

Université de Montréal

The DPRK in China's Post-Cold War Foreign Policy
A Neoclassical Realist Analysis

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Études internationales

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Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales
en vue de l'obtention du grade de maîtrise
en études internationales

Avril 2012

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Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales

Ce mémoire intitulé :

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A Neoclassical Realist Analysis

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Résumé

Avec l'échec des négociations entre les États-Unis et la Corée du Nord, menées depuis le début des années 1990, sur la question du nucléaire, le problème est devenu graduellement l'affaire des pays voisins, tous soucieux de l'avenir de la région du sud-est asiatique. Présentée comme le seul allié de la Corée du Nord, la Chine a été invitée à participer à des négociations à trois, à quatre (1997-1998), et à six (2003-2007), dans l'espoir de faire entendre raison au régime isolé, mais jusqu'à maintenant, aucune des tentatives n'est parvenue à satisfaire chacun des membres à la table. Alors que la tension monte et que la politique américaine se fait de moins en moins flexible, la Chine quant à elle, continue d'encourager le retour des négociations à six (Six-Party Talks) dans l'optique de dénucléariser la péninsule coréenne, tout en travaillant à maintenir ses liens avec la Corée du Nord. Le fil conducteur de cette présente recherche est d'abord d'essayer de comprendre pourquoi la Chine continue de soutenir la Corée du Nord, fournissant donc alimentaires et financiers.

L'idée est donc d'analyser, selon les principes du réalisme néoclassique, la politique étrangère de la Chine. L'hypothèse principale de cette théorie renvoie à l'idée que la distribution du pouvoir dans le système international influence la politique étrangère des États, mais que des variables au niveau de l'état et/ou de l'individu interviennent dans la formulation et l'application de celle-ci. Il est proposé ici que le lien entre l'unipolarité du système international et la politique nord-coréenne de la Chine, est façonné par des variables intermédiaires telles que : a) la perception des leaders de la distribution du pouvoir et de leur place dans le système international; b) l'idéologie du régime politique, et; c) le type d'unité responsable de la prise de décision en politique étrangère. L'analyse de chacune des variables permettra de faire la lumière sur les intérêts politiques et économiques de la Chine dans l'entretien de cette relation avec la Corée du Nord.

Mots clés: Politique étrangère, réalisme néoclassique, Chine, Corée du Nord, États-Unis, pouvoir, arme nucléaire, idéologie, prise de décision.

Abstract

Since the bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula failed to produce any effective outcome in the 1990s, China was brought to the table and agreed to play its part as a mediator in the Four Party Talks (1997-1998) between both Koreas and the United States, as well as in the Six-Party Talks (2003-2007), with the addition of Russia and Japan as negotiators. While the American policies toward the DPRK have taken a tough and inflexible turn with former President George W. Bush declaring, at the end of January 2002, that North Korea, Iran, and Iraq "constitute an axis of evil arming to threaten the peace of the world", China's DPRK policy, however, reflects long-lasting terms of friendship and collaboration between the two countries. With concerns mounting over the aggressive policies of the North Korean regime and its determination to keep its nuclear arsenal, the question is: why does China insist on preserving its good ties with its neighbour, even when those policies are said to hinder its political and economical interests?

To address this question, the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism will be tested within a three-level – systemic, state, and individual level – analysis, with consideration of the propositions that the relative distribution of power shapes China's North Korea policy, and intervening variables at the state and individual levels are filtering the systemic pressures and thus, shaping decisions related to North Korea. These variables include: a) leadership's perception of power; b) regime type and ideology, and; c) type of foreign policy decision-making unit. This in-depth analysis will then provide grounds in defining China's core interests in backing up the secluded regime.

Key words: Foreign policy, neoclassical realism, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), United States, distribution of power, nuclear weapons, ideology, decision-making

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family for their support and encouragements which followed me through all these years of devotion to my studies, and reached me even when I was far away from home. I'm also indebted to Professor Zhiming Chen for sharing with me his knowledge of theoretical approaches to international relations studies, and Professor Paik Wooyeal, who taught at Yonsei's GSIS, South Korea, for enlightening the students with a better understanding of research methodology. My deepest gratitude goes to my thesis advisor, Professor David Ownby, who believed in my curiosity, learning, and writing communication potential. His expertise never stopped to motivate me and his guidance significantly contributed to the process of this thesis. Without them, this achievement would have not been possible.

On a final note, I would like to apologize to my friends for the past three years or so of neglect, since my time was dedicated to my studies and research.

April 2012
Christine Huard

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Since the bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula failed to produce any effective outcome in the 1990s, China was brought to the table and agreed to play its part as a mediator in the Four Party Talks (1997-1998) between both Koreas and the United States, as well as in the Six-Party Talks (2003-2007), with the addition of Russia and Japan as negotiators. While the American policies toward the DPRK took a tough and inflexible turn with former President George W. Bush declaring, at the end of January 2002, that North Korea, Iran, and Iraq "constitute an axis of evil arming to threaten the peace of the world¹", China's DPRK policy, however, reflects long-lasting terms of friendship and collaboration between the two countries.

It has been recognized that the need of a stable and secure environment to pursue its legitimizing goal of economic development, and China's new responsibility, as a party to international regimes and treaties, combined to persuade Beijing to participate in the denuclearization talks, along with its desire to ease tensions and avoid any unilateral show of force by the United States against North Korea. But like any other party to the talks, China's political will to negotiate on "common goals" is mixed with considerations of national interests. While it is argued that a nuclear DPRK is undermining the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s global and domestic interests, official statements have stressed instead the importance of safeguarding peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

¹ "President Delivers State of Union Address". *January 2002. News and Policies. The White House – President George W. Bush.* <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> [online] (accessed April 2011)

Consequently, as concerns about the DPRK's policy have mounted since the missile test-fire of 1993 and more recently, with the shelling of South Korea's *Yeonpyeong* Island in November 2010², the PRC insisted on limiting sanctions, and continued to provide economic, food, and energy aid to its ally. In short, there was relatively no disruption of ties with Kim Jong-il's regime at the time and nothing points to a change in China's stance with the new DPRK leadership under Kim Jong-un. This leaves us with one particular question: What are the interests of the PRC in keeping its good relationship with the DPRK? Or rather, why does China keep backing the DPRK?

To make sense of these questions in terms of international relations studies, they had to be transposed within the subfield of foreign policy studies. However, while most foreign policy specialists tend to test general assumptions through cross-national comparisons, the purpose here is to identify particular properties of a single case, China, and to detect determinants of its foreign policy decisions. To fulfill this purpose, hypotheses had to be extracted from a theoretical approach that could not only clarify the rationale behind China's stance toward North Korea, but could also link specific factors to the leadership's decisions. Since it seeks to explain

² The sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan*, which occurred in March 2010, will not be discussed here, since there is still doubt about North Korea's involvement in the incident. The People's Republic of China and Russia have rejected the official report of the Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group, composed of South Korean and foreign officials, which concluded that the sinking was caused by a torpedo sent by North Korea. For a copy of the official report see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/20_05_10jigreport.pdf
For more information on Russia's response see: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article450117.ece>;
<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/08/05/26/0301000000AEN20100805000200315F.html>.
For details on the PRC's statement see: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2010-06/02/content_9919715.htm; http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-06/10/content_9962812.htm.

the foreign policy of particular states³ by combining systemic and within-state variables, I was advised to look further into neoclassical realism.

Neoclassical Realism, Epistemology, and Methodology

On the whole, neoclassical realists recognize that the international system structures and restricts the policy choices of states⁴ because of constraints related to power distribution between them, but they stress that this link is indirect and complex, and can only shape their intentions. Systemic pressures, such as anarchy and polarity, need to be translated through elements at the domestic level in order to further specify state foreign policy behaviours⁵. These elements are identified as intervening variables, which consist of characteristics within states, such as, their political system, strategic culture, national identity, or even, personal characteristics of leaders⁶. In other words, international system constraints and foreign policy are understood respectively as the independent and dependent variable in a cause-and-effect bond, while domestic factors represent variables that can alter this direct relation.

³ Liu Feng and Zhang Ruizhuang. 2006. «The Typologies of Realism». *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*: 1 (1), p.121.

⁴ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell and Norrin M. Ripsman. 2009. «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy». In Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, ed. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.18.

⁵ Gideon Rose. 1998. «Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy». *World Politics*: 51 (1), p.146.

⁶ Anders Wivel. 2005. «Explaining Why State X Made a Certain Move Last Tuesday: the Promise and Limitations of Realist Foreign Policy Analysis». *Journal of International Relations and Development*: 8 (4), p.357.

Table 1 – Neoclassical Realism and its Related Causal Logic

	Independent Variable	Intervening Variables	Dependent Variable
	Relative power distribution (capabilities)	Domestic characteristics	Foreign policy

Source: Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman (2009), p.20.

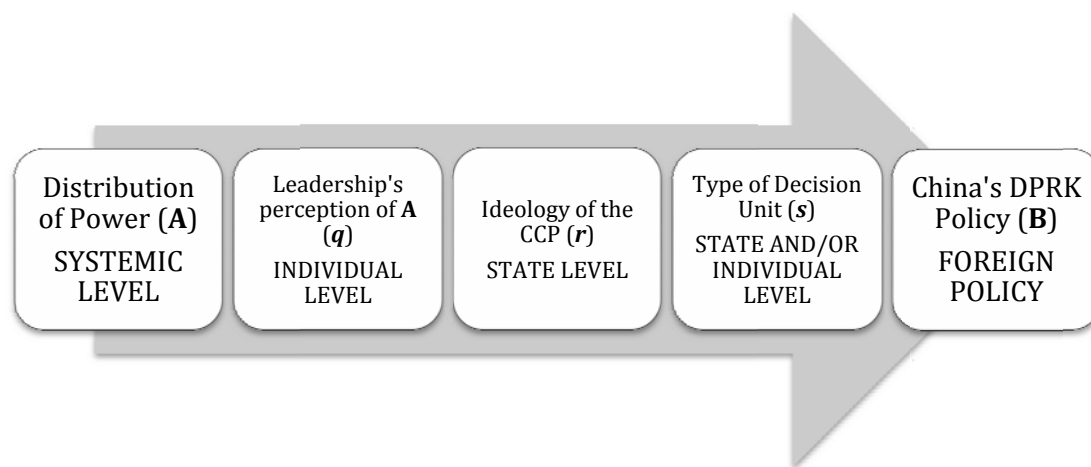
To avoid misunderstandings, an intervening variable is defined as a phenomenon or situation caused by the independent variable and producing the dependent variable. For example, in the proposition that “sunshine causes photosynthesis, causing grass to grow”, photosynthesis is the intervening variable⁷. If we translate this causal logic into a basic equation, one similar to that proposed by Stephen Van Evera in his *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, we would have : $A \rightarrow q \rightarrow r \rightarrow B$; A, being the independent variable, B, the dependent variable, and q and r the intervening variables. To test the theory properly requires seeking explanations related to all three steps of the causal chain, that is, the prime hypothesis ($A \rightarrow B$), the theory’s explanatory hypotheses ($A \rightarrow q, q \rightarrow r, r \rightarrow B$), and the hybrid combinations ($A \rightarrow r, q \rightarrow B$)⁸. In the particular case of neoclassical realism, it rejects the probability of single-factor explanations and accepts that the same intervening variable may, in different circumstances, have opposite effects. This flexibility reflects that, as a theoretical framework, its modest goal is to provide the tools for a conceptual analysis connecting variables together and proposing a range of variables, rather than proposing a collection of laws combined

⁷ Stephen Van Evera. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.35.

with statements explaining them⁹. Therefore, the hypotheses inspired by the theory are not unique, but will change from case to case.

Figure 1 – Causal Chain Suggested for China's DPRK Policy-Making



It is important to mention that the integration of an analysis at the individual level is not determinant in neoclassical realism, but lies more within the field of constructivist studies, which seek to understand how ideas such as, goals, threats, fear, and identities, define international structure, and how this structure defines the interests and identities of states¹⁰. Each neoclassical realist analyst regards the influence of leaders and advisors in his own way, sometimes overlooking it, sometimes briefly mentioning it. But like other realist or pluralist scholars, I argue that there is no decision making without individuals, each of them filtering issues through their perceptions and identity. In other words, to understand state behaviour and policies, we have to descend to the level of a state's specific interests, which are, from the neoclassical realist perspective, constructed

⁹ Thomas Juneau. Dublin, Ireland. European Consortium on Political Research, Graduate Student Conference. August/September 2010. *Neoclassical Realist Strategic Analysis : A Statement*, <http://www.ecprnet.eu/databases/conferences/papers/308.pdf> (page accessed Oct. 2011), p.7.

¹⁰ Michael Barnett. 2008. «Social Constructivism». In John Baylis, Steve Smith, *et al.*, ed. *The Globalization of World Politics - An Introduction to International Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.162.

by government leaders and officials, as well as structured by the international system. Further details about the central concepts behind the neoclassical realism theory and their implications regarding the selected hypotheses will be discussed in chapter two, alongside questions related to the method of inquiry, the limits of this study and criticisms of the selected theory.

This analysis will be based on observation and deduction to test three hypotheses derived from the neoclassical realist framework. It is argued here that China's policy toward the DPRK is influenced by:

- the leadership's perception of relative power distribution (hypothesis 1)
- the one-party ideology (hypothesis 2)
- the type of foreign policy decision-making unit (hypothesis 3)

To test the validity of each hypothesis, it was out of the question to carry out a quantitative analysis, such as game theory, which is useful for generalization of a large number of case studies. This is because, on the one hand, the focus of this study is to find whether or not the assumptions extracted from the neoclassical realist theory can be applied to one specific case study, China, rather than to add mathematical evidence and value to the theory by comparing as many states as possible. On the other hand, methods such as game theory all rely on the assumption that decisions or behaviours of either individuals or organizations are always rational, i.e. that they are based on predefined interests and motives. However, neoclassical realists reject this supposition and argue that states do not necessarily act in the same manner when they encounter the same constraints.

In this sense, a qualitative analysis based on observations and deductions was conducted to test the theory, and the information gathered was divided in two sections. The first part of the study provides theoretical clarifications for the three

intervening variables. Emphasis is put on explaining why they are presented here as having an influence on the making of foreign policy, and a method is proposed to test each hypothesis. As for the second part, it consists of applying the methods to China's official policy responses to issues involving North Korea over the years.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: Neoclassical Realist Theory and the Study of Chinese Foreign Policy

Most scholars analyzing matters related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s nuclear program or to the Six-Party Talks have done so from the perspective of American interests (Cumings 2004; Snyder 1999; Cha 2003¹¹), with the purpose of discussing and elaborating on policy propositions in dealing with the regime. Since their work was left considerably biased by the depiction of a rogue, erratic, and "evil" North Korea, the motivations behind this paper was to keep away from this mindset and rather try to get a more relevant understanding of the DPRK's system itself and its nuclear program, and highlight its relation with China instead of the United States. But due to the opacity of the North Korean regime and the lack of translated material related to foreign relations, white papers, government policies, bureaucracy, and so on, it was more convenient to reverse the subject, and focus instead on China's policy toward the DPRK. Such an analysis had to take into account China's stance regarding nuclear disarmament of the Korean Peninsula, and the leadership's reactions and decisions following incidents related to North Korea's military program.

More specifically, this project had to fit with criteria of positivism which structure most of international relations studies, and therefore, the analysis had to rely on a certain methodological framework, a theory, that not only sought explanations for foreign policy of one particular state, but also considered the

¹¹ See: Bruce Cumings. 2003. *North Korea: Another Country*. New York: New Press; Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang. 2003. *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*. New York: Columbia University Press; and Scott Snyder. 1999. *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

importance of domestic determinants in shaping such crucial decisions. Since it is agreed among most Chinese specialists that China's foreign policy derives from both external and internal factors, the theory selected had to acknowledge this prediction.

International Relations, Foreign Policy, and Realism

At first reluctant to use realism as a frame for this study, because of its "outdated" notions dating back to the Cold War period, I came to realize that several trends had emerged from the general realist theory of international relations. There is, for example, Hans J. Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers, and others' classical realism, Kenneth N. Waltz and Robert Giplin's neorealism, and Gideon Rose, Steven E. Lobell, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Randall Schweller's neoclassical realism¹². While all these theories emerged from realism, they were developed by specialists because of divergent interpretations of concepts, disagreement on certain assumptions, and on the level-of-analysis¹³. In order to justify the choice of neoclassical realism we should address briefly the distinctions between classical realism, neorealism, and neoclassical realism.

¹² Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p.4.

¹³ For a thorough analysis of realist theories see: Alex Macleod. 2010. «Le réalisme néoclassique». In Alex Macleod and Dan O'Meara, ed. *Théories des relations internationales : contestations et résistances*. Montreal: CEPES : Athena Editions, pp.63-130; Stephen Brooks. 1997. «Dueling Realism». *International Organization*: 51 (3), pp.445-477; John A. Vasquez. 1998. *The Power of Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

From Classical to Neoclassical Realism

The book *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*¹⁴ is a great piece of work offering a summary of realism as a broad approach to international relations studies, and as the point of origin for several theories. In general, all realist theories share these core assumptions: 1) international politics refers to a 'perpetual struggle among different states for material power and security in a world of scarce resources and pervasive uncertainty'¹⁵; 2) the absence of a universal sovereign or worldwide government, which is labelled as anarchy, is the permissive cause of international conflict; 3) systemic forces generate incentives for all states to strive for greater competence in protecting themselves¹⁶, i.e. ensuring their sovereignty and survival, and power is a necessary requirement to secure their goals¹⁷.

Classical Realism

Classical realists, such as Thomas Hobbes, Hans J. Morgenthau or Henry Kissinger, considered the individual as the unit of analysis and were concerned primarily with the sources and uses of national power in international politics and the problems that leaders encounter in conducting foreign policy¹⁸. *The Prince*, by Niccolò Machiavelli, for example, was designed as a handbook on politics for Italian princes, and basically conveyed that a statesman's wisdom and decisions will lead to either the state's success or demise. In fact, classical realists write extensively about the state and national power, but little is said about the constraints of the

¹⁴ Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, ed. 2009. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p.4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.16.

¹⁸ For a better understanding for classical realism see: Niccolò Machiavelli. 1952. *The Prince* (or reprints with discussions from editors and political theorists); Hans J. Morgenthau. 1973. *Politics among nations*; Michael Joseph Smith. 1986. *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*; and Jack Donnelly. 2000. *Realism and International Relations*.

international system¹⁹. What stimulated other realists to improve the theory was two-fold. Failure to provide a precise definition of “power” or “balance of power” on the one hand, and non-adherence to standards of social and political science methodology, on the other²⁰. Realist scholars such as Morton Kaplan (1957) and Stanley Hoffman (1959, 1965), abandoned the analysis of human nature to explain conflict and cooperation, and instead focused their attention on the anarchic nature of the international system²¹. Their work progressed into what would be called neorealism or structural realism.

Neorealism

Because it focuses on the international system and its structural restrictions on the behaviour of states, neorealism is a system-centric theory²². Neorealists principally address questions related to international politics, such as: Why do wars occur? Why do states tend to balance against powerful states? And they try to respond in a scientific manner, in line with the positivist methodology²³, which consists of theorizing a general phenomena or situation with causal laws and hypotheses composed of dependent and independent variables. Kenneth Waltz can be considered one of the major contributors to this realist subdivision, with his work on the three images –the man, the state, and the system – to explain the causes of war, and the theory of balance of power. In Waltz’s balance of power theory, states are unitary actors that seek, at a minimum, to preserve themselves

¹⁹ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p. 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.16.

²¹ Robert O. Keohane. 1986. *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.13.

²² Liu Feng and Zhang Ruizhuang, «The Typologies of Realism», p.112.

²³ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p.17.

and, at a maximum, to dominate others, because of the “self-help” international system which doesn’t provide a superior government to regulate their actions²⁴.

Although other neorealists do not necessarily adhere to Waltz’s conceptualization of the balancing process, none contest the proposition that, all states are rational, unitary actors²⁵. Rationality is to realists, the idea that states act in conformity to their national interests and with the purpose of maximizing their benefits and minimizing their losses. And the assumption that states are unitary actors implies that, all states despite variations essentially fulfill the same functions and seek more or less the same ends. Whatever their form, ideology, peacefulness, and so on, states are alike and can be treated as having the same attributes²⁶. In other words, none of the structural realist perspectives (offensive realism, utility theory, etc.) consider that states may differ in their ability to control the policy agenda, select policy options, or mobilize resources to respond to systemic incentives²⁷.

Eventually, criticism was brought upon the fact that, while neorealists frequently commented on foreign policy, they could not explain why states behave differently when subject to the same structural pressure. Recognizing the limitations of the system-centric theory, other realist scholars have sought to analyze not the outcomes related to the international system environment, but the foreign policy behaviour of states. This effort developed into a recent branch of political realism, neoclassical realism.

²⁴ James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations : A Comprehensive Survey*. 5th ed. New York, Montreal: Longman, p.44.

²⁵ Wivel, «Explaining Why State X...», p.363.

²⁶ Terry Terriff. 1999. *Security Studies Today*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, p.35.

²⁷ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p.19.

Neoclassical Realism

As a theory of foreign policy, neoclassical realism seeks explanations regarding the variation in foreign policy behaviour of a particular state over time, or cross-national variations when states are facing similar external outcomes²⁸, unlike neorealists who emphasize the international structure to explain general international outcomes. Proponents of neoclassical realism recognize the importance of key concepts of realism, but interpret them differently. They regard states as the central actors in global politics, but their assessment is that of a state organized under an executive composed by government elite, ministers, and officials charged with making foreign security policy, that has access to privileged information from the state's politico-military apparatus, and is best equipped to perceive systemic pressures and sketch national interests²⁹. They picture the international system as a distribution of power capabilities between states, but they argue that the link between power and policy is indirect, and must be translated through domestic characteristics³⁰ that may intervene in the specification of policy options³¹. Therefore, neoclassical realists stress the need to examine the contexts in which foreign policies are formulated and implemented³², which also implies that foreign policy is understood as a decision making process.

The most important domestic factor highlighted by neoclassical realists is the leadership's perception of power distribution. From their point of view, the executive's capacity to abide by its preferences and objectives *vis-à-vis* other states is believed to stem largely from its evaluation and perception of the power

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

³⁰ Rose, «Neoclassical Realism...», p.146.

³¹ Macleod, «Le réalisme néoclassique», p.130.

