

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO: POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

BLIND MAN'S BLUFF

IS NORTH KOREA PIVOTAL TO JAPANESE SECURITY POLICY?

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[A look at the North Korean missile and nuclear tests in 2006 leading up to the US delisting of North Korea as a terror-sponsoring state, concluding that North Korea does indeed affect Japan's security policy particularly with regard to the US alliance, relations with China and the debate on remilitarization and normalization of defence.]

Contents

Preface.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Background.....	13
Social Scientific Method.....	17
Regions and Powers.....	27
Theory of International Politics.....	40
Origins of Alliances.....	47
Analysis.....	57
Conclusion.....	77
Summary.....	80
Literature.....	81

Preface

In writing this paper I first and foremost wish to thank my supervisor, Tore Nyhamar (SPRING 2009), without whose help I might not have been able to put my idea of writing about Japanese foreign policy into practice. In addition to comments and advice, Mr Nyhamar provided the source material: translated extracts from Japanese news media.

The administration at the University Of Oslo, Department Of Political Science has provided friendly and helpful assistance in answering the many queries which have cropped up, as well making sense of seemingly innumerable bureaucratic obstacles.

The librarians at Agder University have provided assistance in tracking down necessary literature, without conveying annoyance at the effort involved.

Furthermore, my family has been supportive and helpful, especially my father.

Concerning font size, there was no way to use a font size of 13 (as advised by the University) on any machine encountered during the time of writing. The ability to define your own seems to have been lost to extinction. I therefore settled for Times New Roman 12.

Introduction

"Strategy is the craft of the warrior. Commanders must enact the craft, and troopers should know this Way. There is no warrior in the world today who really understands the Way of strategy".

Miyamoto Musashi – A Book of Five Rings (2007: 27)

In an area where the balance of powers and capabilities between Japan, China and the USA is constantly being assessed and reassessed, the rouge, truant and ill-behaved state of North Korea led by Stalinist dictator Kim Young Il, most of whose subjects starve or languish in prison camps and where even presumably privileged rocket scientists (ill. 1) look tense and sallow-cheeked, plays its cards exceedingly well in terms of dominating the diplomatic agenda of neighbour state Japan.



Illustration 1: Kim among his rocket scientists¹

This thesis will explore whether North Korea plays a crucial role in determining Japanese foreign policy. It will explore by what means North Korea's game of brinkmanship is possible, hence the title *Blind Man's Bluff*, referring to the children's game *Blind Man's Buff*.

Even though the missile launches were painfully real, and the sufferings of the North Korean people by no means are a laughing matter, it is tempting to see Korean leader Kim Yong Il as a man blinded by ideology and trapped by circumstance (surrounded by an inward-looking elite of generals eager to maintain their privileged status), all-too aware of the consequences of failure. Responsibility by international law would fall upon Kim and his generals for

¹ The Economist (2009) 'Making a splash', Apr 8th

heinous crimes towards his own people, should a regime change occur and aware of this he continues bluffing with great success to increase and maintain his bargaining-point in elaborate regional and international politics, as well as setting the security agenda for the more developed and internationally fully respected country of Japan.



Illustration 2: M. Morgenstern²

In East Asia today, there is little doubt that one of the vilest and to its neighbours, potentially most harmful states is North Korea, hereditary fiefdom of the Kim dynasty with Kim Jong II's youngest son Kim Jong Un recently named as successor to the throne³. Myanmar, another dictatorship in the surrounding region whose ruling generals disregard utterly the welfare of their subjects, in no way constitutes a current security threat as grave and unsettling as the hereditary fiefdom of Kim Jong II. The main factor in this equation, in addition to the strategic placement between China and US-allied South Korea is the possession of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles capable of delivering these warheads to nearby Japan and perhaps even fairly distant Alaska⁴. Possession of such capabilities marks North Korea as a rouge state eager to acquire if not yet actually in possession of the capability of instigating the nightmare of nuclear attack on its neighbours and on itself through subsequent superpower retaliation.

² The Economist (2009) 'Calling Kim Jong II's bluff', April 23rd

³ The Economist (2009) 'Kim family saga: third and final act', June 18th

⁴The Economist (2009) 'In the court of King Kim', February 5th

The issue of North Korea's nuclear capabilities is a wild card in the quest for stability and the near-permanent regional power alliances in East Asia which have been remarkably stable after the Second World War. Following defeat at the hands of the Allies and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan has chosen to remain impotent and devoid of means of self-defence, at least in name, protected by the nuclear and conventional arms umbrella of the United States. The war-renouncing clause nine in the Japanese constitution of 1947 states that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained" (Johnson 1995: 181). In the words of the *Mainichi*: "Japan basically takes an exclusively defence-oriented policy, which means to: (1) take defensive action only after being attacked by another country; and (2) maintain a defence capability at a minimum level"⁵. The reality is more complex, as both Johnson and Pyle have shown (Johnson 1995: 268-270, 274-279; Pyle 2007: 236, 366, 368) as creative accounting and ambiguities of constitutional interpretation leave more room for militaristic acrobatics than widely assumed.

North Korea's failed attempts at long-range missile testing, on July 5th 2006⁶ and testing of nuclear warheads on October 9th 2006⁷, has had long-ranging, serious effects for Japanese security policy and for Japan's relationship with the United States as a main ally. North Korea is Japan's main security threat and the tests have escalated both the debate on rearmament and actual deployment. As for motives, the main objectives behind the missile tests appear twofold: achieve a stronger bargaining posture and to emphasise clearly that Kim is willing and able to defend his position. By strutting its nuclear stuff on the international stage North Korea attracts attention and international assistance.

Conveniently, the tests also advertised in the most effective manner possible the military technology for which North Korea would like black-market buyers to prop its largely defunct economy⁸ Hard hit by American-imposed sanctions after the "US in September 2005 invoked financial sanctions against Banco Delta Asia (BDA) in Macau, a bank with which North Korea had an account, citing the DPRK's use of the bank to launder money gained from counterfeiting greenbacks. Financial institutions of about 20 countries, such as France and

⁵ Mainichi (2006) 'Editorial: Enemy strike argument requires calm and thorough discussion', July 12th (DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC)

⁶ The Economist (2006) 'Kim Jong Il goes ballistic', July 6th

⁷ The Economist (2006) 'Fears of proliferation', Oct 10th

⁸ Yomiuri (2006) 'North Korea preparing Taepodong-2 missile launch', June 20th (DS060621NkPrepMisLaunch.DOC)

Singapore, followed suit and stopped transactions with North Korea”⁹ delisting as a terror-sponsoring state was high on Kims agenda.

This paper pursues the argument that North Korea is pivotal to the security policy of Japan, since through acquiring and demonstrating its nuclear capability it has forced a thorough rethink and re-evaluation of Japanese defence policies and an altering of Japan's relationship with its main ally the United States. North Korea's missile and nuclear testing led to heightened security cooperation between the two allies, particularly with regard to the missile shield now under implementation and the fast-forwarding of missile purchase and development on the part of the Japanese. Furthermore, the actions of Kim Jong Il were a trigger for further discussion in Japan's media and Diet over scrapping clause nine in the Constitution, and renewed attempts by the US to make Japan pull its weight militarily.

The timeline of this thesis extends from North Korea's missile firing in July 2006 and until October 11th, 2008 when President Bush delisted North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism¹⁰. Thus defrosting frozen funds and granting Kim Jong-II's regime access to its assets President Bush Jr. perhaps had realized that keeping North Korea isolated financially would only encourage black-market vending of nuclear and other weapons to regimes and organizations of dubious intent such as Iran and Syria. The move came even as North Korea “barred inspectors from the Yongbyon nuclear facility that it had closed and begun dismantling. It then threatened to start reprocessing plutonium there, putting the six-party talks in jeopardy”¹¹. In fact, there was little chance of the North fulfilling the previously stated terms of delisting. In the words of the *Sankei*: “We have to wonder how effectively and completely verification can be done in the 45 days before delisting goes into effect”¹².

Described by Secretary of State Rice as a “formality” since sanctions remained in place¹³, there was nevertheless well-founded criticism that the US had succumbed to the machinations of Kim rather than responding to actual progress towards denuclearization. In President Bush's announcement, the rhetoric was ostensibly one of being pleased with progress and

⁹ Yomiuri (2006) ‘North Korea in bind due to financial sanctions’, October 11th (DS061011SanctionsEffect.DOC)

¹⁰ The Economist (2008) ‘Terror off track’, October 16th

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sankei ((2008) ‘Editorial: North Korea's nuclear declaration’, June 27th (DS080627timeline,3points.DOC)

¹³ The Economist (2008) ‘Terror off track’, October 16th

wanting to reward good behaviour, even if this did not match real-life events on the ground. Kim Jong Il clearly made the most of the Bush administration towards the end of its second term badly needing to chalk up a foreign-policy success to offset the mounting difficulties in Iraq and Afghanistan. Portraying Bush as hoodwinked by Kim, wily operator that he is may be a simplification, but the fact remains that little was achieved and much lost by delisting, and this was freely discussed in Japanese media. In the words of Liberal Democratic Party Deputy Secretary General Nobuteru Ishihara: "It was unexpected. The timing of it was a confusing mess."¹⁴.

Stephen M. Walt contends that *social science should always strive to produce accurate and relevant knowledge about the human condition* (in Brown et al. 2000: 8). The situation on the Korean peninsula and how it evolves will be crucial to the development of East Asia as a whole, and the subject of North Korean missile capabilities and Japan's subsequent reaction are of key importance, similar perhaps to the unresolved issue of mainland China's territorial claim on Taiwan (the situation in Tibet, another festering regional sore with a suffering population does not have similar strategic repercussions and is thus of waning interest to international relations academia and world leaders).

An East Asian armaments race is in danger of being instigated, or is already under way, with North Korea as the driving force. One scenario sees countries across Asia scrambling to arm themselves as a response to Japan and Korea deciding to develop a nuclear deterrent. A regional war or escalation of conflict in the Pacific will have consequences for the global distribution of power even as the rise of China and/or India portend a potential restructuring of world order with Asia achieving more prominence.

The treatment of his subjects implies that Kim Jong-Il is indeed callous to human suffering, giving the fact of nuclear weapons in his and his cronies' hands nightmarish implications. Further, there is the threat of proliferation – as Iranian and Syrian officials travel to and from North Korea “with impunity”, North Korea and the theocracy of Iran “are known to be co-operating on their missile programmes”¹⁵. Granted, the technological shortcomings which make its long-range missiles flop and the lack of enough plutonium for more than just ten

¹⁴ Nikkei (2008) 'U.S. removal of North Korea from list of states sponsoring terrorism a blow to the Aso administration' October 13th (DS081014-1DELISTING.DOC)

¹⁵ The Economist (2009) 'Making a splash', April 8th

bombs or thereabouts, make North Korea “a rouge state with an alarming nuclear programme rather than [...] a nuclear power in its own right”, in the words of *The Economist's* Banyan column¹⁶. Still, there is cause for concern.

As source material for my paper will use *Japanese Morning Press Highlights* from the public affairs section at the American Embassy in Tokyo 2006-2008. *Japanese Morning Press Highlights* were obtained through Tore Nyhamar, and used in his report for the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI): *Japan – ut av skyggen av amerikansk militærmakt?*

The hitherto overwhelming soft power yielded by the US since World War II relies on the kind of open, informed approach of which these summaries are a prime example and which show the democratic and free nature of its society at its best. Through examining every type of publication – local or national of every political hue - available for relevant material, having it translated and summarized every day the American embassy in Tokyo is able to stay well on top of developments in Japan and clearly it is in the Americans' own interest to leave nothing out that may be relevant to US affairs. According to Mr Nyhamar, Japanese-speaking diplomats themselves use the service thus they know full-well that their domestic debates and news coverage is continuously scrutinised by the other party (mainly the Americans) thus greasing the subtle workings of the political and diplomatic machine (Tore Nyhamar, personal communication, 29.04.2009).

Walt, Waltz and Buzan and Wæver are the main theorists lending the thesis analytic fervour. *Regions and Powers* by Buzan and Wæver focuses on security complexes offering a highly relevant view on regional security. Considering the interplay between national and global security as expressed through the interactive dynamics of Japan and North Korea, bears the promise of fruitful analysis (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 44). Buzan and Wæver's analytical scheme can highlight the lack of leverage exercised by regional bodies in North-East Asia such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the vital role played by the US in this organisation compared to for example the European Union (ibid: 144). The relative lack of regional bodies in East Asia clearly complicates Japan's dealings with North Korea, although the six-party talks at their best function more or less as an institution in which grievances can be aired or disputes resolved without recourse to diplomatic channels of the ad hoc variety.

¹⁶ The Economist (2009) 'Calling Kim Jong Il's bluff' April 23rd

Indeed, there has been talk of institutionalizing the six-party configuration and this may well materialize in the future as the challenges to East Asian stability promise to remain many multi-faceted, with a number of disputes currently disputed and plenty more to surface.

Kenneth Waltz' *Theory of International Politics* - considered a milestone in international political thought, is the second theoretical pillar propping up the thesis. Waltz' main focus in the book is on structure, not as a collection of political institutions but as their arrangement (Waltz 1979: 81). After dissecting the concept of theories and laws into their main components Waltz maps out the distinct domain of international politics. In order to achieve a clear distinction, Waltz advocates distinguishing systems- from unit-level forces by "showing how political structures are generated and how they affect, and are affected by, the units of the system" (ibid: 79). Separating structural from other causes requires extending comparative method, showing how similar structure produces ditto effect (ibid: 87-88) - in the case of this paper by marking how different behaviours occur within the differently constellated alliance formations of North East Asia.

The central issue in Walt's *Origins of Alliances*, the third and final theoretical cornerstone of the thesis, is how states respond to threats: do they seek allies to counterbalance the threatening power, or do they choose to bandwagon - allying themselves with the threatening state? Security policy consists of hypotheses and predictions: correct hypotheses increase the chances of successful policies being adopted. Walt examines how states respond to threats, whether states with similar internal characteristics are more likely to ally than those whose domestic order is different or whether certain policy instruments can cause others to alter their alliance preferences (Walt 1987: 2-5). The thesis examines whether this happened in the standoff between North Korea and Japan, and if not, which theoretical adjustments may be needed. North Korean nuclear weapons constitute an undeniable security threat to Japan, indeed North Korea is seen as *the only* immediate threat to Japan's security as of today.

Origins relates directly to the subject matter in that both North Korea and Japan are not only dealing with each other, but also with each other's allies - China and USA, respectively. The conflict between the two is as much one of obtaining and keeping support from the outside – both rely on a large backer and friend for security and in the case of North Korea survival. According to Walt, fatal misjudgements concerning implications and alignments resulting from actions, resistance or new alliances formed in response can occur as a result of failure to

understand the origins of alliances (Walt 1987: 2). Consequently, it is Walt who emerges as the most useful theorist when assessing whether North Korea is crucial or not in determining Japanese security policy.

Going through the news briefings can at times be trying, while providing a fascinating glimpse of foreign and domestic political and other debates raging within Japan. As in most countries, the news is domestically biased and at times self-centred, although the level of analysis is high and on the whole reports are objective and opinions are informed. Debates raging on past and present in north-east Asia are rife with inconsistencies. From the vantage point of an outsider it is baffling how narrow-mindedly domestic interests are lauded and applauded while not seen as connected or in any way related to issues abroad. A tragic yet typical example is the completely understandable outrage and anger at the rape of a schoolgirl by US marines, while the continuing affront caused abroad by Prime Minister Abe's callous comments on Korean comfort women with a few notable exceptions meet with indifference.

On the other hand Prime Minister Koizumi and Abe's visits to Yasukuni shrine - by them presented as an internal matter causing incomprehensible fuss - is duly debated, commented and criticized showing at its finest the pluralistic and democratic nature of Japanese media and the open nature of its society. An interesting matter is that articles or editorials similarly question the stance of successive Prime Ministers that decoupling the abduction issue from denuclearization is unacceptable. This approach is responsible for sidelining Japan in the six-party talks and driving a wedge between Japan and the US. As a highly emotional matter which is hard for outsiders to fully comprehend, it is a clear example of domestic politics interfering with high-level international diplomacy, and as such it seems to be exploited by hard-liners on all sides, yet debated and questioned in a fine manner by editors and experts. Comparison to the high-strung, ideological hyperboles of North Korean news sources leaves little doubt as to which side is most trustworthy, and for this reason the thesis relies on Japanese news media solely.

North Korea is one of the most closed countries in the world. Little information escapes and matters like the health of Kim Jong-Il is the subject of "intense if uninformed speculation"¹⁷,

¹⁷ The Economist (2008) 'Terror Off Track', Oct 16th

highlighting the oblique and indiscernible nature of the North Korean elite, and indeed the whole country, to outsiders.



Illustration 3: The Economist ¹⁸

During the time following upon Barack Obama's inauguration, newly-appointed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized Japan's continued standing as the US' main ally in the Pacific by making Tokyo the first stop on her Asian tour. President Obama seems more awake to the threat posed by a nuclear North Korea than was his predecessor, clearly signalling a willingness to rid the world of nuclear weapons. So far, talk has been tough on the issue of North Korea from the new administration, but Kim's launch of an alleged experimental communications satellite on April 5th, 2009 (failed launch of a Taepodong-2 intercontinental ballistic missile said the US, South Korea and Japan) was the equivalent of blowing a ballistic raspberry at President Obama¹⁹ causing hardliners from the Bush II years to voice mistrust at whether Obama has the clout needed.

Denuclearizing the Korean peninsula would surely be a step in the direction of preventing proliferation and the triggering of a regional nuclear arms race. Whether it is an at all achievable goal remains to be seen. In any case, exploring the role of North Korea in the

¹⁸The Economist (2006) 'Kim Jong Il goes ballistic' July 6th

¹⁹The Economist (2009) 'Making a splash', April 8th

security politics of its neighbour and in the case of conflict most likely adversary Japan is essential to understanding the region and realizing which approach might meet with success.

At the time of writing, President Barack Obama is working out his approach to North Korea, stressing: "There's been a pattern in the past where North Korea behaves in a belligerent fashion, and if it waits long enough is then rewarded. We are going to break that pattern"²⁰. This seems to be setting a tone of realistic determination in the face of Kim Jong Il and his presumed successor, his 26-year-old third son, Kim Jong Un²¹. Time will show if Mr Obama can achieve his avowed aim of making our world nuclear-free in the end.

"When we are fighting with the enemy, even when it can be seen that we can win on the surface with the benefit of the Way, if his spirit is not extinguished, he may be beaten superficially yet undefeated in spirit deep inside. [...] Once we have crushed the enemy in the depths, there is no need to remain spirited. But otherwise we must remain spirited.

Miyamoto Musashi – A Book of Five Rings (2007: 79)

Background

Even though the long-range test on July 5th 2006 failed within a minute according to U.S. officials the launch unleashed a flurry of diplomatic activity and international condemnation. "Condemning the launches, Japan called immediately for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council. President George Bush dispatched his chief diplomat on North Korea, Christopher Hill, on a hurried visit to Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing and Moscow." However, "as the Security Council met in emergency session on July 5th, it looked certain that neither China nor, for that matter, Russia, were prepared to countenance anything more than a mild rebuke of North Korea, and would be most reluctant to side with any attempt to impose sanctions"²².

