

North Korea's Perception of Multilateralism*

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As scholars and security specialists continue to call for a regional multilateral security framework for Northeast Asia, advocates of such a framework must contemplate the participation of the region's most incorrigible actor, North Korea. However, one crucial question remains unanswered in the discourse: How does North Korea perceive multilateralism? To glean a better understanding I examine North Korean materials, statements, and behavior relevant to select cases of multilateralism, alongside secondary sources. North Korea's realist interpretation suggests that Pyongyang largely equates multilateralism in the capitalist international system as 'imperialism'. While some of North Korea's statements and cooperative tendencies suggest it values rules and principles—one dimension of multilateralism—North Korea nevertheless does not subscribe to the western IR conception of the term, but rather equates multilateralism to that of a purely functional and strategic tool to pursue its own interests in an anarchical world.

Key words: North Korea, multilateralism, United Nations, Non-

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1. Introduction

In Northeast Asia, multilateral cooperation has been a rare phenomenon. The region has long been characterized by its Cold War divisions (i.e., China and Taiwan; North and South Korea) and strong system of bilateral alliances, the latter being the established and favored mode in which the political actors in the region have for the most part conducted their respective foreign relations.¹⁾ From a realist-functional perspective, multilateral arrangements spring up and institutions are created in response to crisis or evolving structural conditions. With respect to multilateralism in Asia, the region can be viewed as at a stage where multilateralism can be best understood as “an extension and intersection of national power and purpose rather than as an objective force in itself,”²⁾ with the possibility of future regional security architecture being

1) For discussion see William Tow, Russell Trood, and Toshiya Hoshino, *Bilateralism in a Multilateral Era* (Tokyo: The Japan Institute of International Affairs and The Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, 1997); G. John Ikenberry and Chung-in Moon (eds.), *The United States and Northeast Asia: Debates, Issues, and New Order* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); and Michael J. Green and Bates Gill (eds.), *Asia's New Multilateralism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

2) Bates Gill and Michael J. Green, “Unbundling Asia’s New Multilateralism,” in M. J. Green and B. Gill (eds.), *Asia's New Multilateralism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.3.

characterized by “overlapping multilateral institutions layered on top of the existing hub-and-spokes bilateral system.”³⁾

Regardless of one’s theoretical inclination, we must first contemplate what to do with the region’s most incorrigible actor, North Korea. Before we can presume North Korea’s inclusion or participation in any new multilateral security architecture for the region — or any multilateral arrangement for that matter — we must first answer one fundamental question: How does North Korea perceive multilateralism?

Readers of North Korean media and publications would be hard pressed to find the word “multilateralism” in its newspapers and academic journals — a dearth in print that likely speaks volumes. By the same token, North Korea’s history of participation in multilateral settings is quite limited. As Asia moves toward increasing multilateralism, and as the international community continues its pursuit to solve the seemingly inextricable nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula — and more broadly the problem of North Korea’s development and inclusion in the international system — then understanding this dimension of Pyongyang’s worldview, of how it sees the international system and its machinery, becomes instrumental.

This study attempts to uncover *a* (rather than *the*) North Korean

3) Andrew Yeo, “Bilateralism, Multilateralism, and Institutional Change in Northeast Asia’s Regional Security Architecture,” EAI Fellows Program Working Paper No. 30 (Seoul: The East Asia Institute, 2011), p.3.

perception of multilateralism by exploring North Korean materials, examining statements made about select multilateral organizations the DPRK has or has had experience or involvement with and are related in some way to security matters and cooperation. Specifically, this study looks at North Korea's statements about the United Nations (UN), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the Six-Party Talks (6PT), as the leadership in the DPRK has sought to pursue its interests, directly or indirectly, through these multilateral institutions/arrangements. These cases also reflect differences between eras in time (Cold War and post-Cold War), types of multilateralism (global intergovernmental organizations and regional ad hoc arrangements), institutional purpose (multipurpose and single issue), and significance to the North Korean leaders (Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il). This study also makes passing reference to three other interesting cases of North Korean nonparticipation or nonmembership — that is, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) — that reflect these aspects in some capacity. While this research primarily seeks to enhance our understanding of North Korea's worldview, the findings have significant theoretical and political implications for international engagement with the DPRK, especially in future regional multilateral security arrangements.

2. Multilateralism: A Definition

Looking at the IR literature, one finds that “multilateralism” is a discrepant term, as no single agreed upon definition exists. As Bouchard and Peterson point out, multilateralism is “a poor, ugly duckling among concepts … used in a variety of ways to refer to different modes and forms of cooperation.”⁴⁾ It is commonly conceived as one form of relations that states may choose to promote cooperation, manage coordination problems, or work to prevent conflicts or disputes from breaking out. In the liberalist tradition of international relations, it is generally thought of as a type of cooperation and a foreign policy strategy, where three or more states practice coordinating their national policies.⁵⁾ Qualitatively, it can be thought of as “an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of ‘generalized’ principles of conduct — that is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence.”⁶⁾ Multilateral institutions are seen as a means to transform state policies via a process of creating generalized

4) Caroline Bouchard and John Peterson, “Conceptualising Multilateralism: Can We All Just Get Along?” MERCURY E-paper No. 1 (January, 2011), p.3.

5) Robert Keohane, “Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research,” *International Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Autumn, 1990), p.731.

6) John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1992), pp.567~568, 571~ 572.

principles of conduct that include indivisibility, nondiscrimination, and diffuse reciprocity, with a belief in law, rules, transparency, and obligations, and a commitment to strong organizational structures.⁷⁾ Any country that subscribes to the qualitative form of multilateralism makes a certain trade-off by foregoing flexibility and short-term gains to guarantee long-term benefits.⁸⁾

In an exercise of pre-theorizing, Bouchard and Peterson identify three dimensions of the concept common to nearly all interpretations: the importance of rules, inclusiveness in regards to parties involved or affected, and voluntary cooperation that is minimally institutionalized. Accordingly, a definition more reflective of multilateralism in its modern twenty-first century form would be “Three or more actors engaging in voluntary and (essentially) institutionalized international cooperation governed by norms and principles, with rules that apply (by and large) equally to all states.”⁹⁾

With this as our definition, I shall proceed with an examination of North Korea’s use of the term “multilateralism” and statements relevant to selective multilateral institutions/arrangements. But before proceeding, some background on North Korea’s worldview would seem a desideratum.

7) *Ibid.*

8) Lisa Martin, “Interests, Power, and Multilateralism,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (1992), pp.765~792.

9) Bouchard and Peterson, “Conceptualising Multilateralism,” pp.8~10.

3. North Korea's Worldview: "The Jungle Law Prevails"

Does such a definition of multilateralism correlate with the North Korean worldview, which envisions "the international system in terms of 'Hobbesian anarchy' in which its [North Korea's] survival and sovereignty are constantly jeopardized," blaming "American imperial ambition for the rise and persistence of this anarchical order"?¹⁰⁾ As some argue, as an actor in the international system, North Korea does not see cooperative arrangements as desirable; rather, especially in its post-Cold War era of *songun* (military-first) politics,¹¹⁾ North Korea perceives the international system in realist

10) Chung-in Moon, "North Korean Foreign Policy in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective," in Byung-Chul Koh (ed.), *North Korea and the World: Explaining Pyongyang's Foreign Policy* (Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 2004), p.356.

11) North Korea's "military-first" or *songun* is a policy which prioritizes the Korean People's Army in the affairs of the state and the allocation of resources. Since its inception, the concept of *songun* has been expanded, functioning simultaneously and in varying degrees in the political, economic, and ideological realms of governance of the state and society. For discussion, Suh Dae-Sook, "Military First Politics of Kim Jong Il," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2002), pp.145~167; for the North Korean view, see Ri-Jong Chol, *Songun Politics in Korea* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2012). The incumbent North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, has summed up the importance of *songun* as follows: "Songun is our independence, dignity, and lifeblood." Kim Jong Un, "Let Us Brilliantly Accomplish the Revolutionary Cause of Juche, Holding Kim Jong Il in High Esteem as the Eternal General Secretary of Our Party-Talk to Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, April 6, Juche 101 (2012)" (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2012), p.12; see also Kim Jong Un, "Let Us March Forward Dynamically Towards Final Victory, Holding Higher the Banner of Songun-Speech Delivered at the Military

terms, with power — not norms and values — being the only thing North Korean leaders respect.¹²⁾ However, as Moon argues Pyongyang has shown neoliberalist cooperative tendencies, as North Korea has promoted its national interests via international regimes and organizations — such as the UN and KEDO — although it does harbor a negative perception of multilateral approaches arising from its nuclear standoff.¹³⁾

Parade Held in Celebration of the Birth of the Generalissimo Kim Il Sung, April 15 Juche 101 (2012)” (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2012).