³² Rose, «Neoclassical Realism...», p.146.

distribution³³. Depending on one's perception of its material power, an event might be perceived either as a threat or an opportunity. Other factors have been studied, such as domestic politics, where elite consensus or disagreement about the nature and extent of international threats, persistent international divisions within the leadership, social cohesion and the regime's vulnerability to overthrow, all can inhibit the state's ability to respond to systemic pressures³⁴. The role of the extractive and mobilizational capacities of the leadership itself or of politico-military institutions has also been emphasized.³⁵ As both capacities are not simply functions of a state's bureaucracy or of the composition of a regime's power institutions, but can derive from ideational factors such as ideology and nationalism³⁶, ideological predispositions or socialization experiences may also influence the leadership's preferences as to where and how resources are to be utilized³⁷.

Chinese Foreign Policy and Neoclassical Realism

So far, very few Chinese foreign policy analysts have formally acknowledged the theory of neoclassical realism, and very few neoclassical realists have investigated specifically the case of China, which is why this project bears a fair degree of deduction. Nevertheless, Chinese specialists have more than once indicated that a fair assessment of the state's foreign policy should regard both

³³ Macleod, «Le réalisme néoclassique», p.130.

³⁴ See: Randall L. Schweller. 2006. *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University.

³⁵ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p.4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.38.

³⁷ Maurice A. East. 1978. «National Attributes and Foreign Policy». In Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore and Charles F. Hermann, ed. *Why Nations Act : Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, p.105.

external and domestic determinants³⁸. For example, in a review of various approaches to the study of Chinese foreign relations, Samuel S. Kim put forward that:

With the growing interaction between internal and external functions and an increasing associated interaction between security and economic policies, the factors that influence Chinese foreign policy behaviour no longer fall neatly into the dichotomous categories of domestic/societal and external/systemic variables. Both sets of variables involve structural as well as cognitive elements, and they interact during the decision-making process. [...] [A]n increasingly complex and interdependent world domestic and foreign policies and objectives are interwoven in terms of cause and effect, constituting mutually essential parts of any theoretical approach³⁹.

Advocates of this domestic/external-linkage approach recognize that the global system, with its various constraints or opportunities, cannot have any significant influence on Chinese foreign policy unless it is perceived by Chinese policy makers through their own decision-making system, but they disagree on which factors matter the most in determining foreign policy⁴⁰.

To be clear, foreign policy, like domestic policy, is understood here as a decision making process, not simply an act of choice. Such an approach on foreign policy is not new and many scholars of various backgrounds developed their own theory from the perspective of decision-making. Some enhanced the rational choice approach (Allison, 1971; Simon, 1976), which bases assumptions on human

³⁸ For example, see: Chen Jian. *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Korean War* (1994); Zhao Quansheng. «Domestic Factors of Chinese Foreign Policy: From Vertical to Horizontal Authoritarianism» (1992), *Interpreting Chinese Policy* (1996); Liu Guoli. ed. *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition* (2004); Boris T. Kulik. «National Security Policy-Making by the CCP: The Role of Domestic Factors» in Satu P. Limaye and Yashuhiro Matsuda. ed. *Domestic Determinants and Security Policy-Making in East Asia* (2000).

³⁹ Samuel S. Kim. 1994. «China and the World in Theory and Practice». In Samuel S. Kim, ed. *China and the World : Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, p.29-30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.30.

motives and behaviours, and deduce logical institutional and policy propositions from those assumptions. From this perspective, decision-making alternatives are selected because they maximize a policy outcome⁴¹ and can be predicted with game tests and mathematical formulas. As it was said earlier, however, this approach is based on the assumption that any state will act similarly when pressured by the same constraints, regardless of different domestic attributes.

Allison (1971) and others (Halperin, 1974; Neustadt, 1960) also aimed their attention at bureaucratic politics, which defines policy process and decisions as the result of a political competition among bureaucratic entities and actors pressured by their organizational roles and capacities⁴². According to this view, policy decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiation, and struggle among the bureaucrats involved. However, with regard to the Chinese context, bureaucratic infighting is usually muted, since the Party's and the government's bureaucracies are untangled with each other, meaning that responsibilities and loyalties are overlapping. Because of his own multiple bureaucratic affiliations, one official would be fighting for the interests of different and even competing bureaucratic units⁴³.

With the recent case of Bo Xilai; ex-member of China's ruling body, the Politburo, who was demoted for reasons still unclear, but converging around his possible attempt to gain a seat in the Politburo Standing Committee at the eve of a political succession, mixed with his alleged praising of the Cultural Revolution, and

⁴¹ Chen Feng. 1995. *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy in Post-Mao China : Ideology and Reform*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p.6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁴³ Michael Ng-Quinn. 2004. «The Analytical Study of Chinese Foreign Policy». In Liu Guoli, ed. *Chinese Foreign Policy in Transition*. New York: Transaction Publishers, p.36-37.

divergent style of rule in Chongqing⁴⁴, it is hard to say if this is a rare account of political factionalism in China or if it usually does not reach public ears. Another inconvenience of this bureaucratic approach is that it has difficulty explaining why policy orientations might change even though the bureaucratic positions of the personnel remained unchanged⁴⁵.

However limited, a decision-making approach offers a view of politics as a problem-solving process, by which individuals, groups, or organizations choose among alternative courses of action (or inaction) designated to solve a particular problem on the international arena⁴⁶. More specifically, when the unit responsible for decision making perceives a situation or event which is deviating from an ideal or expected status, decision problems arise and the process to resolve them begins. According to the kind of pressure they exert, situation-related stimuli for decision may be perceived as opportunities, problems, or crises, suggesting that motivation behind a decision involve shifting perceptions of the environment by the decision-makers due to events or situations that evolve in the “real world”⁴⁷. As Mintz and DeRouen expressed in their guide to understand foreign policy decision making:

The course of world politics is shaped by leaders’ decisions. The uncertainty involved in foreign policy making can pertain, for example, to an opponent’s motives, beliefs, intentions, or calculations. If we can understand how decisions are made, we can better understand and, perhaps more important, predict outcomes in the international arena⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ «The Sacking of Bo Xilai». March 17, 2012. *The Economist*. Online. <http://www.economist.com/node/21550309> (page accessed April 4 2012).

⁴⁵ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.8.

⁴⁶ Zeev Maoz. 1990. *National Choices and International Processes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.38.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁴⁸ Alex Mintz and Karl R. DeRouen. 2010. *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.3.

Zeev Maoz (1990), a professor of political science and Head of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel-Aviv University, made several contributions to the development of this approach while studying matters related to international conflict, decision making, and international bargaining. As he explains it, the process of making a decision entails a dynamic of six phases, before implementing a certain policy:

1) Diagnosis, which consists of identifying the problem and classifying it as an instance for decision; 2) Search, the exploration of policy options and determination of the array of outcomes associated with each of the identified options; 3) Revision, where the data collected is synthesized for estimation of probabilities associated with each outcome, and the likelihood estimates in light of incoming information are updated; 4) Evaluation, to identify goals or values affected by the decision problem and the cost-benefit analysis of options on these goals. This is when decision makers determine preferences for options on the basis of the degree to which each option is seen to mitigate or alleviate those goals; 5) Choice, which consists of selecting an option for response to the problem. This phase rests on certain criteria that define the ways in which preferences are ordered, as well as a degree of commitment to a certain policy option, and; 6) Implementation, when the decision is converted to observable action⁴⁹.

Integrating such a dynamic to the framework of neoclassical realism makes it easier to picture when domestic variables might come into play during the process of policy making. Furthermore, while neoclassical realism provides the canvas of core concepts and propositions to seek explanations for a state's foreign policy, it does not impose the variables to consider, or the methods to be used to investigate a case study. Therefore, to address the following hypotheses: 1) China's DPRK policy is influenced by the leadership's perception of power; 2) China's DPRK

⁴⁹ Maoz, *National Choices...*, p.39-40.

policy is shaped by the one-party ideology, and; 3) China's DPRK policy is affected by the organization of Chinese foreign policy decision-making, a combination of several methods of inquiry is necessary. In the end, this study will serve more as a way to test the neoclassical realist theory and the predictions extracted from it, by proposing a method to observe each intervening variable and applying these to the context of actual policy decisions from China.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Hypothesis 1 – Perceptions of Power and China’s DPRK Policy

Here, what is assumed is that the relative distribution of power perceived by the leadership reflects national attributes, such as the state’s level of economic development, educational level of its population, its level of technology, in comparison to other states, all of which can affect the leaders’ predispositions as to where and how resources are to be utilized in the process of foreign policy decision making⁵⁰. A great number of Chinese studies experts have looked into what is commonly called “China’s rise” and China’s quest for power, from the perspective of neorealism, arguing that the state’s policies are directed at balancing the United States. The purpose here, however, is to highlight how the Chinese leadership perceives their country’s status, and if it has an impact on the formulation and implementation of foreign policies. To investigate hypothesis 1, the method used is inspired by William C. Wohlforth’s work on balance-of-power⁵¹, which consists of collecting evidence on the leadership’s perceptions of: what constitutes power, how is power distributed in the international system, the prestige it translates, and mechanisms of power.

Such evidence can be found in available archival material such as the People’s Republic of China and the Communist Party of China’s Constitutions, White papers, statements made by the PRC’s Ministry of National Defense, communiqués related to the DPRK, as well as in monographs and articles on China’s foreign and security policies and international relations (Chen, 1993; Chung, 2009; Huo, 1992;

⁵⁰ Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore. 1978. «Political Regimes and Foreign Policy». In Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore and Charles F. Hermann, ed. *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, p.105.

⁵¹ William C. Wohlforth. 1993. *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

etc.). Memoirs or testimonies of actors participating in the foreign and security policy decision-making process or with the fostering of relations with the DPRK, for example, can be of particularly great value. Considering my illiteracy in the Chinese language, this study is however limited to documents translated online or on paper.

Hypothesis 2 – Ideology and China’s DPRK Policy

Since capitalist-type economic reforms have been introduced into China’s socialist system, the prioritization of ideology has declined and so has the interest of scholars in studying its role in today’s China. Accordingly, we can find only a handful of recent references exploring the relation between ideology and foreign policy, in China and in general. The majority of documents dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, and so they lack relevance when observing post-Mao and post-Cold War China. With the combination of Schurmann (1968), Chen (1995), and others’ work, we came to share the insight that China’s political system is still an ideological one and that policies are still justified by the Party in ideological terms⁵². To clarify the role of ideology in the Chinese DPRK policy, emphasis will be put on a comparison of the principal values and goals embedded in the Communist party’s values and principles, and the interests behind the leadership’s DPRK policy.

If a significant correlation is observed, then we can assume that for this case, ideology is a factor intervening in the process of foreign policy making. Such a comparison will rely on sources useful to grasp the CCP ideology, such as the Party and the state’s constitutions, speeches and statements made at Party Congresses or scholar contributions (Levine, 1994; Chen, 1995; Kulik, 2000) on the one hand, and official statements related to “crisis” or conflict management on the Korean

⁵² Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.2.

peninsula, articles and books studying China's DPRK policy, on the other (Garrett, 1995; Liu, 2003; Shambaugh, 2003; Shen, 2006, 2009; Zhang, 2006).

Hypothesis 3 – Foreign policy decision unit and China's DPRK Policy

Relying for the most part on the decision units approach developed by Charles and Margaret Hermann and their colleagues⁵³, this third portion of the analysis will focus on the proposition that the type of actors who have the authority to make foreign policy decisions within any governments or ruling parties around the world, whether it is an individual or a set of individuals, can affect the nature of those decisions. The framework was developed to facilitate the work of scholars examining how decisions are made in all types of countries, and by using it here we will try to verify the impact of the decision unit on China's policy toward the DPRK.

In order to do so, we need to be familiar with who is responsible of foreign policy making in China (Dittmer, 2001; Ning, 2001; Cabestan, 2009; Sutter, 2010; etc.), by seeking answers to questions like: Which organs are responsible for foreign policy? Who constitute the staff? Who is in charge? And since the type of decision unit can change depending on the type of issue, it will be necessary to discern if a different decision unit was responsible for decisions related to the DPRK. From then, the framework will be applied to compare the process outcome suggested with the real response.

The study will develop in two parts. In the first, each intervening variables will be defined more thoroughly one by one, and put in the context of Chinese

⁵³ See: C. Hermann, M. Hermann and Hagan, 1987; M. Hermann, 2001, and the special issue of the *International Studies Review Journal*, Vol. 3 (2), Summer 2001, covering all the aspects of this theoretical framework.

foreign policy making. Then, section two will focus on three specific events involving North Korea, beginning with the second nuclear crisis and the initiation of the Six-Party Talks in 2003, the missiles and nuclear tests of 2006, and the shelling of *Yeonpyeong* Island in 2010. Each issue being of a different nature; one touching on the concern of proliferation, the other referring to missile and nuclear weaponry testing, and the last, on a material conflict between the two Koreas, it is believed that it will offer better ground to test the proposed correlations, and question the validity of the theory. For each incident, the implication of perceptions of power, ideology, and foreign policy decision-making unit will be addressed with their respective method of inquiry, parallel to the official response of the Chinese leadership in dealing with the problem. Before accessing the core of this project, let's consider some concerns related to the theory of neoclassical realism.

Critics of Neoclassical Realism and Limits of this Study

Here are some other elements of neoclassical realism theory that have been criticized both, by proponents of the theory and outsiders. First, because neoclassical realists seek to clarify why the foreign policies of particular states have changed over time or why states facing similar external constraints opted for different strategies, they do not concern themselves with explaining general patterns of systemic outcomes. Thus, they cannot explain the systemic consequences of those responses⁵⁴. Second, neoclassical studies seek to extract clarifications from a particular process or outcome (the foreign policy of a state). In this sense, the variables become context-specific⁵⁵, which compromise the possibility of generalization and the predictive power of the theory As Anders Wivel (2005) noted, “relying solely on structural factors leaves us with highly

⁵⁴ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...», p.21.

⁵⁵ Liu Feng and Zhang Ruizhuang, «The Typologies of Realism», p.121.

indeterminate predictions about foreign policy behaviour, but adding variables *ad hoc* based on single case or very few selected case studies seems equally problematic⁵⁶.” In response to the second remark, one of the contributors to the development of the theory, Randall Schweller, stressed that neoclassical realism was a useful approach for understanding foreign policy in general, because the identification of domestic political variables allows us to explain not only why states occasionally fail to balance against hostile powers, but also why they opt for particular balancing strategies from a variety of acceptable alternatives – alliance versus rearmament, for example – and the timing and style of their foreign policy⁵⁷.

On the other hand, we can say that neoclassical realism is a work in progress, and that like any other variants of realism, improvements will be possible only by testing its hypotheses on a various range of case studies, either to refute or verify them. In its defense, we ought to agree with the fact that the theory is ‘well-positioned’ to perform what policy-relevant theories should do: conceptualize foreign policy strategies, whether successful or inconclusive ones, by transparently identifying the key variables associated with their outcome, and explaining the logic underlying their operation⁵⁸. In their conclusion, the editors of *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* also underline some flaws behind the theory and proposed avenues for future research but on the whole, they believe that neoclassical realism provides a rich understanding of what determines foreign policy and how states respond to international challenges⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Wivel, «Explaining Why State X...», p.357.

⁵⁷ Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell. 2009. «Conclusion: The State of Neoclassical Realism». In Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, ed. *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.281-282.

⁵⁸ Juneau. August/September 2010. *Neoclassical Realist Strategic Analysis : A Statement*, p.21.

⁵⁹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, «Conclusion: The State of Neoclassical Realism» p.292.

Part One

CHAPTER FOUR

Domestic Determinants of Chinese Foreign Policy

The core assumption of neoclassical realism is that a state's relative power vis-à-vis all other states of the international system, is a dominant factor shaping patterns of its foreign policy. Therefore, this is where an analysis of foreign policy should begin⁶⁰. But as mentioned earlier, neoclassical realists, unlike structural realists, find that this relative distribution of power only frames policy choices and intentions of states⁶¹, while their actions are instead determined by domestic characteristics⁶². Applying this assessment to the case of Chinese foreign policy, the present study supposes that perceptions of decision makers, ideology, and decision-making structure have a certain impact on decision-making, as these variables filter the weight of power distribution on policy. We shall examine each variable in turn with an outlook on general understandings and specific considerations for China's foreign policy.

Power, Perception, and Policy

Starting with hypothesis 1, it is argued that the independent variable, relative power distribution, is perceived by states' leaders, and that this perception has an impact on the link between power and policy. A study of perceptions is deemed necessary if we make the two following assumptions: The international

⁶⁰ Rose, «Neoclassical Realism...» p.151.

⁶¹Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, «Introduction: Neoclassical Realism...» p.18.

⁶² Wivel, «Explaining Why State X...» p.357.

environment may influence the general outline of the state's policy but not its specific responses; and individuals, who constitute the state's executive, behave differently under similar constraints⁶³. But what exactly is power and how is it related to perception?

State Power and Capabilities

Power is defined by neoclassical realists as capabilities, or resources, with which states can influence each other. States compare each other's attributes and performance, and while doing so, they can not only redefine their preferences and goals with respect to foreign policy, but also measure up the range of possible actions⁶⁴. This stems from the fact that the leadership needs to mobilize national attributes to implement external policies such as diplomacy, coercion, or cooperation, etc. But it is the leadership's capacity, ability, or predisposition to use those capabilities that determine policy choices. What is important to grasp, however, is that national resources do not refer solely to military strength, because political, socio-cultural, economic, and geographical attributes can also constitute the power of a state⁶⁵.

In effect, reference to the concept of power throughout this study will always bear in mind that elements of power include population, political and economical development, resources, individual leadership, the quality of government, the competence of its administrators, and a government's reputation in world politics, among other things. For neoclassical realists, the distribution of

⁶³ Ng-Quinn, «The Analytical Study of...», p.27. See also: Jervis, R. 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*.

⁶⁴ Rose, «Neoclassical Realism...», p.151.

⁶⁵ For a helpful description of each type of capabilities see: Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi. 2009. *International Relations and World Politics: Security, Economy, and Identity*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, p.117-126.

such power capabilities between all states in the international system drives the scope and ambition of a state's foreign policy. The predominance of the United States in terms of power concentration is still widely recognized in 2012, which attests the unipolarity of the international system. The purpose of this project is to find what Chinese leaders actually think about power and unipolarity in general and how it affects their choice of policy with regard to North Korea.

Power and Perception

For neoclassical realists, power is a concept that depends on the evaluation or perception by a state's leadership of its capacity to realize its preferences and objectives vis-à-vis other states⁶⁶. In his analysis of diplomacy, Adam Watson (1991) summarized perfectly this assessment in a meaningful sentence: "What a state's neighbours perceive to be its power takes into account such things as the numbers and skills of its population, the extent, resources and strategic location of its territory, its wealth and productive capacity including the sources from which it derives its wealth and productive capacity including the sources from which it derives its wealth and how far it controls them, its internal organization, public attitudes and the competence of its government, its existing and potential military capacity, and other more intangible but essential factors like its international aims and the degree of its determination to achieve them⁶⁷".

Not only is the leadership's perception of its own national power important, but also its perception of other states' power. In agreement with Wohlforth (1993) we argue that power-centered analytical frameworks will be improved by accumulating knowledge about how political elites actually perceive power in

⁶⁶ Macleod, «Le réalisme néoclassique», p.130.

⁶⁷ Adam Watson. 1991. *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States*. London: Routledge, p.53.

various time and place. If power affects the course of international politics, it ought to do so through the perceptions of the people who make the decisions on behalf of states⁶⁸. Mark Mancall, a Chinese studies expert who specialized in Sino-Russian relations, once mentioned that policy was made and executed by people who define the world and themselves in consonance with the world view within which they lead their daily lives. “The intellectual assumptions, emotional predispositions, cognitive maps, and perceptual structures of the foreign policy-makers are all rooted in the prevailing world view of his [...] society⁶⁹”. In the same fashion as Wohlforth’s work on balance-of-power, our assessment of Chinese leaders’ perception of power will focus on: a) the elements of power; b) the distribution of power; c) mechanics of power, and; d) prestige⁷⁰. As described by the author;

a) The elements of power refer to questions such as, “what do people think power is? What elements constitute national power? What resources matter?”. Therefore, judgements about the elements of power should reflect judgements about other aspects of world politics⁷¹.

b) Distribution of power relates to : how does one’s country rank against the other great powers? Which states are great powers? Did observers perceive unipolarity, bipolarity, etc.? How did they see changes in the distribution of power?

c) Mechanics of power correspond to a certain policy choice, such as balance-of-power, cooperation, or any other way that a state responds to external threats, and how it is working in the real world.

d) As for prestige, we need to look for the leadership’s interpretation of “Who has the most diplomatic weight? Who has the greatest influence over global politics? What is the relation between power and prestige? Which capabilities

⁶⁸ Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance...*, p.2.

⁶⁹ Mark Mancall. 1984. *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy*. New York: Free Press, p.xvii.

⁷⁰ See Wohlforth (1993), p.26-28 for more details.

⁷¹ Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance...*, p.26.

translate into prestige? Will an increase in power lead to greater weight in diplomatic councils⁷²?" It was mentioned earlier that prestige and reputation were parts of political capabilities. As Wohlforth sees it, statesmen are attentive to the way others perceive their power and prestige because a favourable impression abroad will increase the likelihood of successful diplomacy⁷³.

Perception of Power and Chinese Foreign Policy

With the application of Wohlforth's method to the Chinese case, we have to be particularly careful with the information that will be extracted from archival and open sources, such as White Papers, statements or speeches. The fact that the state is built on the rule of the Chinese Communist Party means that there is a party line on most matters which certainly provides the most important context for all political communication⁷⁴. Perusal of the Chinese press, not to mention its translation, only reveals publicly articulated Chinese rationales under specific circumstances⁷⁵. Also, when dealing with public political sources, we should always question the validity of the text in representing belief, or ask if action can be based on belief.

It is imperative to address one particular question during each text's examination: Is the view expressed in the text a deliberate attempt to mislead the reader? Statements can be part of a broad pattern of censorship or propaganda and therefore, it would be wise to consult as wide an array of sources as possible to control for propaganda targeted at specific audiences, and seek to position each text in its historical and political context. Only then can the analyst give an answer

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁷⁵ Ng-Quinn, «The Analytical Study of...», p.29.

when asking if the author of the text in question has an interest in manipulation. Throughout the analysis of these sources, it is important to inspect for example, whether there was a general party line at the time, an image that the leadership was trying to convey, what was or is the foreign and domestic conjuncture, or to whom the leadership may wish to communicate⁷⁶.

To seek explanations regarding China's DPRK policy since the outbreak of the second nuclear crisis between the United States and the DPRK in 2002, we need to bear in mind the context of the post-Cold War period and, as stated above, the unipolarity of the international system. The post-Cold War period bears particular significance for the Chinese because the collapse of the Soviet Union reminded them of the changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the decline of communist ideology. In addition, in the eyes of the Chinese, the United States has harboured the hegemonic ambition of dominating the world ever since the end of World War II, but was unable to fulfill its aspirations because of the enormous challenge from the Soviet Union. The collapse of bipolarity has strengthened America's volition to play a leading role in world politics⁷⁷.