After the missile launch there followed two years of hard bargaining and stand-offs between Pyongyang and the rest of the world, before former President George W. Bush removed North Korea from his Axis of Evil in 2008. The two key events of the missile launch and Bush's redefinition of North Korea define the chronological limits of this topic thesis.

²⁰ The Economist (2009) 'Meeting thuggery with coolness', June 18th

²¹ The Economist (2009) 'Kim family saga: third and final act', June 18th

²² The Economist (2006) 'Kim Jong Il goes ballistic', July 6th

North Korea relies on food and energy aid from South Korea and its neighbour and revolutionary comrade China, which while itself moving towards a no-holds-barred market economy, displays increasing impatience with the shenanigans of its erstwhile ally.

North Korea's missile launch was the culmination of a long process in which the reclusive and autocratic leader Kim Jong Il played blind man's bluff with the West in order to maximize advantage and exercise as much leverage as possible from what could be regarded as an extremely disadvantageous position. As a state based on the home-grown Stalinist ideology of Kim Il-Sungism featuring *Juche* or self-reliance as a main point, North Korea has an economy reduced in places to barter and a population surviving on near-subsistence levels of nutrition frequently verging on famine, a large proportion of which is interned in prison camps.

According to North Korean propaganda, leader Kim Jong-Il was born at the birthplace of Korea's common founding ancestor Tan'gun, mythical father of the Korean race and founder of the first Korean nation, allegedly in 2333 BC. The myth of Tan'gun is shared by North and South Korea, as is the nationalist conception of the homogeneity of the Korean race, nation, language and culture as characterising and constituting the basis of Korean culture.

Likewise, resistance to attempts at domination and assimilation by Japanese or other stronger powers due to an enduring spirit of resistance forms a common cultural bond between North and South. *Juche* ideology portrays both South- and North Koreans as victims of superpower politics, and emphasis in today's colonial studies (and indeed foreign policy at times) focuses on negative aspects of Japanese oppression and atrocities like the practice of "comfort women" or enforced prostitution of thousands of Koreans in military brothels (Pai and Tangherlini 1998: 1-5). According to Pyle "Antipathy for the Japanese became the bedrock of Korean nationalism; celebration of liberation from Japanese rule, on August 15th, 1945, is a great patriotic holiday" (Pyle 2007: 307). In such an atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that Japan at times finds the going hard when seeking a diplomatic solution to North Korea's rattling of nuclear sabres.

As outlined in Charles Pritchard's excellent account *Failed Diplomacy. How North Korea got the Bomb* (2007) the turn of the millennium saw an unprecedented thaw between the Clinton administration and North Korea, as well as between the two Koreas. A series of high-level meetings seemed to augur a time when the long-standing hostilities between the US and North Korea and between the two Koreas would cease. Clinton policy towards North Korea was

characterized by close ties between the administrations of South Korea and Japan, a continued freeze of the North Korean nuclear weapons programme monitored by the IAEA, and direct dialogue with Pyongyang allowing the US to follow up concerns relating to missiles as well as Agreed Framework violations (Pritchard 2007: 1, 4)



Illustration 4: The Economist²³

Early on, Bush signalled a wish for regime change in Pyongyang (Pritchard 2007: 53). Soon, the incoming Bush administration was entangled in a web of mutual recriminations with North Korea, even hardliners in both countries' administrations taken aback by each others' aggressive rhetoric. The attempt of serious peacemakers and honest brokers such as Pritchard to engage in constructive talks and mutual dialogue in the run-up to the 2006 launches, and the way in which efforts were hampered by hawk US neo-conservatives and their counterparts in North Korea make for a fascinating, if depressing, read.

In the aftermath of the missile tests, initial assurances of US support for Japan and South Korea were replaced with growing impatience towards Japan as the issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea in the 1970s became an increasing distraction in the six-party talks. The frequent Prime Ministerial changes in Japan during the two years from 2006-2008 did not help in resolving the growing chasm between Japanese and US views, as the Bush-Koizumi "Honeymoon" was replaced by patchy and intermittent, sometimes edgy contact between Bush and Koizumi's heirs Abe and in time, Fukuda (see Fig. 1).

²³ The Economist (2006) 'Rocket man', July 6th

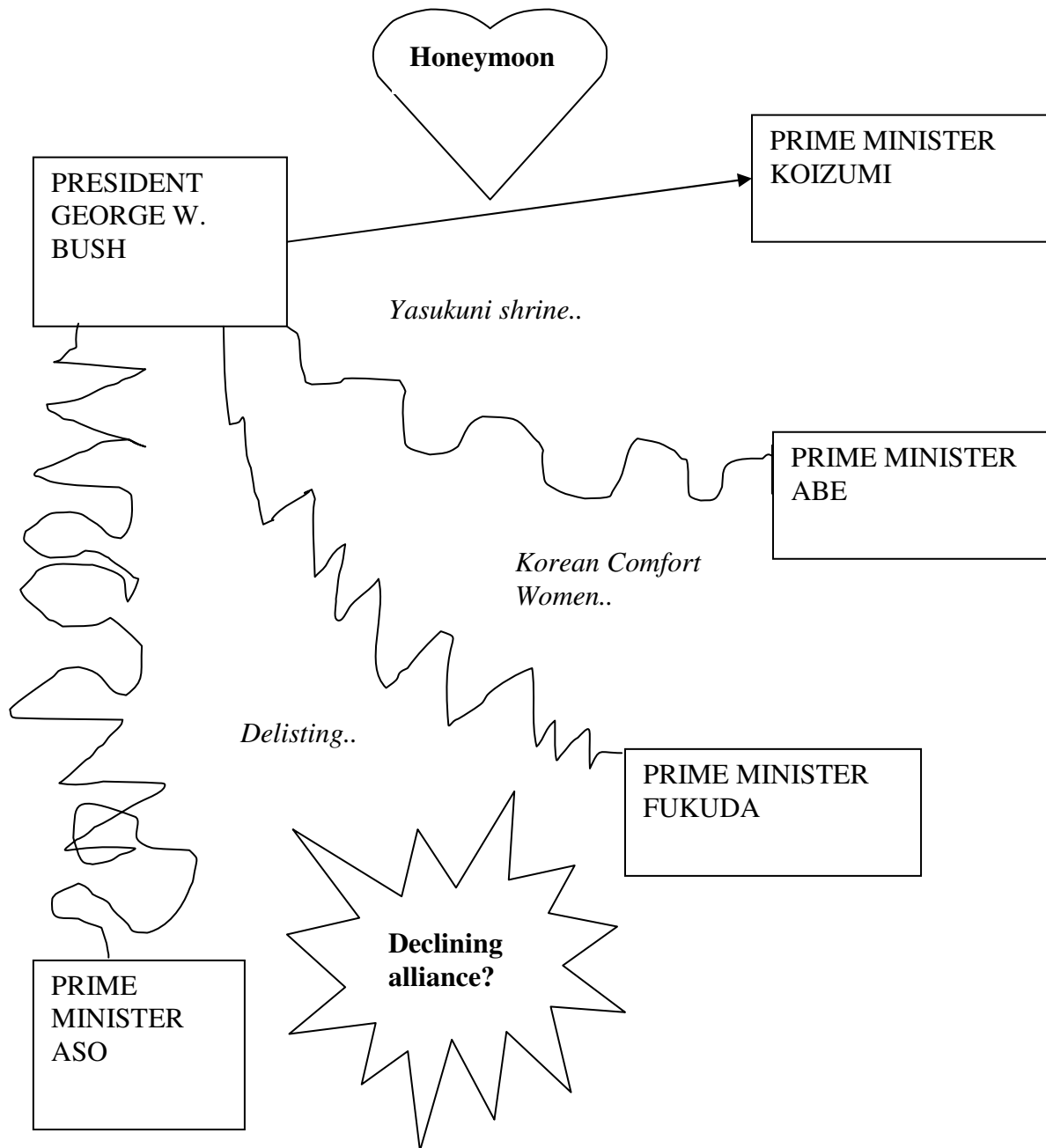


Figure 1: The shifting nature of Japanese - US relations in a time of frequent Prime Ministerial change 2006-2008 (researchers own, 2009)

Social Scientific Method

For social scientific method, this thesis relies mainly on Yin's *Case Study Research* (2009) as a fundamental, comprehensive and enlightening guide to investigation conduct. Andersen (2003) and Thagaard (1998) are also consulted. Undaunted by Yin's assertion that "using case studies for research remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavours" (Yin 2009: 3), the aim of this thesis is nonetheless to explore a single case only, that of North Korea's missile launch and nuclear testing, and the subsequent time leading up to President George W. Bush delisting North Korea as a terrorist sponsor to highlight how North Korea affects Japan's security policy.

Yin asserts that different methods within social science research cater to different needs and different situations in which topics of social science are researched (ibid: 3). Here too the preference is to keep eyes on the facts rather than shrouding the subject in statistics.

Leaning on the twofold definition in Yin's *Case Study Research*, it seems the topic of research fits rather well. According to Yin, a case study is an empirical inquiry which

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 2009: 18)

The research question is centred on one case only, namely that of the relationship between North Korea and Japan: Is North Korea pivotal to Japanese foreign policy? As already stated, the period of time in study is limited from July 5th, 2006²⁴ to October 11th 2008²⁵ offering roughly two years' occasion to observe the foreign and domestic policy manoeuvres of Japan in response to the sometimes subtle and more often unashamedly devious stratagems of the North Korean leadership as well as responses in the vicinity through the eyes of Japanese media. Descriptive in nature even if analytical in intent, the stated aim of this case study is to answer the question as to whether North Korea is pivotal to Japanese Security Policy.

²⁴ Yomiuri (2006) 'Japan, US unite against DPRK, aim to refer missile launch to UNSC', July 5th (DS060705MISSILELAUNCH.DOC)

²⁵ Nakahiro Iwata (2008). 'U.S. strikes North Korea from terrorism blacklist' *Tokyo Shimbun* Oct 12th (DS081014-1DELISTING.DOC)

This case study can be classified as being of an exploratory nature (Yin 2009: 8), since there is no control over behavioural events and a focus on contemporary events, hence the relevance of using a case study according to Yin (2009: 8). The research question could well be rephrased as “*how* is North Korea pivotal to Japanese foreign policy”, either way the answer portends to be of an explanatory nature.

Drawing on the work of Tove Thagaard, who emphasises that the scientific justification for the research question must include both arguments for how the research question relates to other theoretical works within the subject, as well as how it may contribute to already-existing literature within the same field (Thagaard 1998: 49), the first precondition seems to be achieved through the relating of the study question to the three main theorists Buzan and Wæver, Waltz and Walt. As for contributing to current literature within the context, clearly the wish of every author or researcher is that his or her work will be read and appreciated, and the originality or fruitfulness of one's labour is clearly better judged by others than by oneself.

The case study provides both eye-witness accounts and interviews, provided by source material in the form of daily news summaries of high validity and reliability obtained through Tore Nyhamar. Mr Nyhamar used the material in his 2007 report for the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI): *Japan – ut av skyggen av amerikansk militærmakt?* To quote:

“The selection [...] is extensive and consists of local Okinawa newspapers, all large newspapers of every political hue and also some journals and magazines. I have not observed any systematic selection bias, apart from the relationship with the USA naturally receiving extensive coverage. It also seems as if diplomats who master Japanese use the service, since it saves time not having to every day sift through such an extensive source material. No objections to the translation have been registered”.

(FFI rapport 2008/01599: 10, translation: researcher's own)

As stated in the introduction, the sources in question can be said to have been proofread already by the myriad of high-level professionals working in diplomatic and government circles to which it is provided, as well as, prior to translation, millions of (on average well educated and -informed) Japanese newspaper readers. The extracts are taken from all major newspapers in the country and regional papers are also represented where considered relevant

by the American Embassy's Office of Translation and Media Analysis (OTMA), thus providing multiple sources of evidence for the hard facts of actual events. According to Yin, "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence" and "any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information" (Yin 2009: 114-116).

Given the closed nature of North Korean society, and the great practical difficulties associated with gaining access to and interviewing top-level Japanese or American officials and negotiation participants, this paper will rely solely on the multi-faceted, varied and broad selection of newspaper sources available through the OTMA press cuttings.

Japan's security affairs are closely intertwined with that of the US, making the answer to the thesis impossible to address without also touching on US policies and actions. Using such a news summary does not constitute a lack of critical ability or blind faith in US propaganda. Rather, using these sources allows a chronological sequencing of events in the most reliable manner available. Being cut off from first-hand knowledge of Japanese media by unfortunate ignorance of kanji, katakana or hiragana, the three sign languages of written Japanese, these cuttings are the next-best thing. Japan is a modern country enjoying what is best described as Western-type freedoms of speech and press, and there is, frankly, no better way to ascertain which events took place and when.

Points of view as expressed in editorials and politicians' interviews are treated throughout as expressions of opinions, not empirical evidence. From a society such as North Korea the chances of obtaining anything remotely resembling straight facts or honest opinions are next to zero, thus the restriction of the case study's sources to information available from Japanese media. Answering the question effectually means emphasis must anyway be put on Japan and events in Japan, the question itself being slanted to look at the matter from what happens in Japan in response to North Korean activities.

Comparing the linguistics or semantics characterising the contrasting narratives of the two countries is interesting, but falls within the scope of a different type of investigation, hence will not be performed in this thesis.

As a matter of fact, the use of the news cuttings from OTMA allows classic triangulation from multiple sources of evidence using “information from multiple sources but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon” (Yin 2009: 116). According to Yin, “the need to use multiple sources of evidence far exceeds that in other research methods” and “allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical and behavioral issues” (Yin 2009: 115). The method used in this paper fits with Yin’s definition of data triangulation as “encouraging you to collect information from multiple sources but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon”, so that “when you have really triangulated the data, the events or facts of the case study have been supported by more than a single source of evidence” (ibid: 116).

Quoting from several news media reporting the same event from a country such as Japan where freedom of speech and of the press exists, provides corroboration of events and as well as analysis and commentary representing a plethora of views from a broad political spectrum.

Clearly, Thagaard’s assertion that planning the study includes thinking through what should be the focus of the investigation, and which methods may yield the most relevant information, applies to this thesis and these kind of sources, although her openness to “flexibility” of planning in order to change the research outline should new information crop up, smacks of rather unwarranted optimism that strict focus will indeed be maintained no matter which method is used, with no danger of the researcher losing sight of the main objective (Thagaard 1998: 57). In this thesis, the same research method will be used throughout, avoiding problems of slipping away from the original intention if the outline is altered *en route*.

When it comes to manipulation of events, the actual events that took place are beyond the reach of the researcher and as such immune to tinkering. Japanese security policy will or will not be affected by North Korea’s actions, independent of the researcher. There is no partaking of the events by the researcher since the events have already happened, hence no room for informal manipulation at the level of events taking place. Neither is there any possibility for manipulation of sources, except through selection bias. To avoid selection bias is the responsibility of the researcher, making the huge variety of the source material an additional boon, since there will be plenty of opportunity for corroboration and comparison.

The use of documentary information such as documentation and interviews (or at least interviews such as conducted by the newspapers and journals examined) is a common feature

of case study research and “because of their overall value” according to Yin “play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case studies” (Yin 2009: 103). In fact, Yin cites news accounts as “excellent sources for covering certain topics” (ibid: 104) and the drawing of articles from different newspapers as a good way to corroborate and augment events (Yin 2009: 103).

Thus, according to Yin, through the examination of documentary evidence “the case study’s unique strength” comes into play: “its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews and observations – beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study” (Yin 2009: 11).

When it comes to internal validity this is, according to Yin, more a question of ensuring validity of inference. To correctly infer the right and related order of events, incorporating or disregarding rival explanations and possibilities and to ensure that one’s argument and chain of analysis hang together, are the main points endorsed by Yin to ensure internal validity when dealing with exploratory case studies (ibid: 42-43). As such, the newspaper and other media sources used in the thesis are certainly a good starting point.

The researcher is constantly challenged to avoid preconceived views leading to incorrect conclusions being drawn, and strict logic of deduction must be maintained when assessing the events and what they mean. Certainly, from news accounts the researcher could easily be led to form opinions as to what the events *should* mean - the researcher here needs to lay aside the theoretical lens through which events easily can be skewed in their meaning. Assessing whether North Korea is pivotal to Japanese security policy requires looking coolly at the events taking place within the set time frame, making sure the distinctive accounts are compatible throughout the sources and inferring correct conclusions that are logically valid.

As for external validity, generalising beyond the single case study in question is fraught with peril. Questioning the scientific validity of case-studies and their ability for generalization, Andersen (2003:16) nevertheless goes on to outline the means through which such validity can be achieved: controlling unwanted variation of variables is seen as crucial, although the whole matter hinges on the connection between the empirical research model and relevant theory. Furthermore, generalizing from a case study according to Andersen is a question of

clarifying one's primary notions and the connections that are valid for certain groups of phenomena under certain conditions (Andersen 2003: 16).

To Yin, on the other hand, hope springs eternal with a view to the similarity of case studies to experiment: external validity in this case relies not on statistical but analytic generalisation, "the investigator [...] striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory" (Yin 2009: 43). Treating East Asia as *sui generis* can be tempting, since clearly mechanisms hard to match in other, contemporary regions are at work. Drawing historical analogies too far is perilous, at least if leading to prediction. Generalisation must be conducted with caution.

However, if the analysis holds true, the conclusions reached *may* be applicable beyond the single instance from which it has been inferred (ibid: 42-43). On the whole though, extreme care will be needed when applying any findings to a different canvas than that of North-East Asia: Transferring the conclusions reached to for example the Middle East where rouge, ideologically-driven nuclear pretender Iran with a historical chip on its shoulder is pitted against the beleaguered ally and long-time protégé of the US Israel, with historical baggage of its own might be tricky but could provide what Yin calls *replication logic*. This logic is the same as the logic underlying experimental practice, allowing the accumulation of knowledge across experiments by scientists (Yin 2009: 44). This paper being one of single-case design, concentrating on Japan and North Korea's effect on its security policy, testing of the universality of conclusions reached will be constrained to ensuring that the logic of argument holds water. However the case happily (given its disturbing and unsettling nature) being a rare one provides it with the potential of being of a revelatory nature (Yin 2009: 49).

Clearly, ensuring reliability through scrupulously documenting and consistently referring to the use of sources is a priority, opening for potential step-by-step replication of study findings by independent outsiders using the same case (Yin 2009: 45). The sources in question are referred to throughout in accordance with the guidelines set down by the University of Oslo, Political Science Department as stated on the Masters Thesis regulations home page²⁶:

²⁶ <http://www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/fag/master/Retningslinjerformasteroppgaven.html>

Yin's check list of prerequisites for the case study coming to full advantage seems to fit the research outline rather well. That, according to Yin, "is when

- A "how" or "why" question is being asked about
 1. a contemporary set of events
 2. Over which the investigator has little or no control." (Yin 2009: 13)

To reach conclusions and generalize from a single case study admittedly is risky. This paper aims to explore the workings of a particular North-East Asian inter-state rivalry - that of North Korea and Japan - and to see what can be concluded. Since the source material consists of extracts from Japanese media and the research question is focused on that country vigilance is vital to avoid drawing too wide-spanning conclusions. There will though, possibly be cause for drawing careful comparisons or lines of inference. Trying to avoid the excessive imposition of chains or causal relationships as discouraged by Yin, the attempt will be to keep the case study research within bounds acceptable to most social scientists (Yin 2009: 15, 16).