- 12) As Daniel Pinkston argues, “The DPRK sees international law, international institutions, collective security, arms control and any other cooperative arrangement as undesirable and as schemes to undermine their national security. A *son’gun* leader is one who sees power as the only instrument in politics — at both the domestic and international levels. In the *son’gun* mindset, power is the real currency of the international system. Power — not international cooperation — enables a state to achieve its goals …… Without superior capabilities, a *son’gun* leader …… cannot build coalitions or institutions to create mutual benefits for a pluralistic community. Every interaction is a zero-sum game driven by top-down power asymmetries. So he must seek power to survive at a minimum and then pursue other goals when sufficient power resources are at hand.” Daniel Pinkston, “The Ŭnha-3 Launch and Implications of UN Security Council Resolution 2087,” Crisis Group’s Blog on Korea (January 25, 2013).
- 13) Evidence of its cooperative tendencies would be North Korea’s signing of the Geneva Agreed Framework, compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and cooperation with KEDO. Equally, North Korea has been eager to join multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Asia Development bank. See Moon, “North Korean Foreign Policy,” pp.351~352. As an example of its negative views toward the International Atomic Energy Agency, for example, see “DPRK’s Stance Towards Nuclear Issue Clear-cut, FM Declares,” *Pyongyang Times* (December 14, 2002); “International Agency or US Mouthpiece?” *Pyongyang Times* (December 28, 2002).

And what of its worldview? As Seongji Woo explains,¹⁴⁾ during the Kim Jong Il era, North Korea's doctrine of international relations theory holds the state as the basic unit of international relations; emphasizes *chajusong* (independence or autonomy) as the main ideological pillar of its foreign activities¹⁵⁾; centers on the concept of power with a focus on conflict and military capability¹⁶⁾; and values the indigenously wrought political thesis of *juche*¹⁷⁾ that champions the masses as the masters of the nation's development, presumes the existing world order to be unjust and in need of rebuilding anew, and values state sovereignty "more than life" itself.¹⁸⁾ Armstrong further explicates the primacy of the *juche* ideology to North Korean foreign policy making: rather than its direct influence on foreign policy, the importance of the ideology is that it expresses "a general world view that sets the parameters, the outer boundaries, of engagement with the outside world," one

14) Seongji Woo, "Pyongyang and the World: North Korean Perspectives on International Relations under Kim Jong Il," *Pacific Focus*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (August, 2011), pp.188–205.

15) Kim Jong Il, *On the Juche Idea* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1982).

16) For example: "The DPRK's missile development, test-fire, manufacture and deployment, therefore, serve as a key to keeping the balance of force and preserving peace and stability in Northeast Asia." "DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Its Missile Launches," KCNA (July 7, 2006).

17) Characteristic principles of *juche* are independence in politics, self-reliance in defense, and self-sufficiency in economic development. For extrapolation of the *juche* ideology, see Kim Jong Il, *On the Juche Idea*.

18) "Conclusion of Non-aggression Treaty between DPRK and US Called for," KCNA (October 25, 2002).

that restrains the North Korean leadership in a way that leaders “cannot express any policy which rejects or deviates widely from the principles of *juche*”; nevertheless while *juche* is “too intimately linked to the legitimacy of the state and its top leadership to be discarded, it can be …… adjusted and re-interpreted according to changing circumstance.”¹⁹⁾ If *juche* is the guide, and sovereignty Pyongyang’s objective, then *chajusong* (“independence”) is indeed its watchword:

If the revolution and construction [of socialism] are to be carried out as required by the *Juche* idea, *Chajusong* [“independence”] must be maintained and realized in Party and state activities. …… In order to ensure *Chajusong* in politics, it is imperative to exercise complete sovereignty and equality in foreign relations. *Chajusong* of a party and a state is expressed, after all, in foreign relations. To exercise complete sovereignty and equality in foreign relations is fundamental in ensuring political *Chajusong*. Sovereignty is an inviolable right of all parties, all countries, and all people. There are big and small parties, big and small countries, and economically developed and underdeveloped peoples in the world, but all parties, all countries and peoples are equal and independent. No one should

19) Charles A. Armstrong, “‘A Socialism of Our Style’: North Korean Ideology in a Post-Communist Era,” in Samuel S. Kim (ed.), *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.34.

encroach upon the sovereignty of others and no one should tolerate encroachment on one's sovereignty.²⁰⁾

On the surface, the founding leader Kim Il Sung and successor Kim Jong Il's longstanding defense of socialism and persistent clamor for the principle of sovereignty would suggest that Pyongyang does not advocate multilateralism in the capitalist international system. More specifically, the typical dynamics of multilateral engagement suggest that North Korea would shun joining or even dealing with such institutions that might infringe on its sovereignty, or restrict its range of actions or cause it to modify its behavior. In fact, one might be led to believe that North Korea theoretically does not even recognize such relations or cooperation, or that such could exist in the international capitalist system. Rather, based on the leadership's persistent rejection of the United States and characterization of nearly all forms of US international action as "imperialism" — especially its cooperation with Japan and South Korea — one could assume that, in the North Korean worldview, any type of cooperation among three or more parties that reside outside of the socialist camp is not and cannot be "multilateralism."

20) Kim Jong Il, "Juchesasang daehayeo: widaehan suryeong Kim Il Sung dongji tansaeng 70 dolginyeon jeongukjuchesasangtoronhoie bonaen ronmun, 1982 nyeon 3wul 31il" (On Juche Ideology: Treatise Sent to the National Seminar on the Juche Idea Held to Mark the 70th Birthday of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, March 31, 1982), in *Chinaehaneun jidoja Kim Jong Il eongjiui munheonjip* (Pyongyang: Chosunrodongdangchulpansa, 1992), pp. 39, 45.

Since its inception as a state and especially since the end of the Korean War in 1953, the DPRK has called for an outright rejection of and struggle against what it perceives as aggressive US imperialism in the international system. Like multilateralism, imperialism itself is also a generic institutional form, whereby it coordinates relations among three or more states, although it does so by denying the sovereignty of the subject states.²¹⁾ In one sense, from a North Korean perspective, cooperation among capitalist countries — or more explicitly, the nation-states North Korea sees as enemies — would constitute imperialism, not multilateralism. In particular, US allies Japan and South Korea are seen by Pyongyang as nothing more than “stooges” or “puppets” of the US imperialists, merely “accomplices” in the US aggression against the DPRK and for the most part the developing world. Cooperation among them could only constitute imperialism. A 1962 speech by North Korean leader Kim Il Sung helps illuminate this North Korean view of foreign relations between states in the international system during the Cold War, and the dichotomy between the socialist and capitalist camps:

The relations among the imperialist countries are relations of domination and subjection, whereby a big nation interferes in the internal affairs of a small nation, imposing its will upon the latter

21) Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution,” p.571.

and demanding unilateral respect and submission. All socialist countries, however, both big and small, are completely equal and independent and respect and support each other. …… Outwardly the imperialist countries proclaim mutual “friendship” and “solidarity”, but behind the scenes they carry on subversive activities against one another; they advocate “cooperation” and “aid”, but in reality they utilize these as a means of subordinating other countries politically and economically. The socialist countries …… maintain relations of conscious and comradely friendship and cooperation as fellow-fighters for a common cause against a common enemy. There can be no backbiting or double-dealing among these countries. …… The Workers’ Party of Korea, the Government of the Republic and the Korean people will continue to make every effort to steadily promote friendship, solidarity and mutual cooperation with the peoples of all socialist countries and to safeguard the unity of the socialist camp.²²⁾

Under such a viewpoint multilateralism would seem impossible among capitalist countries; imperialism is the best they can achieve.

Finally, the words of former DPRK leader Kim Jong Il delivered some twenty years ago also provide some insight.

22) “On the Immediate Tasks of the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Speech Delivered at the First Session of the Third Supreme People’s Assembly, October 23, 1962,” in *Kim Il Sung Works*, Vol. 16, January-December 1962 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984), pp.420–422.