According to Chinese sources, American leaders made a strategic decision to shape the structure of the post-Cold War international system, as they were reluctant to accept the multipolar trend in world politics. More specifically, Washington was determined to establish a US-dominated unipolar world structure in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Two major developments in world politics in the immediate post-Cold War era are believed to have had a significant impact on

⁷⁶ Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance...*, p.29-30.

⁷⁷ Li Rex. 1999. «Unipolar Aspirations in a Multipolar Reality: China's Perceptions of US Ambitions and Capabilities in the Post-Cold War World». *Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change*: 11 (2), p.119-120.

American strategic thinking. The first was the revolution in Eastern Europe in 1989, which was followed by the break-up of the Soviet Union two years later. To the Americans, the collapse of the regimes in the communist bloc represented a Western triumph in the ideological struggle between capitalism and communism which had lasted for over 40 years. It demonstrated the bankruptcy of the communist system and the strength of capitalist values. In this sense, the US claimed that it had won the Cold War. As Russia was no longer in a position to engage in global rivalry with the United States, it became the sole superpower in the international system⁷⁸.

The second event that encouraged Washington to build a unipolar world structure was the American victory in the Gulf War in 1991. The Gulf crisis provided the United States with an excellent opportunity to prove its military superiority and capability of leading the world. Chinese analysts pointed out that the Americans believed the rapid defeat of Saddam Hussein indicated unambiguously that the US was the only country that had the political, economic and military strength to lead the entire world. This, is only a glance of what may be the Chinese leadership's assessment of the international environment in terms of relative power distribution. In order to test the prediction that the leadership's perception of: a) the elements of power; b) the distribution of power; c) mechanics of power, and; d) prestige, shapes China's policy options with respect to North Korea and the problem of denuclearization, three incidents, from 2002 to 2010, will be explored to trace China's response and China's perception of power during each period of time. Before that, we shall consider the other variables that are believed to intervene in the process of decision making.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.119.

Ideology and Foreign Policy

Incorporating ideas into the realm of foreign policy studies is more common for constructivists than for realists, but when pointing out the role of domestic factors on foreign policy decision making, neoclassical realists cannot discard the possibility that a political ideology may turn out to be such a factor. In an article on grand strategy, Nicholas Kitchen (2010) commented on the neoclassical realist theory and its consideration of ideas as intervening in the process of foreign policy. Kitchen pointed out three locations where ideas may surface: through the individuals that hold them, through institutions in which they may become embedded, and through the broader context of state culture⁷⁹. In terms of foreign policy, neoclassical realists recognize that at the individual level, ideas held by states' decision makers and their advisors are most likely to have an influence on policy. Moreover, when individuals with shared ideas join together groups, organizations, and institutions that operate in either formal and informal sectors of a state's policy-making process, those ideas are bound to impinge upon decisions⁸⁰.

With respect to the neoclassical realist theory and the present case study, we will focus on the dynamic between the power distribution, ideology, and Chinese foreign policy. What is the role of ideology in foreign policy? Is there a link between ideology and the previous intervening variable, perception of power? Concerned by the relevance of an approach focusing on ideology to analyze policy making, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Upsala College, Chen Feng (1995), stated that ideas would have no explanatory power if we don't know how a particular set of ideas penetrates into the policy thinking of decision makers, how ideas define and redefine the problems to be solved, and how ideas

⁷⁹ Nicholas Kitchen. 2010. «Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation». *Review of international studies*: 36 (1), p.130.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

make differences in the policy process⁸¹. In order to present the explanatory capacity of ideology with respect to Chinese foreign policy, we should first clarify what exactly is ideology.

Ideology and Politics

In political science jargon, ideologies can be defined as idea-networks containing beliefs – including consciously or unconsciously held values, understandings, interpretations, myths, and preferences – which support or contest political arrangements and processes, while at the same time, providing plans of action for public political institutions; and in doing so, acting as devices for mobilizing mass political activity⁸². Michael Freeden (1996), a scholar known for his work on ideology stressed that despite micro-functions on the individual level, ideologies are primarily linked to central political structures, seen as both the objects and the disseminators of ideological activity⁸³. Keeping this in mind, and adding the fact that our case study, China, is a highly-centralized, Leninist one-party system, we will not address the question of why or to what extent, ideology is absorbed by the individual to find evidence of the link between ideology and foreign policy making. Such matters should be addressed properly within the scope of psychological studies. Though we mention briefly that ideology can shape perceptions, which relates to the individual level, we are more interested in finding if China's political ideology as a whole might restrain policy options of foreign policy decision makers.

⁸¹ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.4.

⁸² Michael Freeden. 1996. *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.22.

A regime's total ideology consists of pure and practical ideology, or as Chen (1994) puts it, fundamental and instrumental principles. Pure ideology is the core of an ideology and refers to a set of ideas or theories, designed to mould the thinking of the individual⁸⁴ into a unified and conscious world view⁸⁵. Pure ideology stands on fundamental principles which set the tone and parameters of political life in society and epitomize "fixed" elements, which are dogmatic and impermeable to argument and evidence. These principles justify the ultimate goals by which the regime claims legitimacy⁸⁶. For Chinese leaders and citizens who entered the membership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), for example, Marxism-Leninism is the theoretical foundation of the Chinese communist ideology which guides both the Party and the state⁸⁷. However, while Marxism-Leninism is a pure ideology that may be shared by all Communist parties, the principles and methods of practice, i.e., practical ideology, are specific to the CCP⁸⁸. In other words, Communist ideology, like other ideologies, is not monolithic and can be divided into two dimensions, one referring to the core values of ideology and the other to its practical application⁸⁹.

Unlike pure ideology, "practical ideology" is a set of ideas designed to give the individual rational instruments for action⁹⁰. More specifically, the principles of practical ideology, which we refer to as "instrumental principles", state norms, i.e., rules which prescribe behaviour and thus are expected to set options for action⁹¹. They function to interpret the nature of current tasks that confront the leadership

⁸⁴ James C. F. Wang. 1999. *Contemporary Chinese Politics: An Introduction*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, p.37.

⁸⁵ Herbert F. Schurmann. 1968. *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.22.

⁸⁶ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.10.

⁸⁷ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.37.

⁸⁸ Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization...*, p.22-23.

⁸⁹ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.11.

⁹⁰ Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization...*, p.22.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.39.

and to justify current policies, thus indicating how political actors perceive, diagnose, prescribe, and make choices in specific problem areas⁹². Instrumental principles deal with immediate goals and serves to legitimate the leadership by stressing “performance”⁹³. According to James C. F. Wang, professor of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Hawaii, practical ideology is based on experiences and practices⁹⁴, which would mean that it can evolve and change over time.

Chen (1994) explains that these instrumental principles can be grouped into three types, in terms of their construction or their relationship to fundamental principles: 1) dogmatic principles, which are directly derived from, and serve to actualize, fundamental principles; 2) pragmatic principles, simply grounded on practical needs but which can be loosely linked to fundamental principles; therefore they represent new interpretations of fundamental principles and serve to fill the gap between ideology and reality, and; 3) divergent principles, coming from another ideological source but which are defined in the terms of the existing ideology⁹⁵. Although all instrumental principles serve to identify problems and prescribe recommendations for problem solving, the different types of instrumental principles identify the problems to be solved differently, and consequently, offer different policy recommendations.

In the case of communist politics, the dogmatic type of instrumental principles is related to revolutionary orientations and policies that stick to ideological orthodoxy, whereas the pragmatic type portrays moderate and less

⁹² Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁹⁴ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.37.

⁹⁵ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.15.

ideologically inspired problem-solving orientations. Finally, the divergent type indicates the decline of the existing ideology and its failure to address the problems to be solved⁹⁶. In China, the operation of the three types of instrumental principles basically corresponds to the phases of political development. Dogmatic principles mainly reflect the orientation of the pre-reform years, when ideology penetrated every aspect of life in society. The pragmatic type had been widely used by Chinese leadership in most of the reform period, and the divergent type emerged in the late 1980s, when the reform was demanding daring policies beyond the existing economic ideological framework⁹⁷. The fact that the leadership chooses different type of instrumental principles to deal with issues and formulate policies is a sign of a reconsideration of core beliefs that might occur because of a need to adapt to a new international environment, a change in perception of the international environment, or a redefinition of national needs and interests.

Ideology as a Determinant of Perception

Our first variable, which we suggest can intervene in the process of foreign policy decision making, was perception of the power distribution between states. Without going too deep in considerations of the individual, we found that the second variable, ideology, could not only be linked to foreign policy, but also, to perception. As Steven I. Levine (1994), research faculty associate in the Department of History at the University of Montana and Harvard graduate, explained in a chapter on perception and ideology in Chinese foreign policy, decision-makers everywhere bring to their struggles with the complexities of foreign affairs sets of presuppositions, values, expectations, preferences, and operating assumptions that materialize through three different sources. Ideas or principles like those constructing an ideology are assimilated, 1) through a process

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

of socialization into a specific culture at a particular period of time; 2) through their unique experiences as individuals and their shared experiences as members of groups, and finally; 3) through their conscious choices as thinking political actors from the menu of values, systems of thought, and so forth that are available to them⁹⁸.

More specifically, ideology enlists commitments, motivates action, and builds a collective conscience to the extent that actors accept and internalize it in their personality, as they become subjects to their socialization⁹⁹. Each person is influenced by experience, and each person also actively creates a persona as a political actor through an ongoing process of conscious choice. Through this process of creation and self-creation, then, foreign policy actors acquire a particular *Weltanschauung* or ideologically based world-view¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, the ideas of decision-makers about political reality, whether simple and intuitive or highly complex and formally articulated, configure their environment for choice, inform their consideration of various courses of action, and provide rationalizations for the choices that are made¹⁰¹. If we take Chinese decision makers for example, like in the Soviet Union or other communist regime, these members of the Chinese Communist political bureaucracy have received administration and governmental training, and these administrators acquired a technical or administrative experience through ideological and political training¹⁰².

⁹⁸ Steven I. Levine. 1994. «Perception and Ideology in Chinese Foreign Policy». In Thomas W. Robinson and David L. Shambaugh, ed. *Chinese Foreign Policy : Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.33.

⁹⁹ Winberg Chai. 2003. «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts of China's World Views: From Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the Pragmatism-Multilateralism of the Deng-Jiang-Hu Era». *Asian Affairs*: 30 (3), p.164.

¹⁰⁰ Levine, «Perception and Ideology...», p.33.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

¹⁰² Hassner Pierre. 1967. «Brzezinski (Zbigniew), Huntington (Samuel P.) - Political power : USA/USSR». *Revue française de science politique*, p.340.

From a broader perspective, it was mentioned by another scholar that “the adoption as well as subsequent adaption of an ideology are in themselves behaviour, and may have been caused by prior behaviour¹⁰³”. Therefore, no matter how universally valid the substance of an ideology is claimed to be, its actual application to the real world has historically always taken place within a certain national context, and is thus constrained by the latter’s particular objective empirical conditions. It may be essential to ask “how and why people adopted an ideology in the first place¹⁰⁴”. Since objective empirical conditions and prior behaviour are said to play a role in the adoption of an ideology, it is relevant to ask ourselves if, for example, such conditions as China’s disintegration and foreign invasion played a part in the adoption of communism by the Party in 1921, then a change in those objective empirical conditions and a different experience, with China’s reintegration and participation within the international system, may have led to a corresponding change in the ideology and behaviour of the same Party¹⁰⁵.

Ideology and Policy-Making

While neoclassical realists recognized the influence of ideas on foreign policy, criticism was brought upon the fact that they rarely aimed attention at how ideas worked in the decision-making process to mediate structural pressures and why some ideas were adopted as policies. I will try to rectify that by adding some theoretical insights to support the assumption that ideology does have a role to play in the formulation and implementation of Chinese foreign policy. As mentioned earlier, the principles of an ideology are assimilated by decision makers, and therefore, can be said to act as filters not only for their perception of issues and problems in foreign affairs, but also for the range of policy options to be

¹⁰³ Ng-Quinn, «The Analytical Study of...», p.32.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

implemented. A central concern for all students of ideology is the extent to which, and the ways in which, ideology affects practice. As Sargent (2009) notes, political leaders use the language of the dominant ideology of their country to justify their actions, but are these actions actually based on ideology or convenience¹⁰⁶? The most likely effect of ideology on political action is in filtering and limiting options, ruling out policies that fail to resonate with the national political culture¹⁰⁷. In this way, ideology limit, but does not determine practice¹⁰⁸.

In states where particular ideas are highly institutionalized or culturally embedded, their impact is likely to be strong and consistent throughout the policy process. Ideas that form a strong component of national identity or strategic culture are likely to be almost unconsciously shared among ruling elites and foreign policy institutions¹⁰⁹. This is especially true for a Leninist one-party system like China's, where decision making on key policy issues is still highly centralized¹¹⁰ and ideology serves as a legitimization of the political system and transforms power into authority¹¹¹. In China, where survival of the Marxist-Leninist ideology is directly linked to the legitimacy of the one-party system, the Party and the leadership, it is highly probable that ideological considerations are taken into account in formulating both foreign and domestic policies.

¹⁰⁶ Lyman T. Sargent. 2009. *Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis*. 14th ed. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, p.5.

¹⁰⁷ Kitchen, «Systemic Pressures...», p.141.

¹⁰⁸ Sargent, *Contemporary Political Ideologies...*, p.5.

¹⁰⁹ Kitchen, «Systemic Pressures...», p.141.

¹¹⁰ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.3.

¹¹¹ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.164.

Ideology and Chinese Foreign Policy

While acknowledging that today's Chinese Communist ideology is not as it was at the beginning and that its relevance has been questioned by many in light of the integration of economic reforms borrowed from capitalism, this study argues that ideology still plays a role in the leadership's foreign policy outlook and formulations. If an ideological system is one in which political leaders guide a society along the lines of their own political beliefs and aspirations (Brzezinski and Huntington, 1964), then China's system still fits with this definition. As Chen (1995) explains, China's political system still requires a theoretical basis for all major policies to sustain the system's legitimacy. The party still has to present policy changes in consonance with ideology rhetoric; even a pragmatic policy has to be made ideologically sound¹¹². Furthermore, "the Party's refusal to renounce its ideology, which sharply contradicts its economic policies and its continuing insistence on the concept of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', clearly indicates that ideology still matters¹¹³".

With Tiananmen and the crisis of world communism, CCP leaders re-emphasized the importance of their ideology as they were unwilling to discard Marxism-Leninism entirely and wanted to defend Chinese socialism against proponents of other ideologies that could challenge the Party's monopoly of power. Ideological rivals, with the United States in the forefront, were suspected of seeking to discredit socialist ideology in order to overthrow the rule of the CCP¹¹⁴. Deng once stated that "the entire imperialist Western world plans to make all socialist countries discard the socialist road and then bring them under the control of international monopoly capital", and his successor, Jiang Zemin, made a similar comment about "peaceful evolution" and the hostile international forces:

¹¹² Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.2.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹¹⁴ Levine, «Perception and Ideology...», p.42.

Bourgeois liberalization is an internal matching force which they use to carry out peaceful evolution. These kinds of hostile activities constitute a real threat to China's independence, sovereignty, development and reform. In other words, peaceful evolution and bourgeois liberalization are aimed not only at overthrowing our socialist system but, fundamentally, at depriving us of our national independence and state sovereignty¹¹⁵.

With the erosion of the Marxist-Leninist ideology that threatened to undermine the central role of the Communist Party, producing not only a crisis of faith but also a crisis of power, Deng Xiaoping and his associates attempted to foster an ideological revival within China, to justify their own rule and their policy choices inside and outside the borders¹¹⁶, and to protect the nation's distinct political identity¹¹⁷. Consequently, instead of disappearing as a factor in foreign policy, Chinese Communist ideology was redefined.

As Levine (1994) explains, post-Mao leaders viewed Marxism-Leninism as the ideological framework of long-term goals and fundamental social values within which an advanced industrial economy and a modern society would be constructed over a period of many decades. "Adherence to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and the leadership of the CCP was defined as the guarantee of social and political stability without which developmental goals could not be achieved¹¹⁸". In other words, the redefinition of socialism in terms of economic productivity provided the post-Mao leadership with strong theoretical support for its modernization efforts¹¹⁹. The domestic watchwords of stability and prosperity were extended to the realm of foreign policy, as the revolutionary, transformative

¹¹⁵ Thomas Kane. 2001. «China's Foundations: Guiding Principles of Chinese Foreign Policy». *Comparative Strategy*: 20 (1), p.52-53.

¹¹⁶ Levine, «Perception and Ideology...», p.31.

¹¹⁷ Kane, «China's Foundations: Guiding Principles of Chinese Foreign Policy», p.53.

¹¹⁸ Levine, «Perception and Ideology...», p.42.

¹¹⁹ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.18.

rhetoric of Maoist ideology was shelved in favour of a language of accommodation to the prevailing world system. Since the 1980s, peace and development have been emphasized as China's major international goals and the necessary conditions for the attainment of China's modernization¹²⁰, which explains in part why pragmatism and multilateralism were adopted as China's guidelines for action¹²¹.

Although Deng's "socialism with Chinese characteristics" may have evolved into something quite different from the communism Mao envisioned, China's rulers have shown no desire to conform to the liberal political order that dominates much of the world today, much less to allow that order to change their regime¹²². Since it is argued here that Chinese Communist ideology restrain the leadership's foreign policy options and filters perception of the international environment, it seems relevant to at least summarize its main components.

Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the "Three Represents"

For the Chinese, pure ideology corresponds to theory (*lilun*), while practical ideology refers to thought (*sixiang*)¹²³. As previously mentioned, while practical ideology can change and evolve, theory, however, is a universal truth and cannot be altered. The fact that Chinese Communists regard theory as unchanging, means that it alone is not capable of leading to action¹²⁴. Having taken its basic elements from Marxism-Leninism, parallel to ideas developed in the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communists have made the Party's ideology into a systematic set of principles

¹²⁰ Levine, «Perception and Ideology...», p.41-42.

¹²¹ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.168.

¹²² Kane, «China's Foundations: Guiding Principles of Chinese Foreign Policy», p.53.

¹²³ Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization...*, p.24.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.33.

which it used to create its own organization and to achieve its goals¹²⁵. They developed a practical ideology based on Leninism but enriched by their experience in revolutionary struggle¹²⁶. Officially, the CCP's total ideology is described as Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" theory added to the Party's constitution after the 16th Party Congress in 2002¹²⁷. Here is an overview of each of these components.

To begin with, Karl Marx's work began with the proposition that the character of any society is determined the mode of production by which people make their living. He suggested that the mode of production circumscribes social structure and political order, and determines social ideas and customs. Therefore, to change the minds of the people, it is necessary to change the mode of production or the economic system¹²⁸. Using Hegelian dialectics, Marx predicted that a communist society would result from historical materialism after society had passed through certain stages¹²⁹, which will not be discussed here. Marxism would then be slightly modified by Lenin's insights. With respect to organization for the revolution, Lenin outlined a strategy for the working class to achieve and maintain political power. One of the core principle was that a revolutionary party was needed, led by a highly disciplined and dedicated contingent of professional revolutionaries. Another principle was the doctrine of "democratic centralism", which called for centralized decision making, with free discussion at the policy formulation level¹³⁰. In his work *State and Revolution* (1918), Lenin advocated a dictatorship of the proletariat under a single political party within a socialist state.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹²⁷ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.163.

¹²⁸ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.38.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.39.

The development and dictatorship of this political party would destroy capitalism in the interest of the proletariat¹³¹.

The second element embedded in Chinese Communist ideology is the Thought of Mao Zedong. Mao's ideas were very complex as they had their roots in the Chinese nationalism of the May Fourth Movement, in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, and in the revolutionary experiences of the CCP¹³². Mao made four key modifications to Marxist-Leninist doctrine when developing his ideology for China. First, the revolutionary leader was convinced of the enormous potential of the peasantry. Because Marxist-Leninist doctrine regarded the peasantry only as an auxiliary force in the "proletarian revolution", Mao adapted it to give a greater role to the Chinese peasantry. Second, he formulated the concept of the mass line, which is considered Mao's theoretical contribution to populism. The mass line, as defined by John W. Lewis, is "the basic working method by which Communist cadres seek to initiate and promote a unified relationship between themselves and the Chinese population and thus to bring about the supported and active participation of the people¹³³". It was the vision that semiliterate peasants and workers – collectively, the masses – could be the source of ideas and inspiration for the leaders¹³⁴.

A third aspect of Mao's Thought was the modification of Marx's principle of "dialectical materialism". Mao combined dialectical materialism and the neo-Confucian school of Idealism. He proposed that the process of knowledge has three stages: perception, conception, and verification, and emphasized the pertinence of

¹³¹ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.165.

¹³² Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.48.

¹³³ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.165.

¹³⁴ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.49.

ideology to action, i.e., the unity of theory and practice¹³⁵. Mao's practical ideology functions as a guide on which individuals in Chinese society shape their attitudes and regulate their behaviour. In other words, Mao's Thought serves as a set of preferred social values against which actions and thoughts are judged¹³⁶. Mao also insisted that because contradictions are inherent in human relations, they therefore govern politics. All in all, Maoism, unlike Marxism, remains to some extent within the Confucian tradition of leadership, which always has regarded moral instruction to be the first duty of the head of state¹³⁷. Finally, Mao's fourth modification was the concept of "new revolution", rejecting Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence¹³⁸.

After Mao's death, the Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping's new leadership criticized the disasters and failures of Mao's politics such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, but it recognized Mao's contributions to the Party's formal ideology¹³⁹. With the hope of retrieving the people's trust in the Party and rebuilding China's stature domestically and internationally, Deng emphasized the need for economic reforms, even if this meant great concessions. Deng Xiaoping Theory, better known as "building socialism with Chinese characteristics", enhanced and integrated "the universal principle of Marxism-Leninism with the practice of the Second Chinese Revolution (Mao's Revolution being the first) – economic construction, reform, and opening to the outside world¹⁴⁰".

¹³⁵ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.166.

¹³⁶ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.49.

¹³⁷ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.166.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.167.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.60.

Deng and the other reformers always considered that there was no change in the economic base of Chinese socialism, since the public ownership of the means of production was maintained. Individualized economy and joint ventures with foreign capitalist investors could be justified because these experiments were considered “necessary supplements to the social economy¹⁴¹”. But as we know, the paradox of justifying capitalist economic policies as a means to “enhance” socialism¹⁴² was hard to swallow for the conservatives and the general public. At the 14th Party Congress in October 1992, Deng’s ideas and policies were elevated to the status of theory¹⁴³, and since the 15th Party Congress of 1997, they are enshrined into the constitution, together with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought as China’s permanent “guide to action¹⁴⁴”.