As an analytic strategy according to Yin (2009: 130) theoretical propositions are relied on to select and organize data – the decision to use the daily news extracts was made precisely because they offer a reliable chronological account of events with multiple sources of information from different, independent sources. For example on June 27th, 2008 the OTMA summary includes an article from the *Mainichi* on "nuclear programs, abduction, and peace", an editorial from the *Sankei* on "North Korea's nuclear declaration" and from the *Nikkei* an editorial in full entitled "U.S. government should reconsider decision to delist North Korea"²⁷ Thus, using the summaries ensures access to a large amount of broadly differentiated source material which it otherwise would be outside the scope of this thesis to sift through. Since the research question focuses on North Korea selecting the appropriate data which sheds light on the subject matter is achievable.

Concerning the five components of research design as espoused by Yin (2009: 27), the *study question* has been accounted for above. When it comes to *case study propositions*:

²⁷ Mainichi (2008) 'Nuclear programs, abduction, and peace'; Nikkei (2008) 'Editorial: U.S. government should reconsider decision to delist North Korea'; Sankei (2008) 'Editorial: North Korea's nuclear declaration', June 27th, (DS080627timeline,3points.DOC)

1. North Korea has had an impact on Japanese foreign policy. To assume that a nuclear-armed rouge state with hostile intent and within missile-firing range should be without impact would be slightly absurd.
2. North Korea has influenced not only Japan's relations to other countries as a whole, but more specifically relations with its main ally, the USA.
3. Relations with China and South Korea have also been affected.
4. There has been a rekindling and fuelling of the decades-old domestic debate, on whether it is time for Japan to become a "normal" country – armed and ready to use force to defend itself (Yin 2009: 28).

The *unit of analysis* in this paper is the effect of North Korea's nuclear shenanigans on Japanese security policy. The primary unit then, is the Japanese reaction to North Korea's nuclear and missile test, and the events leading up to delisting (Yin 2009: 29). This falls into line with the common assertion that a case-study *per se* refers to one empirically restricted unit (Ragin in Thagaard 1998: 187). Thagaard's own definition, in which the more general aim of the case study as compared with research of a more descriptive nature, the aim being to gain knowledge which can be generalized to apply to other fields, reaching beyond that of the particular unit of investigation (Thagaard 1998: 187) again seems to be appropriate. Seeing the unit of analysis as a complex whole, consisting of various sub-units examining them and their relations to each other also fits this case study rather well (Andersen 2003: 9).

Limiting the study to Japan as a main point of focus and treating North Korea, the US and the other members of the six-party talks: South Korea, China and to an extent Russia as essential to answering the research question, the pitfall of excessive abstraction can be avoided. With the case study geographically and chronologically defined, the aim is to succeed in linking data to propositions. One danger is to get lost in irrelevant details of domestic policy or trade disputes such as the long-term haggle over beef imports from the US or suchlike. An equal challenge is not to become embroiled in the domestic political disputes tangent on but not directly related to foreign and security policy, avoiding overemphasis on nationalistic groups' ravings and Diet debates that stretch to infinity for reasons of political manoeuvring. These matters shed little light on the research question and must be ignored. Rival explanations to the research question should be offered and evaluated, aiming at balanced end analysis (Yin

2009: 27-35). This is achieved through evaluating the case from the point of perspective of the three main theorists Waltz, Buzan and Wæver and Walt.

In explaining the case from a theoretical point of view the second analytic technique described in Yin's *Case Study Research* will be applied. According to Yin, "to 'explain' a phenomenon is to stipulate a presumed set of causal links about it, or 'how' or 'why' something happened. [...] the better case studies are the ones in which the explanations have reflected some theoretically significant propositions [;] the social science propositions, if correct, can lead to major contributions to theory building" (Yin 2009: 141). Thus, the object of this thesis will be explaining how, if at all, North Korea affected Japanese security policy. The means will be "the gradual building of an explanation [...] similar to the process of refining a set of ideas, in which an important aspect is again to entertain other plausible or rival explanations. And the objective: To show how these rival explanations cannot be supported, given the actual set of case study events" (ibid: 143-144).

Sticking to the main topic of interest and continually keeping in mind rival explanations while following a coherent chain of evidence are elements crucial to good explanatory analysis as seen by Yin (ibid: 144). Thus, the objective needs to be all the while explaining and analysing Japan's reaction to North Korea's missile tests and the subsequent process leading up to the US delisting of North Korea as a terror-sponsoring state. Yin's four points of high-quality analysis – attending all the evidence; addressing all major rival interpretations; addressing the most significant aspect of the case study as well as using prior, expert knowledge will all be beneficial to producing a thesis that ideally has a new, instructive viewpoint (ibid: 160-161).

The most compelling reason for choosing the case in hand is that it constitutes a *representative* or *typical* case (Yin 2009: 48). Sadly, the current standoff between North Korea and Japan over the former's possession of a nuclear arsenal is illustrative of a history fraught with failed attempts at diplomatic rapprochement, full of misunderstandings and deliberate provocations, new beginnings and broken dreams. It is telling that since the armistice of July 27th, 1953 no concluding peace agreement has yet been signed between North and South Korea (this continues to be an item requested by North Korea in the six-party talks), that issues related to atrocities committed before and during the Second World War by the Japanese Imperial Army on the Korean Peninsula are seen as unresolved and that North

Korea has yet to fully account for or repatriate Japanese citizens forcefully abducted in the 1970s to serve as Japanese-language instructors or spies.



Illustration 5: Claudio Munoz²⁸

As previously discussed some scepticism for dealing with a single case only in exploring the research question of Japanese foreign policy may be appropriate (Yin 2009: 62). However, this case represents such a broad spectre and room for analysis as to justify such a decision. Fairly unique in the warped yet extremely successful workings of its diplomatic manoeuvring, North Korea and any process in which it is implemented affords a rather special view of alliances and alliance-formation, thus casting a strong light on Japanese foreign affairs. Like a dysfunctional family, the unhappy dictatorship seems to move in its own twisted way.

A poverty-stricken land unable to adequately feed itself let alone provide anything approaching a modern lifestyle even for a small part of the population, North Korea grabs a disproportionate large share of regional and world leaders' attention, compared to countries like neighbouring nasty dictatorship Myanmar. There is a high level of unpredictability when dealing with North Korea, an almost absurd yet extraordinarily crafty and cunning actor. In the words of the *Sankei*: "threats from that nation are all the more real because North Korea is a country that carries out such a ridiculously provocative act without a second thought"²⁹. And might be added which continues to do so, in the face of condemnation, sanctions and isolation from the civilized world.

²⁸ The Economist (2009) 'On Mushroom Cloud Two' May 28th

²⁹ Sankei (2006) 'Editorial: Missile launches by North Korea are "fireworks" displayed by impoverished nation', July 6th (DS060706MISSILELAUNCH.DOC)

Possibly, the threat of proliferation and the possibility of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda gaining access to nuclear devices is the most likely scenario resulting from Kim's shenanigans, but this is of little comfort to the Japanese who, uniquely as a people (Pacific Islanders exempted) twice already have suffered the devastating effects of nuclear weapons. Pitted against the post-war self-proclaimed pacifist state of Japan traumatized by wartime militarism and subsequent defeat, where a democratic sheen glosses over a rather special and presumably dysfunctional political apparatus (Johnson 1995: 213-218, 224-226) the standoff between Japan and North Korea provides a fascinating yet somewhat disconcerting single-case example of security policy in North-East Asia, with uncertain ramifications of a nature both empirical and theoretical.

Regions and Powers

Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's description of what they have decided to name Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory arises from the end of an era of post-World War bipolarity, which provided local powers more room for manoeuvre. The theory constitutes a professed break from neo-realism in treating the distribution of power and patterns of amity and enmity as independent variables. As a conceptual framework, RSC theory aims to classify security regions into a typeset, providing the basis for comparative studies in regional security, and a theory with predictive powers in being able to narrow the range of possible outcomes for given types of regions (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 3-4). Thus, it can be relevant in exploring the regional security mechanisms at play in North-East Asia, pertinent when determining whether North Korea is pivotal with regards to Japanese security policy.

According to Buzan and Wæver, RSC theory has constructivist roots, as the formation and operation of RSCs hinge on patterns of amity and enmity among the units in the system, making regional complexes dependent on the actions and interpretations of actors, rather than a reflection of the distribution of power. This will be useful in mapping out the patterns of friendship and antagonisms which clearly affect the involved parties' reactions to North Korea's nuclear and missile tests and by extension the six-party talks.

Allegedly, RSC theory replaces traditional ideas of a buffer state (defined by standing at the centre of a strongly patterned security area), with the concept of an insulator: a location occupied by one or more units where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back. Thus, in border areas between regions – often geographically determined – this unit faces both ways and bears a large burden yet lacks the strength to unify two worlds into one (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 40-41). In East Asia, South Korea may be the prime example of a buffer state, *insulator* in the jargon of Buzan and Wæver, doing its best through “sunshine policy” and suchlike to sweeten North Korea into at least a semblance of sociability, while at the same time continuing its alliance with US and playing host to large contingents of US troops.

The framework of Buzan and Wæver is not state-centric, although they concede the world may still be. RSCs are defined by durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of sub-global, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence. Historical factors may well affect a local RSC, its formation being derived from the interplay between the anarchic structure of international politics with its consequences relating to balance of power on the one hand and the pressures of local geographical proximity on the other (ibid: 45).

In East Asia, historical factors have indeed affected the formation of alliance structures – North Korea and China were brothers in communist revolutionary arms, and victims of Japanese expansion and colonial atrocities. The US alliance with South Korea stems from the Korean War: the alliance with Japan from after the Second World War. When examining how North Korea's neighbours reacted to the tests, keeping history in mind is highly pertinent, even as while examining the news cuttings one is constantly reminded through the words of regional and world leaders how alive historical issues still are between the two Koreas and Japan, between China and Japan and between the US and Japan.

For Buzan and Wæver, the mechanism of penetration links the global power distribution of power to regional RSC dynamics. This occurs when outside powers enter into security alignments with states within an RSC; penetration links local patterns of rivalry with global patterns. So-called penetration being a natural feature of life in an anarchic system, RSC theory sees as its role to suppress the over-emphasis on great powers and ensure proper weight is given to local ones in security analysis (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 46-47).

Applying this aspect of the theory to East Asia highlights the international implications of the security policies of the region: the US is heavily involved in East Asia and will be for the foreseeable future. Although the wish to deemphasise great powers is understandable in the wake of the apparent ending of the Cold War, East Asia is one part of the world where the dynamics have not changed all that much. Possibly, this is due to the prevalence of Chinese over Russian influence in the region: the standoff between the Cold War antagonists was slightly modified and as such the collapse of the USSR did not have the same effects on East Asia as on the rest of the world. It would be tempting to predict a standoff between China and the US in the future, occasioning a replay of Cold War patterns of action, but history rarely repeats itself, and if it does, never exactly.

The definition of a Regional Security Complex as a group of states or entities possessing “a degree of security interdependence sufficient both to establish them as linked and to differentiate them from other surrounding security regions” (ibid: 47-48), means that the US-Japanese and US-South Korean alliances may confidently be classified apart from the RSC of China-North Korea. Whether Buzan and Wæver feel one should bundle both of these US allies into one RSC with the US is uncertain. Characteristic for the region is the low level of inter-regional co-operation, as well as the often putrid sores of historical resentment.

Indicative of classifying the two US allies into separate RSCs are episodes like the following: In the time leading up to the nuclear and missile tests, foreign-ministerial talks were held between China, South Korea and Japan. As reported by the *Mainichi*³⁰ “Beijing is showing signs of wanting to improve ties with Japan, while Seoul continues its tough stance toward Japan. The meeting between Japanese and Chinese foreign ministers this time revealed a difference in strategic terms between China and South Korea in their diplomacy toward Japan”. South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon, mindful of his aspirations to the post of UN Secretary General, nevertheless lambasted Japan: “Referring to the Japan-South Korea dispute, Ban stressed that behind it is the history issue”. On a more conciliatory note, Chinese foreign minister Li underlined: "When China-Japan relations are in good shape, both sides can

³⁰ Seiji Nishioka and Akiko Horiyama (2006) 'Close-up 2006 column' *Mainichi* May 25th (DS060525ChiSKJap.DOC)

enjoy the benefits, but if both sides quarrel, both will be injured. The rest of Asia as well as the world hope to see our relations improve"³¹.

In East Asia, alignments fluctuate and regional security complexes are not cast in stone, as indeed the delisting of North Korea by the US showed. Japan's powerful friend, after pledging the uniqueness of their alliance and the continued importance of the bond, decided to go it alone and throw away one of the most valuable negotiation cards in the deck. The befuddled Japanese could only gasp in wonderment, Kim Jong Il cashing his chips with glee.

Sometimes fluid and often precarious patterns of tension, reproaches and counter-accusations are prevalent in East Asia. Buzan and Wæver's emphasis on "the security discourses and security practices of actors, not *primarily* their regional(ist) discourses and practices" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 48) may be a useful strategy to rise above the fray and see what is actually happening. Especially on the subject of Yasukuni visits by Japanese state officials or the refusal to apologize properly to Korean comfort women the discourse at times makes alliance structures seem shaky, but here the so-called penetration into the region by the US plays a role larger than that implied feasible by RSC theory. Thus, the difference in levels of analysis allegedly occupied by regional as opposed to global powers becomes diffuse, dulling further the analytical edge of Buzan and Wæver's theory.

On the other hand, the insistence that RSCs are durable, but not permanent patterns, their existence shaping the outcome of state's interactions through modifying and mediating, not causing unit interaction (ibid: 50-51) is useful and to the point. In such a way the fundamental freedom of movement for states is preserved, giving a bow to the principle of sovereignty which prevails despite vague allusions to the contrary (ibid: 45). In the time leading up to the delisting of North Korea as a terrorist-sponsoring state, US senators held parliamentary exchanges with Japanese Diet members: "The U.S Senate has already been engaged in parliamentary exchanges with China since 2004. This is the first time that the U.S. Congress has held one with Japan in order to deepen the parliamentary exchanges with the U.S.' ally Japan"³².

³¹ Seiji Nishioka and Akiko Horiyama (2006) 'Close-up 2006 column' *Mainichi* May 25th (DS060525ChiSKJap.DOC)

³² Takashi Arimoto (2008) 'U.S. senators in exchange between Japanese and U.S. lawmakers urge caution' *Sankei* June 18th, (DS080618parliamExchange.DOC)

RSC theory can be criticized for being overly descriptive and often ambiguous: the regional level will always be operative and sometimes dominant– it must not always be dominant. The theory in its descriptive application is aimed at people working empirically on specific regions, and as such perhaps should rather be classified as a methodological instrument rather than a full-fledged theory. Its aim is to provide structural logic, most notably via the hypothesis that regional patterns of conflict shape the lines of intervention by global level powers (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 52). This holds water to an extent when applied to the standoff between North Korea and Japan: the initial reaction to the nuclear and missile tests was a reconfirmed commitment by the US to increase intelligence sharing, deploy the X-band radar and step up surveillance.

In the wake of the tests, the US confirmed its security commitments to both Japan and South Korea: “President Bush issued an emergency statement that purposely referred to the US "nuclear umbrella" [...]. The statement noted: "The US has reaffirmed with its allies, including South Korea and Japan, that it will fulfill its duties to ensure deterrence and security.”³³. However, the most threatening rhetoric of Kim Jong Il (although the actions through which he repays the South for its sunshine, economic development zones and general indulgence in no way constitutes a thank-you) is reserved for Japan and for the US. The fact that North and South, although separated by lethal minefields and shoot-to-kill border guards are two parts of one country, is prevalent not just through Kim's comparatively benevolent rhetoric but also through the South's conciliatory, some would say all-too overbearing approach. This makes the US presence in South Korea, marked as it is, fairly much of a non-issue in the debate following the nuclear and missiles tests, at least in Japanese media. It seems Kim's rockets are aimed at Japan and the US primarily, not at annihilating his own kin in the south.

One purpose of Regional Security Complex theory is to establish a benchmark against which to identify and assess changes at the regional level. This can be useful. Considering the four levels at which to look for what within descriptive RSC theory, mainly:

1. Domestically in the states of the region, particularly their domestically generated vulnerabilities.
2. State-to-state relations (generating the region)

³³ Mainichi (2006) 'Shock waves from North Korea's nuclear test', October 13th, (DS061013umbrellaAffirmed,Pac3deploy.DOC)

3. The region's interaction with neighbouring regions (supposed to be limited given the definition of the complex assigning more importance to internal interaction)
4. The role of global powers in the region (interplay between global and regional security structures) (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 51).

These four levels constitute the security constellation, but again the view is clouded by the introduction of half-categories (sub-levels) defined similarly to RSCs yet differentiated by being embedded in a larger RSC and thus forming part of a whole rather than being recognised independently. This to avoid too much "overlap and interplay" (ibid: 51) for disentanglement and independent analysis (ibid: 51-52). Tweaking the theory to fit empirical fact, Buzan and Wæver list the three evolutions possible to a Regional Security Complex:

1. maintenance of the status quo, no significant changes in its essential structure
2. Internal transformation – changes in essential structure occurring within the context of its existing outer boundary.
3. External transformation, the outer boundary expanding or contracting – changing the membership of the RSC and transforming its essential structure in other ways. (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 52 – 53).

Drawing on Buzan and Wæver it may be pertinent to assume three main regional security complexes in East Asia: that of the US- South Korea, US- Japan and China- North Korea. Categorizing Japan and South Korea as constituting a security complex together by themselves would be ridiculous. Even if the two countries see eye to eye on the subject of North Korean nuclear weapons (which it is not altogether clear that they do) historical factors remain at play, too prevalent to allow a permanent alliance to take root. In the run-up to the September 2008 trilateral summit between Japan, South Korea and China, "South Korean President Lee Myung Bak delivered a speech on Aug. 15, on the 63rd anniversary of national liberation from Japan, in which he said: "We should make our country powerful so that Japan will not unjustly covet our territory.""³⁴. The summit aim being "to bring stability to Japan's relations with China and South Korea that became icy because of visits to Yasukuni Shrine by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.", chances were still that "The improved relations

³⁴ Mainichi (2008) 'Shaky borders between Japan, China and South Korea', Aug 26th (DS080826trilatSummit.DOC)

can suffer a setback even with minor discord over territorial issues that can inflame nationalism”³⁵.

To a mind-boggling extent, the talks between the concerned actors seem to hinge on detail: in June 2008, when delisting had already been announced, and the US had drawn back from previous non-committal declarations of support for abducted Japanese citizens, in Japan-North Korea talks “an agreement was reached for Pyongyang to reinvestigate the abduction issue and hand Japanese radicals who hijacked a Japan Airlines plane to North Korea in 1970 over to Tokyo and for Japan to partially lift its sanctions against the North. It is widely believed that behind this development, there was a nudge by Washington, which wants to proceed with the denuclearization of North Korea's nuclear disarmament”.

In the face of delisting, which meant that “Japan has lost the leverage of delisting the North” oddly the focus was not on denuclearization, but the fact that “the future of the implementation of the reinvestigation into the abduction issue remains unclear”³⁶. As heartbreaking as the abduction issue may be – one girl was 13 years old when abducted and reportedly “scratched so desperately at an iron door during the boat ride to the North that she lost all her fingernails, according to a former North Korean agent”³⁷, it still seems that common sense would make Japanese politicians see the big picture and concentrate on disarmament. The US was instrumental even in making these talks happen, and some exasperation is understandable in the face of Japan's stubbornness in sticking to abduction resolution at all costs.