Strengthening cooperation among all countries and nations, large and small, on the principles of independence, equality and mutual respect creates favorable conditions for the people to realize their independence. …… Our people, guided by the ideals of independence, peace and friendship, have been strengthening international solidarity and developing the relations of friendship and cooperation with the peoples of all countries who aspire to independence; they have been effecting *multilateral exchange* with all the countries that are friendly towards ours, on the principles of equality and mutual benefits.²³⁾

While this message was directed mainly at developing nations (in particular African nations which North Korea had given certain material support to in the past), it appears as one of the rare early occasions where the term “multilateral” (i.e., “multilateral exchange,” or “*dabangmyeonjeokin gyoryu*”) was actually used by Kim Jong Il. It emphasizes that multilateral exchange can only be conducted with those state and nonstate actors who are deemed by the Kim regime as “friendly” toward the DPRK, respect North Korea as an “equal,” and provide North Korea with “mutual benefit.” Variations of this line have been reiterated often by the North Korean media.²⁴⁾

23) Kim Jong Il, “Inmindaejeungjeungsimui uri sik sahoijuineun pilsungbeulpaeida” (Our Socialism Centered on the Masses Shall Not Perish), May 5, 1991, in Kim Jong Il, *Seonjip* (Anthology), Vol. 11 (Pyongyang: Chosonrodongdangchulpansa, 1997), pp.47-48. Italics mine.

24) For example, see “Rodong Sinmun on Basic Idea of DPRK’s Foreign Policy,”

4. Definitions and Media Survey

1) North Korean Definitions

How does North Korea define multilateralism? In its *Daegukeosajeon English-Korean Dictionary* (대국어사전: 영조사전) the noun “multilateralism” (다각주의; *dagakjuui*) appears, with its only example of usage being “~ in trade.”²⁵⁾ In the *New Korean-English Dictionary*, the adjective “multilateral” (*dagakjeok*) is defined as “many-sided, diversified, multilateral, versatile.” Given examples of its use are “*dagakjeokmyeokjuui*,” meaning “multilateralism in trade”; “*dagakjeokhyeobjeong*,” or “multilateral agreement”; and “*dagakjeokin haekjeollyak*,” or “multilateral (nuclear) force.”²⁶⁾ However, these definitions seem purely nominal.

In some of the North Korean literature, the term seems to be tied to economics and trade. For example, in the North Korean economics dictionary, the word “multilateral” can be found, but in the names of international organizations and arrangements: for example, in “Multilateral Trade Organization,” “multilateral trade negotiation,” and “Multilateral Fiber Arrangement.” The anonym “multilateraling”

KCNA (October 13, 2007).

25) *Daegukeosajeon yeongjosajeon* (North Korean English-Korean Dictionary) 2012 (electronic version on *Samjiyeon* tablet computer).

26) *Joyeongdaesajeon* (New Korean-English Dictionary) (Pyongyang: Woeguk-mundoseochulpansa, 2002), p.488.

even appears.²⁷⁾ Listed in the very recent electronic dictionary are also such terms as “multilateral trade” (다각무역), “multilateralism in trade” (다각적무역의), and “multilateral settlement” (다각결제). However, the stem “다각” and “다각적” also carry the meanings “many-sided,” “diversified,” and “versatile,” thereby giving a wider interpretation to the terms in which they are used and thus complicating their meanings.²⁸⁾ Scanning some of the economic research of North Korea, the term “multilateral” can be seen, but mainly in the context of developing foreign trade and economic cooperation.²⁹⁾

2) A Survey of North Korean Media

The NKNews.org holds a “KCNA Watch” database containing historical Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) articles in English,

27) *Hyeondaesegyegyongje sajeon* (Modern World Economics Dictionary) (Pyongyang: Sahoigwahakchulpansa, 1998), pp.191~192.

28) See Samjiyeon [삼지연] tablet computer, 2013 model (체제생성시간 2013. 06.26.12:30:32), *Dagukeosajeon*<samheung>, *joyoungsajeon*[다국어사전<삼흥>, 조영사전]. This program is a compilation of several North Korean dictionaries from various years.

29) For example, see Ri Gi Seong, “Widaehan suryeong Kim Il Sung dongjikke-seo sinnyeonsaesa jesihasin sahojuuigyeongjegeonseolui wanchunggiwa uri dangui hyeokmyeongjeokgyeongjejeollyak,” *Gyeongjaeyeongu* (Economic Research), Vol. 1 (1994), pp.2~5; Choi Gyeong Hee, “Hyeonsigi daewoesijanguel gaecheokhagi uihan bangdo,” *Gyeongjaeyeongu* (Economic Research), Vol. 2 (1995), pp.51~53; and Jeong Seung Hyeok, “Dongbukasiradeulgwa muyeokeul hwakdaebaljeonsikineundesa naseoneun jungyoyogu,” *Gyeongjaeyeongu* (Economic Research), Vol. 2 (2004).

Korean, and Chinese. As of October 24, 2013, there were a total of 150,009 articles in the database. The database contained 87,285 articles in English (January 1, 1997-October 23, 2013). A search was conducted for the keyword “multilateralism.” Of the total articles, only six articles turned up with the word “multilateralism” in their text. Two of the six were merely reports on statements made by foreign dignitaries (i.e., Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, referring to the role of the BRICS in the world’s economic order; and Zheng Wantong, vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, stating that no country is allowed to think of itself only but pursue multilateralism in the multi-polarization of the world and to address worldwide problems such as the international financial crisis, climate change, and energy security and food security). Five of the articles made reference to the United Nations. On the other hand, in a keyword search of the word “multilateral,” 163 articles were found to have the word in the text or title.

Most significant, however, is the database search for the term in Korean. The database contained 60,409 articles in Korean (March 1, 2005-October 23, 2013). The keywords “다각주의”, “다국간주의”, and “다자주의” (the third being a South Korean term for ‘multilateralism’) were searched for separately. Surprisingly, on each occasion, the searches of the Korean terms produced no results. One can only speculate that the regime in Pyongyang does not see multilateralism as a concept of relevance for propaganda

directed at its ethnic Korean readership.

5. Multilateralism: North Korean Participation/Nonparticipation, and Statements

The nations that compose Northeast Asia have a rather limited history of involvement in multilateral regimes. One fundamental reason why this may be is because of the soft peace that the United States enforced in the region after World War II, leaving historical animosities among states (e.g., Korea and Japan, China and Japan) in the region to go unresolved, and the subsequent Cold War divisions hindered horizontal relations among Northeast Asian countries.³⁰⁾ The broader East Asian region itself is bereft of a tradition of successful regional institutions created and maintained by great powers in part because many Asian states remain wary of US or Chinese involvement in institution building (although many Asian states as of today still desire to maintain the system of US bilateral alliances as a check against future threats to regional security).³¹⁾ Likewise, actors in the region do not seem to

30) Bruce Cumings, "The History and Practice of Unilateralism in East Asia," in Kent Calder and Francis Fukuyama, *East Asian Multilateralism: Prospects for Regional Stability* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp.41~42.

31) The Stanley Foundation, "Challenges to Effective Multilateralism: Comparing Asian and European Experiences," report on the conference held by the

pay enough attention to each other's "sensitivities,"³²⁾ which would be crucial for maintaining regional security and building a multi-lateral mechanism to help deal with security problems.

If the phenomenon of multilateralism has been rare among the states in Asia, then it should come as no surprise that North Korea has little experience with it. What can we construe from North Korea's participation, nonparticipation, and/or relationship with various multilateral organizations and arrangements? What has North Korea said about these organizations and arrangements? In this section, I examine three select cases of North Korea's participation as an active member, and to a lesser degree three other cases of nonparticipation or non-membership.

1) The United Nations

Born from the ashes of World War II and at the dawn of the Cold War, the United Nations is the only international organization of multilateral diplomacy with near universal membership, the "central piece of global governance"³³⁾ or "capital *M*" approach of

Stanley Foundation in cooperation with Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Swedish School of Advanced Asia Pacific Studies of The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education(Sigtuna, Sweden, July 8-11, 2008).

32) For discussion, see Yoshihide Soeya, Jianwei Wang, and David A. Welch, "A New Look at the U.S.-China-Japan Triangle: Toward Building a Stable Framework," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Fall, 2003), pp.177-219.