Not long after endorsing the role of Deng Xiaoping’s successor, Jiang Zemin with the help of numerous advisers such as Hu Jintao, developed the “Theory of the Three Represents¹⁴⁵”. The theory suggested that to remain relevant and to prosper, the party “must represent the foremost production forces, the most advanced culture, and the broadest interests of common people¹⁴⁶”. One of the core principles of Jiang’s theory was that private entrepreneurs, managers, and other professionals should be accepted as members of the CCP and even promoted to senior positions, since they could be said to represent the highest-level productivity and culture. This proposition originated from the early years of the reform era with the abandon by the CCP of the old-days’ goal of promoting class struggle for the task of promoting economic modernization. The change in goals called for a change in criteria for recruiting new members and appointing new personnel to key posts in

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹⁴² Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.ix.

¹⁴³ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.60.

¹⁴⁴ Chai, «The Ideological Paradigm Shifts...», p.168.

¹⁴⁵ Willy Wo-Lap Lam. 2006. *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era: New Leaders, New Challenges*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, p.36.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the party and the government. However, with the events of Tiananmen in 1989, the CCP had imposed a ban on recruiting entrepreneurs, which delayed the process of co-opting the “capitalists”¹⁴⁷. It was not until July 2001, that Jiang formally opened the door to “outstanding elements” of the “new social strata”¹⁴⁸. Another principle of the Theory of the Three Represents was that the CCP had evolved into a party for all classes and all people, i.e., a party for all the people. From now on, the CCP would have to justify its rule as a party that promotes the welfare of all Chinese, regardless of “class origin”¹⁴⁹.

Theoretically, according to Chen (1994), the fundamental ideology of the CCP has several interrelated functions; to determine the Party’s final goal, to legitimate the CCP’s leading role in society, to define the social and political order the CCP wants to maintain, and to provide an ontological framework to evaluate everything from policies to social behaviour¹⁵⁰. In this sense, the Party needs the fundamental principles for its self-claimed legitimacy, and to preserve the continuity of the polity, to define its unique status in society, to maintain a socialist image, and to prevent potential political groups from demanding power sharing¹⁵¹. On the other hand, Mao Zedong Thought, as part of the CCP’s practical ideology, calls for unity between the leaders and encourages them to rely on the masses for inspiration, support, and implementation of policies and programs¹⁵².

As we are more familiarized with China’s Communist ideology and more aware of the potential influence ideology can have on policy making, it will be

¹⁴⁷ Bruce J. Dickson. 2008. *Wealth into Power: The Communist Party’s Embrace of China’s Private Sector*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.66-67.

¹⁴⁸ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.36.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

¹⁵⁰ Chen Feng, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy...*, p.13.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.49.

easier to discern if fundamental and instrumentals principles of the CCP's ideology have an impact on the formulation and implementation of China's DPRK policy. Because official documents such as the Party and the state's constitutions or Party Congress reports reiterate Party rules which affirm the major ideas that govern party policy, organization, and action¹⁵³, we know that these documents consist of a systematic presentation of the Chinese communist ideology. Therefore, we will compare those fundamental principles to actual actions, as we extract from reports, newspaper articles, and official statements, the Chinese leadership's recommendations for decisions regarding North Korea's nuclear program. But before embarking on the analysis of China's DPRK policy since 2002, our last step leads to the third and last variable expected to intervene in the process of foreign policy, the foreign policy decision-making unit.

How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy

To my knowledge, there are no neoclassical realists who aimed their attention at the type of unit responsible with foreign policy making when seeking explanations for decisions, except for those who analyzed the link between the personality of leaders and policy choices. Again, it was a challenge to find a method that could be applied to test this last hypothesis, but it was equally motivating, since it would add new insights to the general theory. On the whole, three different methods were integrated to the neoclassical framework to analyze each intervening variables' impact on foreign policy, and eventually test the propositions on Chinese foreign policy in general, and more specifically, China's DPRK policy.

¹⁵³ Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization...*, p.19.

The Decision Units Framework

In the article “How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Framework¹⁵⁴”, Margaret G. Hermann presents the decision making approach she collaborated on, with Charles Hermann, Joe Hagan, and others, back in the 1980s¹⁵⁵. At the core of this approach is the idea that there is at the apex of foreign policy decision making in all governments or ruling parties, an individual or set of individuals which possess the ability to commit the resources of the society and the authority to make a decision when faced with a problem; a decision that cannot be readily reversed by other entities within the government¹⁵⁶. This set of decision makers is called the “authoritative decision unit”. Three types of decision units are said to be found in the various decision-making bodies around the world: a predominant leader, a single group, or a coalition of autonomous actors. And it is recognized that for issues of vital importance to a country, the highest political authorities are usually part of the decision unit, while with more routine problems, the decision unit might be at a much lower level¹⁵⁷. In other words, the actors responsible for decision making can vary depending on the kind of problem the government is facing (military, economic, ...) ¹⁵⁸.

The decision units framework propose a way to monitor when each of these types of units is likely to be involved in making foreign policy decision and how the structure and process in the unit can shape the nature of that decision¹⁵⁹. By focusing on the stage of choice in the decision-making process, that is, the selection

¹⁵⁴ Margaret G. Hermann. Summer 2001. «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Framework». *International Studies Review*: 3 (2).

¹⁵⁵ See: Hermann and East, 1978; Hermann, Hermann and Hagan, 1987.

¹⁵⁶ Margaret G. Hermann, Charles F. Hermann and Joe D. Hagan. 1987. «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior». In Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley and James N. Rosenau, ed. *New directions in the study of foreign policy*. Boston: Allen & Unwin, p.311.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ M. Hermann, «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy...», p.47.

of a particular course of action, the authors argue that knowledge about how foreign policy decisions are made provides insight into the intentions and strategies of governments and how decisions of the situation are translated into action¹⁶⁰. As M. Hermann mentions:

[w]hat happens within a decision unit in the decision-making process can lead to an array of different kinds of outcomes, [...] decision-making dynamics do not have a direct, singular impact on foreign policy. Rather, they can produce various results from consensus to deadlock, from compromise to domination by one individual or faction¹⁶¹.

Accordingly, the proposed framework defines key factors that set into motion alternative decision processes, and links these alternative decision processes to particular outcomes¹⁶².

Occasions for decision are described as the instances in dealing with a problem when the policymakers are faced with making a choice. "They are those points in the decision process when there is a felt need by those involved to take action even if the action is the choice to do nothing or to search for more information¹⁶³". The questions that instigate occasions for decision generally take one of the following forms: asking about whether or not action is needed for this problem, asking for possible solutions to a problem, or asking about whether one or more proposals for dealing with this aspect of the problem should be adopted¹⁶⁴. Since the third kind of occasion for decision leads to a strategic decision in which a particular action is chosen and resources are committed, it is the one that the

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.48.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

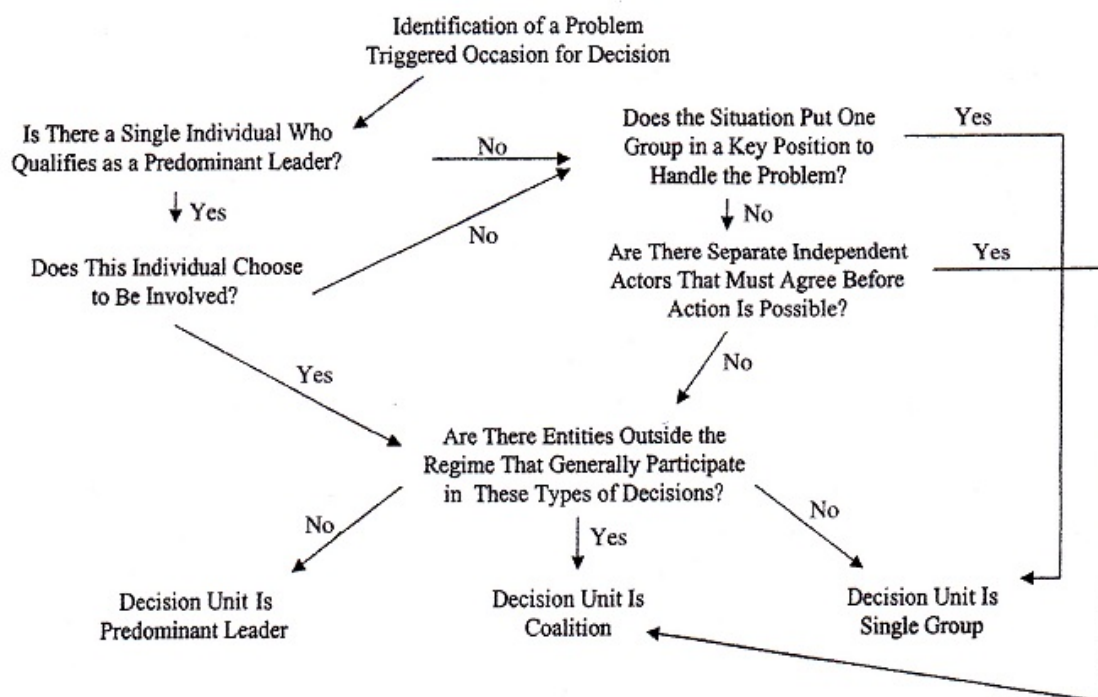
¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.52.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

decision units framework focuses on¹⁶⁵. Figure 2 presents the sets of factors considered in determining which of the three types of decision units mentioned above, will have the ultimate authority to respond to a particular occasion for decision.

Figure 2 – Factors determining the nature of the authoritative decision unit for an occasion for decision



Source: Hermann, M. (2001), p.58.

Conditions Favouring a Single Group in China

With respect to China, it is important to note that the present structure of foreign policy decision-making has its roots in the Leninist-type of organization,

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.55.

but gradually evolved during the post-Mao era under rules emphasizing intraparty democracy and collective leadership¹⁶⁶. The new leadership under Deng Xiaoping and other reformers consisted for the most part of old revolutionaries that returned to positions of power after the Cultural Revolution and after Mao's death. They had come to realize that the movement for class and human liberation they had supported had turned into one of the most oppressive systems in Chinese history, and following their rehabilitation, they urged sweeping bureaucratic reforms, as early as 1982, reversing the past trend toward an all-powerful party-state that imposes tighter controls over society¹⁶⁷.

Deng insisted on the professionalization of the PLA, gradually decreasing the authority of the generals within the CCP leadership, while reviving the activities of the CCP's foreign-affairs bureaucracy – the Central Committee's International (Liaison) Department¹⁶⁸. Revolutionary cadres were replaced with bureaucratic technocrats, more qualified in terms of political experience, socialization, and value orientation. These technocrats were selected for their expertise needed to help China's industrialization rather than for their revolutionary potential, as it was practice during Mao's years¹⁶⁹. As Lee (1991) mentioned, their promotion to political positions was not based on their leadership ability but on the belief that their rigorous scientific training would enable them to grasp any problem in its totality and to find the solution through an analytical approach¹⁷⁰. "The bureaucratic technocrats have a better understanding and better qualifications to

¹⁶⁶ Hong Yung Lee. 1991. *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.169.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Jean-Pierre Cabestan. 2009. «China's Foreign and Security Policy Decision-making Processes under Hu Jintao». *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*: 38 (3), p.64.

¹⁶⁹ Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres...*, p.284.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.287.

deal with such prerequisites of industrialized society as functional specialization, coordination of various parts, rational decision-making, and problem solving¹⁷¹”.

While Deng Xiaoping still embodied the role of a predominant leader until the end of his rule, new leaders such as Jiang and Hu would need the expertise and broad inputs that come from consulting the wide range of bureaucratic and non-government specialists and interests. In Sutter (2010)’s words, to do otherwise would risk ineffective or mistaken policies that can have a direct impact on top Chinese leaders, whose legitimacy depend heavily on demonstrating an ability to advance Chinese power and influence without major international complications or confrontation¹⁷². But at the same time, those new leaders would have to fulfill three roles simultaneously; what Chinese political scientists call the “three in one” (*sanheyi*) principle or organizational model¹⁷³, being president of the government, CCP general secretary, and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). In any event, the Secretary General-President-Commander in Chief would embody the key final decision-maker, and exerts preeminent and ultimate power in foreign affairs¹⁷⁴.

Nevertheless, foreign policy making, as in all areas of politics and administration, was bound to increasing institutionalization, higher education preparation of officials, and more collective decision making¹⁷⁵. A more pluralistic range of Chinese decision makers representing a variety of government, party, and military bureaucracies, government-affiliated and non-government think tanks,

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.288.

¹⁷² Robert G. Sutter. 2010. *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy Since the Cold War*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, p.58.

¹⁷³ Cabestan, «China’s Foreign and Security Policy...», p.69.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.70.

¹⁷⁵ Lowell Dittmer. 2001. «Reform and Chinese Foreign Policy». In Zhao Jianmin and Bruce J. Dickson, ed. *Remaking the Chinese State : Strategies, Society, and Security*. London / New York: Routledge, p.173.

and provincial and local governments, would influence foreign policy and behaviour¹⁷⁶. The Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which approves key foreign policy choices, translates this diversity of interests; each member supervising six different functional sectors from: 1) military affairs; 2) legal affairs; 3) administrative affairs, which is responsible for industrial and agricultural production, finance and commerce, foreign affairs, health, education, science, sports, and so on; 4) propaganda; 5) United Front, responsible for non-communist political parties, religion, and minorities, as well as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao affairs, and; 6) mass organization affairs, which is responsible for unions, youth, women's organizations, and other associations¹⁷⁷.

In David M. Lampton's *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, contributor Samuel S. Kim acknowledges that since it is not possible to observe Beijing's decision-making process directly, we can only draw causal inferences and certain basic rules about its decision-making from its patterns of manifest action¹⁷⁸. Noting this fact and considering the elements mentioned above about the previous and actual leaderships, we will focus on the dynamics of decision making in a single group, proposed by the decision units framework. We can say that there is a dominant leader in China, the Secretary General-President-Commander in Chief, but so long as he views his advisers as members of a decision-making team, the decision unit takes on the characteristics of a single group that is interactive and collective in its decision making¹⁷⁹. Even with respect to the issues selected for China's DPRK policy analysis, the variety of

¹⁷⁶ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations...*, p.58.

¹⁷⁷ Lu Ning. 2001. «The Central Leadership, Supraministry Coordinating Bodies, State Council Ministries, and Party Departments». In David M. Lampton, ed. *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.39-40.

¹⁷⁸ Samuel S. Kim. 2001. «The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform». In David M. Lampton, ed. *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.372.

¹⁷⁹ Hermann, «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy...», p.63.

interests that are entwined in the central goal of peace and stability in the east-Asian region in general, and in the Korean peninsula, makes it unlikely that decisions are proposed and authorized by the leader without consultation or by institutions at a lower level.

Group Decision-Making Dynamics, Process Outcome and Attributes of Foreign Policy Response

Regardless of its size, the single group acts as the decision unit, so long as there is a collective, interactive decision process in which all members who are needed to make authoritative commitments participate. Once we know about the type of decision unit, we have to consider the dynamics of problem-solving within that unit, because they can affect the choice or nature of a decision. More precisely, since disagreements within a single-group decision unit are to be expected, its operation is likely to be conditioned by the techniques that are used to manage disagreement and conflict within the group. As Charles F. Hermann and his colleagues explain, a group's management of substantive disagreements among its members affects the resulting output, that is, their "solution" to the problem¹⁸⁰. Since conflict in a problem-solving group can be debilitating, members often devote energy to developing ways of dealing with substantive differences¹⁸¹.

We can find three models in the literature to describe how single groups cope with conflict: 1) members act to minimize conflict by promoting concurrence (groupthink); 2) members acknowledge that disagreement is a fundamental part of the decision-making process and seek to resolve the conflict through debate and

¹⁸⁰ Charles F. Hermann, Janice G. Stein *et al.* Summer 2001. «Resolve, Accept, or Avoid: Effects of Group Conflict on Foreign Policy Decisions». *International Studies Review*: 3 (2), p.135.

¹⁸¹ M. Hermann, «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy...», p.65.

compromise (bureaucratic politics); and 3) even though disagreements are likely, members recognize that such conflict may have no resolution and approve a rule to govern decision making (winning majority). To differentiate between these dynamics, two variables are of particular use, the extent to which members of the group identify with the group itself or with external organizations, and the decision rules used by the group¹⁸². As M. Hermann explains:

A focus on building concurrence and denying conflict is more likely when members' loyalties lie within the group. Members are concerned with what is happening in the group itself, in maintaining morale and cohesiveness, and in retaining their position in the group. When members' loyalties lie outside the group, the rules in place to guide decision making help to differentiate if conflict is accepted or resolved. With a unanimity decision rule, members recognize that no solution is possible unless it is acceptable to everyone; with a majority decision rule, members agree to abide by what a certain percentage of the group decides¹⁸³.

The type of solution group members will come up with to manage disagreement are differentiated as: a) deadlock, i.e., a situation of stalemate in which group members reach no decision on how to resolve their differences; b) prevalent solution, referring to a situation in which the group selects the one option that has been discussed from the outset. It translates concurrence around a particular choice. Such circumstances may result when no other option is perceived to meet the apparent decision criteria, when norms prevent articulating an alternative to an option advocated by an authoritative group member, or when there is a shared set of beliefs about what is appropriate in the particular context; c) subset solution, that is, a solution satisfactory to some faction in the group; and d) integrative solution, which consists of an alternative that in the course of the group discussion comes to represent the preference of all members and involves some shift from their initial choices¹⁸⁴. In Figure 3, group problem-solving

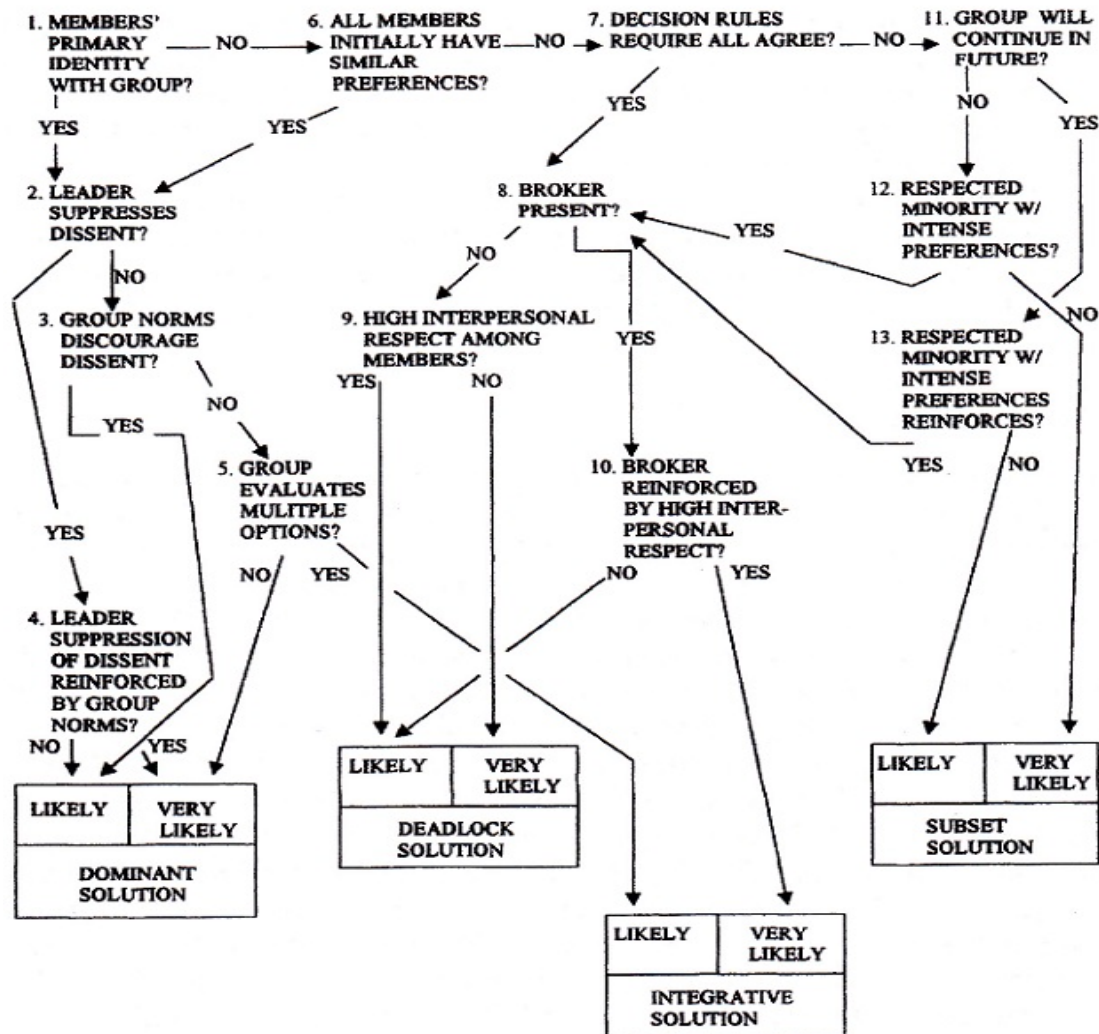
¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.65.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Hermann, Stein *et al.*, «Resolve, Accept, or Avoid...», p.136-137.

dynamics are illustrated, with reference to a few variables that can lead the process to a type of solution.

Figure 3 – Determinants of Group Decision Outputs



Source: Hermann, Stein, and al., (2001), p.146.

Finally, Hermann, M. (2001) further argued that, depending on the type of solution selected to deal with disagreements within the group, characteristics of

the foreign policy decision will differ¹⁸⁵. For example, the government's commitment of resources is less likely to be assertive when there is concurrence or one party's preferences are represented in the decision, than when the decision represents no one's position or a mixture of the preferences of the parties involved. Similarly, when there is concurrence or one party's preferences are represented in the decision, foreign policy initiatives are more likely to be taken. On the other hand, when deadlock is the outcome of the decision process, reactions to stimuli from the international environment are more likely. In other words, decisions are less likely to involve the use of a government's higher-priced instruments of statecraft (economic and military) when they involve compromise or deadlock than when members of the decision unit concur or one party's position prevails¹⁸⁶.

Table 2 – Substantive Nature of Decisions Corresponding to Various Process Outcomes

Process Outcome	Commitment of Resources	Intensity of Affect	Willingness to Take Initiative	Instruments of Statecraft Used
Dominant Solution (Concurrence)	High	Strong	High	Military/Economic
Deadlock	Minimal	Neutral	React	Diplomatic if any response demanded
Integrative Solution (Mutual compromise)	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Diplomatic
Subset Solution (One party's solution prevails)	High/Moderate	Moderate	High/Moderate	Military/Economic

Source: Hermann, M. (2001), p.74.

¹⁸⁵ Hermann, «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy...», p.74.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.75.