The US then, as “penetrating” or less dramatically, pervasive actor is invaluable to ensuring that this regional security complex prevails. Implicitly acknowledging the continuing presence of the US in East Asia and the importance of China, Buzan and Wæver explicitly mention East Asia as an example of a bipolar great power Regional Security Complex. This makes East Asia the exception presumably proving the rule, demanding different treatment from ordinary RSCs since East Asian dynamics directly affect balancing calculations at the global

³⁵ Mainichi (2008) ‘Shaky borders between Japan, China and South Korea’, Aug 26th (DS080826trilatSummit.DOC)

³⁶ Mainichi (2008) ‘Nuclear programs, abduction, and peace’, June 27th (DS080627timeline,3points.DOC)

³⁷ Ibid.

level in ways unexpected from a standard RSC. In addition, since great powers are involved, wider spillover into adjacent regions is to be expected (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 59).

Thus, in contrast to regular RSCs, the East Asian Regional Security Complex would be expected to generate sustained and substantial levels of interregional security dynamics (ibid: 60). If China and Japan were to merge into one RSC, something that in a long-term perspective may or may not happen, the resulting security super complex would, according to Buzan and Wæver, become “more elaborate than usual” with “a fourth, superregional level to replace the normally weak interregional one” (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 60).

Taking a cue from Waltz, Buzan and Wæver note the reproductive logic of trends, the structural forces of the international system tending to reinforce a trend once a region clearly has fallen into one scenario (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 68). They therefore set forth to outline their so-called predictive regional security complex theory, specifying which options are relevant under which conditions (ibid: 65). Democratically minded, Buzan and Wæver attempt to construct a bottom-up theory, assembling the full picture from jigsaw pieces of individually assessed regions. Their effort to minimize nevertheless must give way to theoretical concepts – at a global level, this is unavoidable (ibid: 85). The two key theoretical concepts structuring the book are thus mutually exclusive regions (the concept of super complexes capturing spillover) and the importance of the regional level.

The regional level is in Buzan and Wæver's own mind not necessarily the *most* significant but rather the most *consistently* significant level –which presumably is why it has lent its name to the theory as a whole (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 87). In East Asia, with the heavy involvement of the US, it is hard to see how this applies. When examining the question of whether North Korea is pivotal to Japan's defence policy the US clearly plays a role, blurring somewhat the lines between the regional and global level although Buzan and Wæver seem to think the problem solved through their concept of “penetration”.

In Buzan and Wæver's opinion Asia sticks out, since it contains the great powers China and Japan plus that aspiring great power, India. In addition, nuclear weapons abound: China, India and Pakistan (and North Korea, we may add with some reservation) already possess such weapons and Japan, South Korea and Taiwan practice so-called recessed deterrence which gives them the capability to move quickly to such status should the situation require. The co-

location of adjacent great and regional powers brings to the minds of Buzan and Wæver nineteenth-century Europe's balance-of-power politics, characterized by budding industrialization and rising authoritarianism and nationalism. To their credit, they do not draw the comparison too far, observing justly that the occasion for analogy is limited (ibid: 93-94).

Recoiling from the assumption that events in Europe are a blue-print for the future in East Asia, Buzan and Wæver set their course by acknowledging the prevalence of realist logic in "the high probability of fairly classic power-politics behaviour as the Asian standard over the next few decades" where "military-political security has priority, and the use of force, even all-out war, is understood as a possibility in many places" and "economic development is a priority not just for welfare objectives and maintaining military strength, but also for moving up the ranks of military power" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 95).

Indeed, assertions like the one in *Nihon Kezai* that "an argument regarding a fast-growing China as a threat has gained ground in Japan"³⁸, as well as increasing belligerence between Japan and Taiwan after the pro-mainland Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) government took over³⁹, are just some examples of the constant bickering and general atmosphere of mistrust which prevails in East Asia. Although the theme of denuclearizing North Korea could hardly be said to be unimportant, it does not seem to be top of the agenda in terms of regional interaction. Instead, territorial, trade and historical items of dispute carry the day to a surprising degree.

To Buzan and Wæver, the end of the cold war affected Asia greatly. Further, North East Asia is interesting in light of RSC theory since it provides one example of a super complex at work over time (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 96-97), as well as one arising naturally, not from decolonisation (ibid: 130). China having broken with the USSR in the early 1970s following an ideological schism and even border skirmishes that could have escalated into all-out war is not mentioned by Buzan and Wæver. Granted, the USSR kept a heady presence in Indochina, but as for East Asia influence was limited. Thus, what may be true for Asia as a whole does not necessarily apply to East Asia, and this region can be said to describe a more unbroken

³⁸ Nihon Kezai (2006) 'This summer marks 61st year of post-war politics', August 12th (DS060815Jp-ChiRelationsYasukuni.DOC)

³⁹ Yomiuri (2008) 'Ma Ying-jeou administration's Japan policy', June 25th (DS080625Jpsanctions.DOC)

lineage than that of the rest of Asia – something of an enclave where the continuum of Chinese and US influence persists even as it did during the Cold War.

On the regional level, Buzan and Wæver point to the fear and loathing of Japan that is very much kept alive in China and the two Koreas, where as we have seen wartime atrocities are no less forgiven than forgotten, and diplomatic rhetoric escalates at the smallest possible sign that Japan may be remilitarizing or rekindling the nationalist fervour of the pre-war years. The fact that South Korea plays almost as active a part as antagonist in such cases as its communist/home-grown Stalinist neighbour is seen by Buzan and Wæver as a sign of the strength of the indigenous regional element of securitisation. The conflict ensuing from the division of Korea and the two Chinas is labelled a further subset of indigenous security dynamics (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 131-132), and the first of these clearly applies to the study question as without a belligerent, embattled and isolated North Korea the problem of a crackpot dictatorship with a nuclear arsenal might not have arisen in the first place.

On the interregional level too, Buzan and Wæver describe the way in which residual fear and dislike of Japan shared by all its victims of aggression before and during the Second World War, serves to keep Japan as a neutral power in East Asia. When it comes to China, it is high on the list of many local states as a security threat, whereas China itself places the US and Japan highest, in addition to, still, Russia (ibid: 136-137). As a “subset” of the “global level action and imposition”, “an active set of regional security dynamics” was “the quite public fears and dislike of Japan in China and the two Koreas” as “all three countries took care to keep their worst memories of Japan alive” (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 131). This, above, has been amply exemplified.

On the global level, the great powers of the USSR and China both supported North Korea during the Cold War, despite being non-aligned since the 1960s. To Buzan and Wæver their policies towards Japan were equally similar, seeking to keep it weak and demilitarized with as weak ties to the US as possible (ibid: 142). Portraying Japan in this way as buffeted and manipulated by Cold War winds is simplistic and rather patronising, the case having been made for a more nuanced, if not contradictory version of events. Pyle (2007: 212-213) dubs the strategy of coping with the Cold War “mercantile realism”, incorporating classic Japanese strategic principles to achieve status and power through trade and commerce.

Having sketched a historical backdrop of some disputability if not inaccuracy, Buzan and Wæver go on to outline their proposals for future scenarios and from which developments these may evolve. Seen as crucial by Buzan and Wæver on the domestic level are China, Japan and North Korea: North Korea as a key to one of the regional flashpoints, China and Japan because their domestic developments would determine their behaviour as great powers. For Japan the main question is seen as whether to maintain its military dependence on the US or not, two scenarios being either its pioneering of a new type of great power - a trading state – or an eventual reversion to normality as a conventional great power (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 146-147).

The first of these developments now seems unlikely in the face of Japan not being able to handle its prolonged financial slump, deflating the huge, perhaps unrealistic ideas that were held until late in the 1990s about the superiority of the Japanese economic model. The problems facing Japan today are acknowledged by Buzan and Wæver (2003: 147) in a fleeting way, yet oddly their scenario for the trading state still stands in their 2003-published work, even though this seems increasingly unlikely. The reversion of Japan to a more traditional state armed just like any other seems the more probable option. Reforming the constitution and overcoming domestic opposition to rearmament clearly will take time, although North Korea's nuclear and missile tests seem to have played a part in hastening such a development.

On the so-called sub-complex level, post-Cold War, the regional security dynamics continue to evolve around the tense relationship of Japan to its neighbours and the unresolved war between the two Koreas. Little progress has been made in Japan regarding confronting its recent history, and the two-pronged threat of an increasingly militaristic and assertive China plus a nuclear-capable North Korea could according to Buzan and Wæver both be met by increasing cooperation with the US over missile defence (ibid: 152-153). Indeed, the latter seems to be the case, as seen in immediate focus on missile-defence equipment, a stepping-up of PAC-3 deployment and heightened intelligence sharing between the US and Japan in wake of the North Korean nuclear and missile tests and general heating of the debate on Japan's

defence and first-strike abilities⁴⁰. Later on, however, North Korea succeeded in driving a wedge between the US and Japan, throwing the alliance somewhat off course.

On the regional level, the ASEAN regional forum, ARF, usefully binds Japan and China into a regional framework. North Korea was allowed to participate in 2000, laying the basis for the six-party talks addressing its nuclear issues. As seen by Buzan and Wæver, socializing China into polite world society could well be a hidden agenda for the ARF (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 158-160). Weakened by the East Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, and admittedly "much more effective in tying the northern powers, especially China and Japan, to Southeast Asia than it was at tying Southeast Asia to the to the security dynamics of Northeast Asia" (ibid: 160) the ARF and ASEAN may look unimpressive by EU standards. However, as a beacon of regional cooperation in an area with weak institutional ties it is an achievement, although as clear-cut evidence for the emergence of an East Asian Regional Security Complex it does not suffice.

Making their case for the emergence of one East Asian Regional Security Complex, Buzan and Wæver rest their argument on three parallel developments:

1. "Shared concerns throughout North- and Southeast Asia about the implications of growing Chinese power.
2. The creation, partial and fragile, of institutional security connections linking North- and Southeast Asian states.
3. The build-up of an East Asian regional economy, which is widely believed to lead to politico-military stability" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 164).

Buzan and Wæver see clear signs of an integrated, Asia-wide set of interregional security dynamics emerging, focused on China. The development of China towards aggression as a regional power or the US pulling away from its security engagement in Asia or both

⁴⁰ Shigeru Handa (2006) 'Challenge of North Korea's missile firing', *Tokyo Shimbun* July 8th (DS060710launchResponse.DOC); Sankei (2006) 'Gov't begins studying strike on enemy country' July 11th (DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC); Mainichi (2006) 'Editorial: Enemy strike argument requires calm and thorough discussion', July 12th (Ibid); Nihon Kezai (2006) 'Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe denies preemptive strike argument' July 13th (DS060713preemptiveDiscussion.DOC); Tatsuya Fukumoto (2007) 'Interview with ASDF's 1st Air Defense Missile Group Commander Kenji Yamauchi on DPRK', *Yomiuri* Feb 28th (DS070228PAC-3.DOC)

developments together could allegedly be expected to strengthen these dynamics markedly (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 164-165).

To be sure, China is emerging as a regional, if not world-wide powerhouse, although the stumbling blocks on the path towards greatness may turn out to be many and close together. Possibly, the US decision to delist North Korea could be read as a sign of turning away from its deep embedment in Asia through choosing the easy option and tolerating a North Korean nuclear state to avoid long-term entanglement at the immediate cost of East Asian security.

On the global level Japan, as Buzan and Wæver have it, remains committed to keeping the United States active in East Asian security and poses no challenge to US leadership. Commencing reform of its defence guidelines towards a more active role played by the Japanese Self Defence Forces and a closer coordination with US regional forces is hampered by constitutional and political constraints, though furthered by North Korean missile testing and nuclear warhead development (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 167-168). This hits the mark quite well, at least up to the time of the US delisting of North Korea.

For Buzan and Wæver, the removal of the Soviet threat has strengthened the US in East Asia, leaving Asians concerned about a growing China but one way to turn. Buzan and Wæver therefore ask whether the significance of the global has dropped compared to the regional level or merely changed in character without changing in relative weight, the US remaining more important to the security of most large Asian states than they are to each other (ibid: 169-170). This seems to contradict their argument of an emerging East Asian Regional Security Complex, and indeed the disparity between the so-called "big drop in the impact of the global level" which "works to increase the weight of China within the region" and the alleged change of character of this level "from bipolar to uni polar superpower intervention, without changing in relative weight" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 169-170) remains unresolved.

Rejecting the hypothesis of a *sui generis* nature of East Asian international relations, Regional Security Complex theory classifies its workings as of a "fairly traditional sort" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 170). Summarizing the analysis into questions of political economy on the domestic level, strong continuities from the Cold War on a regional level, concerns about China, institutional developments and "linkage between security and economic

interdependence" (ibid: 170) on the interregional level, on the global level Buzan and Wæver remain indecisive towards whether US engagement is weakened or strengthened (ibid: 171).

Puzzling to Buzan and Wæver is why China's belligerent behaviour does not result in more balancing by its neighbours (ibid: 180). Could it be that the US security presence makes for a rather passive attitude towards defence? Certainly, while illuminating certain aspects of regional security dynamics in East Asia, Regional Security Complex theory seems to falter when addressing issues of global consequence, such as the still-dominant US involvement. Puzzling to every reader of *Regions and Powers* is the complexity and muddled nature of the theory as set out by Buzan and Wæver, obscuring and complicating its potential usefulness.

Theory of International Politics

Marking international systems off from other international domains, such as economical, social and presumably cultural ones requires, according to Waltz, "showing how political structures are generated and how they affect, and are affected by, the units of the system" (Waltz 1979: 79). What is the link between interacting units and the consequences of their actions and interactions? To Waltz, abstraction is king – the characteristics, behaviour and interactions of units kept aside in order to recognize the difference between unit-level and system-level variables, not giving heed to the interaction of units but instead examining their relationship to each other. Structure - by definition abstract - is defined by how and by which underlying principle its parts are arranged (ibid: 79-80). This high level of abstraction seems symptomatic of a positivist approach to Political Science, in which the striving for impartiality and purity of scientific method dominates, the greatest fear being accusations of lack of logical consistency and methodological rigour.

In East Asia, which structure prevails? Waltz takes care to stress that the "placement of units in relation to one another is not fully defined by a system's ordering principle or the formal differentiation of its parts" (Waltz 1979: 82). Changes in the units' relative capabilities lead to changes in the standing of the units (ibid: 82). "Political structure produces a similarity in process and performance so long as a structure endures" (ibid: 87).

Applying political structuralism to international politics, Waltz takes the leap from (domestic) structures where governmental institutions and offices concretise the theory to an arena of

arguable anarchy (Waltz 1979: 88), “a realm in which anything goes” (ibid: 91). Where domestic politics are centralized and hierarchic, international politics is anarchic and decentralized. Having carefully distinguished the political realm from that of economics (ibid: 79) Waltz permits himself to analogize between the two (ibid: 91).

In Waltz' mind, the international political system comes about as an unintended consequence of the struggle of states for survival as a prerequisite to obtaining whatever secondary goals they may set themselves, reacting to uncertain surroundings (ibid: 91-92). Slightly tautological the argument may be it still conjures up a compelling account of East Asia as seen from North Korea's perspective: surrounded on all sides but one with enemies and anxious about US regime-change plans, the rules for international behaviour were not at all broken since they simply were not there in the first place.

Anarchy, then, as the starting point for analysis; from a perspective of international institutions of which there are few in East Asia, this seems fairly valid. The only two outfits of international institution active in the two years from the missile launch to the delisting was, initially, the UN and intermittently the framework of the six-party talks. Also, at the ASEAN summit of January 2007 the expectations were that, “While welcoming North Korea's return to the six-party talks on its nuclear issue, the chairman's statement is likely to urge the North to scrap all its nuclear weapons and nuclear development programs in accordance with the joint statement adopted in the six-party talks in September 2005. On the abduction issue, the statement is expected to stress the importance of addressing humanitarian problems in response to Japan's call”⁴¹. The principle of non-interference continues to dominate ASEAN, though, with nothing more potent than a statement expected to ensue.

At the summit, elementary discussions such as over what countries should form a part of ASEAN which today consists of the so-called ASEAN+3 (Japan, China, and South Korea) continued, but the intention behind the launching of the summit – “with the aim of promoting efforts to build a regional community with an eye on an increasing number of blocs in the world, such as the European Union”⁴² belies the total disregard shown for international institutions in Waltz' analysis. Apt to recall, however, that even with the high levels of

⁴¹Asahi (2007) ‘Japan, China, South Korea confirm with ASEAN on cooperation in establishing East Asia community’, Jan 15th (DS070116ASEAN,NATO.DOC)

⁴²Mainichi (2007) ‘East Asia Summit ends’, Jan 16th (DS070116ASEAN,NATO.DOC)

integration both politically and economically experienced in the EU today, talks of demarcation and which countries should be allowed membership continue. Neither has the EU succeeded in forming a comprehensive body to decide on a common foreign policy, one of the remaining areas in which the nation-state continues to assert itself. Unrealistic then, to expect anything more than a joint statement, if anything, from a body as loosely knitted together and fresh in formation as the ASEAN.

Framing a joint UN Security Council Resolution condemning North Korea and imposing financial sanctions was similarly hard in the face of Kim's traditional allies - in the words of the *Asahi*, "China and Russia, which are both against Japan's sanctions resolution against North Korea, have indicated they will propose their own draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) critical of North Korea"⁴³. The end result after some wrangling was "Resolution 1695 condemning missile launches, co-sponsored by Japan, the US and other countries. Since Japan and the US agreed to leave out Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which leads to enforcement action, China and Russia changed their minds and voted for it"⁴⁴. Passed on July 15th, the resolution "warned North Korea and demanded it stop transferring financial assets and goods and technologies related to missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to other members of the United Nations"⁴⁵. Not total anarchy in other words, or at least anarchy thinly lacquered with an institutional sheen.

Indeed, a year later, even as the US decision to delist North Korea gained momentum, talk was of another UNSC resolution "critical of North Korea's human rights situation, including the abduction issue"⁴⁶. The *Sankei* reported that "The six-party talks have reached an agreement, which is North Korea's promise to come up with a 'complete and accurate' declaration of its nuclear activities for strict verification. In June, North Korea declared its nuclear programs. Its nuclear declaration, however, did not include uranium enrichment. The United States has called for North Korea to accept overall verification and delayed its action to remove North Korea from the terror blacklist. North Korea, reacting negatively, called off

⁴³ *Asahi* (2007) 'Editorial: Time to aim at a unified UNSC resolution on North Korea', July 14th (DS060714unifiedResolution.DOC)

⁴⁴ *Asahi* (2007) 'UNSC unanimously adopts resolution censuring North Korea', July 17th (DS060718financialSanctions.DOC)

⁴⁵ *Yomiuri* (2007) 'With passage of UNSC resolution, government firms up decision to impose financial sanctions', July 18th (DS060718financialSanctions.DOC)

⁴⁶ Tsutomu Ishiai (2008) 'Japan, U.S. European countries likely to resubmit resolution criticizing North Korea to UN' *Asahi* Sept 12th (DS080926UNresolution.DOC)

its process of disabling its nuclear facilities.”⁴⁷. Although delisting was performed without preconditions being met by North Korea, both the six-party talks and the UNSC thus provided a framework within which to communicate and co-operate, again taking the edge off anarchy.