33) Margaret P. Karns and Karen A. Mingst, *International Organizations: The*

multilateral institutions as a means to transform state policies via a process of creating generalized principles of conduct that include indivisibility, nondiscrimination, and diffuse reciprocity, with a belief in law, rules, transparency, obligations, and commitment to strong organizational structures, and acquiescence of non-state actors in supporting roles.³⁴⁾ The UN operates to promote peace, security, and economic development, with its main purposes being to keep peace worldwide, develop friendly relations among nations, and be the center for harmonizing actions of nation-states to achieve these and other humanitarian goals, thereby functioning to create international laws, norms, and principles. Founded by 51 countries back in 1945, its charter is based on the proposals deliberated on by the major powers China, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States, and former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Despite seeking a single membership for Korea in the UN in the 1970s in its battle with South Korea for legitimacy, the DPRK eventually attained UN membership in 1991, and then only begrudgingly, as South Korea also became a member that same year. Pyongyang did not participate in the formative years of the

Politics and Processes of Global Governance (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), p.95.

34) Paul Evans, "Constructing Multilateralism in an Anti-Region: From Six-Party Talks to a Regional Security Framework in Northeast Asia," in Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel C. Sneider (eds.), *Cross Currents: Regionalism and Nationalism in Northeast Asia* (Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, 2007).

UN as a member. In general, Pyongyang views the organization as merely a “puppet” organization of the United States. As Young Whan Kihl notes, from 1946 to 1970 North Korea remained outside the UN system as its membership application was denied. During this period, North Korea was preoccupied with maintaining political independence by defending its sovereignty and claims for political legitimacy. After acquiring UN observer status in 1971, from 1971 to 1989 North Korea campaigned to win the support of the members of the Non-aligned Movement. This was done mainly to promote North Korea’s claims for “absolute legitimacy” at the United Nations *vis-à-vis* South Korea. But this ended when the Cold War ended; from 1989 onwards, North Korea applied for UN membership (becoming the 160th member on September 17, 1991) and since has participated in the UN General Assembly, exploiting its position in UN forums and agencies in order to “defend its claims for independence and sovereignty, while promoting the ‘relative legitimacy’ of the DPRK *vis-à-vis* the ROK in UN politics.”³⁵⁾

In the post-Cold War era, North Korea has called for UN reform, with a stated concern for principles: “The UN should be reformed as required by the new century if it is to fulfill its mission for global peace and security and the economic and social progress. What is most important here is to materialize UN-centered

35) Young Whan Kihl, “North Korea and the United Nations,” in Samuel S. Kim (ed.), *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.259.

multilateralism in line with the purpose and principle of the UN Charter.”³⁶⁾ It has also used the UN as a platform to announce its position on international trends in international security, including in nontraditional security issues such as terrorism, and stressing the pivotal role of the UN and adherence to the UN Charter in related endeavors: “The dangerous unilateralism and strong-arm practices, which are emerging anew in international relations, should thoroughly be rejected and international relations based on multilateralism and equal sovereignty should be established.”³⁷⁾ Likewise, it has acknowledged the major role of the UN in the international system by calling for its reform in the post-Cold War era to increase its role in settling crucial international issues through adherence to universal principles and norms:

The UN reform should be thoroughly carried out in the direction of realizing UN-centered multilateralism in line with the objective and principles of the UN Charter ……to check unilateralism and high-handed practices quite contrary to the UN Charter and international law and ensure the major function and role of the UN in settling

36) Choe Su Hon, vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, head of DPRK delegation addressing the plenary meeting of the 60th UN General Assembly. “DPRK to Closely Follow How U.S. Will Move at Phase of Action in Future,” KCNA (September 26, 2005).

37) This is the DPRK delegate addressing the Sixth Committee of 58th UN General Assembly, stating the DPRK position on terrorism. “DPRK Opposes All Forms of Terrorism,” KCNA (October 23, 2003).

crucial international issues.³⁸⁾

The present times are quite different from the days the UN came into being. The UN is faced with a lot of tasks at present. Unilateralism and arbitrary and high-handed practices have become pronounced, disturbing peace and security in the world, making the international relations complicated and hamstringing the progress of human civilization. Mankind can successfully meet these challenges only when the member states of the UN establish and develop the fair international relations based on the multilateralism that calls for strictly abiding by the universally accepted principles of respect for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and reciprocity.³⁹⁾

However, despite its membership and the UN's positive role in settling international affairs, overall North Korea is quite critical of the UN, stating that it has been "abused" in the past and was "being abused even today in sustaining the Cold War division of Korea."⁴⁰⁾ North Korea is said to be duly aware of how the UN can be used to advance its national interest and goals and how the

38) A Rodong Sinmun signed article dedicated to the Day of the UN. "Major Role of UN Called for," KCNA (October 25, 2005).

39) Rodong Sinmun signed article, expressing the DPRK's efforts to ensure peace and security in the world and establish fair international relations as required by the objective and principle of the UN Charter. "Establishment of Fair International Relations Called for," KCNA (October 27, 2007).

40) For example, see Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK (April 10, 1996), circulated as UN document A/51/98.

UN Security Council (UNSC) can be used as an instrument of foreign policy by big powers, namely the United States.⁴¹⁾ Pyongyang also claims that it cannot seek protection in the UN: “Only the strong can defend justice in the world today where the jungle law prevails. Neither the UN nor anyone else can protect us.”⁴²⁾ It has used the UN forums as arena for publicizing its struggle against global imperialism and what it perceives as US unilateralism and hostile policy toward the DPRK, including UN condemnation of North Korean human rights practices — which the DPRK claims are nonexistent.⁴³⁾ Nevertheless, North Korea appears to have taken the UN somewhat seriously during its “arduous march” period (i.e., the famine years of the 1990s) when North Korea desperately required international food aid,⁴⁴⁾ demonstrating how North Korea has used the UN as a strategic tool for direct material gain in times of domestic crisis.

41) For example, see “DPRK Foreign Ministry Refutes ‘Resolution of UN Security Council,’” KCNA (July 18, 2006); “DPRK Calls for Building Just and Equal World,” KCNA (October 6, 2007); “DPRK Foreign Ministry Declares Strong Counter-Measures against UNSC’s ‘Resolution 1874,’” KCNA (June 13, 2009); 박근광, “제국주의자들의 강관행위는 절대로 용납될 수 없다,” 『근로자』, 9호(2009), 59~62쪽.

42) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Refutes ‘Resolution of UN Security Council,’” KCNA (July 18, 2006).

43) “‘No Human Rights Problems in My Country,’ Says North Korea’s UN Rep.,” Foreign Policy (June 21, 2013), at blog.foreignpolicy.com.

44) Young Whan Kihl, “North Korea and the United Nations,” pp.264~265.

2) Non-Aligned Movement

North Korea does boast a nearly half-century history of participation in a form of multilateralism in the international system, and one that is not exclusive to the socialist camp: the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement is another capital *M* approach to multilateralism. The movement finds its origins amid the deep concerns of leaders of the developing world's non-major powers during the advent of the Cold War. Like the UN, it represents a type of multilateral diplomacy concerned with global governance — albeit representing the states of the developing world — and is committed to world peace and security. However, while NAM emphasizes the principle of multilateralism and the practice of peaceful cooperation, it differs considerably compared to the UN in *raison d'être*, organizational structure, and function.

NAM is a multilateral intergovernmental organization established by several “Third World” states that sought not to align formally with or against either the Western or Eastern power blocs of the Cold War, but rather pursue a middle course between the two blocs. The organization was established in 1961 largely through the efforts of the heads of state of Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Ghana, and Indonesia, who sought to thwart the Cold War by creating this grouping. The organization's core foundational ideologies included national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the

struggle against colonialism and imperialism. The criteria for NAM membership was set up at its inaugural conference in 1961, outlining that member countries could not be involved in alliances or defense pacts with the main world powers, as the organization sought to prevent its state-members from becoming pawns in the power games of the major Cold War powers. Protecting the right of nations to independent judgment and countering imperialism were set as NAM's aims.⁴⁵⁾ Over the years, the movement has sought to restructure the world economic order. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, NAM's preoccupations with global politics and the Cold War have given way to concerns about globalization, trade and investment, debt, Aids, and international crime. Currently, NAM consists of 118 developing countries, and claims that its aim is to represent the political, economic, and cultural interests of the developing world.