In line with this framework, we will focus on the unit at the apex of China's foreign policy decision-making structure, the Politburo Standing Committee, to observe the link between this group and foreign policy, in the next section. However, to better understand the responsibility of the PBSC we should further examine the Party and the government's interlocking structure and decision-making.

Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making Structure

As mentioned earlier, China's economic development priority and the increasing complexity of its international interests have intensified the need to better coordinate the activities of the various Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and state organs involved, and increase awareness of any impacts on China's interests, by consulting a range of experts on various fields¹⁸⁷. However, decision making in the area of foreign policy has remained highly centralized and concentrated in the supreme leading bodies of the CCP, such as the Politburo Standing Committee, the various leading groups dealing with foreign affairs (Foreign Affairs Work Leading Small Group (FAWLSG), all chaired by China's paramount leader¹⁸⁸, and state institutions.

The CCP's Leading Organs

In James Wang's *Contemporary Chinese Politics: An Introduction*, we learn that in China, the Communist Party controls and directs the complex system of government machinery, and it is through the agencies of the government that the policies and programs approved by the Party are implemented¹⁸⁹. Although all

¹⁸⁷ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...» p.63.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.64.

¹⁸⁹ Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics...*, p.89.

Communist states accept the fact that under socialism there is a distinction between state and Party¹⁹⁰, the Party can manage to control the state bureaucracy by supervising its personnel. Therefore, it is the CCP that has the final word over state and armed forces in all political decision making¹⁹¹. This will be very important to remember for the next section on China's DPRK policy. Formally speaking the highest executive forum is the Central Committee (CC), consisting of over three-hundred members, working as advisors for state policies, which in turn assigns power to the Politburo and its Standing Committee (PBSC)¹⁹². Collective power is traditionally exerted by the Politburo and the Secretariat of the CCP's Central Committee. However, according to Cabestan (2009), the Politburo does not meet frequently enough to approve every major foreign policy decision, and the CC's Secretariat no longer plays a key role in foreign affairs¹⁹³.

State Institutions

State institutions, like the Foreign Ministry or the Ministry of Commerce – previously known as the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation – as well as the PRC presidency, play a role in foreign policy decision making hard to disconnect from that of the CCP and the position their respective leaders hold in the Party¹⁹⁴. It is not a coincidence that the PRC president is also the CCP General Secretary, since it became common sense that, the state must work in symbiosis with the Party, in order to protect its legitimacy and look after its interests.

¹⁹⁰ Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization...*, p.109.

¹⁹¹ Dittmer, «Reform and Chinese Foreign Policy», p.174.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...», p.67.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.65.

The State Council, as the highest executive organ of state power, runs the state's foreign policy apparatus. It is composed of a premier, vice-premier, secretary-general, state councillors, and ministers in charge of ministries and commissions. The State Council is responsible for carrying out the principles and policies of the CCP, and according to article 89 of the RPC's constitution, is responsible for dealing with such affairs as China's internal politics, diplomacy, national defence, finance, economy, culture, and education. Under the present Constitution, the State Council exercises the power of administrative legislation, the power to submit proposals, the power of administrative leadership, economic management, diplomatic administration, and social administration. It also has the function to formulate the tasks and responsibilities of the ministries and commissions of the State Council, to exercise unified leadership over the work of the ministries and commissions and to direct all other administrative work of a national character that does not fall within the jurisdiction of the ministries and commissions¹⁹⁵.

Four of the State Council ministries, out of twenty-nine, are concerned with foreign policy: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, the Defence Ministry, and in special cases, the People's Bank¹⁹⁶. The main body for foreign policy recommendations and implementation is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁹⁷. The MFA is responsible for day-to-day foreign policy, makes many diplomatic decisions, is a unique source of analyses and information about the

¹⁹⁵ Beijing. The National People's Congress of the RPC. *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*. Online. http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/2007-11/15/content_1372967.htm

¹⁹⁶ Dittmer, «Reform and Chinese Foreign Policy», p.173.

¹⁹⁷ George Yang. 1995. «Mechanisms of Foreign Policy-making and Implementation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs». In Carol Lee Hamrin and Zhao Suisheng, ed. *Decision-making in Deng's China : Perspectives From Insiders*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, p.91.

outside world, a major source of proposals on policy options, and a privileged channel of foreign-policy implementation¹⁹⁸.

Leading Small Groups

Leading small groups' central purpose is to allow key government, party, and military components to have input into key foreign policy decisions. Another purpose is to allow the leader and his advisors to benefit from these contributions as they seek to formulate effective policies that reflect the expertise and interests of key parts of the Chinese administration¹⁹⁹. LSG's such as, the National Security Leading Small Group (NSLSG), Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG), Taiwan Leading Small Group, Hong Kong LSG and Macau LSG, are not empowered to make final decisions, and their proposals must be formally endorsed by the PBSC²⁰⁰. In fact, most of them are chaired by the State's general secretary. With the globalization of China's economy, the role of LSGs in charge of finance and economy, energy issues, and global warming has also increased²⁰¹.

Overall, while we can consider the general process of Chinese foreign policy making and the organs involved in it, it remains ambiguous to propose an accurate description of the power center where decisions are actually made and approved²⁰². China's North Korea policy decision making is no exception and we can only make assumptions based on official statements, and scholarly papers and monographs.

¹⁹⁸ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...», p.82.

¹⁹⁹ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations...*, p.60.

²⁰⁰ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...», p.78.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.78.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.65.

Part Two

CHAPTER FIVE

Case Study: China's DPRK Policy from a Neoclassical Realist Standpoint

It is now time to test our three hypotheses in the context of China's policy toward its neighbour, North Korea. The methods proposed earlier to analyze foreign policy determinants – the leadership's perception of power, ideology, and the type of decision unit responsible with foreign policy – respectively, will be applied with respect to three events which led to the formulation and implementation of a decision on China's part. Monitoring observations based on the process-tracing of each response will enable comparison and help verify the involvement of these domestic variables between the structural pressure of the international environment and foreign policy, predicted by neoclassical realist theory.

The Second Nuclear Crisis, North Korea's Withdrawal from the NPT, and the Six-Party Talks (2003)

The Second nuclear crisis between the United States and North Korea began in October 2002, as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly confronted the regime about suspicions that it had acquired materials consistent with the pursuit of a nuclear weapons program based on highly enriched

uranium (HEU)²⁰³. One month later, the United States imposed on the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization²⁰⁴ (KEDO) its unilateral decision to stop monthly heavy fuel oil shipments that were being made in partial accordance with the Agreed Framework. The supply of heavy fuel oil was, in fact, reportedly the only one of the four articles of the Agreed Framework that the United States has ever respected²⁰⁵. Eventually, the United States refused to talk alone with North Korea and insisted on multilateral negotiations. As a response to Washington's consistent refusal to hold bilateral talks and to the resolution adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which called for Pyongyang's compliance with its obligations under the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the DPRK announced in January 10, 2003, its withdrawal from the non-proliferation treaty²⁰⁶.

While China had kept a low profile during the 1993-1994 negotiations of the first nuclear crisis, the leadership came to the decision to play an active role in dealing with the issue and to strive to bring about a denuclearized Korea. What started as a three-party-talks initiative, with Beijing mediating between the two parties, turned into China's hosting the Six-Party Talks in August 2003 and deploying tremendous efforts to bring the "crisis" under control²⁰⁷. By looking

²⁰³ Xiao Ren. 2007. «Korean Security Dilemmas: Chinese Policies». In Hazel Smith, ed. *Reconstituting Korean Security : A Policy Primer*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, p.151.

²⁰⁴ KEDO is a multinational consortium that the United States agreed to establish and lead, following the signature of the Agreement Framework in 1994 by the U.S. and North Korea. It would oversee the financing and construction of a pair of thousand-megawatt light-water reactors to replace the North's existing or planned graphite-moderated reactors. Building directly on the Agreed Framework, KEDO and the DPRK had signed a contract for two light-water reactors to replace its nuclear complex in December 1995, which were to be completed by 2003. For more on the first nuclear crisis and the Agreed Framework, see: Pollack, «The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework».

²⁰⁵ Samuel S. Kim. 2006. «Sino-North Korean Relations in the Post-Cold War World». In Young W. Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, ed. *North Korea : The Politics of Regime Survival*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, p.193.

²⁰⁶ Kyung-Ae Park. 2004. «North Korea in 2003: Pendulum Swing between Crisis and Diplomacy». *Asian Survey*: 44 (1), p.139.

²⁰⁷ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.159.

more thoroughly into the power, ideology, and decision-making contexts, we should find clarification regarding the determinants of China's decision to participate in the Six-Party Talks.

Hypothesis 1 – Leadership's Perception of Power

In line with its project of economic reform in late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping's leadership had conveyed that the concept of comprehensive power relied not only on military and economic capabilities, but also on such factors as the moral and political unity of the people. The idea that neglecting these components of comprehensive power could result in the demise of the regime, just like in the Soviet Union²⁰⁸, was still vivid in the mind of successors Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao. In addition, since ancient times, the Chinese conception of power has been very different from the western view, emphasizing the glory of victory without the use of force, such as expressed in the classic work of Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

On the matter of military power, China's 2002 White Paper reiterated the country's military doctrine of national defence as a policy of a defensive nature. As a strategic task in China's modernization drive, strengthening national defence is considered a key guarantee for safeguarding China's security and unity and building a well-off society in an all-round way. The fundamental basis for the formulation of China's national defence policy primarily includes: safeguarding state sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security; upholding economic development as the central task and unremittingly enhancing the overall national strength; adhering to and improving the socialist system; maintaining and

²⁰⁸ Boris T. Kulik. 2000. «National Security Policy-making by the CCP: The Role of Domestic Factors». In Satu P. Limaye and Yasuhiro Matsuda, ed. *Domestic Determinants and Security Policy-making in East Asia*. Honolulu; Tokyo: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies; National Institute for Defense Studies (Japan), p.44.

promoting social stability and harmony; and striving for an international environment of lasting peace and a favourable climate in China's periphery²⁰⁹. In the same mindset, “[t]he Chinese government”, it said, “is willing, together with the international community, to contribute to the maintenance of the legal system for international arms control and disarmament, and the advancement of the process of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation²¹⁰”. China had joined the NPT in 1992, after nearly two decades of condemning the treaty for discrimination against non-nuclear countries and failure to curb the nuclear arms expansion of the superpowers efficiently²¹¹. It was concluded by Chinese analysts that on balance, joining the treaty would be more advantageous to China than remaining outside the NPT regime²¹².

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chinese leadership characterized the distribution of power as far from equally balanced, and while acknowledging the status of the United States as a sole superpower, preferred multipolarity as a better prospect for the future. The 2002 White Paper stated that in terms of military technology, the gap between the developed and developing countries was wider than ever before, posing a challenge for the developing countries in their effort to safeguard sovereignty and security²¹³. On the international political and economic order, the document deplored that the world's economic development was materially unbalanced, widening the North-South gap, and embraced the developing countries' push forward for the establishment of a fair and rational new

²⁰⁹ Beijing. International Office of the State Council of the PRC. December 2002. *China's National Defense in 2002*. Online. http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/28/content_17780.htm

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Banning N. Garrett and Bonnie S. Glaser. 1995. «Chinese Perspectives on Nuclear Arms Control». *International Security*: 20 (3), p.50.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.50.

²¹³ Beijing. International Office of the State Council of the PRC. December 2002. *China's National Defense in 2002*. Online. http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/28/content_17780.htm

international order and participation in the promotion of peace and development²¹⁴.

Previous leader Jiang Zemin had worked to craft a so-called *daguo waijiao* (great power diplomacy) from the mid-1990s onward, recognizing that when America became the sole superpower it created the situation that Chinese experts have characterized as *yichao duoqiang* (“one superpower, several powers”). For Jiang, the key to whether China could live up to the reality and obligations of a “great power” in world affairs depended very much on ties with the U.S.²¹⁵, which is why a “pro-U.S.” policy was pursued. Conversely, Hu Jintao and his colleagues have taken a more comprehensive, cool-headed approach to diplomacy²¹⁶. Hu would only characterize ties with the U.S. as “a constructive, cooperative partnership”, giving observers the impression of being an “Europeanist”- or being as “pro-Europe” or “pro-Russia” as Jiang was pro-United States²¹⁷.

The United States’ display of unilateralism and firepower in Iraq, in March 2003, had a profound impact on the CCP leadership’s perception of the dangers of Bush-style neo-conservatism²¹⁸. A year before, Chinese leaders were briefed on the White House’s National Security Strategy (NSS), which justified the United States taking preemptive military actions against regimes that could be developing WMDs²¹⁹. The Bush administration had worked on putting an official end to the practice of assigning a set of fixed targets for the U.S. nuclear force – the vast majority of them in the former Soviet Union – by replacing it with a more flexible

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.159.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.160.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.171.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

system providing U.S. presidents the option of conducting a preemptive strike with precision-guided conventional bombs or nuclear weapons aimed at states that threaten or use chemical, nuclear or biological arms against the United States or its allies. Details of this policy, which Pentagon planners called "offensive deterrence," were contained in excerpts from the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review, which was sent to Congress in January 2002. Among other things, the review stated that immediate contingencies, which require pre-targeted weapons, included an Iraqi attack on Israel or its neighbours, a North Korean attack on South Korea or a military confrontation [with China] over the status of Taiwan²²⁰.

For China, who was found listed together with North Korea as targeted countries, such a report was in violation of the 1994 U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework, which stated that "the United States will provide formal assurances to North Korea, against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the United States", the proposition to develop small, "usable" nuclear weapons, was in contravention of Article VI of the NPT²²¹. Under the circumstances, the U.S. intervention in Iraq came as a second red flag, added to the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999 and the U.S. missile strike on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, which reflected that the U.S. had not abandoned the use of force to reach its objective²²², and constantly violated the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of a state. The same month,

²²⁰ Walter Pincus. March 23, 2002. «U.S. Nuclear Arms Stance Modified by Policy Study». *The Washington Post*. Online. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A5080-2002Mar22?language=printer> (page accessed 10 December 2011).

²²¹ Kim, «Sino-North Korean Relations...», p.193.

Article VI of the NPT reads as follow: "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early data and to nuclear disarmament. ...". In broad terms Article VI sought to delegitimize nuclear weapons as instruments of national policy. For more on the NPT, see: Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky and George Bunn. July/August 1994. «The Doctrine of the Nuclear-Weapon States and the Future of Non-Proliferation». *Arms Control Today*: 24

²²² Kulik, «National Security Policy-making...», p.47.

People's Daily commentator, Huang Peizhao commented about the U.S. moves in the Middle East which had “served the goal of seeking worldwide domination²²³”.

Disapproving of policies of expansion or hegemonism, and in order to meet the goal of sustained economic development, the fourth-generation of leaders under President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao pursued a more assertive and multi-pronged diplomacy²²⁴. Beijing was aware that a rising, socialist China would remain a concern to other countries, and that its international role remains controversial for those proponents of the “China threat theory”. As it seeks to play a more responsible role internationally and regionally, China came to the conclusion that multilateral approaches were the best way to accomplish this goal, as the “threat” of too much Chinese “presence” or involvement might be decreased²²⁵.

Implications for the North Korean Issue

Beijing’s behaviour since the start of the standoff in October 2002 reflected a changing strategic calculus on China’s part and a reprioritization of competing interests and goals. China came to recognize the possibility that the U.S. and the DPRK might not come to any workable settlement on the nuclear issue without some third-party intervention²²⁶. The Iraq war was an indicator of the extremes to which the Bush administration was willing to go in pursuit of its objectives, and China worried about the escalation of the crisis between the U.S. and the DPRK, which would bring U.S. military power projection close to its borders²²⁷. Strongly opposed to the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution to condemn

²²³ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.171.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.157.

²²⁵ Chu Shulong and Lin Xinzhu. 2008. «The Six Party Talks: A Chinese Perspective». *Asian Perspective*: 32 (4), p.39.

²²⁶ Kim, «Sino-North Korean Relations...», p.189.

²²⁷ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.172.

Pyongyang's withdrawal from the NPT, China chose to play a proactive conflict-management role²²⁸.

The evidence of a change in the PRC diplomacy was first noted when Beijing accepted to host the Six-Party Talks to defuse the North Korean nuclear crisis. At first, Chinese leaders did not have strong feelings about North Korean nuclear weapons because no one in China believed that they would be aimed at China or would pose a serious threat or direct security problem for the country²²⁹. The "crisis" was an issue between the DPRK and the United States. But growing security concerns about possible U.S. recklessness in trying to end the North Korean nuclear crisis through military means were a clear catalyst for Beijing's hands-on diplomacy²³⁰. We have to understand that, Korea has always borne a special significance for China's security because of its geopolitical location in the centre of Northeast Asian where the mainland and sea powers meet with each other²³¹. Having an approximately 1,360 km long shared border, North Korea would always be a reminder of the route by which imperial Japan launched its invasion of the Chinese mainland in the early twentieth century, and of the U.S. intervention in the Korean War, when in late 1950 General MacArthur's forces almost reached the Chinese border²³².

The nuclear issue now presented not only a danger to North Korea's development and survival, but also a major problem for Chinese relations with the US and its diplomacy in the international community. Not to mention that a

²²⁸ Kim, «Sino-North Korean Relations...», p.189.

²²⁹ Chu Shulong and Lin Xinzhu, «The Six Party Talks...», p.31.

²³⁰ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.172.

²³¹ Jian Cai. 2010. «The Korean Nuclear Crisis and the Changing Sino-DPRK Relationship». *Asian Perspective*: 34 (1), p.152.

²³² Kim, «Sino-North Korean Relations...», p.183.

nuclear-armed North Korea could fuel proliferation with Tokyo, Seoul, and even Taipei, deciding to have their own deterrents as a guarantee of security²³³. The Chinese government regarded the Six-party Talks as a way to constrain the problem and keep it under control²³⁴. Added to this was the possibility that, a multilateral approach might enhance China's prestige and leverage with Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul, while avoiding extreme reactions in Pyongyang²³⁵.

A day before the August 27-29 first round of the talks took place in Beijing, Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi at a Joint Interview by Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, CCTV, CRI and China Daily, reiterated Beijing's stance on the issue:

"We hold that the Korean Peninsula should be nuclear-free. At the same time, the DPRK's security concerns should also be addressed through the only means of dialogue and peaceful talks so as to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula. [...] The root of the nuclear issue derives from the remaining shadow of the Cold War on the Korean peninsula. After the problem became acute, the main views and proposition between the DPRK and the US became confrontational, leading to the escalation of situation on the Korean peninsula. [...] We are against such actions as sanctions or coerce, least to mention war. We sincerely hope the nuclear issue can be resolved peacefully. [...] China hopes all parties will take into consideration the general situation of safeguarding peace and stability of the Korean peninsula, show sincerity to solve the issue, adopt a calm and patient attitude, respect each other, conduct consultations on an equal footing, seek common grounds, and reduce disputes, so as to ensure the talks to continue and yield peace²³⁶".

²³³ Howard M. Krawitz. August 2003. «Resolving Korea's Nuclear Crisis: Tough Choices for China». *Strategic Forum*: 201, p.5.

²³⁴ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.156.

²³⁵ Krawitz, «Resolving Korea's...», p.1.

²³⁶ Beijing. Ministry Of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. August 26, 2003. *Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Head of the Chinese Delegation to the Six-Party Beijing Talks, Receives a Joint Interview by Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, CCTV, CRI and China Daily*. Online. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjw/gjrdwt/t25372.htm>

Hypothesis 2 – Ideology

Heike Holbig²³⁷, senior research fellow at the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies, editor of the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, and specialist in PRC domestic politics, analysed the Chinese Communist Party's ideological reform in the aftermath of the Sixteenth Party Congress. From Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, the reemphasis on ideology and the inclusion of the concepts of Harmonious Socialist Society and of a Scientific Outlook on Development in the party constitution at the Seventeenth Party Congress have been tremendously significant. Moreover, after Hu Jintao was elected general secretary, the elitist concept of the Three Represents was reinterpreted in a populist manner by shifting the emphasis to representation of the interests of the people from that of the “advanced social productive forces²³⁸”.

Based on the analysis of recent elite debates, Holbig argues that reformulation of the CCP's ideology since 2002 has been the consequence of perceived challenges to the legitimacy of CCP rule. Contrary to many Western commentators, who see China's successful economic performance as the most important if not the only source of regime legitimacy, Chinese party theorists and scholars have come to regard Deng Xiaoping's formula of performance-based legitimacy as increasingly precarious. In order to tackle the perceived “performance dilemma” of party rule, the adaptation and innovation of party ideology is regarded as a crucial measure to re-legitimize CCP rule²³⁹. In Duchâtel's words, “Party and academic elites have repeatedly emphasized the legitimizing

²³⁷ See: Heike Holbig. 2009. «Remaking the CCP's Ideology: Determinants, Progress, and Limits under Hu Jintao». *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*: 38 (3)

²³⁸ Mathieu Duchâtel and François Godement. 2009. «China's Politics Under Hu». *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*: 38 (3), p.8.

²³⁹ Holbig, «Remaking the CCP's Ideology...», p.35.

function of ideology and the adaptation of Marxism to the needs of a society experiencing tremendous transformation since the beginning of the reform era²⁴⁰”.

It is also important to note that while not too many Hu Jintao’s Communist Youth League (CYL) affiliates are found in government departments, particularly in areas dealing with the economy, trade, and foreign affairs, those who have filled senior CCP positions at the 16th Party Congress are for the most part party affairs specialists²⁴¹. Hu himself began his first term as party boss with a package of plans to perpetuate the CCP’s ruling party status. He has conscientiously promoted the status of party organs even in government and economic fields²⁴². It is no surprise that, as Lam (2006) observed, while the majority of CYL members are specialists in Communist ideology, organization, and propaganda issues, they often consider the survival and welfare of the party as the be-all and end-all of statecraft²⁴³.

At the Sixteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on November 8, 2002, Jiang Zemin delivered to the future leadership his report entitled "Build a Well-off Society in an All-Round Way and Create a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics". The theme of the congress, it says, “is to hold high the great banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory, fully act on the important thought of Three Represents, carry forward our cause into the future, keep pace with the times, build a well-off society in an all-round way, speed up socialist modernization and work hard to create a new situation in building socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

²⁴⁰ Duchâtel and Godement, «China’s Politics Under Hu...», p.8.

²⁴¹ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.21.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p.22.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

Looking back at the theory on ideology and foreign policy, it was mentioned that the ideas of decision-makers about political reality had a certain influence, since they configure their environment for choice, inform their consideration of various options, and provide rationalizations for the choices that were made²⁴⁴. The mindset on the actual international environment read as follows in the Party Congress report:

The trends toward world multipolarization and economic globalization are developing amidst twists and turns. Science and technology are advancing rapidly. Competition in overall national strength is becoming increasingly fierce. Given this pressing situation, we must move forward, or we will fall behind. Our Party must stand firm in the forefront of the times and unite with and lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in accomplishing the three major historical tasks: to propel the modernization drive, to achieve national reunification and to safeguard world peace and promote common development, and in bringing about the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on its road to socialism with Chinese characteristics. This is a grand mission history and the era have entrusted to our Party²⁴⁵.