Unromantic in its world-view, Waltz' theory rests on an inherent, if modified assumption of rationalism in assuming that states are motivated by ensuring their survival as “a prerequisite to achieving any goals that states may have” (Waltz 1979: 91). Acknowledging the extremely simplistic nature of this assumption, Waltz defends his position by advocating its usefulness in constructing a theory from which new insight, otherwise obscured, can be gleaned.

Acknowledged is the incomplete nature of knowledge and uncertainty of information leading to what might be rational decisions, as is the uncertain extent to which actors may perceive structures of which they are part. A system works as long as most parts perform as expected, the success of an actor determined by which kind of player is favoured by the system to win (Waltz 1979: 92). This implies that somehow an “invisible hand” be at work, similar to the Darwinist mechanisms by which unfettered capitalism ensures the survival of the fittest.

Applied to the international stage, Waltz thereby concludes that the system surrounding states is shaped by how some states prioritize survival as a long-term strategy, being willing and able to disregard shorter-term goals to succeed (Waltz 1979: 91-92). Clearly this is the case in North Korea, where millions are left to starve and languish while the Dear Leader spends scant resources on missile technology development and nuclear research. Applying his diplomatic skills thus to brinkmanship and extracting concessions, the successful achievement of delisting seems to prove that the actor most favoured to win the game of East Asian politics in 2006-2008 was a rouge actor of North Korea's kind. Was it the neo-conservative mood of US leadership, with slight regard for thoughtful analysis and reliance on prejudiced, opinionated points of view which created an atmosphere in which Kim Jong Il's powers of persuasion found room to shine? It certainly wasn't Japan's moment, shocked and embittered at what was seen as US treachery and defection.

The units in this international system – Japan, North Korea and the US – seem to be distinguished not only by their capabilities but also by the rules they perceive as valid in their interactions. Where Japan continues to press for sanctions and resolutions and spends time

⁴⁷ Sankei (2008) 'Editorial: North Korea nuclear verification', Oct 10th (DS081010delisting.DOC)

agonizing over whether a first-strike capability can be justified or not⁴⁸, North Korea has no qualms about breaking promises and issuing threats: clearly, there is here a clash of world-views if not ideologies, and assessing the capabilities of the units and thereby deciding their position in the system is not adequate basis for understanding. Historic, economic and strategic considerations do play a role, because whereas North Korea ultimately is in the corner fighting for continued statehood, the US is more pragmatically worried about longer-standing considerations such as maybe an unwillingness to cope with the collapse of the North just yet, and a pragmatic assessment that letting Kim keep his weapons is not too high a price to pay for avoiding the nightmare scenarios such a collapse might entail.

Waltz' self-proclaimed clean break from contemporary political science consists in his definition of units and structure as the two essential elements of a systems theory. Defining structure as an organizational concept, this entails states retaining their autonomy yet being specifically related to each other – forming an order or an “organisation” implying some sort of constraint. Thus, structure becomes the way in which one can attribute organizational effects to international politics and subsequently analyze the interaction and mutual effect of units upon each other (Waltz 1979: 99-100). The structure of the Japanese- US alliance is clearly in place. If when it was instigated Japan had no choice but to comply, the alliance today clearly serves Japan well even if its self-esteem is damaged by continuing dependence. Debatably, Japan can *afford* to flounder in its security policies, knowing that the US is pushing for increased military capabilities – the neo-realist view that relying on institutions is only sensible as long as a strong power is behind the institution, backing it with the threat of force, here seems valid.

With regard to North Korea, attempts to envelop the state in the structure of the six-party talks are haltingly and at times arbitrarily successful. Waltz' perception of structure as something states are a part of whether they like it or not, meaning that the units themselves form a system in spite of themselves so to speak, relies on the sameness of the units – they are differentiated not through their myriad variations in domestic organization but through “changes in the organizing principle or, failing that, through variations in the capabilities of units” (Waltz 1979: 93). Vague as this definition may be, it is clear that Japan, the US and

⁴⁸ Sentaku (2006) ‘Japan is capable of developing nuclear weapons in one year’, Dec. (DS061205nucDebate.DOC); Asahi (2007) ‘New Komeito head says, "It's too early to set constitutional revision as a campaign issue" for Upper House election’, Jan 8th (DS070109constRevision.DOC); Asahi (2007) ‘Aso hits Nakagawa's head for nuke argument’, March 8th (DS070313nuclDebate.DOC)

North Korea all share the trait of being nation-states and as such at least possess the basic characteristics required to interact on the international arena. It seems, however that the organizing principle by which the US and Japan comply is not adhered to by North Korea and that by choosing to delist, the US temporarily stepped out of a at least partly institutionalized world order based on co-operation, into the much harsher world of anarchy and every man for himself which seems to define the universe of Kim Jong Il.

When distinguishing between the domestic and the international political system, Waltz takes the classical realist view that the difference is one of level of protection: "A national system is not one of self-help. The international system is." (Waltz 1979: 104) The interaction of units in each structure is said to define the goals they set themselves and the ways in which they develop the means for reaching them. In a self-help situation, units will spend effort not just to further their gains but attain the means of protecting themselves. Co-operation raises the question of how eventual benefits will be shared, especially for states feeling insecure – the condition of insecurity in itself counters any tendency for co-operation (ibid: 104-105). "In any self-help system, units worry about their survival, and the worry conditions their behaviour" (ibid: 105).

The situation of North Korea in the structure of East Asia then, helps define its goals (the ultimate one being survival) and the way in which to reach them. Finding itself in the classic realist situation of uncertainty faced with hostile and anarchic surroundings, North Korea's only sensible option is to make sure it has the necessary means for defence and bargaining power required. Japan, however, relies more on institutions for problem-solving and allies for defence: hampered by the Constitutional renunciation of war, the three non-nuclear principles and a maximum limit on defence spending, it does not operate from the same harsh starting-point as North Korea. Stylized, the conflict between the two countries seems as much one of ideology, perception and interpretation, even in our so-called post-ideological age.

Since according to Walt, structures cause unintended consequences (Waltz 1979: 107). "Rational behaviour, given structural constraints, does not lead to the wanted results" (ibid: 109). Asking an actor to subordinate national to international interest is in Waltz' view absurd, although great tasks can be achieved by actors of great capability (ibid: 109). The insistence from Japan that abductees be returned and accounted for before any concessions are made, would in light of Waltz be perfectly reasonable.

Perhaps this can also be made to explain the seemingly incoherent behaviour of the US in suddenly delisting North Korea even though the preconditions set were far from met?

Worrying that staying with Japan and insisting on resolving the abduction issue may have seemed like a dead end, and the further decline of that administration's popularity in the wake of twin defeats in Afghanistan and Iraq, did the Bush administration decide to spin delisting like a hard-earned diplomatic victory to boost morale? Or did the administration decided to keep on living with Kim in the face of much more disheartening outlooks should his regime fail? Time, declassified information and autobiographies yet to come, may tell.

To Kenneth Waltz, international politics being "the realm of power, of struggle and of accommodation" it is also "anarchic, horizontal, decentralized, homogeneous, undirected, and mutually adaptive". Force is not the last resort, but the only one, and as such it "limits manipulations, moderates demands, and serves as an incentive for the settlement of disputes (Waltz 1979: 113-114). This does not seem to apply to the delisting of North Korea. Even if a potential bombing of Japanese cities were the ultimate worst-case effect of not complying with Kim's requests for concessions and aid, it was not a threat that was yet on the table when the US decision was made. The case study starting with the tests and going on through negotiations leading up to the delisting is one of rules being rewritten and unexpected decisions being made. This indeed equals the dynamics of international politics described by Waltz in his Theory of International Politics where "so long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them" (Waltz 1979: 94).

The case study of the North Korean tests leading up to US delisting would in Waltz' world probably be expected to be one of force being met by force: instant rearmament in the case of Japan. Indeed, defence investments already planned were hastened, intelligence sharing stepped up and nuclear and first-strike debates were rekindled, but a quick show of brute strength by the US did not occur. Instead commenced the slow, tortuous process of hitting North Korea through the use of sanctions and UNSC statements, blockades and boycott, as well as renewed six-party talks requiring infinite patience and diplomatic ingenuity.

Even if the process ended in a seeming victory for North Korea which regained access to its funds and an end to categorization as a terror-sponsor, this was the result of skilful negotiations, not brute force. Anarchic at times, then, is East Asia and certainly not highly

integrated as a region, but recognizing the role of the six-party talks means acknowledging that, even here, institutions matter.

Origins of Alliances

The self-proclaimed originality of Walt's *Origins of Alliances* lies, as the title implies, in his exploration of the causes that bring alliances about, the failure of which, according to Walt has been the cause of several unexpected twists and turns of history (Walt 1987: 1-2).

The aim of strategy being to secure oneself, Walt sees the failure to understand origins of alliances as fatal in that implications of actions, alignments resulting from actions, resistance to actions or new alliances formed in response to aggression thus may be misjudged. Security policy consisting of hypotheses and predictions, correct hypotheses increase the chances of successful policies being adopted (ibid: 2). To Walt, understanding better the origins of alliances entails expanded comprehension of the "security burden" implying immediate, practical results for a state (ibid: 6).

Written towards the end of the Cold War, Walt's book relates well to the standoff between North Korea and Japan – at times seeming like a last, fermenting leftover of the 40-year freeze between East and West. On one side a propaganda-spewing last bulwark of Stalinism, on the other a liberal democracy. In September 2008 there were unconfirmed "rumors that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il had a stroke in mid- or late August"⁴⁹. Experts scrutinized photos of Kim but clearly no-one had a clue as to what was really happening. In this contest the quest for allies is crucial. The policy processes on either side are at times opaque and hard to interpret, the stakes high.

The central issue in *Origins* is how states respond to threats: do they seek allies to counterbalance the threatening power, or do they choose to bandwagon and ally themselves with the threatening state? Walt reaches the following conclusions:

1. Balancing is more common than bandwagoning. States ally against threats rather than against power. We are thus dealing with a balance of threat, not power.

⁴⁹ Miyazaki (2008) 'Negotiations on nuclear verification suspended', *Yomiuri* Sept 14th (DS080916-1NkDelay.DOC)

2. Ideology is less powerful than balancing as a motive for alignment. Ideological alliances are in fact balancing acts. States with similar ideologies are more likely to compete than to form durable alliances.
3. Neither foreign aid nor political penetration is by itself powerful enough cause of alignment. Neither is an effective way to gain leverage except under very unusual conditions (Walt 1987: 3-5).

The first point seems borne out by the stand-off between Japan and North Korea: the US-Japanese alliance was hardened rather than weakened by the missile launches and nuclear test of 2006. Towards the delisting of October 2008 however, the alliance was shaken, if not crumbling: then Prime Minister Aso avoided criticising the US decision to remove North Korea from the list of terrorist-sponsoring states on the grounds that it was “one approach” and “better than leaving the issue [denuclearization] totally immovable”⁵⁰.

Other government politicians however did not mince their words: “‘Extremely regrettable,’ was the way Finance Minister Shoichi Nakagawa put it when meeting the press. He was in Washington at the time. He raised his doubts about the way the U.S. had handled the decision, saying, ‘I do not know whether or not there was prior consultation with Japan as an ally.’”⁵¹. Indeed. As late as October 10th, *the day before the delisting was announced* Chief Cabinet Secretary Taro Aso also at his press briefing announced, "At this point in time, there has been no formal contact from the U.S. about delisting the DPRK in mid-October."⁵².

One reason why the US decided to move away from the alliance with Japan and go behind its back could be a re-evaluation of the immediacy of the threat: two years on from the tests, North Korea perhaps did not seem such an immediate cause for concern from a pragmatic point of view. To the Japanese, of course, the picture was different since they were (and are still) within striking range, the problem of the abductees still unsolved. Possibly, the Bush administration had by now classified Kim as a blackmailer only – appeasement perhaps would keep him in check until the next administration took over. A mainly domestic reason might be

⁵⁰ Sankei (2008) ‘Text of Prime Minister Aso's statement on U.S. delisting of North Korea’, Oct 13th (DS081014-1DELISTING.DOC)

⁵¹ Nikkei (2008) ‘U.S. removal of North Korea from list of states sponsoring terrorism a blow to the Aso administration’, Oct 13th (DS081014-1DELISTING.DOC)

⁵² Nikkei Online (2008) ‘Foreign Minister Nakasone: No contact from the US about removing North Korea from the list of terrorist-sponsoring states’, Oct 10th (DS081010delisting.DOC)

the need to chalk up at least one foreign-policy success in the wake of the Iraq public-relations disaster ('Mission Accomplished', anyone?).

As for foreign aid to North Korea, this has brought little benefit in the form of alignment. Of political penetration there is, safe to say, none. Political penetration in the shape of US influence over Japanese policies is slightly more salient. The Japanese willingness to submit to the uneven alliance is striking: during the so-called Koizumi-Bush "honeymoon" this took on ridiculous proportions, even as Prime Minister Koizumi did everything possible to show his regard for President Bush, serenading him "I want you, I need you, I love you", the classic Elvis song in June 2006⁵³



Illustration 6: Political Cartoon⁵⁴

Personality-based as this tender relationship was, Koizumi's successors Abe, Fukuda and finally, Aso had a rough time keeping the alliance vibrant. With the US administration lacking

⁵³ Asahi (2006) 'Five years of Koizumi diplomacy', July 1st (DS060703disparityWorkLevel.DOC)

⁵⁴ DS060710launchResponse.DOC

in officials “deeply involved in Japan-US relations” and “gaps [...] widening among working-level officials of the two countries”⁵⁵, the scene perhaps was set for a drifting apart of the two countries, even as North Korean leader Kim Jong Il put his skills of manipulation and negotiation to play. Indeed, the running sore of Yasukuni visits, Korean comfort women and Japanese leaders’ dodgy wartime backgrounds were particularly high on the agenda up to the time of the delisting, with British and Australian newspapers making much of the Aso Company Report of 2006 stating that then PM Taro Aso’s family firm used Korean and Allied slave labour for their mines in Fukuoka during the war⁵⁶.

In the late summer of 2008 several issues were raging through Japanese news media ranging from geographic disputes over Takeshima island via beef import restrictions to the North Korean delisting, causing Professor Koji Murata to comment: “It is clear that the Japan-U.S. alliance's golden age like the one in the Koizumi-Bush days is gone”⁵⁷. Special correspondent Hiroshi Yuasa lamented: “Japan has experienced betrayals by its ally through two recent events: the United States' decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and its changing of the geographical listing of Takeshima”. Continuing his analysis, Hiroshi asserted that “The United States tends to adopt a reconciliatory policy toward an adversary once it succeeds in carrying out a nuclear test”, allegedly “a trend common in the Anglo-Saxon world [as] pragmatic thinking to join hands with unbeatable rivals”⁵⁸. Once again, issues of great symbolic value like the comfort women statements to the US public or the renewal of geographical disputes to a Japanese home audience were allowed to heat tempers to a fray, contributing to the perception of the number one ally as untrustworthy or at worst disloyal.

According to Walt, the two main reactions to a significant external threat are to balance or to bandwagon. To balance entails allying with other powers against the external threat, to bandwagon means alignment with the source of danger. If balancing is more common states are more secure since no power will grow strong enough to dominate completely (Walt 1987: 17). The development of the East Asian alliance structure in the two years from the tests and leading up to the terror-state delisting is one of a United States first choosing the balance

⁵⁵ Asahi (2006) ‘Five years of Koizumi diplomacy’, July 1st (DS060703disparityWorkLevel.DOC)

⁵⁶ Shukan Gendai (2008) ‘British, Australian newspapers reported that Aso Mining owned by Takakichi Aso, father of Taro Aso, had used Allied POWs for forced labor’, Oct 4th (DS080923AsoSkeletons.DOC)

⁵⁷ Koji Murata (2008) ‘The end of the Japan-U.S. alliance's golden age’, *Sankei* Aug 1st (DS080801abdUrgesCompr.DOC)

⁵⁸ Hiroshi Yuasa (2008) ‘Japan fed up with being betrayed by America's diplomacy’ *Sankei* Aug 6th (DS080808betrayal.DOC)

option: aligning with Japan and confirming the strength of their mutual ties, thereafter a steady drift away from stated commitments to abduction victims and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, towards – if not bandwagoning – appeasement of North Korea. From a historical viewpoint, the bandwagoning nature of the Japanese alliance with the US came about in the wake of catastrophic defeat (and perhaps a clear perception of the threat posed by the USSR) and subsequent occupation: to bandwagon with the hegemonic power was the only sensible option, and this is the legacy on which the alliance still is based although there clearly is a will in Japan to move towards a more independent and assertive role, as well as a push from the US coupled with apprehension for this to happen.

According to Walt there are two main reasons why balancing should be more attractive to a threatened state than bandwagoning: 1) survival is at risk if the potential hegemon is not curbed before it grows too strong. According to Walt, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger believed that in a triangular relationship it was better to align with the weaker side (Walt 1987: 18) The historic Nixon-Mao summit in 1972 –the so-called Nixon Shock to Japan when the US opened up to China without consulting its alleged prime Asian ally Japan (Pyle 2007: 12) – was a move to “shape a global equilibrium” (Macmillan 2006: 123) thus shifting the cold war balance of power. 2) Joining the weaker side increases the new member's influence within the alliance more than joining the strong side would, since the weaker side has more need for assistance and will be more accommodating in an alliance (Walt 1987: 18-19). Whether this is behind the United States' drift away from Japan is, however, unlikely.

Balancing then, should be the preferred choice. There remains, apparently, a widespread belief among leaders that bandwagoning is more common, especially when justifying military spending or overseas involvement (Walt 1987: 18-19). In the case of North Korea, this could be at the heart of Kim's reasoning: might is right, in a classic realist way. Showing force thus attracts allies and deters enemies. Kim is balancing on a knife's edge, though, as China grows increasingly impatient. The concessions achieved through negotiations are formidable, leading up to the delisting, North Korea “succeeded in winning promises from the U.S. for 500,000 tons of food and from Russia for aid of wheat. In working-level talks with Japan, the North managed to solicit an agreement from Japan to gradually remove its economic

sanctions in accordance with the level of progress on the reinvestigation into the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents”⁵⁹.

A tempting conclusion is to view Kim Jong Il's nuclear venture not as mainly a strategic quest for allies and power, but through a mercantile lens – the blackmailing and negotiation card with which the bare necessities of life are obtained. Indeed, previous to the tests, the *Yomiuri* listed possible practical reasons for nuclear development: “North Korea has sold missiles to Syria, Iran, Pakistan, and other countries, reportedly earning 500 million dollars annually. Kim himself stated: ‘The export of missiles is trade. If there are buyers, we will sell the products’.”⁶⁰. Further on, in the run-up to the delisting, a “North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman emphasized: ‘I believe that if the U.S. completely halts its hostile policy, the denuclearization process will make smooth progress.’”⁶¹. This tit-for-tat approach to the six-party talks reveals a form of reasoning as suited to wring material goods as to intimidate.