Unlike other international organizations NAM has no statute or charter. Its structure of cooperation is informal. The organization has no permanent secretariat. Member countries have no obligation to defend another member's actions — for example, when North Korea conducted missile and nuclear tests in 2006, NAM failed to reach an agreement on the issues and therefore did not release a statement on these issues.⁴⁶⁾ Members are not bound to any

45) Government of Zaire, "Non-Aligned Movement: Background Information" (September 21, 2001), at www.nam.gov.za.

46) "Non-Aligned Movement Struggles for Relevancy in the Post-Cold War

policies or allegiances in a legal sense. The only norm is that member states should support each other under the principles of non-alignment.

If North Korea saw this institution as embodying what western observers would consider a multilateral character, then North Korea's Korean-language name for NAM is somewhat peculiar. In the North Korean lexicon, NAM is known as “*bbeulleokbulgadam-undong*” (뽀력불가담운동). The first syllable, to be read as “bloc,” is actually an exceptional early instance of North Korea transliterating an English word.⁴⁷⁾ The use of “bloc” does seem a natural choice, as the word does refer to a group of nations, parties, or persons united for common action. However, actual use of the word is surprising on two accounts. First, North Korea has long been resistant to introducing foreign words into its lexicon, as such words are seen as “cultural pollution.” So why give NAM this distinction? Second, the word “bloc” blatantly contradicts the stated principles of NAM countries, who refused to turn their movement into a bloc, as specified in the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Nonaligned States adopted at the Belgrade Conference in 1961.⁴⁸⁾

World,” DW-World.De (July 13, 2009), at www.dw-world.de.

47) I am indebted to Professor Koo Kab-Woo for pointing this out.

48) “The non-aligned countries represented at this Conference do not wish to form a new bloc and cannot be a bloc. They sincerely desire to cooperate with any Government, which seeks to contribute to the strengthening of confidence and peace in the world,” *Documents of the Gatherings of Non-Aligned Countries*

Over the years, through its statements on NAM, North Korea has demonstrated in some way that it is concerned with the character and composition of multilateral institutions that it is a part of. For instance, in May 19, 1998 at the foreign ministerial meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of NAM, Kim Yong Nam, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister of the DPRK, clarified North Korea's viewpoint on the then upcoming NAM summit (i.e., 12th summit) that August:

The 12th summit must mark an occasion in which faithfulness to the ideal and principles of the movement is promised once again so that the NAM can correctly define its orientation even in the next century. The NAM must neither deviate from its basic interest and principles nor change its character for changes in the international situation. The 12th summit must not be a place in which the already-reaffirmed basic principles, mission and orientation of action of the movement are discussed again and it must not allow any attempts to modify its character and orbit of activities. …… [it] must work out a joint strategy of the movement to cope with the negative effects of the economic ‘globalization’.⁴⁹⁾

1961-78 (Belgrade, 1978), cited in V. Benevolensky, *The Non-Aligned Movement: From Belgrade to Delhi* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985), p.30.

49) “Korean Reunion and NAM,” *Pyongyang Times* (May 30, 1998), p.8.

In an article published four years later in the *Rodong Sinmun*, North Korea expounded its position on NAM membership and the need for exclusiveness:

With an increasing number of nations hoping to join the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), it is necessary to put main stress on its unity and observe decisions and recommendations adopted at NAM conferences in approving their membership. …… If NAM is to keep itself pure, it is important for NAM to thoroughly implement the decision on its membership, observers and guests, which was adopted …… last year.⁵⁰⁾

Based on these statements, it would appear that North Korea

50) The North Korean statement goes on: “The meeting’s final document stipulates that there will be no permanent guests and that those nations which want to participate in summit conferences or regular conferences of foreign ministers as guests are able to attend them only as guests of the host nation after sending applications to the New York Coordination Committee for Deliberation. The decision was a flexible step to maintain NAM’s original principles and purity. The principle should be adhered to invariably in the issue of approving membership and participation of observers. And the rules should be observed strictly so that guests can only participate in opening and closing sessions of the summit conferences and regular conferences of foreign ministers as guests of the host nation. If member nations abuse the principle in their interests, NAM will be confused and its existence endangered. If NAM had failed to strictly observe its membership standards, all sorts of ineligible nations would have joined it and tried to hamper its development and derail NAM from its original goal. It shows that NAM should as ever strictly observe the standards to keep itself pure. NAM should steadily expand itself in such a way as maintaining its purity and unity.” “Rodong Sinmun Calls for Observing NAM Membership Standards,” KCNA (April 2, 2002).

values that the ‘letter of the law’ be kept with respect to rules. It also appears to view international multilateral institutions as fairly exclusive rather than inclusive groupings.

In addition, in the 1950s, North Korea began to cultivate ties with the nations of the Third World and thus members of NAM, in particular with countries of Africa and Asia, declaring its solidarity with the African and Asian nations where anti-colonial and national liberation movements were carrying on struggles for national liberation from their colonial authorities.⁵¹⁾ The obvious affinity with NAM’s core ideologies and the organization’s unique informal administrative style⁵²⁾ no doubt brought North Korea into the organization’s membership in 1975.⁵³⁾ Throughout its member-

51) For discussion of North Korea’s Third World diplomacy, see Charles K. Armstrong, “*Juche* and North Korea’s Global Aspirations,” Working Paper No. 1, North Korea International Documentation Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (April 2009).

52) According to NAM, its founders and their successors recognized that the Movement could not survive if formal structures, such as a constitution and internal secretariat, were constructed for the organization. A multilateral transnational organization consisting of states with differing ideologies and purposes could never create a rational administrative structure to implement its policies that each member could accept. Thus, NAM created a non-hierarchical administration, both rotational and inclusive, that provides all member states with an opportunity to participate in global decision-making and world politics. At its summit, the organization formally rotates its Chair to the Head of State to the host country of the summit, who then holds office until the next summit, and delegates certain responsibilities to the chair for promoting the principles and activities of the Movement. Government of Zaire, “Non-Aligned Movement: Background Information” (September 21, 2001), at www.nam.gov.za.

53) For an early North Korean description of the Non-Aligned Movement, see

ship, the DPRK has praised the organization occasionally as a “powerful anti-imperialist revolutionary force” and promoter of democracy,⁵⁴⁾ praising it for upholding the principles of equality and independence.⁵⁵⁾ In the twilight of the Cold War and dawn of the post-Cold War era, Kim Il Sung himself lauded the organization, and at times called for strengthening North Korea’s cooperation with NAM member states,⁵⁶⁾ and specifically for NAM’s further development in areas such as nuclear war prevention, South-South cooperation for economic independence, establishment of a new economic order, and even physical education and sport.⁵⁷⁾ In parti-

Choseonjungangnyeongam 1976 (North Korean Yearbook, 1976), (Pyongyang: Choseonjungangtongsinsa, 1976), pp.485-486.

- 54) For a mid-1990’s example, see “No Force Can Check the Advance of NAM,” *Pyongyang Times* (September 2, 1995).
- 55) For example, see 리중목, “빨럭불가담운동은 반제혁명위업을 힘 있게 추동하는 진보적이면 혁명적인 운동이다,” 『근로자』, 8호(1975), 59~64쪽; 김화, 『21세기 태양 김정일 장군』(평양: 평양출판사, 2000), 545~560쪽; 박근광, “제국주의자들의 강관행위는 절대로 용납될 수 없다,” 60쪽; “DPRK Asserts Independence and Equality,” KCNA (July 18, 2009).
- 56) Kim Il Sung’s mention of NAM in his 1992 New Year’s Address demonstrates the organization’s importance in the eyes of the Kim regime: “The Non-aligned Movement is a movement which opposes domination and subjugation and champions the independence of countries and nations and it is of great importance as ever. We shall further strengthen friendship and cooperation with the non-aligned nations and strive to strengthen and develop this movement to meet the aspirations of the people around the world to build a new independent world, in order to meet the present changing situation.” “New Year Address,” in *Kim Il Sung Works*, Vol. 43 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1998).
- 57) “For the Development of the Non-Aligned Movement, Concluding Speech at a Joint Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Central People’s Committee of the

cular, in the early 1990s, in the wake of the virtual disappearance of the international socialist market, North Korea sought to make the shift toward developing foreign economic relations with capitalist countries⁵⁸); but instead of targeting “large scale capitalist countries …… subject to pressure from the United States,” Kim Il Sung’s target was the “newly-emergent countries, the third-world nations” of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa,⁵⁹) with the implication being trade with members of NAM. Thus, in one respect, North Korea has demonstrated its willingness to engage in multilateral settings where it believes that it can profit economically.