With respect to foreign policy, we can assume that these three major tasks advanced in the Party rules, would affect the nature of Beijing's policy decisions. Any decisions that would undermine the modernization drive, national reunification and safeguard of world peace, and the progress of socialism with Chinese characteristics, would bring criticism to the decision-makers. This might explain why emphasis is also put on collective leadership and a more consultative decision-making manner.

²⁴⁴ Levine, «Perception and Ideology...», p.30.

²⁴⁵ «Full Text of Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress». November 2002. *People's Daily Online*. Online. http://english.people.com.cn/200211/18/eng20021118_106983.shtml (page accessed 22 April 2012).

Party Principles and the Six-Party Talks

As a way to test the theory that ideology is a determinant of China's DPRK policy, we will consider provisions extracted from the Sixteenth Party Congress report of 2002, which represent core principles of the Party to lead the people in building socialism with Chinese characteristics, to see if they are reflected in China's policy to resolve the Korean nuclear issue.

First, the Party underlined the need to keep economic development as the central task and solve problems cropping up on the way forward through development. In addition, all opportunities to accelerate development should be seized²⁴⁶. With the economic dimension embedded in the Communist Party ideology, it is not a secret that Beijing's dilemma toward its implication in the nuclear issue was affected by economic factors. On the one hand, economic sanctions were rejected. Under worst-case scenario, withholding food, fuel, or economic aid, or acquiescing to a third party's economic sanctions could significantly harm the North Korean regime, resulting in internal chaos, flood of North Korean economic migrants into Northeast China, and discontent of the Chinese people already having a hard time making ends meet²⁴⁷. On the other hand, the main concern of the leadership was to avoid the outbreak of an armed conflict, or at the worst, war, between the U.S. and the DPRK. Since China has very deep economic ties with South Korea, Japan, and the United States, a Korean or regional war would seriously jeopardize the prospects of China's economic development²⁴⁸. The need to diffuse the crisis was key in inducing China's participation in the Six-Party Talks.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Krawitz, «Resolving Korea's...», p.2.

²⁴⁸ Jian Cai, «The Korean Nuclear Crisis...», p.140.

Second, also included in the Party Congress report was the need to ensure stability as a principle of overriding importance and balance reform, development and stability: “Stability is a prerequisite for reform and development. We should take into full consideration the momentum of reform, the speed of development and the sustainability of the general public²⁴⁹”. Considering the nuclear crisis of 2002, since a stable, nuclear free Korean peninsula, and to a broader extent, Northeast Asia, was essential for China in terms of the primary goal of economic development of the country, the leadership decided that it needed to take action to deal with it²⁵⁰.

Third, also included in the Party Congress report were the international provisions of pursuing the independent foreign policy of peace, safeguarding world peace and promoting common development:

We will, as always, attach paramount importance to our state sovereignty and security. In handling international affairs, we should observe and cope with the situation cool-headedly, adhere to the principle of mutual respect and seek common ground while shelving differences. We need to respect the diversity of the world, promote democracy in international relations and strive for a peaceful international environment and a good climate in areas around China²⁵¹.

As Krawitz (2003) explains, given Chinese aspirations of being seen as a premier power in Asia and credible actor on the global scene, the spectre of a possible public diplomacy failure and the prospect of subsequent international humiliation are real fears for Beijing. In order to prevent such contention, Beijing must keep presenting itself as skilled in international diplomacy, while also clearly

²⁴⁹ «Full Text of Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress». Online.
http://english.people.com.cn/200211/18/eng20021118_106983.shtml

²⁵⁰ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.151.

²⁵¹ «Full Text of Jiang Zemin's Report at 16th Party Congress». Online.
http://english.people.com.cn/200211/18/eng20021118_106983.shtml

demonstrating that it is charting its own course. In effect, it would be unlikely to sign on to any initiative that might create an impression that it is following Washington's lead, doing Washington's bidding, or taking Washington's side²⁵². Furthermore, China is not only concerned about economic and military ramifications, but also about preserving its image and credibility with Third world countries:

China has relatively been on good terms with Iran and Syria, and other states that Washington has historically considered supporters of terrorism, threatening to U.S. security interests, or otherwise suspects. Beijing has normal relations with these states and does not wish to create problems with them. Iran is for example a major supplier of oil to China. Certainly, the lesson would not be lost on such states if Beijing were to reverse suddenly its policy on North Korea, especially if such a move were interpreted as having occurred in response to U.S. urging. Its credibility would be undermined²⁵³.

Principles of mutual respect and shelving differences also refer to a policy of neighbourliness, trustworthiness and partnership with neighbouring countries in Asia and the Pacific, also endorsed in the 16th CPC Congress, together with recommendations to increase common interests, raise trust and reduce regional threat perceptions of China²⁵⁴. As we can see, this third principle is an allusion to power status, and prestige in terms of a state's weight in world affairs. This stems from the fact that, given the authoritarian nature of the People's Republic of China (PRC) political system, the CCP's interpretations of foreign events and actions are transmitted as China's national interests²⁵⁵.

²⁵² Krawitz, «Resolving Korea's...», p.4.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Chung Chien-peng. 2009. «The " Good Neighbour Policy" in the Context of China's Foreign Relations». *China: An International Journal*: 7 (1), p.113.

²⁵⁵ Fei-ling Wang. November 2005. «Preservation, Prosperity and Power: What Motivates China's Foreign Policy?». *Journal of Contemporary China*: 14 (45), p.676.

Hypothesis 3 – Decision Unit

In his account of Chinese foreign relations, Robert Sutter (2010) stressed that on the one hand, the mix of Chinese goals and Chinese leaders' perceptions regarding Asian and world affairs influenced China's behaviour in international affairs, while on the other hand, Chinese actions abroad duly took account of domestic priorities of stability and economic growth. Consequently, a risk-averse approach that usually represented the lowest common denominator among senior Chinese leaders, followed by consensus, appeared to be the norm in dealing with the outside world²⁵⁶.

The second nuclear crisis arose when China had just entered a new stage of economic reform and political succession. The 16th Party Congress supposed to take place in September 2002 was postponed in November because then President Jiang Zemin was scheduled to make an important state visit to the United States in late October²⁵⁷. Hu Jintao became CCP leader in November 2002, one month after the nuclear standoff began between the United States and the DPRK, but Jiang remained President of the PRC at least until March 2003, and chair of the CMC until September 2004. Although we previously mentioned that factionalism is generally muted in China's web of interrelated bureaucracies, the fact that it took nearly a year to come up with the decision to host the Six-Party Talks increase speculation that consensus building in Chinese foreign policy might have been more difficult because of the political succession and leadership lineup²⁵⁸.

²⁵⁶ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations...*, p.42.

²⁵⁷ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...» p.147.

²⁵⁸ David Bachman. 2003. «New Leaders, New Foreign Policymaking Procedures?». In Lin Gang and Hu Xiaobo, ed. *China After Jiang*. Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, p.116.

This proposition bears on the circumstances of Hu Jintao's first year in power, which was overshadowed by the lingering presence of Jiang Zemin, and by the continuing influence of power brokers such as Zeng Qinghong and the party elders²⁵⁹. A few months before the Congress was to convene, Jiang manoeuvred to have Shanghai party chief Huang Ju and Beijing party boss Jia Qinglin included in the Politburo Standing Committee. This was despite the fact that except during brief periods in the Cultural Revolution, the PBSC usually consists of merely five to seven members so as to facilitate decision-making. The inclusion of Huang and Jia ensured that the nine-member top executive body would have at least four Jiang supporters: CCP Secretariat member Zeng Qinghong, Vice-premier Wu Bangguo, Huang and Jia²⁶⁰. In an interview conducted by Lam (2006) in 2002, a party veteran indicated that Jiang and Zeng's personnel reshuffles in the run-up to the 16th Party Congress would deprive the new party chief of an important means of quickly firming up his grip over the party, government, and army. "In the Chinese tradition, the most effective way for a newly ensconced supremo to establish himself is through appointments and promotions", he said, "[h]owever, since Jiang and Zeng have already filled most of the civilian and military slots with relatively young officials, Hu may have to wait a couple of years or more before he can make another series of appointments²⁶¹".

Thus, it was argued that the extent of Hu's actual power was unclear and that prospects for institutionalized succession had been overshadowed by factional politics. Some ventured that Jiang Zemin had scored a "comprehensive" victory in limiting the power of the new general secretary and in ensuring that his political line would dominate China's development for the next couple of years²⁶². However,

²⁵⁹ Duchâtel and Godement, «China's Politics Under Hu...», p.3.

²⁶⁰ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.17.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

²⁶² Duchâtel and Godement, «China's Politics Under Hu...», p.3.

the outcome of the Congress led to diverging interpretations, and Hu clearly set in motion a process-based hold on political power. On the one hand, Bo Zhiyue (2005) argues that the office of the CCP general secretary holds institutionally based power and that it can, therefore, govern beyond a factional balance of power because power lies in the institution and not in the man. According to Bo, a new pattern in the Chinese political system has emerged from the 16th Congress, allowing Hu Jintao to govern through an evolving decision-making process²⁶³.

On the other hand, Cheng Li²⁶⁴ (2009) identifies a pattern of emerging bipartisanship within the CCP, between an elitist coalition led by former general secretary Jiang Zemin, former vice president Zeng Qinghong and the incumbent chairman of the National People's Congress, Wu Bangguo, and a populist coalition led by General Secretary Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. With the Elitists being mainly princelings, and the populists coming from the Communist Youth League, these two coalitions are said to be political bases built on factional affiliations. Most importantly, each has diverging political priorities: for the former group, it is a further integration into the world economy; as for the latter, focus is on the development of the private sector and market liberalization, a more balanced regional development, health care and employment²⁶⁵.

Cheng (2009) argues that this emerging pattern of bipartisanship is already having an impact on the decision-making process, as the distribution of power between the two coalitions, works as a non-institutionalized system of checks and balances. On the policy front, it raises new challenges for the CCP's performance

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.3-4.

²⁶⁴ Li Cheng. 2009. «The Chinese Communist Party: Recruiting and Controlling the New Elites». *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*: 38 (3)

²⁶⁵ Duchâtel and Godement, «China's Politics Under Hu...», p.7.

because of increased bargaining and the risk of deadlock. On the political front, it brings a transformation which is leading to collective leadership and some form of Chinese-style inner-party democracy²⁶⁶. From Lam's perspective, the momentum was going the way of the Hu Jintao- Wen Jiabao leadership and not the Shanghai faction. Other things being equal, an average cadre would rather link his fate with leaders of the future than with those of the past. Thus, PBSC members with no obvious factional affiliations such as Li Changchun and Luo Gan, as well as Politburo members Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Zhang Lichang, and He Guoqiang, had by late 2003 begun showing signs of aligning themselves with the Hu faction. And, this was despite the fact that cadres such as Li Chanchun, Zhang Dejiang, and Yu Zhengsheng seemed to owe their rise more to Jiang than to Hu²⁶⁷.

All in all, Hu appeared to give more emphasis than Jiang to the role of the full Politburo and its Standing Committee, and take into consideration recommendations from various bureaucracies; the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Commerce, and the CCP's International Department²⁶⁸. He allowed official media reports of Politburo decision-making activities and study sessions, as well as decision-making meetings of the Politburo Standing Committee²⁶⁹. He also invited CMC members and designated experts to participate in PBSC or Politburo meetings when he deems it necessary²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁶⁷ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.19.

²⁶⁸ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...», p.66.

²⁶⁹ Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations...*, p.60.

²⁷⁰ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...» p.66.

Decision to Participate in the Six-Party Talks

It is believed that given the sensitivity of North Korea policy, top Chinese leaders may have tried to assert greater control and so-called democratic centralism over such deliberations²⁷¹. Since decision-making processes remain largely closed to outside scrutiny, it is difficult to know exactly if there was disagreement within the decision unit, but the fact that it took a relatively long time to decide, could be a sign that differences of opinion and approach had arisen. Assuming that the decision unit was the Politburo Standing Committee, we have mentioned earlier that each member represented their bureau, department, or some outside interest. It is their home affiliation whose views they are to present and defend, which reflect outside identity to the group.

In addition, George Yang (1995)'s portrayal of the mechanism of policy-making in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which offers a view on professional bureaucracy in the Chinese government, pointed out that consensus was required among the participants on the basis of frequent consultations and discussions. "The consensus thus reached takes the form of a formal report or a memorandum for approval that offers the unanimous recommendation²⁷²". Keeping in mind the decision units framework, we can already get a clearer picture of the decision process. Members' primary identity is outside the group, members have different preferences, and decision rules require all to agree. In addition, according to Duchâtel (2009), power brokers such as PBSC member Zeng Qinghong and the party elders were particularly influential in promoting the interests of the former president, Jiang Zemin. Such a process leads to an integrative solution as the group

²⁷¹ Bates Gill. July 2011. «China's North Korea Policy: Assessing Interests and Influence». *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*: 1-14. Online.

http://www.usip.org/files/resources/China%27s_North_Korea_Policy.pdf, p.4.

²⁷² Yang, «Mechanisms of Foreign Policy-making», p.95.

decision output, which generally implies a diplomatic response by the leadership with respect to the issue at hand.

Hosting the Six-Party Talks was not decided on a whim by the Chinese leadership. Not only did decision-makers within China have to reach consensus, but the parties involved, especially North Korea, had to agree on the format and provisions of the negotiation talks. As early as October 18, 2002, American Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs John R. Bolton and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly had discussed the DPRK, during their visit in China. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue confirmed to reporters that it was China's consistent stance to support the non-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula to safeguard its peace and stability, and added: "the nuclear issue in the DPRK should be solved through peaceful means, through dialogues and consultations²⁷³". This statement showed that Beijing's position concerning the methods to be used in dealing with the DPRK issue was already clear to the decision unit responsible. Thus, when the two U.S. diplomats pressed Chinese officials to use all their diplomatic and economic leverage to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program²⁷⁴, it was unlikely that the Chinese leadership would have agreed to it.

If we briefly trace developments of China's response, it seems to fit with the proposition extracted from the decision units framework. In February 2003, during

²⁷³ «Chinese FM Spokeswoman on Visit by US Officials». October 19, 2002. *People's Daily Online*. Online. http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200210/19/eng20021019_105320.shtml (page accessed 17 December 2011).

²⁷⁴ David E. Sanger and James Dao. October 17, 2002. «A Nuclear North Korea: Intelligence; U.S. Says Pakistan Gave Technology to North Korea». *New York Times*. Online. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/18/world/nuclear-north-korea-intelligence-us-says-pakistan-gave-technology-north-korea.html?scp=1&sq=october%202002%20north%20korea&st=cse&pagewanted=1> (page accessed 17 December 2011).

another phone conversation, President Bush suggested that the two countries jointly bear responsibility for achieving a nuclear-free peninsula. In order to alleviate the tension and to help bring the crisis under control, Beijing was convinced that the United States and the DPRK had to sit down to talk with each other. Yet the two were stuck on the terms of the talks' format. Whereas Pyongyang insisted on dealing with Washington bilaterally, the Bush administration had learned a "lesson" from the Clinton's administration's experiences and rejected the bilateral format, hoping that other parties would take part²⁷⁵. At the end of May 2003, when asked to confirm a Japanese report on the expansion of the talks to include Japan, South Korea, and Russia, spokeswoman on the third-party talks Zhang Qiyue stated that priority was to foster the Beijing talks between China, the United States, and the DPRK²⁷⁶.

Finally, in July 16, a day after his visit to Pyongyang, Deputy Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo departed for Washington, carrying a letter from Hu Jintao to George W. Bush. He met with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell and other high-ranking officials, briefing them on his meetings with the North Koreans. On behalf of the Chinese government, he proposed that, as a next step in the trilateral meetings, talks might adopt an extended multilateral format in which the U.S. and the DPRK would have some extra time to talk bilaterally²⁷⁷.

²⁷⁵ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.152.

²⁷⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. May 26, 2003. *Spokesperson Zhang Qiyue on the Talks of China, the DPRK and the United States*. Online.
<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zsjg/yzs/gjlb/2701/2704/t22849.htm>

²⁷⁷ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.154.

North Korea's Missiles and Nuclear Tests (2006)

On July 5, 2006, North Korea defied international warnings and launched seven ballistic missiles, including its long-range *Taepodong-2* missile. A month later, North Korea's Foreign Ministry announced, in October 3, that the country would in the near future carry out its first nuclear test. Six days later, geo-scientific and intelligence stations worldwide monitored an underground nuclear test. While neither of Pyongyang's nascent intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability and nuclear capability tests was rated as highly successful by outside experts, both were seen as ominous indicators of where North Korea was heading in terms of developing a deliverable nuclear weapons capability. Both tests were widely condemned by the United Nations Security Council, as members unanimously voted on UNSC Resolution 1695 on July 15, 2006 and UNSC Resolution 1718, on October 14, 2006²⁷⁸.

Hypothesis 1 – Leadership's Perception of Power

Since the mandate of the 16th Party Congress was effective from 2002 to 2007, there was no succession of leadership in 2006, and no drastic changes regarding the perception of the elements of power at that time, except perhaps, for a noticeable concern over socio-political capabilities, such as political governance and political and national unity. For example, in an address to Central Party School students in early 2004, Vice-president Zeng Qinghong criticized certain cadres' obsession with mere GDP growth, and argued that "we must use a scientific spirit and a scientific methodology" to look at economic growth and national progress. In other words, while measuring China's wealth, "software elements" such as

²⁷⁸ Alan D. Romberg and Yoshihide Soeya. March 2011. «Introduction». In Yuki Tatsumi, ed. *North Korea: Challenges for the US-Japan Alliance*. Washington: Stimson Center, p.2.

educational standards, public health, and respect for the law were to be given as much weight as increases in manufacturing and exports²⁷⁹.

Otherwise, the 2004 National Defense Paper reaffirmed China's development goal to build a moderately prosperous society. It stated that to achieve the arduous task for modernization, which calls for prolonged and persistent hard work, China will rely mainly on its own strength for development, and therefore poses no obstacle or threat to anyone²⁸⁰. Regarding military capabilities, the White Paper reiterated that, as an advocate of peace, development and cooperation, the country adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy of defensive nature. It promised that China would never pursue expansion, nor seek hegemony. The document further stated that: "A major strategic task of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in exercising state power is to secure a coordinated development of national defense and the economy, and to build modernized, regularized and revolutionary armed forces to keep the country safe²⁸¹".

In September 2005, a White Paper entitled *China's Endeavors for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation* was issued at a press conference in Beijing by the State Council Information Office. As a foreword was a reminder that the year 2005 marked the 60th anniversary of the victories of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations (UN), "the most universal, representative and authoritative inter-governmental international

²⁷⁹ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.43.

²⁸⁰ Beijing. International Office of the State Council of the PRC. December 2004. *China's National Defense in 2004*. Online. http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/28/content_18078.htm

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

organization in the world²⁸²". The section "China's Basic Policy and Decision" read as follows:

In the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, China follows the new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and commits itself to creating a favorable international and regional security environment, maintaining world peace and promoting common development. [...] In handling affairs related to international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, the Chinese government always bases its policy-making on the judgment whether it serves to safeguard national sovereignty and security, whether it serves to maintain global strategic stability and whether it serves to promote security for all and mutual trust among countries²⁸³.

With respect to missile technology and related issues, the official document underlined that China supports the important role played by the UN and other multilateral institutions, and advocates the establishment of a fair and non-discriminatory multilateral mechanism universally accepted by the international community in the field of missile non-proliferation²⁸⁴. These clarifications on the orientation of China's policy-making in dealing with issues related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation will be essential to our understanding of the decisions related to North Korea's missiles and nuclear tests.

On the matter of the international environment and power distribution, China's National Defense Paper of 2004 underlined that complicated security factors in the Asia-Pacific region were on the increase:

The United States is realigning and reinforcing its military presence in this region by buttressing military alliances and accelerating deployment of missile defense systems. Japan is stepping up its constitutional overhaul,

²⁸² «China Publishes White Paper on Arms Control ». September 1, 2005. *China.org.cn*. Online. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Aug/140343.htm> (page accessed 26 April 2012).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

adjusting its military and security policies and developing the missile defense system for future deployment. It has also markedly increased military activities abroad²⁸⁵.

It is fair to suggest that such considerations were influenced by Washington's mid-2004 announcement that the United States was redeploying its forces had raised eyebrows in China. In a statement, the White House had indicated that for the Asian region, the United States would "improve its ability to deter, dissuade, and defeat challenges through strengthened long-range strike capabilities, streamlined and consolidated headquarters, and a network of access arrangements". For example, more aircraft carriers would be stationed in facilities in Hawaii, Japan, Okinawa, and Guam. These considerations prompted some cadres to dispute whether Beijing should change its long-standing geopolitical strategy of "seeking cooperation and avoiding confrontation" with the United States²⁸⁶.

Subsequently, in the first half of 2005, having apparently steadied the course in the Middle East, the Bush administration seemed to be turning to Asia. In Beijing's eyes, the new doctrine of containment was spelled out during a visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Tokyo as part of her Asian tour of March 2005. Echoing President Bush's State of the Union address which pushed a foreign policy predicated upon "spreading democracy", Rice noted that "even China must eventually embrace some form of open, genuinely representative government". She dropped hints that the United States would bring about a democratic China through joint actions with countries including Japan, South Korea, and India. The same

²⁸⁵ Beijing. International Office of the State Council of the PRC. December 2004. *China's National Defense in 2004*. Online. http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/28/content_18078.htm

²⁸⁶ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.172.

points were made by Bush himself during a brief visit to Beijing in November 2005²⁸⁷.

In response to the trends in the international political, economic, and security spheres, the years 2004 and 2005 would go down in history as a turning point in Chinese diplomacy. As Lam (2006) points out, “[s]uddenly, Beijing’s senior cadres, diplomats, and foreign affairs specialists in the army and foreign-trade departments seemed all guns blazing in different parts of the globe²⁸⁸”. The leadership seemed eager to maintain a peaceful global climate – particularly good ties with China’s neighbours – so as to ensure continual economic development, and counter the “anti-China containment policy” allegedly pushed forward by Washington²⁸⁹. Beijing’s foreign and security policy goals at the time, included for example, seeking a strategic partnership with EU countries in the interest of constructing a “multipolar” world order, promoting good will with China’s neighbours to secure a “harmonious environment” for economic growth, building solid relationships with key countries in Africa and Latin America, and securing a long-term supply of petroleum and other precious resources²⁹⁰.