If Walt's theory on the benefits of balancing for states is taken to its full conclusion, Japan perhaps should be expected to throw the US alliance to the wind in the face of US world domination and to cast its lot with small, relatively weak North Korea who if Walt is to be believed would grant extreme concessions at the joy of finding an ally. This has not happened, and the reason perhaps can be found in the perception of risk. As put by Walt: “States tend to ally with or against the power that poses the greatest threat” (Walt 1987: 21) – North Korea is infinitesimally more dangerous to Japan than the US, even if its nuclear capabilities at the most are tiny by comparison – “when a state is believed to be unalterably aggressive, other states are unlikely to bandwagon” (ibid: 26). Aggression and perceptions of intent combined are enough to deter Japan from considering allying itself with North Korea, as well as the potential gains for Japan being less than tiny. What on earth an alliance between the two countries would intend to achieve is difficult to fathom, even if common ground was to be found possible to find between these old antagonists.

As maintained by Walt, the geographical factor also plays a role. Therein perhaps can be found a more valid reason for the drifting apart of the two allies – Japan is within striking

⁵⁹ Nikkei (2008) ‘North Korea already eyeing "next return," keeping nuclear card in hands’, July 2nd (DS080702KeepingWeapons.DOC)

⁶⁰ Yomiuri (2006) ‘North Korea preparing Taepodong-2 missile launch’, June 20th (DS060621NkPrepMisLaunch.DOC)

⁶¹ Nikkei (2008) ‘North Korea already eyeing "next return," keeping nuclear card in hands’, July 2nd (DS080702KeepingWeapons.DOC)

distance of North Korean missiles while the US, for the moment, is not. Applicable then, is Walt's rather obvious assertion that "states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away" (Walt 1987: 23). Japan's perception of the North Korean threat is one of immediate and realistic danger. Although previous to the missile launches the Taepodong-2 was thought to have "the US mainland within its range"⁶² the missile launches later were deemed failures, relaxing the immediacy of the threat to the US. For Japan however, even a stray missile loaded with chemical or biological payloads reaching its shores would be awful.

North Korea, Japan and the US all seem to be motivated by different factors and different world views in their strategic behaviour. Japan, the smallest in terms of offensive power is tied in bandwagoning relationship to the US, whilst continuing to put its almost idealistic faith in institutions like the UN. The US, which as a hegemonic state sees the world through the pragmatic lens of reducing risk to itself while staying on top, maintains a more neo-realist view, lending an ear to institutions and relying slightly but not solely on the UN and the six-party talks. North Korea, as the outsider playing by its own rules has everything to win in a system it probably perceives as anarchic and governed by the law of the jungle. In the fight for survival it is prepared to lie, cheat and steal and it is not afraid to upset its one major ally China – a power on the rise which tentatively is feeling its way to a position as a responsible stakeholder on the international political arena.

According to Walt, if the choice lies between the twofold strategically forking ways of international politics, if balancing is the prevailing trend, states that threaten will provoke others to align against them. Status quo states can thus take a reasonably sanguine view of threats from states aspiring to domination. In a world of balancing powers, policies conveying restraint and benevolence are most fruitful, and credibility is less important since allies will resist threatening states out of their own self-interest. The fear of allies defecting thus declines. Strong states as allies are valued but they must take care to avoid appearing too aggressive (Walt 1987: 27). In this light can be viewed the US- Japanese alliance in the prologue to the missile launches and in the immediate aftermath.

⁶² Sankei (2006) 'Taepodong missile: Japan, US begin to eye possibility of vigilance becoming protracted', June 26th (DS060627MDSspeedingUp.DOC)

The temptation to bandwagon will increase when allies are unavailable. An effective system of diplomatic communication is a prerequisite for balancing behaviour, enabling the recognition of shared interests and coordination of responses. Excessive confidence in allied support will, according to Walt, encourage free-riding, the optimal policy for a weak state (Walt 1987: 29-30). This fits the situation of post-war Japan perfectly, and explains well the bandwagoning nature of the US-Japanese alliance. To Walt, balancing is the dominant tendency in International Relations, bandwagoning the opportunistic exception (ibid: 30-31). Harshly as bandwagoning is judged by Walt, it has nevertheless made sense to Japan so far, and the fears of nervous neighbours wary of a potentially rearming, re-assertive Japan have to a large part been assuaged.

To Walt, in a world where bandwagoning is the dominant trend, competition prevails. Strong and potentially aggressive behaviour is rewarded with plethoric alliances. International rivalries are intensified since one defeat may signal the decline of one side and the ascendancy of another. This is most alarming – there will be a snowball effect of defection. Both or all sides will be aggressors since there will be more to gain by belligerence or brinkmanship, and status quo powers will be more inclined to use force in order to appear powerful and resolute. In sum, policies that are fruitful in one situation will be dangerous in another. Perceiving which trend prevails becomes vital when deciding whether to balance or to bandwagon (Walt 1987: 27). With a very careful and highly modified brush, this analysis may be applied to the palette of the time around delisting: although the hostility is verbal and the show of force rhetorical, the situation clearly had shifted enough for other mechanisms to be at play.

Although most realist scholars according to Walt downplay the importance of ideology in alliance choices, yet the belief persists that this plays a role (Walt 1987: 32-33). Indeed, the historical link to China keep Kim Jong Il linked to the outside world. Apart from fellow rouge states like Iran and Syria, and occasional exasperation by the Chinese at North Korean belligerence and brinkmanship, the ties forged in the crucible of the revolution remain strong: in mid-June, 2008 “the Chinese vice president visited Pyongyang. North Korea signed four agreements, including one for economic and technical cooperation, with China, which is strongly hoping to stabilize the region in the run-up to the opening of the Beijing Olympic

Games. Some observers anticipate that Kim Jong Il might visit China in a bid to deepen China-North Korea relations”⁶³.

Although China today hardly can be called a communist state, bonds of allegiance run deep. Strategically, China is ill served by a collapse in North Korea, which would bring a deluge of refugees, extreme instability and the possibility of US forces stationed right on China's border. Conveniently in a post-ideological world not envisaged by Walt at the time of writing, he is careful to point out that the belief that mutual attraction prevails between like states may be self-fulfilling. There being a close relationship between ideological factors and security considerations, many ideological alliances may be balancing alliances “in disguise” to oppose the spread of a hostile power (Walt 1987: 40).

Stephen Walt's assumption is that the forces that shape international alliances are among the most important in international politics. He further suggests that many debates over foreign policy and grand strategy primarily are based on conflicting beliefs about the origins of international alliances. According to Walt, ideological explanations and balance of threat hypotheses transpire to be the most fruitful contributors to insight (Walt 1987: 262). In the final throes of the Cold War, although Walt did not know it to be such, ideological factors were no doubt seen to play a larger role than they do today. That is not discounting altogether the value of a shared set of ideals and beliefs – the US and Japan share a common, liberal democratic language through which to communicate facilitating dialogue and making problems easier to solve. Similarly, North Korea and China are fellows in totalitarianism if not autocracy, which provides incentive to stay friends even if there are differences.

Indeed, in *Origins of Alliances* Walt points to how the importance of ideological distinctions declined as the level of the threat increased – ideological solidarity was seen to be most powerful when security was high or when ideological factors and security considerations reinforced each other. Caution is king where ideology is concerned; the impact of ideological factors can be negative, discouraging alignment, although it is more common for states that share ideologies to also share strategic preferences: powers behave as if ideology is important, reinforcing the innate tendency of regional powers to favour one another for ideological reasons (ibid: 266-268).

⁶³ Nikkei (2008) ‘North Korea already eyeing “next return,” keeping nuclear card in hands’, July 2nd (DS080702KeepingWeapons.DOC)

Concerning the balance of power, states according to Walt balance against the states that pose the greatest threat, which need not be the most powerful in the system. Several interrelated components make up the level of threat that a state may pose to others. Whereas balance of power theory predicts that states will react to imbalances of power, Walt's balance of threat theory predicts that when there is an imbalance of threat states will form alliances or increase their internal efforts in order to lessen their vulnerability. Aggregate power, the cornerstone of balance of power theory, is neatly subsumed into the theory of balance of threats, as it plays an important, though not unique role as a component of a threat (Walt 1987: 263- 264).

Read through the lens of Walt's theory of the origins of alliances, then, the decision of North Korea to develop long-range missiles and nuclear payloads and to test them when they did, may have been a response to the threat posed by the growing hegemonic power of the US, and the perception that by being included in the "Axis of Evil" it may have been on the regime-change shortlist in Washington. Wishing to attract allies by showing strength, it triggered an imbalance in the power structure of East Asia, causing a reaction on the part of Japan and the US. North Korea being seen as the greatest contemporary threat, Japan and the US initially confirmed their alliance and armed themselves hastily, to lessen Japan's vulnerability

Slotting neatly into a neo-realist view of the international system of states, the theory nevertheless meets a hitch in explaining subsequent US deviation in the form of the seemingly sudden decision to delist North Korea from the list of terror-sponsoring states. Temporary or not, this was a setback in US-Japanese relations and led to premature speculation that the alliance was in its death throes. However, there was never serious talk of new structures entailing for example the US or Japan abandoning the alliance and allying with North Korea instead. The impossibility of such an alliance is a rejoinder to the realist view of the world as anarchic and immoral, signalling a change of times since the birth of the nation-state in 1648 when princes made and unmade alliances willy-nilly.

Even if pragmatic statesmanship means few alternatives are ever not up for consideration, to ally formally or informally with such a country would be a step too far even for the US, and clearly carry few advantages. Advantages to delisting however there were, as the six-party talks seemingly moved forward and then President G. W. Bush could notch up a much-needed foreign policy success. The subtlety of Walt's balance of threat theory here comes in useful,

pinpointing the distinction between the situations as seen by the US and by Japan – the one with a nuclear-armed rouge state only a metaphorical stone's throw away, the other out of nuclear or otherwise armed missile range.

If anything, analyzing the time from the missile launches and nuclear testing shows how fragile and easily disrupted the alliance structures of North-East Asia are. The need for permanent institutions and/or communication structures between parties, the speed at which tempers can flare and animosity escalate, and the possibility for rapid deterioration of long-standing friendships between states are all highlighted, as is the prevalence of historical and economic factors shaping the course of events.

Analysis

Within the timeline stretching from July 5th 2006 to October 11th, 2008 this section will focus on the main events and what these can tell us in light of the theory hitherto discussed.

The launch itself, in the early hours of July 5th, unleashed a flurry of activity: The reaction of Tokyo was swift, consultation with the US immediate and the aim was quickly set for referring the matter to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Potential foot-draggers in the UNSC, China and Russia – historically sympathetic to if not directly allied with North Korea - would have to be brought on board if the sanctions were to be effective - this much was certain⁶⁴. China and Russia indeed seeking no more than a Chairman's statement, having less binding force than a resolution⁶⁵, a number of unilateral measures were drawn up by the Japanese to ensure at least some kind of response in case of complete international inertia.

Aggression and alliances

Thus it seems Walt's predictions are borne out: a threatened state seeks allies to secure itself against an aggressor. At least superficially sharing the ideologies of liberalism and democracy, Japan chooses to turn to the US rather than bandwagon with Stalinist relic North Korea. However, the balancing here is one of alliance between relatively weak (in military

⁶⁴ Yomiuri (2006) 'Japan, US unite against DPRK, aim to refer missile launch to UNSC and work together to impose economic sanctions against Pyongyang', July 5th (DS060705MISSILELAUNCH.DOC)

⁶⁵ Nihon Keizai (2006) 'China proposes a chairman's statement at UNSC, aims to check hard-liners; Sanction measures eliminated', July 7th (DS060707responseMLaunch.DOC)

terms) Japan with hegemonic America against the otherwise even weaker state of North Korea. This can be explained in part by the fact that it is not America in this instance which is perceived as the most immediate threat: Japan is responding to an immediate, urgent threat rather than a long-standing one, thus bearing out Walt's assertion that states ally "against threats, rather than against power" (Walt 1987: 5).

In fact, Walt elaborates on his argument, specifying that states tend to ally with the state posing the greatest threat, not the state yielding the greatest power (ibid: 21). Further detailing of balancing preconditions imply that geographical proximity play a role – something Japan may well subscribe to, being within firing range of Kim's missiles certainly makes the threat more immediate. Walt sees perceptions of intent as crucial (Walt 1987: 25), and North Korea certainly doesn't inspire confidence in the hearts of the Japanese. In the words of Professor Akihiko Tanaka at Tokyo University: "North Korea's missile launches might be likened to a mischievous act by a fretful, ignored child wanting to draw attention to himself"⁶⁶.

Regional security dynamics

Seen through the theoretical lens of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, the missile launch and North Korea's belligerence are prime examples of how historical factors may well affect a local Regional Security Complex, its formation being derived from the interplay between the anarchic structure of international politics with its consequences relating to balance of power on the one hand and the pressures of local geographical proximity on the other (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 45). Again, then, the geographical explanation, coupled with a slant to great-power politics. The Buzan and Wæver emphasis on local security constellations seems to offer a limited view on the conflict in question, though. The immediacy of the US reaction made it clear that it intends to stay involved in East Asia: Teaming up with Britain and France, Japan and the US together made a push for adopting the UNSC resolution, while then Assistant Secretary of State Hill for East Asia and the Pacific, made "a tour of the concerned Asian nations, such as China and South Korea"⁶⁷.

⁶⁶Akihiko Tanaka(2006) ' Comments by experts on North Korea's missile launches' *Mainichi* July 6th (DS060707responseMLaunch.DOC)

⁶⁷ Nihon Kezai (2006) 'Japan will not budge on taking vote on July 10, agreement with US to do all the two can do to persuade China, Russia', July 10th (DS060710launchResponse.DOC)

On the opposite side, through the long-standing treaty on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance between China and North Korea, under which the two countries have pledged to cooperate with each other in the military area⁶⁸ the conflict between two arguably small countries like Japan and North Korea acquire longer-reaching consequences. The occasional vagueness of RSC theory – the regional level will *sometimes, but not always* be dominant (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 52) nonetheless, Buzan and Wæver seem to have recognized that North East Asia somehow doesn't quite fit: that in the Asian case “all the [analytical] levels are in play at the same time, confronting all the states concerned with an extremely difficult hand to play” (ibid: 61).

The conflict surrounding the two Koreas and the two Chinas earns North-East Asia its own denomination as a “subset of indigenous security dynamics” (ibid: 132). In Buzan and Wæver's analysis, East Asia is dubbed a mild conflict zone or weakly integrated Regional Security System. China and the US together cushion the impact of antagonism on the Korean peninsula. The US presence makes for a passive view towards defence, and East Asian states are happy to leave the costly and uncomfortable task of ensuring stability to its' huge, hegemonic powers (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 180-181).

The absence of international institutions in East Asia and the effect this has on trying to solve regional disputes of which the Japanese- North Korean standoff is a prime example, is one key element of Buzan and Wæver's theory. The ASEAN regional forum – the ARF – in which North Korea has been allowed to participate since the year 2000 has not been particularly active in solving the dispute, and this task has fallen almost solely within the semi-institutional framework of the six-party talks. Indeed, ASEAN and the ARF have a history of tolerating nasty dictatorships and avoiding criticism of countries within the region, such as Burma/Myanmar. One should not overdo criticism of the ARF seems to be the point of view of Buzan and Wæver, since comparison to Europe and European institutionalisation would be unfair (ibid: 158-160).

This seems to imply a certain relativism and acceptance of the ARFs own argument that there is an “Asian” way of doing things on the part of Buzan and Wæver, akin to excusing human-rights violations in this part of the world by using the “cultural factor” as an explanation, a

⁶⁸ Shigeru Handa (2006) 'Challenge of North Korea's missile firing', *Tokyo Shimbun* July 8th (DS060710launchResponse.DOC)

disputed argument shown by amongst others Chan (in Bauer and Bell 1999: 212) to be largely based on misunderstandings and ignorance. Although Chan uses the example of China and Confucian values, his line of reasoning can be extended to address the misconception of “Asian”, hierarchical and consensus-oriented culture as setting different standards from the rest of the world, showing how it is counterproductive and logically flawed.

Buzan and Wæver do see signs of an integrated interregional security dynamics emerging in Asia, with China as a focal point. Whether China develops into an assertive power manifesting itself in armed aggression or the US chooses to limit its presence or indeed both, these dynamics are expected to be strengthened (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 164-165). The ongoing process of the six-party talks, with China as a strong driver, the US as an intermittent co-pilot and Russia, Japan and South Korea as interested, active partners has provided at least some of the Asian countries with institutional habits and mechanisms valuable to such a development in the near future, a glimmer of positive effect wrought by an otherwise bleak course of events.

Structure and strategy

Assessing the usefulness of Waltz' theory of units influencing the structure of a system of which they are part, in this case requires evaluation of whether changes in the units' relative capabilities lead to changes in the standing of the units (Waltz 1979: 82). This should be applicable to the situation in which North Korea finds itself – supposedly nuclear capable with long-range technology at hand (at least to a degree), thus changing its standing in regard to deal-making. The theory will then be valid at least by one count since without usefulness, the theory is invalid, as asserted by Waltz himself (Waltz 1979: 10).

Waltz' modified assumption of realism relating to states' goal being survival, and their oft-uncertainly informed strategic choices for reaching these goals in the anarchic setting of international politics hits the nail on the head concerning North Korea (ibid: 89: 91). Probably, Kim Jong Il sees the long-term effects of possessing nuclear weapons and an eventual admittance to the “nuclear club” on a par with India and Israel as a good way of

securing the continuance of Kim rule in North Korea, his recently-announced heir being his third son, 26-year-old Kim Jong Un⁶⁹.

Concerning Japan, Waltz' analysis might lead one to expect that Japan would indeed be willing to overlook certain unpleasant facts of US presence – crimes committed by marines, local (and vocal) opposition to arms and troops deployment, the danger of pre-emptive strikes or accidents relating to nuclear-powered vessels – in return for security. This makes Japan a no less realist actor in North-East Asia than North Korea: the one fiercely independent, the other willing to endure a high level of dependency in return for extensive protection. Thus, both states can be said to be shaping the system of which they are part, by disregarding certain short-term goals in favour of long-term survival goals (Waltz 1979: 91-92).

The international structure surrounding the two countries, however, seems to limit their freedom of movement in different ways. North Korea is bound by sanctions and an international unwillingness to engage and trade with it by most other countries – even as shortage of funds makes paying for necessary imports hard. Domestically, there are ideological and hard-to-fathom internal political processes by which decisions such as cutting carefully established ties to South Korea – seemingly on a whim - are taken, making it an erratic and unpredictable international actor. Japan is hampered domestically by three post-war political barriers to rearmament: “the war-renouncing clause (Art. 9) in the Constitution of 1947; the three non-nuclear principles (*hikaku sangensoku*- ‘Japan will not produce, possess, or let others bring in nuclear weapons’) that Prime Minister Satô first enunciated in 1968; and the ceiling on defense expenditures of 1 percent of gross national product (GNP) that Prime Minister Miki established in 1976” (Johnson 1995 : 265).

Externally, close geographical proximity to China and a generally perceived scepticism, if not hostility to anything seen as Japanese assertiveness or aggression caused by wartime wounds, makes Japan tread with some, if not always adequate, caution.

⁶⁹The Economist (2009) ‘Kim Jong Il’s bombshell’, May 28th; ‘Kim family saga: third and final act’, June 18th

One Step at a Time

According to the *Yomiuri*⁷⁰, "The government has taken this view about defence-only policy: "Japan should use defence power for the first time when it comes under an armed attack, but it should exert minimum necessary power to defend itself." Even so, it takes the view that attacking an enemy state is possible if there is no other means". Further: "For an attack on an enemy state, the following capabilities are necessary: (1) being able to launch missiles or drop bombs from a long-range fighter; and (2) able to deploy a naval ship or an Aegis destroyer mounted with Tomahawk cruise missiles. In launching an attack by fighter aircraft, it is necessary to gain air supremacy by blanking out the enemy's radar and destroying its fighters and anti-aircraft bases"⁷¹.