At the thirteenth NAM summit in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, North Korea reiterated its position that NAM play an active role in the international system, and stand firm to its original ideals and principles by “rejecting all attempts at emasculating its

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, June 20, 1986,” “For the Development of Physical Education and Sport in the Non-Aligned Countries,” and “Let Us Develop South-South Cooperation,” in *Kim Il Sung Works*, Vol. 40, May 1986-December 1987 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1995), pp.117~149, 302~312; “Muscle-flexing Needed for Non- Aligned Movement,” *Pyongyang Times* (June 11, 1994).

- 58) “On the Central Tasks Facing the Administration Council at Present,” speech delivered at a joint meeting of the Central People’s Committee and the Administration Council of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, December 14, 1992, in *Kim Il Sung Works*, Vol. 44, December 1992-July 1994 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1999), pp.14~15.
- 59) “On the Direction of Socialist Economic Construction for the Immediate Period Ahead,” concluding speech at the 21st Plenary Meeting of the Sixth Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, December 8, 1993. *Kim Il Sung Works*, Vol. 44, pp.254~255.

existence.”⁶⁰) In the fall 2012, North Korean media reiterated the importance of NAM sticking to its core founding principles: “The movement set forth the independence against imperialism as its basic idea ever since its foundation. …… NAM should uphold the banner of independence against imperialism and wage dynamic actions to achieve its sacred cause.”⁶¹) Prior to the 2012 NAM summit, a North Korean delegate to the Geneva Disarmament Conference on August 21, 2012 reaffirmed North Korea’s intention to support the proposal of non-aligned countries on the earlier convention of the fourth special meeting of the UN General Assembly on disarmament, interestingly referring to the disarmament conference as “the only forum for multilateral negotiations whose mission is to work out internationally recognized disarmament pacts upon authorization of the first special meeting of the UN General Assembly on disarmament in 1978.”⁶²)

Finally, the NAM has special significance to the Kim regime.

60) “DPRK Vows to Fulfil Its Commitments and Role,” *Pyongyang Times* (March 1, 2003).

61) “Independence against Imperialism Is Banner of Victory for NAM: Rodong Sinmun,” KCNA (September 1, 2012). This reiterates what Kim Yong Nam declared at the previous NAM summit in July 2009: “The DPRK is convinced that its struggle for independence and equality is a just one in line with the idea and common interests of NAM. The DPRK government will as ever further boost the unity and solidarity with the non-aligned countries and wage a positive struggle for the stability on the peninsula and the world peace in the idea of independence, peace and friendship.” “DPRK Asserts Independence and Equality,” KCNA (July 18, 2009).

62) “DPRK Delegate Calls for Adhering to Principle of Equality,” KCNA (August 27, 2012).

Its name sometimes appears in the North Korean literature and documents to define the image of the revered founding DPRK leader Kim Il Sung. For example, the preamble of the amended North Korean 2009 constitution states: “As a veteran statesman in the world, Comrade Kim Il Sung opened up the new era of independence, carried out energetic activities for the strengthening and development of the socialist movement and the non-aligned movement, as well as for world peace and for friendship among the peoples and made an imperishable contribution to the cause of human independence.”⁶³⁾ Interestingly, however, the North Korean “supreme leader” does not attend the NAM summits. As per usual, in the most recent NAM summit held in Iran in 2012, North Korea sent its figurehead head of state, Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the DPRK’s Supreme People’s Assembly.⁶⁴⁾ One can speculate that if North Korea’s “supreme leader” were to ever show up, it would certainly signal a real seriousness and commitment to the movement and its ideals. Until that happens, NAM can only be seen as being of tertiary interest to the leadership.

63) *Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2010), p.2.

64) “N. Korea to Send Figurehead to Summit, Not Supreme Leader-KCNA,” *Reuters* (August 22, 2012).

3) Six-Party Talks

The Six-Party Talks (6PT) is a rare case of North Korea having major involvement in a regional multilateral security arrangement as a member. The 6PT is the ad hoc multilateral dialogue forum tasked with peacefully resolving the North Korean nuclear issue through diplomacy.⁶⁵⁾

It is important to note that some scholars question the “multilateralism” of the 6PT, arguing against the notion that it fundamentally embodies the principles of multilateralism. Some cite as evidence the confrontational DPRK versus US paradigm which has dominated the talks, the two actors’ domination of the negotiations, and the fact that no settlement has been reached by the parties on agenda relevant to all of the members outside of the issue of North Korea’s nuclear programs.⁶⁶⁾ Others concur, saying that the 6PT is “disguised as an equal-opportunity multilateral process,” when in reality “the dynamic is overwhelmingly five against one (North Korea).”⁶⁷⁾ Still others see its ability to achieve

65) For discussion on the 6PT, see Chang Dal-Joong, Lee Jung-Chul, and Lim Soo-Ho, *Bukmi daerip* (US-DPRK Confrontation), (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2011); and Han Yong-Sup, “The Six-Party Talks and Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia,” in Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak (eds.), *North Korea’s Second Nuclear Crisis and Northeast Asian Security* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), pp.191~205.

66) Kim Keun-sik, “The North Korea Nuclear Issue, the Six-Party Talks and Institutionalization,” in Su-Hoon Lee (ed.), *Security and Foreign Policy of the ROK Government* (Seoul: Happy Reading, 2007), p.343.

67) Bates Gill and Michael J. Green, “Unbundling Asia’s New Multilateralism,” in M. J. Green and B. Gill(eds.), *Asia’s New Multilateralism*, p.21.

cooperation on multilateral initiatives as compromised by the fact that the forum “more often than not reflects the power, identity, and status of member states.”⁶⁸⁾

Nevertheless, the 6PT does demonstrate dimensions of our definition. Members to the talks have acknowledged the importance of rules and inclusiveness of affected parties. The 6PT is also minimally institutionalized and its membership is voluntary (with the possible exception of North Korea). In addition, through their participation, the parties have demonstrated their willingness to cede aspects of sovereignty and freedom of action: for example, the US has foregone coercive options in favor of coordinating with its ally South Korea and regional rival China; the energy-strapped DPRK has shown willingness to allow its freedom of action to be restricted by halting its civilian nuclear energy program; and neighbors Russian and Japan have come on board with the rest to coordinate efforts to find a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue. In this respect, the 6PT does display aspects of multilateralism.

Looking at the 6PT from the DPRK perspective, from the start North Korea was negative toward participating in any form of multilateral talks to address the nuclear issue, as it views denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula fundamentally as an issue to be settled through bilateral talks between Pyongyang and Washington.⁶⁹⁾

68) Andrew Yeo, “Bilateralism, Multilateralism, and Institutional Change in Northeast Asia’s Regional Security Architecture,” p.2.

69) “DPRK ‘Nuclear Deterrent Force’ To Be Built If US Maintains ‘Hostile

In late 2002 and early 2003, DPRK-US relations spiraled downward. The George W. Bush administration revealed its preference to “multilateralize” the North Korea nuclear issue. The United States sought a multilateral dialogue framework to address what had previously been an issue discussed within the framework of DPRK-US bilateral relations. But as Pritchard argues, “the original rationale for holding six-party talks was negative, not positive. … the United States opted to broaden the field of players but refused to deal directly with Pyongyang. It was based more on a desire not to be seen as repeating the ‘failure’ of the Clinton’s administration’s Agreed Framework. … the U.S. objective in taking the multilateral approach was to avoid bilateral contact with Pyongyang.”⁷⁰⁾

The multilateral approach was not readily accepted by Pyongyang. North Korea stated its refusal of multilateral talks aimed at halting its nuclear programs: “As I told you on January 25, we will never participate in any kind of multilateral talks. … I think that is the official position of my government.”⁷¹⁾ In late January 2003, this rejection would appear in the North Korean media: “The U.S. proposed … that the nuclear issue … should be dealt with in the alleged five plus five multi-party talks … The DPRK rejects

Policy’,” KCNA (June 9, 2003).

70) Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), p.57.

71) *Ibid.*, p.60.

all attempts to internationalize the Korean nuclear issue and it will not attend any talks of this sort.”⁷²⁾ North Korea would continue to reiterate its rejection of a multi-party negotiation framework.⁷³⁾

Yet the US insistence on a multilateral approach, North Korea’s uncertainty and concern about Washington’s approach to “rogue states,” and Chinese proactive diplomacy⁷⁴⁾ and “soft coercion”⁷⁵⁾ would bring Pyongyang to the multilateral negotiating table in the

72) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on ‘Multi-party Talks,’” KCNA (January 25, 2003).