Among CCP leaders, Lam (2006) observes, Hu and colleagues such as Wen Jiabao are the first to take a comprehensive approach to security and diplomatic issues. Apart from focusing on traditional concerns such as diplomacy and military affairs, Hu and his team have been paying more attention to the foreign-policy implications of trade, economic cooperation, technology, and energy. For example, the 2004 White Paper noted that apart from foreign and military affairs, leading

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.173.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.161.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.158.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.161.

cadres must take into consideration areas including information technology (IT), energy, finance, and even “environmental security²⁹¹”.

Implications for China’s DPRK Policy

Both tests were conducted, at a time when negotiations within the Six-Party Talks had stalled. After all parties agreed to a Joint Statement in September 2005, the fifth round of negotiations was scheduled to take place the following month. However, the process was interrupted over North Korea’s protests that the United States had frozen the regime’s funds in Macau. Indeed, after what had been billed as a breakthrough at the Six-Party Talks, the US Treasury Department had issued a statement branding Banco Delta Asia (BDA), based in Macau, as a “pawn” of North Korea’s alleged money-laundering, and pressured the bank to freeze around \$24 million worth of North Korean assets for February the next year. The United States’ freeze campaign was suspected to be a bargaining chip to resolve the standoff over North Korea’s nuclear programs²⁹².

First, concerning the ballistic missile tests, it is important to note that while they were conducted in early July, a series of reports on the imminent tests had already been diffused in June. When intelligence confirmed that North Korea was going to test-fire long-range missiles capable of reaching the west coast of the United States, the reactions of Japan and the US fundamentally changed, and pressure on China increased²⁹³. The Chinese leadership came to realize that its neighbour would not call off its plan, and for the first time in the history of the two

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Steven R. Weisman. April 12, 2007. «How U.S. Turned North Korean Funds Into a Bargaining Chip ». *The New York Times*. Online. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/12/world/asia/12bank.html> (page accessed 26 April 2012).

²⁹³ Zhu Feng. 2009. «Shifting Tides: China and North Korea». In Ron Huisken, ed. *The Architecture of Security in the Asia-Pacific*. Canberra: ANU E Press, p.45.

countries' diplomatic relationship, the Chinese premier openly demanded that the DPRK halt its "erroneous" action. On 28 June 2006, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao openly called on North Korea to stop the test-launch. As Feng (2009) points out, this reaction was unprecedented as China's senior leaders had never officially demanded anything of North Korea, even when the latter withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), reopened its 5-megawatt graphite reactor or when it declared possession of nuclear weapons in February 2005²⁹⁴. Nevertheless, without prior notice, even to Chinese officials, the North Korean regime launched the missile tests.

Under the circumstances, North Korea's show of force was significant, as it damaged Beijing's credibility as a mediator and decreased its presumed influence on North Korea²⁹⁵. China had hoped that through a multilateral mechanism such as the Six-Party Talks, it could have facilitate negotiations between North Korea and the other parties, but the intransigent behaviour and thinking of Pyongyang despite five rounds of six-party talks and the signing of the Joint Statement in September 2005, proved otherwise²⁹⁶. Translated in terms of capabilities, it was a blow to China's prestige and status in international affairs. Opening the door to criticism of its policies by its counterparts, China's diplomatic weight could be considerably undermined.

Less than a week after the tests, the UN Security Council agreed to put off a vote on a draft resolution that would slap sanctions on the DPRK over its missile tests. This was after receiving Japan's formal draft resolution on July 7, asking for sanctions against the DPRK. The draft, co-sponsored by Britain, France and the

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.47.

United States, invoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorizes sanctions or even military action. China, on the other hand, had introduced a draft UN Security Council presidential statement, which does not bear the weight of a resolution, expressing that it disapproved the missile launches, but urged the DPRK as well as other countries in the region to show restraint and refrain from any action that might aggravate tension, and continue to work on the resolution of non-proliferation concern through political and diplomatic efforts²⁹⁷.

After revision and a vote on the matter, UN Security Council members unanimously agreed to UN Resolution 1695, which urged the DPRK "to cease the development, testing, deployment and proliferation of ballistic missiles and return to its moratorium on missile launching". It also called upon member states to prevent the transfer of missiles, missiles-related materials and financing resources to "end users involved in or supplying to DPRK's missile and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs²⁹⁸". In a statement attached to the UN resolution, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Wang Guangya, expressed his government's regret and concern about the new complicated factors on the Korean peninsula, and recalled that China had always been committed to maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, and insisted on resolving the relevant issues through peaceful dialogue and negotiations²⁹⁹.

As for the issue of the nuclear test, Zhang Liangui, professor of International Strategic research at the Party School of the China Communist Party Central

²⁹⁷ «China Circulates Draft Presidential Statement on DPRK Missile Launch ». July 11, 2006. *People's Daily Online*. Online. http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200607/11/eng20060711_281929.html (page accessed 14 January 2012).

²⁹⁸ Security Council Condemns Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Missile Launches, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1695 (2006). July 15, 2006. United Nations. Department of Public Information. Online. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm> (page accessed 26 April 2012).

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Committee, had observed that in the aftermath of the nuclear test, China was caught in a difficult bind. On the one hand, since a North Korea with nuclear weapons was not in China's interests or the common interests of humankind, as a responsible power, China had to take a clear stand of opposition. Otherwise, its international image and prestige could have been severely tarnished. On the other hand, unequivocal opposition from China toward the DPRK was bound to cause vicious reprisal, certainly leading to degradation of the Sino-DPRK relations³⁰⁰. In his article «Coping with a Nuclear North Korea», he summarized precisely why security concerns for China emanated from the now-revealed nuclear weapon program of its ally:

North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons may push China into a new security dilemma in Northeast Asia. For a long time, in Chinese strategic thinking, the American military presence in Northeast Asia has been a latent threat to China's national security. Until now, it is because of the U.S. nuclear umbrella that Japan has exercised self-control in terms of developing nuclear weapons. But with North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons, only through U.S. military presence and nuclear deterrence in Northeast Asia will Japan, and possibly South Korea and Taiwan, might be dissuaded from developing nuclear weapons themselves in the future. China would then be in a position of having to choose between two unfavourable alternatives: accepting Japan and South Korea with their own nuclear weapons or cementing a high-profile U.S. military presence in Northeast Asia³⁰¹.

Furthermore, the move by Pyongyang not only clearly ran counter to its promise to keep the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons, but also revealed that the leadership had made the decision to develop and possess nuclear weapons³⁰². For a long period, there has been a theory that North Korea's claim to develop nuclear weapons was a bluff, that it had not the ability to carry it

³⁰⁰ Zhang Liangui. Autumn 2006. «Coping with a Nuclear North Korea». *China Security*, p.11.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p.3.

through³⁰³. Despite having signed the NPT in the mid-1980s, the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula with South Korea in 1992, and the Agreed Framework with the U.S. in 1994, it seems that North Korea didn't have the intention to stop its nuclear program throughout this time³⁰⁴.

After news of the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution had spread, Chinese Ambassador to the UN Wang Guangya offered, on October 14, explanatory remarks on the vote of UN Resolution 1718. He mentioned the fact that China "believe[s] the act of the Security Council should both indicate the firm position of the international community and help create enabling conditions for the final peaceful solution to the DPRK nuclear issue through dialogue". "As the resolution has basically reflected the above spirit", Wang said, "the Chinese delegation has voted in favour of this resolution³⁰⁵". If we recall the official document on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of 2005, we can say that there is a concordance between proposed policy orientations and the present decision. Subsequently, a press conference held in October 17, Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao confirmed the government's decision to accept the UN Resolution: "As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has always been earnest and responsible in implementing relevant solutions of the Security

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ New York. Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN. October 14, 2006. *Explanatory Remarks by Ambassador Wang Guangya at the Security Council After Taking Vote On Draft Resolution on DPRK Nuclear Test* Online. http://www.china-un.org/eng/chinaandun/disarmament_armscontrol/t276121.htm

Council. There is no exception this time. China will deal with relevant issues in compliance with the Resolution³⁰⁶”.

Hypothesis 2 – Ideology

Observations of Hu Jintao’s leadership, a few years after the political succession of November 2002, cannot ignore the fact that great effort had been invested in the promotion of the Party’s ideological value and principles. Interested in Hu Jintao’s role in the reformulation of the CCP ideology, Heike Holbig (2009) mentioned that his early pilgrimages to Xibaipo, the village where Communist leaders established their base between 1947-1948, and other historical sites of the Communist Revolution, his handshakes with members of the working masses, and his televised reproduction of memorized Marxist and Maoist tenets were designed to evoke core elements of party ideology³⁰⁷. As a former president of the Central Party School, Hu had done thorough research on ideology and governance matters³⁰⁸, and skilfully used his background to foster political and ideological unity.

Evidences of such valorisation of ideology included the Central Committee of the CCP’s endorsement of a resolution entitled *Strengthening the Construction of the Party’s Governing Capacity* which demanded that Marxism take on the “guiding status” (*zhudao diwei*) in the ideological sphere in September 2004, and the CCP’s launch of a new Academy of Marxism under the auspices of the prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Science and bestowed it with the mission of modernizing

³⁰⁶ Beijing. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. October 17, 2006. *Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao’s Regular Press Conference on 17 October 2006* Online.

<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t276682.htm>

³⁰⁷ Holbig, «Remaking the CCP’s Ideology...», p.36.

³⁰⁸ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.35.

Marxist theory in late 2005³⁰⁹. In terms of international affairs, Lam (2006) noted that the basic thrust of the governing philosophy and worldview of the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao team, had become clear by late 2005. Both leading figures being what China calls “within-the-system reformers”, not Gorbachev-like figures, the fourth-generation of leaders’ basic philosophy was that they must balance the needs of the Party’s self-preservation with the requirements of reform³¹⁰. Thus, we can assume that under the current leadership, the CCP’s political preservation concern would be translated as China’s national interests, and noticeably transpire in domestic as well as foreign policy decisions³¹¹.

Party Principles and UN Security Council Resolutions 1695, 1718

First, if we take a look at the scope of UN Resolution 1695 to condemn North Korea’s missile tests, the approved articles prohibited all member states from selling, buying or transferring missile and missile-related items, materials, goods and technology to or from the DPRK, and called on members to prevent the transfer of financial resources in relation to the DPRK’s missile and WMD programs³¹². If the resolution was addressed to North Korea this time, for the Chinese leaders it might have been a way to show China’s general positions regarding the management of disagreements between states. Assuming that Pyongyang had used the missile launches to show its discontent with the United States principally, this was, in the eyes of the Chinese, antagonistic to Party principles of mutual non-aggression, and peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the principle of equality and mutual benefit to develop relations between China and other countries which refers to the notion of non-discrimination, can work both ways, non-discrimination when fostering

³⁰⁹ Holbig, «Remaking the CCP’s Ideology...», p.36.

³¹⁰ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.34.

³¹¹ Wang, «Preservation, Prosperity and Power...», p.682.

³¹² *Security Council Condemns Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s Missile Launches, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1695 (2006)*. Online. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm>

relationships, but also non-discrimination when dealing with such issues as the use of missile technology. The message of China accepting the UN Resolution was sent to all other states that were considering the idea of using such confrontational measures, regardless of their relationship with China.

On the UN Resolution 1718 to condemn the nuclear test, the acquiescence of the leadership in imposing economic reforms to the North Korean regime raised speculation about China stiffening its posture. However, the resolution was mainly designed to target North Korea's nuclear and missile development, and to bar its importation of heavy-class conventional weaponry as well as luxury items which appeal to Pyongyang's elite. In this sense, it has managed not to affect North Korea's basic economic realm³¹³. As noted by Xiao Ren (2007), China's agreement to UN Resolution 1718 should be understood as balancing a strong Security Council response, and the desirable goal of a peaceful resolution. Sanctions are only a means and not an end in themselves³¹⁴.

It is important to consider that the decision stemmed largely from China's interpretation of the North Korean leadership's move, amidst ongoing efforts to save the Six-Party talks. Everyone knows that the pursuit of nuclear technology requires great human ingenuity, massive material and financial resources, all underpinned by long-term sustained effort, and considering North Korea's precarious conditions, such a show of force reflected the DPRK's prioritization of military build-up at the expense of economic improvement, which frustrated China, who had kept investing in the stability of the regime. The conditions in North Korea remind Chinese leaders of the process China had embarked on to avoid political

³¹³ Shen Dingli. 2009. «Cooperative Denuclearization Toward North Korea». *The Washington Quarterly*: 32 (4), p.178.

³¹⁴ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.159.

change, that is, by resolving economic problems and strengthening regime security based on economic performance and public support. Like China did when it decided to reform, North Korea would need foreign relations, especially with the United States, to boost its economy, but to do that, trust was a key prerequisite³¹⁵. By conducting the tests, it inevitably raised concern for the international community, slowed reconciliation with the parties concerned, and hindered prospects for the establishment of economic ties with foreign countries.

Moreover, Xiao (2007) reminds us that the nuclear issue is only part of a broader picture for Beijing, since Korean security, as a comprehensive and complex matter, involves other important issues such as border stability, economic migration, illicit activities, and so forth. All those concerns transcend the porous DPRK-China border and affect local social stability and national security, and therefore should be taken into consideration as well³¹⁶. Since China's intentions include peaceful management of its relationship with the DPRK and the intent to preserve the status quo on the peninsula, rather than securing leverage over North Korean affairs, the leadership does not seem to aspire to use its economic leverage to control outcomes³¹⁷.

Given its socialist political ideology, and as a country where its sole Party's Constitution endorses the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence, as a basis for developing relations with other countries, and a nation deeply committed to

³¹⁵ Chu Shulong and Lin Xinzhu, «The Six Party Talks...», p.36.

³¹⁶ Xiao Ren, «Korean Security Dilemmas...», p.159.

³¹⁷ Jaewoo Choo. 2008. «Mirroring North Korea's Growing Economic Dependence on China». *Asian Survey*: 48 (2), p.368.

fostering its economic development, it was unlikely that those two UN Resolutions China agreed on, would include provisions that could threaten the fellow Communist regime or that could be perceived as a way to intrude in its internal affairs.

Hypothesis 3 – Decision Unit

Jiang passed on his post as Chairman of the CMC to Hu Jintao in September 2004. While it doesn't mean his influence has stopped being felt among the decision unit and Party members in general, it will surely leave more space for Hu Jintao and his advisers to use their expertise, "seek truth from facts", and approach international issues according to their own worldview. At the Sixth Plenum of the 16th CPC Central Committee held in Beijing on Oct. 8-11, a communiqué was issued highlighting the issue of building a harmonious socialist society. It stressed that the role of the CCP itself was crucial for the construction of a harmonious society, and urged Party members to strengthen ideological and moral cultivation. It also underlined that CCP's efforts in improving governance capacity and maintaining advanced nature were the political guarantee for this achievement, calling on the leadership and cadres at various levels to improve their capability of leading people. The communiqué reminded that democratic centralism should be adhered to and improved³¹⁸.

In «Shifting Tides: China and North Korea», a contribution to the book *The Architecture of Security in the Asia-Pacific*, Zhu Feng indicates that any ultimate decision regarding Beijing's policy toward North Korea is directly subject to

³¹⁸ CPC Session Concludes, Elevating Social Harmony October 11, 2006. Chinese Government's Official Web Portal. Online. http://english.gov.cn/2006-10/11/content_410337.htm (page accessed 26 April 2012).

judgment and selection at the highest level, but notes that the implication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which focuses on coordination with the international community, and the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee (CCPCC), which plays an important role in dealing with "delicate" countries such as the DPRK³¹⁹, has also had an influence over that policy³²⁰. According to Zhu, while the former camp can hardly be called a 'pro-West' group, it does advocate coordination with the West. On the other hand, the latter camp can be called 'pro-Pyongyang' and advocates strongly for cooperation with North Korea. "The CCPCC's International Department oversees exchange with other political parties and is generally sympathetic to North Korea", he says, "often calling for a strengthened relationship between the Chinese and the North Korean political parties and governments and advocating full "political trust" in Pyongyang³²¹".

More importantly, Zhu went further in disclosing that Hu's proactive and rational international policy approach was facing challenges from within. He argues that the missile launches and nuclear test only provided the ossified forces within the conservative camp that were originally discontent with Hu and Wen and their new style government, with new fodder for attacking the Hu-Wen team³²². "In the run up to the 17th Party Congress, Chinese politics are now entering a sensitive period", he says, and North Korea's actions have, on balance, damaged the diplomatic prestige of the Chinese reformists represented by Hu and Wen. If China's policy toward North Korea is dragged into the domestic struggle over political power, the future orientation of China's diplomatic policies towards North Korea will become even more complicated³²³. The same nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee that had taken part in a welcoming ceremony for

³¹⁹ Cabestan, «China's Foreign and Security Policy...», p.84.

³²⁰ Zhu Feng, «Shifting Tides: China and North Korea», p.52.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*, p.53.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p.53-54.

Dear Leader Kim Jong-il's three-day visit to Beijing in April 2004³²⁴, were now pressured to deliberate on its response to North Korea's actions.

Decision in Response to North Korea's Missile Tests

Considering the relative promptness of the Chinese leadership in accepting UN Resolution 1695, we can assume that disagreements among the group of decision-makers were less critical in defining the official response³²⁵. Since the resolution did not include reference to Charter VII of the UN Charter, allowing measures such as military action, and did not contain "punitive" measures such as economic sanctions, it was conform to China's policy predispositions. In addition, since Pyongyang's show of force was a blow to the Chinese leaders who had worked on fostering their "partnership" through bilateral meetings and tried to convince the regime to refrain from launching the missiles, we can assume that the decision unit members were more conscious about their identity to the group, unlike what was detected with the previous issue. The decision-makers might have debated on whether it should condemn formally the act through the UN Security Council, or only convey its concern over a public statement, but on the matter of the provisions included in the UN Resolution 1695, as long as none would aggravate the domestic situation of the DPRK, unanimity was likely to be reached within the decision unit, denoting a small shift from initial preferences³²⁶.

³²⁴ Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era...*, p.188.

³²⁵ See Hermann, Hermann and Hagan, «How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy...», p.321, for more on single group with prompt consensus.

³²⁶ Hermann, Stein *et al.*, «Resolve, Accept, or Avoid...», p.44.

Decision to Accept UN Resolution 1718 Condemning North Korea's Nuclear Test

Again, China's response to the nuclear test was issued less than a week after the incident, which decreases the likelihood of strong disagreement within the decision unit group. The decision to condemn the missile tests, through UN jurisdiction, had been accepted by the leadership a month ago, and it would stick to the same principles and intentions for the nuclear test. This time, however, Choo (2008) noted that although Beijing agreed on many other articles presented in the draft of the UN Resolution 1718, its opposition centered on the character of the resolution. Clearly, Chinese representatives strongly opined that the article related to sanctions should be limited to economic ones. Chinese officials were aware that the article could provoke Pyongyang's withdrawal from the Six-party Talks³²⁷.

What might have convinced the leadership to vote in favour of the resolution despite the inclusion of economic sanctions was that it would not affect China's policy of providing the DPRK with "humanitarian" food and financial aid. In a press conference held on October 12 2006, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao, was asked if China's position on the nature of the sanctions had changed after Chinese Permanent Representative to the UN Wang Guangya said the UN should take "punitive" action on the DPRK. He rectified that the position of the Chinese Government has been consistent: "punishment is not the purpose. We should take effective, appropriate and well-measured step to make all parties aware that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula serves the interest of all³²⁸". While the resolution's enforcement depends on voluntary implementation and reporting by member states, with no compulsory enforcement mechanism in

³²⁷ Choo, «Mirroring North Korea...», p.369.

³²⁸ «Full text: FM press conference on October 12». October 15, 2006. *China Daily*. Online. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-10/15/content_708369.htm (page accessed 12 December 2011).

place, it was reported that China did take some steps to implement the provisions of UN Resolution 1718, such as, increased inspection of cargo trucks crossing the China-North Korean border, a non-renewal of visas for North Koreans working in China, and the extension of a barbed-wire fence on the China-North Korea border³²⁹.

North Korea's Shelling of *Yeonpyeong* Island (2010)

On November 23, 2010, North Korea unleashed an artillery barrage on *Yeonpyeong* Island, situated in the disputed border area between North and South Korea, which contains both a military garrison and a small fishing community. The attack, seen as the most serious single military incident since the end of the Korean War of 1950-1953, killed two South Korean marines and two civilians, injured more than eighteen people, and set the South on a war footing³³⁰. Five months prior, in late July, the United States and South Korea had agreed on conducting U.S.-led joint military exercises in the South China Sea (Yellow Sea), which would be staged once a month throughout the year³³¹. This was clearly a catalyst, as seem to suggest North Korean statements, but not everyone perceived it that way. As China chose not to criticize North Korea for the artillery barrage, and instead, gave equal prominence in the state-run media to North Korea's claim that the United States

³²⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718. The National Committee on North Korea. Issue Briefs. Online. <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1718> (page accessed 12 December 2011).

³³⁰ Peter Walker. November 28, 2010. «China Calls for North Korea Talks». *The Guardian*. Online. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/28/china-calls-north-korea-talks> (page accessed 6 January 2012).

³³¹ Wang Hui. July 29, 2010. «US Should Stop Meddling in Asian Issues». *China Daily*. Online. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-07/29/content_11067850.htm (page accessed 6 January 2012).

masterminded the crisis³³², South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and United States President Obama openly professed their discontent.

Hypothesis 1 – Leadership’s Perception of Power

Compared to previous Chinese National Defense Papers, the one of 2008 gave bigger emphasis to the notions of status and prestige, as elements of power. In the preface, we could read:

Historic changes have taken place in the relations between contemporary China and the rest of the world. The Chinese economy has become an important part of the world economy, China has become an important member of the international system, and the future and destiny of China have been increasingly closely connected with the international community. China cannot develop in isolation from the rest of the world, nor can the world enjoy prosperity and stability without China³³³.

This was added to the economic and socio-political aspects of “comprehensive power” included in the previous White Papers, as well as military attributes integrated in the national defense policy solely aimed at protecting China’s territory and people, and endeavoring to build, together with other countries, a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity³³⁴.

The 2008 White Paper also stressed that the trends in world affairs generated rising insecurities, with world peace and development being faced with multiple difficulties and challenges. “Struggles for strategic resources, strategic locations and

³³² Ian Johnson and Helene Cooper. November 28, 2010. «China Seeks Talks to Ease Korean Tension». *The New York Times*. Online. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/world/asia/29korea.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all (page accessed 28 November 2011).