Thus we see the North Korean launch and test had the direct effect on Japanese domestic politics of rekindling, if not actually setting ablaze the steadily smouldering debate on defence policy and capability. The total dependency on US assistance is underscored in several articles, since the Japanese Self-Defence Forces lack the necessary intelligence to make adequate assessments of targets or the radar-equipment needed to establish whether enemy missiles are heading towards Japan. This last a prerequisite for launching attacks under strict interpretation of clause nine in the Constitution⁷², according to the so-called enemy strike argument originating in the Hatoyama cabinet of 1956⁷³. Neither does Japan possess the necessary strike capability⁷⁴, making the scenario one of the SDF offering US bombers logistical support⁷⁵ rather than striking North Korean bases on their own which would be unrealistic according to one senior Defence Agency official⁷⁶.

Is this immediate assessment of self-defence and strike capability plus tentative twanging of alliance strings the kind of reaction envisaged by Walt, Waltz or Buzan and Wæver? Whether

⁷⁰ *Yomiuri* (2006) 'US urging China to persuade North Korea: Bush', July 11th
(DS060711Radar,DiploNK.DOC)

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Mainichi (2006) 'Editorial: Enemy strike argument requires calm and thorough discussion', July 12th; Sankei (2006) 'Gov't begins studying strike on enemy country', July 11th (DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC)

⁷³ Mainichi (2006) 'Editorial: Enemy strike argument requires calm and thorough discussion', July 12th
(DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC)

⁷⁴ Sankei (2006) 'Gov't begins studying strike on enemy country', July 11th
(DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC)

⁷⁵ *Yomiuri* (2006) 'High public support necessary for enemy base strikes', July 11th
(DS060711Radar,DiploNK.DOC)

⁷⁶ Sankei (2006) 'Gov't begins studying strike on enemy country', July 11th
(DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC)

explicitly stated or deductable from the aforementioned works, do empirical fact and the mapped course of events fit these stellar theorists' predictions?

Rude Awakening

Interpreted according to Waltz, the attaining of nuclear long-range strike capability (if still in the early stages) clearly constitutes a challenge to the established balance of power. North Korea so far has been more a source of irritation and unhappiness through its kidnapping of Japanese and other citizens, laundering of money and counterfeiting, smuggling and other disruptive activities, than an immediate, urgent security threat. Now long-range strike capability is within reach, albeit within an uncertain time-frame as the Taepodong-2 launches in fact were failures - something the Japanese eventually found out when US intelligence after some time was released⁷⁷. As the distribution of capabilities in North-East Asia thus shifts, Waltzian power-balancing theory should be applicable.

The international system according to Waltz being one of anarchy and self-help (1979: 104), and with North-East Asian institutions as sketchy and its members as uncommitted as they are would entail units using their resources to ensure their survival. Worrying about survival conditions behaviour (Waltz 1979: 105) – the invasion of Iraq and the ousting (and eventual execution of Saddam Hussein) may have convinced Kim Jong Il that it was time to resume North Korea's nuclear programme, as G. W. Bush stepped up his hostile discourse and expressed his repulsion towards *Kim* (disregarding honorific titles) as part of the so-called Axis of Evil. The reward to North Korea for maintaining a costly, resource-consuming nuclear programme is the maintenance of autonomy, not increased well-being (ibid: 107) – although in fact, through the six-party talks and by using his nuclear leverage in admirably clever ways Kim is indeed able to extract aid and concessions, thus countering if not refuting absolutely Waltz' argument.

Clearly, the Waltzian argument to a certain point holds for North Korea, while the picture is slightly different for Japan. As a currently heavily and closely interdependent state enmeshed within the security alliance with the United States, Japan is indeed subject to the vulnerabilities and lack of control that such dependence entails (Waltz 1979: 106). However,

⁷⁷ Asahi (2006) 'Taepodong-2 a complete failure', Sept 1st (DS060901relianceUSintelligence.DOC)

Japan does not only strive to regain control and lessen dependence – the picture is complex, as a snapshot of the goings-on shows: concurrent with staunch statements of common intent, recognition of shared purpose and mutual respect, there is mistrust.

Highlighting the American commitment to Japan's defence, in the run-up to the missile tests two US Aegis destroyers capable of detecting and attacking missiles were deployed in the Sea of Japan⁷⁸. This is in the spirit of the 1997 guidelines for bilateral defence cooperation stating that "US forces will consider, as necessary, the use of forces providing additional strike power" in case of a missile attack on Japan⁷⁹. Yet the X-band radar deployed by the US military on the Shariki base is shrouded in secrecy and seems to offer Japan no protection against missile attack, due to the complex chain transmitting intelligence between America and Japan: "A missile launch detected by a US spy satellite is first transmitted to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in Colorado, then to the Pacific Command in Hawaii, and finally to Yokota Air Base in Japan. The Defense Agency comes after that"⁸⁰.

This last example leaves room to wonder whether, by hosting a potential target for military attack yet not benefitting from the intelligence gleaned, Japan is indeed paying too high a price for its dependency on US protection, provided of course that North Korea's strike capability is of such a finely-tuned nature that it would be capable of hitting the radar site. Seen in light of the tests, this is unlikely – the threat is more one of one or several missiles more by chance than by design reaching as far as a major centre of population, wreaking untold havoc. Does this verify Waltz' maxim, that within a certain type of structure, perhaps such as that furnished by living in the nuclear age, "pursuit of individual interest produces collective results that nobody wants, yet individuals by behaving differently will hurt themselves without altering outcomes" (1979: 107-108)? The beneficiary in this case would be North Korea, gaining fear from its neighbour Japan and hesitance to engage militarily from its would-be aggressor the US, while Japan, which has chosen to make itself dependent harvests much risk and little real protection.

⁷⁸ Sankei (2006) 'Editorial: Japanese, US leaders should give strong warning to North Korea', June 28th (DS060628KoizumiBush.DOC)

⁷⁹ Sankei (2006) 'Gov't begins studying strike on enemy country', July 11th (DS060712enemyStrikeArgument.DOC)

⁸⁰ Tokyo Shimbun (2006) 'X-band radar deployed at Shariki base', July 8th (DS060711Radar,DiploNK.DOC)

On the face of it then, Waltz seems to hit a nerve in describing the East Asian scene at the time of the missile tests and Japan and the US's reaction. North Korea plays the game, benefitting from a show of strength and an increase in capabilities. Japan, which has lived in a post-war haze, dreaming of an end to nuclear weapons and war in general, wakes up brutally to realize that depending on the US for shelter may be unwise.

Regions and Dictators

In Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's *Regions and Powers* (2003) traditional ideas on centre-periphery or unipolarity are complemented by notions of regions and centres of power. This is based on a realist view, the regional structures subsets of the anarchical superstructure.

As for East Asia, Buzan and Wæver explicitly give mention to the region in their rather descriptively explained theory of Regional Security Complexes (RSCs), describing North Korea as a regional "flashpoint" and the development of Japan (and China) as crucial to the region as a whole (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 146). The prospect in the time period covered by this essay is not which awkward aspects unification between North and South will raise as predicted by Buzan and Wæver (2003:146), rather which implications for Japan follow from the ongoing division of the peninsula and the nuclear armament of the one part.

On the issue of Japan, however, Buzan and Wæver's analysis remains valid, even as the prolonged recession continues and political inertia hinders real reform (ibid: 146-147). Worryingly for Japan itself and the region in general, Japan does not seem able to shake off stagnation and uproot rottenness from domestic politics. The constant dithering over issues such as whether the prime minister should visit Yasukuni shrine where class-A war criminals are interred, the dynastic nature of political succession and the "lost generation" of young, jobless Japanese living at home doing nothing do not bode well, and question the concept of the flying geese model of "Japan-centred East Asian economic interdependence", or capitalistic regionalism (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 161).

On a regional level, Buzan and Wæver's assertion that Northeast and Southeast Asia became more knitted together in the 1990s does not really seem to affect the dynamics of the crisis associated with the North Korean missile and nuclear tests of 2006. ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum are conspicuously absent in the process of dealing with the crisis. It is also

interesting how the antics of Kim Jong Il seem to draw tension away from what would otherwise be the worrying ascent of China as envisaged by Buzan and Wæver (2003: 161).

Certainly, in the face of China's stated aim in its 2006 Defence White Paper of "strengthening and modernizing its strategic capabilities" as quoted in the *Yomiuri*⁸¹ Japan will be facing a "very difficult situation" (ibid.). However, the resumption of full-scale defence exchange, reciprocal marine port calls and the setting up of working groups aiming at establishing a hotline between the two countries shows that China, at least is willing to engage on an equal footing, although the Taiwan issue continues to be a stumbling-block for full amity⁸².

A mere three weeks after the 2006 testing, the foreign ministers of China and Japan agreed "to work closely together toward an early resumption of six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue", although here, too the Chinese took the opportunity to raise the issue of Prime Ministerial visits to Yasukuni shrine⁸³. Cooperation on the North Korean problem may have brought the two countries closer as China slowly has lost patience with Kim's antics. There seems to be a realistic assessment in Japan, as indeed one would expect, that living with China as an assertive power of near geographical proximity can only be achieved through dialogue and mutual respect. This realization at times is clouded on the two countries' domestic scenes, where nationalist sentiment often seems used as a safety valve for government opposition, and the Yasukuni, text-book and comfort women issues played for what it is worth by parties interested in making tempers flare.

Even if the ASEAN and the ARF has not fulfilled its role in defusing the conflict, the six-party talks however, did play a role and perhaps it is here the Buzan and Wæver analytical scheme can be put to use by concentrating on the international or, in Buzan and Wæver's term, global level.

Concerning the global implications of the power structures in North-East Asia, Buzan and Wæver succinctly pinpoint the hindering of North Korean nuclear proliferation as the main factor in strengthening US involvement. Japan's avoidance of anything like a challenge to US

⁸¹Yomiuri ((2007) 'China carries out anti-satellite weapons test, challenging US military hegemony', Jan 26th (DS070126chishootsSatellite.DOC)

⁸²Yomiuri (2007) 'Japan, China resume defense exchange after a lapse of four years', Aug 30th (DS070830JP-ChidefenseSummit.DOC)

⁸³Toyofumi Amano ((2006) 'Japanese, Chinese foreign ministers agree to cooperate on early restart of 6-party talks with North Korea', *Nihon Keizai* July 27th (DS060727firstStrikeDebate.DOC)

hegemony in the region, and the process of loosening restrictions on overseas deployment of SDF troops is likewise borne out by events in 2006-2008 whereas the “doubts [that] remained about whether, and to what extent, Japan would support the United States in a crisis” (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 167) are in fact, as seen above, mutual.

From the point of view of Buzan and Wæver, assessing whether the global level has dropped in significance in East Asia is performed by drawing attention to the changing nature of US involvement, without going into specifics (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 169-171). Characteristically muddled and vague, Buzan and Wæver nevertheless manage to express the notion that “The United States remains as, or more, important to the security of Japan, China and India, not to mention to the Koreas, Taiwan and ASEAN, than any of them are to each other (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 170). The continuing importance of the US to Japanese security is not in doubt. It is still seen as pivotal to Japan's defense, the US military playing the role of spear while the Japanese Self Defense Forces constitute the shield in the defense alliance between the two countries⁸⁴.

Grappling with its Asian identity and role in the world, there is ongoing debate in Japan about alliances and how to deal with the changing world order resulting from the rise of China. In the words of Japan Research Institute Chairman Jitsuro Terashima: “Simply put, Japan should be friendly to the US while becoming closer to Asia”⁸⁵. Worrying that the constitutional debate makes Japan look like a “country with no principles”, the Chairman laments the changing interpretation of the Constitution, praising the country's former great standing as a major power lacking military option (ibid.)

On the far end of the spectrum from Chairman Jitsuro is Professor Satoshi Morimoto, at Takushoku University: “Japan must possess a sufficient enemy-base strike capability. There is every reason for Japan to equip support fighters with air-to-surface missiles and vessels with ship-to-surface missiles. Japan also must consider developing cruise missiles”. Further, “Japan must [...] resolve the issue of the right of collective self-defense and actively join

⁸⁴Tokyo Shimbun (2006) 'LDP begins discussing enemy-base strike capability to deal with North Korean missiles', Aug 21st (DS060821enemy-strikeDiscussion.DOC)

⁸⁵Tokyo Shimbun (2006) 'Bush-Koizumi honeymoon alliance', Aug 28th (DS060830doveProfViews.DOC)

multinational efforts in the region”, and “Constitutional revision is essential for the country's security policy”⁸⁶.

Envisaging a strong security regime in East Asia is hard especially anything resembling the confederate (or supranational) EU, as Buzan and Wæver point out. Why anything like the EU should be expected to occur in East Asia is not warranted further explanation, illustrating yet again the fallacy of attempting to impose or transfer analytic or empirical mindsets between regions of an extremely different nature. The historic tendency of Japan to ally with the dominant regional power is noted (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 177), countering the regional security complex concept of “durable” patterns of amity and enmity defining RSCs (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 45).

In all, then the vagueness and empirical nature of Buzan and Wævers RSC theory makes application to North East Asia easy, although at the cost of the theory itself. Making an exception to the rule for the whole of North East Asia, as a region where institutions are weak and Cold War logic still seems valid highlights the weaknesses of Regional Security Complex theory mainly its general lack of clarity, applicability and opportunity for generalization.

The Absence of Alliances

Stephen Walt – disciple of Kenneth Waltz and cold-war theorist – concentrates on alliance formation and the preconditions that determine countries' choices of allies. Forces affecting the size of a threat facing a country and how much assistance it can expect thus shape the international system (Walt, 1987: 1). The realist nature of East Asian politics and the persistence of cold-war logic in the operation of its actors make Walt immediately relevant to the conflict under study.

At the existentialist heart of Waltian analysis is the dichotomous choice faced by states: to balance or to bandwagon? (Walt 1987: 3) The point at which one state previously determined to bandwagon with a threatening state in the hope of sharing the spoils of a potential victory, avoiding annihilation or simply seeking protection from another, even more threatening aggressor is pivotal to predicting which way the tide will turn and who will prevail.

⁸⁶Satoshi Morimoto (2006) ‘Security policy a top priority for the next administration’, *Sankei* Aug 31st (DS060831hawkProfViews.DOC)

Both for Kim Jong Il and for Japan in the situation under study, the choice of allies and whether these allies really can be depended on or not is one of crucial importance. Witness the examining of defence capability in the Japanese press in the immediate build-up to the missile tests: “In response to the threats of North Korean and Chinese ballistic missiles, Japan and the United States will enhance their MD intercept capabilities.”⁸⁷. A joint “MD test was conducted in a scenario to shoot down intermediate-range missiles launched from North Korea at Japan”⁸⁸. And most importantly, the aim is “to build an intelligence sharing system, thereby integrating their [the US and Japan's] respective Aegis ships and ground-based radar to detect ballistic missiles”⁸⁹.

Clearly then, the US-Japan alliance initially responds to the heightened threat coming from North Korea by stepping up military cooperation. In the aftermath of the launches, the incomplete defence offered by the existing missile defence (MD) shield is lamented. Referring to the ground-based PAC-3 interceptor whose job it is to shoot down missiles in the terminal phase, should the sea-based SM-3 shield fail, *Tokyo Shimbun* asserts: “The PAC-3's shield is highly effective only in Tokyo, Gifu, Fukuoka, and their environs. [...]The PAC-3 cannot be expected to intercept all intruding missiles even if its shield network covers the Japanese archipelago like a porcupine”⁹⁰. Adding this to the above mentioned delay in intelligence transmission between the US-controlled X-band radar and Japanese SDF forces with the authority to approve launching of counterattack when Japan eventually gains its own missile defence capability, it is clear that preparation for repelling a North Korean missile attack is inadequate and will most likely be ineffective.

Why then, does Japan choose to bandwagon with the US, if it is not protected properly by the alliance? On the face of it, this relatively small yet economically reasonably sound state in a volatile region might be expected to counterbalance US world hegemony and overpowering regional influence through alliance with China. However, Walt quickly ascertains the

⁸⁷ Sankei (2006) ‘Japan, US to gear up for missile defense cooperation, extend intelligence sharing network’, May 20th (DS060522IntellShare.DOC)

⁸⁸ Asahi (2006) ‘Yokosuka on the front of missile defense, Aegis deployment at high pitch’, May 17th (DS060519missileDefence.DOC)

⁸⁹ Sankei (2006) ‘Japan, US to gear up for missile defense cooperation, extend intelligence sharing network’, May 20th (DS060522IntellShare.DOC)

⁹⁰ Shigeru Handa ‘Challenge of North Korea's missile firing’, *Tokyo Shimbun* July 8th (DS060710launchResponse.DOC)

difference between balancing against threats and against power, thus marking the self-proclaimed distinction between Waltian and other balance of power theory (Walt 1987: 5).

The importance Walt attributes to the factor of power distribution does not uniquely apply to East Asia, but the emphasis on geographical proximity, offensive capabilities and *perceived intentions* (Walt 1987: 5) certainly rings a bell when summing up the stand-off between Japan and North Korea. The strong historical bonds of friendship between China and North Korea, based on shared ideology seem to contradict Walt's disparagement of ideology as a uniting factor. However, the alliance between ex-Communist now (to an extent) free-market yet still-repressive China and the autocratic Stalinist fiefdom of the Kims is clearly also based on the common interest: survival in a post-cold war world of US interventionist ideology (North Korea) and ensuring a buffer state against US military bases in South Korea (China).

As already stated, the lines between allies in North-East Asia were quickly drawn in the wake of the missile launches. Japan and the US joined forces to propose a UN Security Council resolution with strict measures against North Korea as punishment, China quickly moved to block hard-line proposals with a proposed chairman's statement with less binding force⁹¹. The picture however, becomes nuanced as the six-party talks get under way, with China increasingly irritated by North Korean belligerency, and the US in the end abandoning Japan in favour of a quick-fix seeming diplomatic victory.

It may be pertinent to consider the alliances between Japan and the US and China and North Korea as remnants of history, likely to be revised if US hegemonic power and influence decreases (as, in the long run it surely will) and, as seems likely, China becomes a new regional and world dominant power (this may or may not happen).

Traditional balance of power theory, according to Walt, expects states to ally in order to balance against a power that threatens to dominate them. Allying against the dominant power before it becomes too strong means not having to rely on its continued benevolence. Allying with a weak power ensures a stronger position in the new alliance, since there will be gratitude and equality of footing (Walt 1987: 18-19). This is empirically sustainable as a preferred behaviour according to Walt. However, the belief that bandwagoning is the more

⁹¹Nihon Keizai (2006)'China proposes a chairman's statement at UNSC, aims to check hard-liners; Sanction measures eliminated', July 7th (DS060707responseMLaunch.DOC)

common way is widespread among scholars, as “momentum accrues to the gainer and accelerates his movement” (Thompson in Walt 1987: 19).

Popular among statesmen says Walt, the theory's appeal may lie in the incentive for military spending and the need to show strength, as this will attract allies who otherwise will fall by the wayside. Unfathomable as the internal workings of the North Korean decision-making processes are, there is cause to think that this, perhaps, is one of several justifications for developing nuclear weapons: deterrence, then, demonstration of merchandise with a view to making hard cash, and an attempt to keep what few allies there are on its side.