73) “KCNA Refutes U.S. Absurd Call for ‘Multilateral Talks,’” KCNA (March 11, 2003); “DPRK-U.S. Direct Talks Called For,” KCNA (March 12, 2003).

74) Samuel S. Kim, “North Korea’s Nuclear Strategy and the Interface Between International and Domestic Politics,” *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2010), pp.68~71.

75) While Scott Snyder uses this term to explain China’s policy toward North Korea from 2003 onward, he concludes that China’s leverage over North Korea since the advent of the second nuclear crisis is overstated: although some claim that China has become North Korea’s economic “lifeline,” “North Korean economic dependency on China and greater levels of Chinese trade with and assistance to North Korea do not appear to have enhanced China’s political leverage.” In addition, China rejected a sanctions approach to pressure the DPRK, and rejected any “stick” that might induce instability in the DPRK. This position left China constrained as well. Snyder, *China’s Rise and the Two Koreas* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), pp.14~15, 132. However, China did pressure North Korea to stop its nuclear development in March 2003 — as it did not support the idea of a nuclear-armed DPRK — warning Pyongyang that Chinese assistance in protecting the DPRK from international sanctions could be lost unless the North refrained from its provocative behavior regarding the nuclear issue. China’s cutting off of oil supplies to North Korea for three days in March 2003 was likely a signal to Pyongyang to refrain from provocations — as North Korea fired a missile into Japanese waters in early March — and to accept talks with the United States under a multilateral framework. Jonathan Watts, “China Cuts Oil Supply to North Korea,” *Guardian* (April 1, 2003).

spring 2003 in the form of trilateral talks. Washington's military presence in the Northeast Asian region and the start of the Iraq war in March 2003 raised fears in Pyongyang — and other capitals — of a possible preemptive strike on North Korea.⁷⁶⁾ This development, along with US Secretary Colin Powell's suggestion to the Chinese during his visit to Beijing in February 2003 that China was well positioned to organize and host multilateral talks (but only involving the US, Japan, China, and the two Koreas), would prompt China to urge Washington and Pyongyang to hold bilateral negotiations in Beijing under the rubric of trilateral China-DPRK-US talks. On March 8, China sent its former foreign minister and vice premier to the Chinese-DPRK border to meet DPRK leader Kim Jong Il and convince him to enter trilateral talks.⁷⁷⁾ Pyongyang agreed.⁷⁸⁾ However, trilateral talks would go nowhere.

Eventually, North Korea indicated its willingness to engage in multilateral dialogue, but only if it was reassured bilateral negotiations with the United States, it perceives the United States as posing “the most real and grave threat” to its security.⁷⁹⁾ Washington

76) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on U.S. Start of Iraqi War,” KCNA (March 21, 2003); “KCNA Dismisses Large-Scale U.S. War Maneuvers as Alarming Development,” KCNA (March 21, 2003).

77) Ming Liu, “China and the North Korean Crisis: Facing Test and Transition,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (2003), p.360.

78) “Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry on Peaceful Solution to Nuclear Issue,” KCNA (April 12, 2003); “Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry on Expected DPRK-U.S. Talks,” KCNA (April 18, 2003).

79) “It would be rational that the Korean peninsula nuclear issue, from historical

would continue to apply pressure and insist on multilateral negotiations.⁸⁰⁾ This pressure, coupled with the urgings from Beijing — rather than pure volunteerism — would seem to be a big factor underlying North Korea’s decision to join the multilateral talks. Nevertheless, by acquiescing to the 6PT, North Korea would obtain a seat at a multilateral negotiation, indirectly giving it some international legitimacy.

The 6PT process seemed particularly vulnerable to externalities, in particular friction in the DPRK-US relationship. The inaugural meeting lacked substance, concrete agreements, or convergence of common interests among the participants. However, it did provide a starting point for addressing the deteriorating security situation in Northeast Asia. It also allowed regional actors, including North Korea, the first ever opportunity to express their concerns in a multilateral context. In its 2004 yearbook, North Korea stated that during the first round of talks its delegation stated the North Korean objective of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and that if the US basically gives up its hostile policy, North Korea

point of view and in relation to a composite of its composition and in the light of responsibility and ability to settle the issue, be settled by employing all the forms of negotiations and combining them in an organic way. The DPRK government holds that it is going to have all forms of negotiations including bilateral, three-party and multi-party talks that have so far been proposed by directly related parties and the nations concerned by fixing an appropriate order.” “DPRK FM Sends Letter to President of UNSC,” KCNA (June 28, 2003).

80) John Bolton, “A Dictatorship at a Crossroads,” speech delivered at the Seoul Hilton Hotel (Seoul, July 31 2003), at www.usembassy.it/file2003_08/alia/a3080508.htm.

could give up its nuclear plan. However, the yearbook also states that the George W. Bush administration in Washington ignored everything the DPRK suggested, and reiterated the position that Pyongyang sees the nuclear issue as a bilateral issue yet participated in multilateral talks “without regard to the form.”⁸¹⁾

Over the years, the talks would lack continuity. For instance, the lull between rounds three and four caused many to question the six parties’ commitment to dialogue and thus the overall effectiveness of the multilateral process itself. During that lull, in February 2005 North Korea announced that it had suspended its involvement in the 6PT and, more shockingly, had developed a nuclear deterrent capability,⁸²⁾ thus undermining the very reason for this multilateral arrangement’s existence. The 6PT resumed in July 2005 and eventually produced a significant achievement at the end of the second phase of the fourth round of talks in September 2005, that being the signing of a six-article joint statement.⁸³⁾ This was a landmark

81) *Choseonjungangnyeongam 2004* (North Korea Yearbook), (Pyongyang: Choseonjungangtongsinsa, 2004), p.249.

82) “DPRK Suspends Six-Party Talks for Indefinite Period,” KCNA (February 10, 2005).

83) In brief, the six parties unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. In the statement, “the DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards”; “the United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons” and its willingness to offer security guarantees to this effect; and “[t]he ROK reaffirmed its commitment not to receive or deploy nuclear weapons in accordance with the 1992 Joint Declaration of the Denucleariza-

step in the multilateral process, and one that appeared to obtain a positive commitment from North Korea:

As clarified in the joint statement, we will return to the NPT and sign the Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA and comply with it immediately upon the U.S. provision of LWRs, a basis of confidence-building, to us. As already clarified more than once, we will feel no need to keep even a single nuclear weapon if the DPRK-U.S. relations are normalized, bilateral confidence is built and we are not exposed to the U.S. nuclear threat any longer. What is most essential is, therefore, for the U.S. to provide LWRs to the DPRK as early as possible as evidence proving the former's substantial recognition of the latter's nuclear activity for a peaceful purpose."⁸⁴

However, Washington's unilateral interpretation of the joint statement on when North Korea could get a light-water reactor for civilian energy generation, and the next-day US Treasury Depart-

tion of the Korean Peninsula." The parties also expressed their intention to observe the 'words for words', 'actions for actions' principle and mutually coordinate measures, among commitments to provide energy assistance to North Korea, to discuss at an appropriate time the provision of light-water reactors to the North, to promote economic cooperation, to work toward U.S.-DPRK and Japan-DPRK normalization of relations, and so forth. For a copy of the statement, see "Joint Statement Released at the Six-Party Talks," KCNA (September 19, 2005).

84) "Spokesman for DPRK Foreign Ministry on Six-Party Talks," KCNA (September 20, 2005).

ment's sanctioning of eight DPRK entities (for unspecified involvement in proliferation of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons or their related delivery devices) dashed the 6PT's first substantial achievement. Pyongyang vituperated the Bush administration for its "double standards."⁸⁵⁾ Talks restarted in November 2005 but achieved practically nothing and broke without a schedule for a future meeting.

In 2006 the US sanctions related to the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) issue would continue to hamper the 6PT. In March 2006, the US Department of State indicated that issues related to North Korea's financial system could potentially be discussed in the 6PT. In the North Korean viewpoint, the reality was Washington avoids bilateral talks with Pyongyang for lifting sanctions, and because of this the 6PT would have to be suspended indefinitely.⁸⁶⁾ During the hiatus, North Korea threatened to boost its nuclear deterrent,⁸⁷⁾ while offering in April 2006 to return to the 6PT if the United States would resolve the BDA issue (which was not satisfactorily resolved until June 2007).⁸⁸⁾

In October 2006 North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. On October 3, Pyongyang stated it would "bolster its war deterrent for self-defence," saying that it would conduct a nuclear test, and

85) "U.S. Double Standards Accused," KCNA (October 23, 2005).