³³³ Beijing. International Office of the State Council of the PRC. January 2009. *China's National Defense in 2008*. Online. http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2009-01/20/content_1210227.htm

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

strategic dominance have intensified”, it says, “Meanwhile, hegemonism and power politics still exist, regional turmoil keeps spilling over, hot-spot issues are increasing, and local conflicts and wars keep emerging³³⁵”. The same applied to the economic field, with the financial crisis triggered by the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis causing a snowball effect. Economic risks were said to reveal a more interconnected, systematic and global nature, pointing out issues such as terrorism, environmental disasters, climate change, serious epidemics, transnational crime and pirates are becoming increasingly prominent³³⁶. Meanwhile, the influence of military security factors on international relations was also considered to be mounting:

Driven by competition in overall national strength and the development of science and technology, international military competition is becoming increasingly intense, and the worldwide revolution in military affairs (RMA) is reaching a new stage of development. Some major powers are realigning their security and military strategies, increasing their defense investment, speeding up the transformation of armed forces, and developing advanced military technology, weapons and equipment. Strategic nuclear forces, military astronautics, missile defense systems, and global and battlefield reconnaissance and surveillance have become top priorities in their efforts to strengthen armed forces. Some developing countries are also actively seeking to acquire advanced weapons and equipment to increase their military power. All countries are attaching more importance to supporting diplomatic struggles with military means. As a result, arms races in some regions are heating up, posing grave challenges to the international arms control and nonproliferation regime³³⁷.

Apart from these global circumstances, rising concerns converge around the Obama administration’s seeking a bigger role in Asia. A series of episodes all pointed to the same direction that Washington followed the footsteps of the previous administration, and beyond. For example, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's October 27-November 8 trip to the Asia Pacific region was a sign that the US was making a bold comeback to Asia's regional affairs. According to Wang Hui

³³⁵ *ibid.*

³³⁶ *ibid.*

³³⁷ *ibid.*

(2010), in an apparent attempt to fan anti-China sentiments among the country's smaller Asian neighbours, Clinton chose the ASEAN Regional Forum, a meeting on Asian security held in Hanoi, to show off the US' open support of nations that have territorial disputes with China over the South China Sea. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi characterized Clinton's comments as "an attack on China", adding that "Beijing has always opposed any effort to "internationalize" the issue³³⁸. The US meddling in the South China Sea issue is widely perceived as another move to provoke China's interests, since a bigger presence of Washington in Asia's regional affairs will inevitably disrupt the current political and strategic equilibrium³³⁹.

Prior to the shelling by the DPRK, the head of the Chinese delegation to the UN Wang Qun had issued, in November 7, a statement on security challenges and the need to foster a peaceful and stable international environment, fully respect and accommodate the legitimate and reasonable security concerns of all countries, conduct dialogue and cooperation on an equal footing and build state-to-state relations of mutual understanding and mutual trust, adhere to multilateralism, and consolidate the collective security system with the United Nations at its core³⁴⁰. "To advance the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation process, joint and unremitting efforts are called for on the part of the entire international community³⁴¹". We can presume that the US-ROK (Republic of Korea, South Korea) joint-military exercises that took place close to North Korea's border went against that mindset.

³³⁸ Wang Hui. «US Should Stop Meddling in Asian Issues». Online.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-07/29/content_11067850.htm

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Beijing. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. November 7, 2010. *Statement by H.E. Ambassador Mr. Wang Qun, Head of the Chinese Delegation at the General Debate of the First Committee of the 65th Session of United Nations General Assembly*. Online.
<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/jks/kjfywj/t759455.htm>

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Implications for China's Response to the North Korean Offensive

Following news of the artillery on *Yeonpyeong* Island, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, during a meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow, called for all parties concerned to exercise utmost restraint³⁴². He stressed that the international community should do more to ease the ongoing tension, bringing special attention to Russia and China under the circumstances and to the resumption of the Six-Party Talks aimed at denuclearizing North Korea³⁴³. Similarly, during a press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said China was highly concerned about Tuesday's incident, and was worried about the developments. "The Chinese side strongly urges the two Koreas to remain calm, exercise restraint and start dialogue and contact as soon as possible to avoid the recurrence of similar incidents³⁴⁴".

Although the United States pressed China to constrain North Korea to prevent further "provocative incidents³⁴⁵", and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak strongly commented that Beijing was not exerting enough pressure on North Korea, calling on China to contribute to peace in a "more objective, responsible" manner³⁴⁶, the Chinese leadership's stance did not change. Instead, it only went further in deploying consecutive diplomatic efforts in response to what might have

³⁴² Kim Young-gyo. November 25, 2010. «Wen Jiabao Opposes Any Threat of Force on Korean Peninsula: Report». *Yonhap News*. Online. <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/11/25/65/0301000000AEN20101125010500320F.HTML> (page accessed 7 January 2012).

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Tania Branigan, Ewen MacAskill and Steven Borowiec. November 24, 2010. «US to Press China to Rein in North Korea After Attack». *The Guardian*. Online. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/24/us-china-north-korea-attack> (page accessed 6 January 2012).

³⁴⁶ Walker. «China Calls for North Korea Talks». Online. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/28/china-calls-north-korea-talks>

turned into an intensification of the conflict. To be sure, the term “provocative incidents” used by the United States didn’t seem to apply to them, considering the US-South Korea military drills conducted every month near North Korean territory. In fact, the next day after the strike, the aircraft carrier USS George Washington was dispatched for a show of solidarity with the South, about a hundred miles south of *Yeonpyeong* Island.

It is important to note that when it comes to Korea, Chinese leaders are always conscious about conflict escalation. A more aggressive response, despite divergent views on what triggered the strike, could have triggered a bigger conflict, with North Korea feeling cornered. From an outlook of power and international affairs dynamics, China does not want the North Korean government to fall, because it could instigate a unification of the two Koreas, with major U.S. influence, which is not welcomed by China. Concretely, the North Korean territory keeps at bay the tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, and this allows China to reduce its military deployment in the Northeast³⁴⁷. Internal breakdowns in North Korea, and/or U.S. presence near China’s north-eastern regions, would necessitate, at minimum, strengthening Chinese border defences, meaning a probable need to move troops, equipment, and security and intelligence assets³⁴⁸. As Shen Dingli (2006) commented, some might think that China has helped North Korea without getting anything in return, but if we think from a geopolitical and political perspective, the fact that North Korea has been an ally for more than 50 years provided China with this many years of peace. For all the money spent on aid to encourage stability in North Korea, China has in essence helped itself³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁷ Shen Dingli. Autumn 2006. «North Korea’s Strategic Significance to China». *China Security*, p.20.

³⁴⁸ Krawitz, «Resolving Korea's...», p.4.

³⁴⁹ Shen Dingli, «North Korea’s Strategic...», p.20.

Whereas, from an ideological perspective, the fall of the DPRK, a communist ally, would be another case of a socialist regime's failure, which could trigger political domestic complications for China, à la Tiananmen, and growing pressures from foreign states for China's democratization. The one-party authoritarian political system had survived after the Soviet empire's decline and the fall of the communist governments in East Europe, which were, according to Chinese decision-makers, determined by their domestic failures, and the East European experience had convinced Beijing that, to stay in power and make the system work, the Chinese Communist Party had no choice but to continue and deepen the economic reform³⁵⁰. But could the actual, fourth and fifth-generations of leaders manage a resurging legitimacy crisis?

Hypothesis 2 – Ideology

Based on the constant emphasis on Party building and on the updating and upgrading of the Party's ideology since the 16th Party Congress to the 17th Party Congress of 2007, we may suspect they would struggle a bit. In 2010, Hu Jintao's leadership was as highly devoted to the promotion of the Chinese Communist Party ideology as it was in 2006, if not more. Evidence of this was that in October 21 2007, a newly amended party constitution was adopted by the CCP National Congress, revealing for the first time many landmark changes in its major political, economic and social guidelines and policies. Scientific Outlook on Development, a new theoretical development of the Party in the past five years, as well as policies to boost democracy at intra-Party and government sphere and expand democracy were enshrined in the amendment. Among other things, the general program of the amended Party constitution raised new requirements for the Party members and cadres, stressing the need to study the Scientific Outlook on Development and legal

³⁵⁰Huo Hwei-ling. 1992. «Patterns of Behavior in China's Foreign Policy: The Gulf Crisis and Beyond». *Asian Survey*: 32 (3), *op.cit.*, p.267.

knowledge, to take the lead in its application, to foster a correct view on evaluating their performances, and to improve their moral standards. Also added as Party members' duties, was the task to take the lead in putting into practice the socialist maxims of honor and disgrace³⁵¹. Again, democratic centralism was pointed as the basis for decision making.

With respect to foreign affairs, Hu Jintao's report delivered at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on Oct. 15, 2007, extolled the major progress made in all-directional diplomacy. The report said that, “pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace, China energetically carried out diplomatic activities, enhanced exchanges and cooperation with other countries in various fields and played a major constructive role in international affairs. This created a favourable international environment for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects³⁵²”. Having been itself a victim of foreign aggression, China and its leaders were said to be committed to combining the interests of the Chinese people with the common interests of the people of other countries, and always stand for fairness and justice.

We maintain that all countries, big and small, strong and weak, rich and poor, are equal. We respect the right of the people of all countries to independently choose their own development path. We will never interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or impose our own will on them. China works for peaceful settlement of international disputes and hotspot issues, promotes international and regional security cooperation³⁵³.

This would denote China's response to North Korea's strike in November 2010, as a mix of power and prestige concerns, as well as ideological concerns

³⁵¹ «CPC Publishes Key Policy Changes in Party Constitution ». October 26, 2007. *People's Daily Online*. Online. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6291002.html>.

³⁵² Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 17th Party Congress. October 25, 2007. *People's Daily Online*. Online. <http://english.cpc.people.com.cn/66102/6290205.html> (page accessed 26 April 2012).

³⁵³ *ibid.*

surfaced with the increasing presence of the U.S. in Asia, and mounting insecurity felt by its ally, the DPRK. The United States and South Korea did not seem concerned about the impact of their military exercises on the North Korean regime, especially after the UN Security Council condemnations of the missile launches and second nuclear test in 2009, and after the Six-Party Talks had failed to produce any commitments from both, North Korean and U.S., sides.

Party Principles and the Issue of the Shelling of Yeonpyeong Island

Beijing's motto with respect to the Korean Peninsula issues has always been to maintain a peaceful and stable environment, in order to minimize the risks of consequences to China's domestic interests, primarily, the economic development, and political stability. But for this particular issue, it seems that the destabilizing factors were perceived by the Chinese leadership as emanating from the U.S. presence, more than from North Korea's behaviour. Therefore, the response to the shelling was first "inaction", only commenting on it in the press, and thereafter, to stick with its multilateral cooperation mindset, the leadership called for emergency consultations among the heads of delegation to the Six-Party Talks in December 2010, "as tensions rise on the Korean Peninsula³⁵⁴".

We can better grasp China's interpretation of the issue, if we look at the following section of an address by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi at the First Lanting Forum on December 1st 2010:

Diversity and complexity are a distinctive feature of the Asia Pacific. Countries in this region have diverse political and economic systems, histories, cultures and social development models, which have grown side

³⁵⁴ «China Proposes Emergency Consultations on Korean Peninsula Tensions». November 28, 2011. *Xinhua News*. Online. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-11/28/c_13625768_2.htm (page accessed 7 January 2012).

by side over the long years of history. Diversity is a source of the unique strength and enduring vitality for the Asia Pacific. We need to uphold this tradition, carry forward the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, seeking common ground while reserving differences, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation, and strengthen mutual learning and people-to-people and cultural exchanges, so as to build the Asia Pacific into a community in which diverse nations and cultures live in peace and friendship³⁵⁵.

Hypothesis 3 – Decision Unit

Again referring to the 17th Party Congress report of October 2007, the document included new recommendations concerning decision-making, such as the need to strengthen the institutions of standing committees of people's congresses and improve their membership composition in terms of intellectual background and age. To make it possible, it was said the leaders would support the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in performing its functions centered on the two major themes of unity and democracy and improve the system of political consultation, democratic oversight, and participation in the deliberation and administration of state affairs³⁵⁶. "We will incorporate political consultation in decision-making procedures, improve democratic oversight and ensure that the CPPCC participates in the deliberation and administration of state affairs more effectively³⁵⁷".

Furthermore, to ensure scientific and democratic decision-making, the report assured that actions would be done to improve the information and intellectual support for it, increase its transparency and expand public

³⁵⁵ Beijing. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. December 1, 2010. *Shape the Future of Asia Pacific with Confidence and Cooperation* Online. <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t773516.htm>

³⁵⁶ *Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 17th Party Congress*. Online. <http://english.cpc.people.com.cn/66102/6290205.html>

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

participation in it³⁵⁸. In the same mindset, the report underlined the need to improve the mechanism of restraint and oversight, as well as ensure that power entrusted by the people was always exercised in their interests.

Power must be exercised in the sunshine to ensure that it is exercised correctly. We must have institutions to govern power, work and personnel, and establish a sound structure of power and a mechanism for its operation in which decision-making, enforcement and oversight powers check each other and function in coordination³⁵⁹.

These recommendations and demands could be interpreted both as a pledge to rectify past abuses and misconducts, or to prevent such wrongdoings to happen in the future. However, it remains difficult to know the extent to which this concerns foreign policy decision making in 2010, since we are left with only a vague apprehension of what actually happens within the group of decision makers. We cannot fully appreciate the conditions behind deliberations, such as whether Hu Jintao, or someone else, exercises a predominant role and influence decisions, or if there are profound disagreements between the members who come from very different backgrounds.

In September 2009, Party members met again at the 4th Plenum of the 17th Party Congress to update the Party Line and reiterate core principles and expectations. But one thing caught the attention of both Chinese and foreign observers, it was the fact that Vice-president Xi Jinping, who is expected to replace Hu as CCP general secretary at the 18th Party Congress in 2012, was not inducted into the policy-setting Central Military Commission (CMC). Recalling Hu Jintao's access to higher posts in the early stages of the fourth-generation leadership's rise to power, he had inherited the post of Vice-chairman of the CMC in 1999, three

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

years before his succession to Jiang Zemin³⁶⁰. While Hu's speech to the plenum stressed the expansion of intra-party democracy and reform of the party cadre to raise governance ability, as Willy Lam (2009) comments, Xi's failure to make the CMC cast doubt on the smoothness of the upcoming transition of power³⁶¹. Will Hu Jintao hold on to his post of CMC chairman like Jiang Zemin had done previously? We will know soon enough, with the 18th Party Congress approaching. But for now, we only know that Xi Jinping was eventually appointed as vice-chairman of the CMC at the fifth plenum of the Party Congress on October 2010, one month prior to the North Korean strike on the island.

Also noteworthy at the time, was the Chinese government's appointment of former Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, in early February 2010, as special representative for Korean Peninsula affairs. The ministry said in a press release that Wu would be in charge of the Six-Party Talks and related issues. Wu, who served as the deputy director-general of the Ministry's Asian Affairs Department, China's ambassador to the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan as well as Vice foreign minister, is said to be well-informed about the Korean Peninsula situation³⁶².

Decision for Inaction

Besides deep concerns over the fact that the exchange of fires between the two Koreas was an unprecedented incident of such nature since the Korean War,

³⁶⁰ Willy Lam. September 24, 2009. «CCP 17th Central Committee Plenum Skips Xi Jinping and Inner-Party Democracy». *The Jamestown Foundation*. Online. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35534](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35534) (page accessed 28 April 2012).

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² «China Appoints Special Representative on Korean Peninsula Affairs». February 10, 2010. *People's Daily Online*. Online. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6892946.html> (page accessed 20 November 2011).

what resonated broadly in the aftermath of the attack, both in foreign news articles and within the South Korean community, was China's quiet response following the report of the attack. While South Korean President Lee wished for China to use its leverage on North Korea, American officials had wanted China to single out the North as an aggressor in this case³⁶³. For example, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Armed Services Committee called on China to suspend economic and energy assistance to the DPRK to show the consequences for its "aggression³⁶⁴".

The next day after the shelling, during a visit to Russia, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao urged parties concerned to remain calm and exercise restraint, and hoped multilateral cooperation could reduce prospects for escalation. Subsequently, during a press briefing, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei indicated that the government opposed any act that would undermine peace and stability on the peninsula, and that China would not take sides between South and North Korea, saying, there was divided opinions over the cause of the incident³⁶⁵. This statement was an indication that negotiations within the group of Chinese decision-makers had either led to deadlock, that is, group members could not resolve their differences and therefore took no decision³⁶⁶, or considering the promptness of the response, that all agreed on the decision to do nothing, no UN Resolution, no sanctions. The fact that the incident was an issue between both Koreas and did not involve any third-party was with no doubt a factor that shaped China's response. A stronger reply could have generated misunderstandings, not

³⁶³ Johnson and Cooper. «China Seeks Talks to Ease Korean Tension». Online.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/world/asia/29korea.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

³⁶⁴ «Analysts refute criticism of Chinese efforts to defuse Korean Peninsula tensions». December 1, 2010. *People's Daily Online*. Online. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7216634.html> (page accessed 7 January 2012).

³⁶⁵ Kim Young-gyo. «Wen Jiabao Opposes Any Threat of Force on Korean Peninsula: Report». Online.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/11/25/65/0301000000AEN20101125010500320F.HTML>

³⁶⁶ Hermann, Stein *et al.*, «Resolve, Accept, or Avoid...», p.136.

to mention that for the Chinese leadership, it would have meant intervening in a state's internal affairs.

As Zhu Feng, professor at Peking University's School of International Studies, explains, China's actions are made out of a respect for other sovereign states and humanitarian considerations. He noted that, “[t]here is serious misunderstanding and hostility between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The best solution is to make every possible effort to bring the parties to negotiation to maintain peace”. Only with more contact and dialogue, Zhu said, can we ease the current tensions and find a solution acceptable to all³⁶⁷. China was not tempted to change its response due to criticism, but rather because the United States resumed naval war games with South Korean forces in the Yellow Sea, less than a week after the incident, a move that both China and North Korea have criticized as provocative³⁶⁸.

Ultimately, on the week-end of November 27-28, China moved to defuse the crisis on the Korean Peninsula, publicly calling for “emergency consultations” beginning with what amounted to high-level shuttle diplomacy between North and South Korea. The moves by China were its first concerted diplomatic intervention to calm the emotions that have dangerously escalated since North Korea's lethal shelling³⁶⁹. In a hastily called news conference in Beijing, the Chinese government asked for South Korea, North Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia to convene what it described as emergency talks in Beijing next month, as a way to avoid a further deterioration of the situation. China also sent a top foreign policy official,

³⁶⁷ «Analysts refute criticism of Chinese efforts to defuse Korean Peninsula tensions». Online. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7216634.html>

³⁶⁸ Johnson and Cooper. «China Seeks Talks to Ease Korean Tension». Online. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/world/asia/29korea.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*

State Councilor Dai Bingguo, to South Korea over the weekend and announced that a North Korean official would travel to Beijing next week, in what appeared to be an attempt at mediation, something unusual for China in its complex relationship with the Koreas³⁷⁰.

On the 1st of December, in an address on confidence and cooperation in Asia-pacific, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, offered explanatory remarks on China's stance regarding the Korean peninsula issue:

As a big responsible country, China decides its position based on the merits of each case and does not seek to protect any side. China is of the view that the most pressing task now is to prevent any escalation of the tension, and nothing should be done to inflame the situation. The parties concerned should keep calm and exercise restraint, and work to bring the situation back onto the track of dialogue and negotiation³⁷¹.

Summarizing China's response to the present issue, what first took the form of a hands-off approach, due to diverging views within the decision unit, evolved to diplomatic efforts, as the spectre of conflict escalation started to rise.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ Beijing. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. December 1, 2010. *Shape the Future of Asia Pacific with Confidence and Cooperation* Online. <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t773516.htm>

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

If we recapitulate the theoretical compound of this study and juxtapose it with the analysis of China's DPRK policy, three propositions were to be tested. First, was the assumption that leaders' perception of relative power distribution has an impact on their determination of foreign policy. It was acknowledged that systemic pressures may influence the general outline of a state's policy, but it was the perception of these, by the leadership, that could shape its specific response. If we take Issue 1, that is, the Second nuclear crisis, we could see that concerns about conflict escalation, which emanated from the possible recklessness of the United States in trying to end the nuclear standoff, was an important determinant of China's decision to play a proactive role, as a mediator. Similarly, regarding Issue 2 – the missile launches and nuclear tests – power attributes such as prestige and leverage in world affairs were important considerations in the decision to accept the UN resolutions, as well as perception of a threat to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and beyond. Issue 3, the strike on *Yeonpyeong* Island, on the other hand, didn't raise as much security concerns as the other incidents.

Second, the possible impact of ideological predispositions on foreign policy decision making was addressed. Since individuals with shared ideas join together organizations and institutions that operate in sectors of a state's policy making process, it was fair to wonder if those ideas could shape decisions. The fact that China relies on a highly centralized one-party system could not be ignored, and it was expected that the Chinese Communist Party ideology, with its principles and recommendations for action, would intervene in the process of policy making. China's responses to all three issues gave the impression to be in line with, or were justified as being in line with Party principles.

The third, and last variable, was the type of decision unit, and how problem-solving dynamics could affect the choice of a policy options. Since it remains difficult to get inside China's "black box", of all three hypotheses, this was the one who relied most on deduction. To be honest, it was not expected that the results inferred from the decision units framework would match China's actual response to each issue, since it did not take into consideration predispositions that could limit the range of options for action, such as ideological predispositions. But concretely, aren't organizations created on the basis of ideology? Since ideology serves to motivate individuals to give full commitment to the organization, and provides individuals a set of rational ideas with which to carry out the actions demanded by the organization³⁷², it is not surprising that the structure and process of foreign policy decision making at the apex of a government or party is designed to convey values and principles of their ideology.

In retrospect, testing three different intervening variables, instead of focusing on one or two, has had its advantages and disadvantages. For sure, the work was time-consuming, since it necessitated additional theoretical knowledge of those variables and expanded the range of elements to monitor when tracing the foreign policy decision making. But it proved to be efficient in testing the core proposition of neoclassical realism, that, domestic factors come into play in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, as they filter systemic pressures. Applying the framework and methods to three situation-related stimuli, in this case, the Second nuclear crisis, the ballistic missiles and nuclear tests, and finally, the shelling of *Yeonpyeong* Island, was also considered as a way to gather as many observations as possible in order to compare the results.

³⁷² Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization...*, 1968.

While the focus of this study was on China's policy toward one state, the DPRK, others could use the same pattern to analyze one state's foreign policy in general (grand strategy) throughout a specific period of time, or its policy toward one specific issue, such as, for example, arms control and disarmament, or economic cooperation. Indeed, researchers more at ease with the economic field of studies could easily have brought to light developments related to trade and other compounds of world economy, such as the obtainment of the Most-favoured nation, or the accession to WTO, in the analysis of the perception of power variable.

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