear and missile tests as sanctions and pressure increased. Indeed, North Korea's negotiation position seems to be the product of the North Korean administration's engagement program, rather than global sanctions and pressure.

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Conclusion

The US's efforts to isolate North Korea, try to get results by putting pressure on China, and pass international sanctions through the UNSC can be considered a success for the Trump administration. However, in an environment where Pyongyang absolutely refuses to open its nuclear program to negotiation, it seems difficult for a direct negotiation ground to emerge in the short term.

Although the Trump administration has declared that the strategic patience policy is over, it should be admitted that the means to keep North Korea under control in line with the strategic accountability policy are limited.

Pyongyang will continue to challenge international sanctions if China does not radically change its policy on North Korea. Kim Jong Un needs this both to achieve political consolidation and unity at home and to make concessions from the international community.

China, on the other hand, does not want a new conflict on the Korean Peninsula and stands out as a status quo power that tries to limit the US military presence as much as possible. It is also almost impossible for China to find common ground with the USA and completely cross North Korea. While South Korea wants to benefit from the security umbrella of the USA, considering the people and material losses it will lose in a possible war, it does not prefer the American military intervention.

While giving assurances to its allies such as South Korea and Japan, it has also set a very difficult target of denuclearization of North Korea. Under these circumstances, it can be said that the North Korea issue will continue as a long-term crisis that occasionally raises tensions.

Following Trump's tough language and the firm but diplomatic remarks made by senior administration officials, North Korea seems to have taken a step back for the time being, refraining from reiterating its threats against Guam. It is thought that the two parties' preconditions in the conversations conducted using the diplomatic route known as the "New York channel" preclude an opening at this point.

It is clear that Pyongyang does not accept the American precondition for the release of American nationals detained in North Korea, and Washington, on the other hand, does not accept China's demand for a freeze on joint military exercises with South Korea.

The Trump administration's attempts to isolate North Korea, exert pressure on China, and enact international sanctions via the UNSC may be regarded a success. However, given Pyongyang's utter refusal to negotiate on its nuclear program, it is unlikely that a direct negotiating ground would develop in the near future.

While the Trump administration has proclaimed that the strategic patience policy is finished, it must be acknowledged that the measures available to contain North Korea in accordance with the strategic accountability policy are limited.

Pyongyang will continue to defy UN sanctions unless China fundamentally alters its approach toward North Korea. Kim Jong Un needs this both for domestic political cohesion and unity and for foreign concessions.

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China, on the other hand, is opposed to a new confrontation on the Korean Peninsula and is a staunch supporter of the status quo, attempting to keep the US military presence to a minimum. Additionally, it is very hard for China to establish common cause with the United States and entirely bypass North Korea. While South Korea wishes to benefit from the United States' security umbrella, it does not desire American military action, given the human and material costs of a hypothetical conflict.

While it has provided guarantees to allies such as South Korea and Japan, it has also set a very tough goal of North Korean disarmament. Under these conditions, it is reasonable to conclude that the North Korea situation will remain as a long-term crisis with periodic flare-ups.

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