The fragility of alliances if the bandwagon thesis is to be believed – states may choose to bandwagon either for offensive reasons, to share the fruits of an eventual victory, or for defensive reasons in order to preserve independence in the face of a threat – may apply more to periods of international instability than times of relative calm. In fact, Walt's examples for the bandwagoning approach are taken from the immediate pre-war days of 1939, and the initial, hefty stages of the Cold War (Walt 1987: 20-21). The long-term nature of the alliance between Japan and the US, and indeed the remarkably deep and far-reaching implications entailed for both countries clearly acquits the alliance of a bandwagon label.

Where Walt elaborates on and refines his theory on alliances, the picture becomes clearer with regard to Japan and the US: states choose to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat (Walt 1987: 21). Explicitly: “states may balance by allying with other strong states if a weaker power is more dangerous for other reasons” (Walt 1987: 21-21). This leads on to considerations of aggregate power, geographic proximity (as considered above), offensive power and aggressive intentions (Walt 1987: 22). Recognizing that a state's aggregate power constitutes a motive for balancing behaviour is hardly revolutionary.

There is no inherent contradiction in Japan maintaining the alliance with the US and approaching China for a closer relationship on the other. In the words of Professor Makoto Iokibe of Kobe University: “Japan must pave the way for a combination of the Japan-US alliance and a Japan-China entente for its people of the 21st century”. These are the two key

elements of weathering the wild seas of the 21st century, and “building good relations with them would allow Japan to conduct activities vigorously as an international leader”⁹².

The Japan-US alliance, however close and mutually committing is not without drawbacks: According to the *Nihon Keizai* when Prime Minister Koizumi referred to the “deepened bilateral relationship, the statement used the words “most mature bilateral relationship in history”⁹³. There remained, however, issues to be resolved between Japan and the US, such as “the implementation of the agreement on the realignment of US forces in Japan” (ibid.). Lamenting the absence of working-level official cooperation in the two countries, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence Kurt Campbell further comments: “In the US government, there are no officials deeply involved in Japan-US relations at present.”⁹⁴. The establishment of a “hotline” between Koizumi’s supposed successor, Abe and Presidential Assistant for National Security Affairs Hadley in the wake of the tests consisted of a connection between the two via Abe’s cell phone⁹⁵.

Undoubtedly, the US- Japan relationship was tightened in the wake of the missile and nuclear tests. Frequent meetings between top-level officials took place, and the determination to get a UNSC resolution adopted meant that getting China on board was a priority⁹⁶. As referred from the Abe – Hu summit shortly after Abe’s appointment as PM by the *Asahi*: “At the summit talks, Japan and China agreed to improve their bilateral relations. In addition, the two countries also agreed to build a “strategic reciprocal relationship” in order to share common strategic interests on North Korea, environmental, and energy issues”⁹⁷. Although Yasukuni visits by Japan’s top politicians remain an issue, the paper refers to the fact that in China “a number of researchers have recently suggested the need for China to conclude “long-term, across-the-board” strategic relationship with Japan”⁹⁸.

⁹² Makoto Iokibe (2006) ‘Japan-US alliance and a Japan-China entente essential for sailing through wild seas of the 21st century’, *Mainichi* June 18th (DS060620alliances.DOC)

⁹³ *Nihon Keizai* (2006) ‘Japan-US summit: Maintaining sense of unity between Japan and the US a sticky issue for post-Koizumi administration’, June 30th (DS060630koizumiDiploFailure.DOC)

⁹⁴ *Asahi* (2006) ‘Five years of Koizumi diplomacy’, July 1st (DS060703disparityWorkLevel.DOC)

⁹⁵ Hiroshi Maruya (2006) ‘Perilous provocation -- North Korea missiles’, *Nihon Keizai* July 20th (DS060721hotline.DOC)

⁹⁶ *Yomiuri* (2006) ‘Koike-Hadley meeting’, Oct 4th (DS061004AbeSummitPAC3Prot.DOC)

⁹⁷ *Asahi* (2006) ‘Japan, China agree to improve relations, aiming at strategic reciprocity’, Oct 9th (DS061010JpChiSummit.DOC)

⁹⁸ Ibid.

In January 2007, China, South Korea and Japan held a joint summit, agreeing to “establish a working-level forum in order to coordinate views to address their political and diplomatic challenges, with the aim of holding its first session in China by the end of this year”. Further, “The leaders of the three countries expressed concern about the aftermaths of North Korea's missile launches and nuclear test. They confirmed the need for the UN resolution to be fully implemented”⁹⁹.

During the same time the three countries held a summit with ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), hoping to further free-trade agreements in the region. The chairman's statement of January 13th encouraged North Korea “to suspend a new nuclear test, implement the joint statement adopted in the six-party talks in September 2005, and to swiftly return to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)”¹⁰⁰. This was the extent of ASEAN reaction to the tests, further underlining the weak nature of regional institutions and the continuing prevalence of non-interference as a way to deal with nasty neighbouring regimes.

Is it pertinent, then to suggest that instead of drawing his allies closer North Korea's Kim actually did the opposite: driving Japan and China closer together? If not causing Japan to bandwagon with China, Kim certainly made the two plus South Korea search for common ground and start talking. As for the US-Japanese alliance, which could be classified in the balancing category, he succeeded in driving a wedge between the arguably weakening though still hegemonic US and Japan. The delisting of North Korea is a low point in the history of the alliance, highlighting perhaps the fault lines of this nevertheless enduring relationship. Apart from resisting UN sanctions, China in this narrative emerges as an increasingly responsible and sensible actor, something which, sadly cannot be said for the Bush-led US administration.

Divide and Delist

When the six-party talks were broken off in March 2007 after US negotiators shifted their stance to one of decoupling the nuclear issue and financial sanctions¹⁰¹, seemingly a shift towards a more hard-line approach. Concurrently, Japanese attempts at linking the nuclear

⁹⁹ Hitoshi Kujiraoka (2007) ‘Gist of statement at Japan-China-South Korea summit’, *Asahi* Jan 15th (DS070116ASEAN,NATO.DOC)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Tsutomu Nishioka (2007) ‘Japanese diplomacy at crossroads’, *Sankei* March 23rd (DS070323talksBreakdown.DOC)

issue with the abduction of Japanese nationals and their repatriation and/or accounting for seemed to have stalled, with North Korean officials actively trying to divide and rule, creating a “honeymoon relationship” with the US for itself¹⁰².

During this time, the issue of Korean comfort women came to the fore. Disparaging remarks made by Prime Minister Abe seemed to contradict the fact that women were coerced into prostitution by the Japanese Imperial Army during the occupation of Korea. This caused international uproar, and in January 2007 a resolution in the US Senate was submitted condemning the wartime atrocities of the JIA¹⁰³. The US Congressional Research Service later issued a research report specifying that “on the principal question of whether there was ‘compulsory recruitment by the former Japanese Imperial Army,’ [...] neither the military nor the government adopted a compulsory recruitment policy”¹⁰⁴. The truth being hard to discern, public opinion and that of US lawmakers was nevertheless moved and not in Japan’s favour, by Abe’s rather callous and in the context of other, worryingly nostalgic and guilt-evading expressions of sentiment insensitive remarks.

Events in April 2007 contributed to the impression of a thaw between the US and North Korea, as it was announced that “25 million dollars frozen at North Korea-related bank accounts at Banco Delta Asia (BDA) in Macao” would be unfrozen¹⁰⁵. Setting out a roadmap for denuclearization, Japan was increasingly seen as nagging on about abduction without contributing constructively. Tellingly, Former US Secretary of State Kissinger, when visiting Japan during this time, “queried ranking Japanese officials: ‘What would be a resolution to the abduction issue? Could you tell me the definition?’ Reportedly, however, no clear-cut answer was given to him”¹⁰⁶.

Even though North Korea missed the deadline for meeting conditions attached to the de-freezing of the accounts, the gradual drifting away from each other of Japan and the US in the six-party process continues. Likening these events to the “Nixon Shock” of 1972 When Nixon

¹⁰² Tsutomu Nishioka (2007) ‘Japanese diplomacy at crossroads’, *Sankei* March 23rd (DS070323talksBreakdown.DOC)

¹⁰³ Toru Hayano (2007) ‘Mood of Abe administration: Abe antagonistic toward America's "past occupation of Japan", *Asahi* March 30th (DS070330Abe,Yasuk,CW.DOC)

¹⁰⁴ Yoshihisa Komori (2007) ‘US CRS's report on "comfort women" issue: "No organized and coerced recruitment"’, *Sankei* Apr 12th (DS070412noCWvidence.DOC)

¹⁰⁵ Yoichi Funabashi (2007) ‘Japan @ World by Yoichi Funabashi’, *Asahi* April 16th (DS070416kissinger.DOC)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

visited Chairman Mao without first notifying its alleged main ally in the East Japan (thus causing a new word to enter the Japanese vocabulary: *shokku*) (Macmillan 2006: 287) Mr Hang Sung Joo, formerly a foreign minister of South Korea noted “that the pattern of a Japan-US coalition vs. South Korea in the six-party talks has changed to the pattern of a South Korea-US coalition vs. Japan. He also ascribed this changeover to the "strategic decision" of the United States and also to the Sunshine Policy [of South Korea] toward North Korea”¹⁰⁷.

Clearly then, the policy of the US towards Japan and towards North Korea shifted during this time. Why this shift in the alliance and co-operations patterns at this point in time?

Exasperation with Japan's unflinching stance on the abduction issue may play a role, which juxtaposed with the Abe remarks concerning Japan's own war atrocities made public opinion less than favourable. The fact that President G.W. Bush's ratings were through the floor at the time and that it would be nice to chalk up at least one foreign affairs success before leaving office perhaps played a role. The absence of working-level official co-operation and a lack of expertise on Japan in the Bush administration probably made it easy to drift apart, and the frequent prime ministerial changes and institutional inertia in Japan's Diet and administration did not help.

From a hard-nosed realist point of view, abandoning Japan and dropping the abduction issue was the only sensible thing to do. Japan should perhaps be pitied for clinging to the resolution of the abduction issue at all costs rather than accomplishing the nuclear-free peninsula which might have been within reach if more flexibility had been displayed. However, if an ultra-pragmatic view is to be taken, it is unlikely that North Korea would ever have given up one of the few tools by which it wrings concessions, aid and hard cash into its defunct economy to keep the wheels barely turning.

Kim then, has succeeded in shifting the balance of power in East Asia. Japan stands more isolated than before, with a wary closeness to China not previously enjoyed not making up for further cooling of its alliance with the US. It is rearming, albeit in cooperation with the US and still under the umbrella of US protection. Even though Kim Jong Il possesses comparatively few weapons (see Fig. 2) – if any of functional quality – he uses them skilfully to gain disproportionate leverage.

¹⁰⁷ Hisayoshi Ina (2007) 'People who can't recognize North Korea threat', *Nihon Keizai* April 16th (DS070419CW,secondNixShock.DOC)

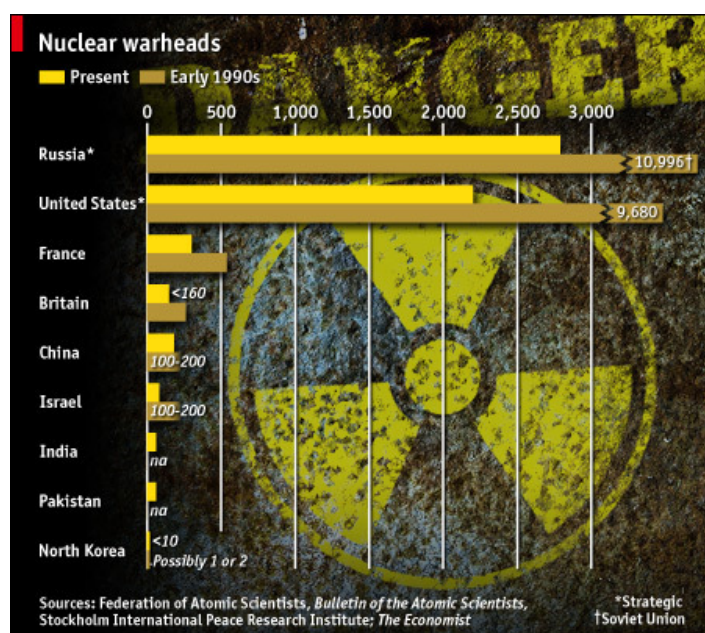


Fig 2: Shutterstock¹⁰⁸

The delisting of North Korea as a terror-sponsoring state was a severe shock for Japan, and it will take years to regain a level of trust previously enjoyed between the key allies if at all possible. On an institutional level, the six-party talks have taught the participants how to communicate, bringing China into league with the responsible big players as a participant in its own right. As such, the crisis in North Korea *has* been pivotal to Japanese Security Policy, changing the surrounding in which these policies are shaped.

¹⁰⁸ The Economist (2009) 'Bargaining over the bomb', May 18th

Conclusion

From the foregoing thesis it is clear that a nuclear armed North Korea is a threat to regional and world peace not just through proliferation of technology but mainly through its role in triggering tectonic shifts in East Asian alliances structures and enhancing military build-up in a region where history, geography and economies all intersect with potentially lethal and far-reaching consequences. If North East Asia is a powder keg, Kim Jong Il is the wicked, oft-punished yet still-defiant child playing with matches, either ignorant of the consequences to himself or others or too far-gone to care.

Regional security complex theory is in some way borne out by the episode under study, since with a shift in capabilities there ensues a shift in the perceived balance of power and alignment of states, *if only for a limited time* through the workings of the six-party talks. However, in the end Buzan and Wæver have little to offer in the way of understanding what happened between the nuclear and missile tests and the terror-sponsor delisting. Partly, this springs from the muddled and vague nature of their theory, partly it seems to result from an unwillingness to deal with East Asia as a region where cold war logic in many ways still applies, regional institutionalization is patchy and integration weak.

Traditional realist theory also hits the mark well when analyzing North Korean movements, if only because of Kim Jong Il's pragmatic, clever and completely ruthless approach to bargaining and extremely skilful diplomatic manoeuvring. Kim seems to see himself as a lone wolf in an anarchic world of hostile states, survival being the only clear-cut goal, thus making Kenneth Waltz' *Theory of International Politics* a fruitful tool for analysis. Kenneth Waltz' classical realist thinking seems to apply only too well to North Korea, at least when it comes to the cold-war logic seemingly behind Kim Jong Il's calculations and machinations. For East Asia as a whole the perseverance of the six-party talks and the continuing reliance on institutions by Japan to resolve the situation belie Waltz' underlying assumption of anarchy.

When it comes to Walt's theory of the *Origins of Alliances*, much use can be made of the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning in understanding the subtle shifts in alliance structures leading up to the delisting of North Korea by the US. Attempting to explain alliances as reactions towards threat not capability clearly hits the nail on the head concerning the continued decision of Japan to stay allied with the US. The alternatives as of yet being few

since alliance with North Korea is out of the question and China still is relatively weak, there clearly has been a shift nevertheless in the Japanese- US constellation, especially in light of the delisting which was inelegantly and inconsiderately carried out by the US, leading to considerable loss of face and faith for Japan.

There is no doubt that North Korea is pivotal to Japanese security policy. The changes wrought by the missile and nuclear tests can be said to have been:

- A rekindling of the debate on constitutional revision and a shift in public opinion towards “normalization” of Japanese defence capability
- A weakening of the US - Japan alliance, although it is still in place
- A subtle yet discernible shift towards greater understanding with China.

The changes in Japan's defence and military might have come anyway; indeed the US has been pushing for an increase in military spending for years. The nuclear test and missile launches, however, heightened the immediacy of the threat as perceived by both the Japanese public and its defence and political establishment. It thereby hastened the already planned deployment of missiles, caused an immediate plan for upgrading of warning systems and made clear the need for coordination of intelligence between the US Army and the SDF. Domestically, the debate over revision or reinterpretation of clause nine in the constitution was rekindled, the argument in favour of remilitarization strengthened. However, a nationalist militaristic revival as feared by other Asian countries and in the world is still far from reality.

It can be said that, finding itself now with a presumably nuclear or nearly-nuclear, hostile and irrational actor at its doorstep, Japan has been rudely awakened from the near-pacifist, partially free-riding nation with a strong belief in international consensus and institutional rule of law it has been since the Second World War. It must now face up to a reality in which even great powers such as the US seem willing to tolerate rogue states messing with nuclear warheads and threatening regional peace, to the cost of their long-time allies Japan, or at least this was the case at the time of terror-sponsor delisting.

Despite the failure to halt North Korean nuclear armament, the six-party talks have provided the countries involved a forum for exchange and dialogue lacking in East Asia today, and there is a chance it may evolve into something permanent.

Unexpectedly, the country to emerge from the debacle of North Korean belligerency and US appeasement looking responsible and measured is China. There has been a slight if still-tentative tilt towards China in Japanese foreign policy as presented in the Japanese media. This can be said to be an unintended consequence of the missile tests, one which would not please North Korea greatly. Although there is no question of Japan switching allegiances and committing itself to an alliance with China as of now, it is an interesting development and one which may require thoughtful analysis in the years ahead.

Causing as much a change in perceptions of its surroundings and of the relationship to its number one ally, the two years examined in this thesis show that Japan must now adjust to a new set of circumstances like it has done successfully in the past. Perhaps Japan will turn towards Asia in a search for allies, realizing that depending on the US is too uncertain in a time of relative superpower decline. Looking at past swift periods of dramatic change following stagnation and uncertainty, there is a possibility that Japan will seek to rearm and be once again a normal state on a par with any other. When it does, the actions of North Korea will no doubt be seen as essential in triggering that change by reinforcing long-dormant or already-apparent trends within security and defence policy in Japan.

"What is called the spirit of the void is where there is nothing. It is not included in man's knowledge. Of course the void is nothingness. By knowing things that exist, you can know that which does not exist. That is the void.

People in this world look at things mistakenly, and think that what they do not understand must be the void. This is not the true void. It is bewilderment.

In the void is virtue, and no evil. Wisdom has existence, principle has existence, the Way has existence, spirit is nothingness."

Miyamoto Musashi – A Book of Five Rings (2007: 99-100)

Summary

This thesis has explored the events between North Korea's missile and nuclear tests in July 2006 up until the delisting of North Korea as a terrorist-sponsoring state by the US in November, 2008. The aim being to answer the question of whether North Korea is pivotal to Japanese security policy, translated press cuttings from Japanese media have been examined according to social scientific method as espoused by Yin and others in order to determine the chronological order of events. Having thus established the facts, the theories of Buzan and Wæver, Kenneth Waltz and Stephen Walt respectively have been applied to the proposition.

The answer is affirmative – Japan has been greatly affected by the North Korean acquiring of nuclear weapons with long-range strike capability even if the exactitude of aim and technological reliability of these weapons is disputed. The debate on the pacifist clause in the constitution has been revived with those in favour of remilitarization gaining momentum.

Further, the US decision to delist North Korea resulted in a breach of trust within the US - Japan alliance upon which Japan relies for its defence, constituting yet another shift in the security situation for Japan with repercussions for East Asia as a whole. On a more positive note, the six-party talks have revealed China as a responsible and stable actor and within the time frame examined Japan and China have, warily, moved closer to each other. Also, the six-party talks may yet evolve into the kind of permanent regional institution and forum for exchange and dialogue which today is lacking in East Asia.

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