86) *Choseonjungangnyeongam 2006* (North Korea Yearbook), (Pyongyang: Choseonjungangtongsinsa, 2006), pp.285~286.

87) "DPRK Threatens to Boost Nuclear Arsenal," *Reuters* (April 13, 2006).

88) The National Committee on North Korea, "NCNK Issue Brief: BDA," at http://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/ncnk_issue_brief_bda/.

“manufacture up-to-date nuclear weapons,” though “never use nuclear weapons first but strictly prohibit any threat of nuclear weapons and nuclear transfer.”⁸⁹⁾ On October 9, North Korea claimed to have successfully conducted a nuclear test,⁹⁰⁾ yet stunningly rationalized that its action “does not contradict the September 19 [2005] joint statement under which it committed itself to dismantle nuclear weapons and abandon the existing nuclear program. On the contrary, it constitutes a positive measure for its implementation.”⁹¹⁾ The UNSC would soon pass Resolution 1718, unanimously condemning the DPRK for its behavior and placing more economic sanctions on the country.

The third phase of the fifth round of 6PT held in February 2007 led to a breakthrough signing of a detailed “action plan” in which all parties reaffirmed their common goal to move the peninsular denuclearization efforts forward in a peaceful manner, reiterated their intention to fulfill their commitments in the September 2005 joint statement in coordinated steps in a phased manner and in line with the principle of “action for action.”⁹²⁾ Agreement on an

89) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Clarifies Stand on New Measure to Bolster War Deterrent,” KCNA (October 3, 2006).

90) “DPRK Successfully Conducts Underground Nuclear Test,” KCNA (October 9, 2006).

91) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on U.S. Moves Concerning Its Nuclear Test,” KCNA (October 11, 2006).

92) “North Korea-Denuclearization Action Plan” (February 13, 2007), at www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/february/80479.htm.

“action plan agreement” followed that October 2007.

However, talks would fall into limbo again, with North Korea blaming Washington for the deadlock.⁹³⁾ In late June 2008 North Korea would disable its core nuclear facilities at Yongbyun by blowing up its cooling tower, something North Korea claimed constituted “a step taken out of good will, a proof of the DPRK’s will for denuclearization” taken in advance of what was fixed in the October 2007 agreement; it would further urge the other five parties to fulfill their commitments to make economic compensation to the DPRK under the agreed upon 6PT principle of “action for action.”⁹⁴⁾ Two months later, Pyongyang demanded under this same principle that Washington stop raising unilateral conditions (i.e., a verification through a “special inspection”) to “encroach upon the sovereignty of the DPRK” and instead live up to its end of the bargain by delisting the DPRK from the US list of “state sponsors of terrorism,” questioning “for whom is the six-way structure necessary if the six-party talks are reduced to a platform for a big country to trifle with a small country as it does at present?”⁹⁵⁾

Finally, in early April 2009, North Korea launched what it

93) “DPRK Foreign Ministry’s Spokesman Blasts US Delaying Tactics in Solution of Nuclear Issue,” KCNA (March 29, 2008).

94) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Implementation of Agreement Adopted by Six-Party Talks” (July 4, 2008).

95) “Foreign Ministry’s Spokesman on DPRK’s Decision to Suspend Activities to Disable Nuclear Facilities,” KCNA (August 27, 2008).

claimed to be a satellite. Washington believed it to be a test of weapons technology — a Taepodong-2 missile.⁹⁶⁾ The UNSC quickly responded, unanimously agreeing to a Presidential Statement that condemned North Korea for the launch and stated the UNSC's intention to expand sanctions against the country.⁹⁷⁾ North Korea responded by saying that it would never again take part in 6PT, and instead boost its nuclear deterrent,⁹⁸⁾ adding later that its army had “never pinned any hopes on the six-party talks from their outset but closely followed the moves of the US and Japanese aggressors and the Lee [Myung-bak] group of traitors.”⁹⁹⁾ Not receiving an apology from the UNSC, Pyongyang expelled IAEA nuclear inspectors from the country and in May 2009 conducted a second underground nuclear test.¹⁰⁰⁾ In 2010, North Korea reiterated its intent to build its own light-water reactors,¹⁰¹⁾ and in February 2013 conducted its third nuclear test.

In hindsight, North Korea may not have been committed to the

96) “North Korea’s Rocket Launch ‘Fails,’” *Guardian* (April 5, 2009).

97) “UN Security Council Condemns North Korean Rocket Launch,” *Guardian* (April 13, 2009).

98) “DPRK Foreign Ministry Vehemently Refutes UNSC’s ‘Presidential Statement,’” KCNA (April 14, 2009).

99) “KPA General Staff Spokesman Blasts Hostile Forces’ Anti-DPRK Racket,” KCNA (April 18, 2009).

100) “KCNA Report on One More Successful Underground Nuclear Test,” KCNA (May 25, 2009).

101) “N. Korea Has Begun Construction of Light-Water Reactor Due in 2012: Expert,” *Yonhap* (November 16, 2010); “N. Korea to Build Light Water Reactor Soon: State Media,” *Agence France-Presse* (March 29, 2010).

six-way multilateral process. At times Pyongyang would reaffirm that it would make every possible effort to settle the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations, but DPRK actions such as its nuclear test go against the entire purpose of the 6PT process. Behind-the-scenes bilateral discussions among parties, in particular between China and North Korea and North Korea and the US, would eventually lead to a resumption of the 6PT time and again. North Korea would almost always take credit for moving the process forward. In its statements, its primary focus on the US and lack of mention of the other parties, (i.e., China, South Korea, Russia, and Japan) reveal that Pyongyang essentially viewed this multilateral arrangement as subordinate to the DPRK-US bilateral context; that is, as a means to achieving direct bilateral talks with the Washington. Washington on the other hand saw the talks as a multilateral forum, with all direct DPRK-US discussions outside the talks and even those within as merely preparations for the multilateral process.

4) Other Notables of Nonparticipation / Nonmembership

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) - During the Cold War, North Korea bypassed engagement in multilateral arrangements with its communist brethren, as North Korean leader Kim Il Sung refused the invitation of its patron, the Soviet Union, to join its communist comrades in the Council for Mutual

Economic Assistance. COMECON was an association of Soviet-oriented Communist nations to coordinate economic development in the communist world — a kind of Eastern bloc equivalent to the European Economic Community. It was founded in 1949 but disbanded in 1991 with the fall of the Eastern bloc and the members' adoption of free-market policies. North Korea did not join because Kim Il Sung took a negative view of the association. As Person notes, in the 1950s, Kim Il Sung had practical reasons for rejecting appeals for North Korea to join COMECON, as he “equated industrialization with strength at a time when South Korean president Syngman Rhee continued to engage in saber-rattling and the Republic of Korea witnessed a massive influx of US aid,” and was convinced that a strong North Korea would appeal to South Koreans sympathetic to communism.¹⁰²⁾ The North Korean leader also realized that integrating his country's economy into the international division of labor would mean sacrificing industrial development since the DPRK would be expected to be merely an exporter of natural resources and marine products to the members of COMECON. “Kim Il Sung was first and foremost a nationalist, and with Korea emerging from a centuries-old Sino-centric system of relations and 35 years of Japanese colonial rule, he would not willingly subjugate his

102) James F. Person, “New Evidence on North Korea in 1956,” in Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008), p.448.

country by entering into a new suzerain system of ‘serving the great’ (*sadae*) with the Soviet Union.”¹⁰³⁾

Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) - KEDO is an example of ad hoc functional multilateralism and a regional institutional arrangement, one born out of a 1994 bilateral agreement (the Geneva Agreed Framework) between the DPRK and the United States to solve the security dilemma posed by North Korea’s nuclear programs. KEDO was tasked with carrying out the provisions of Geneva agreement. KEDO is a unique and notable case because despite not being a member and only the recipient of KEDO’s provisions [i.e., deliveries of heavy-fuel oil and construction of light-water reactors (LWRs)], North Korea had a distinct role in shaping this international multilateral consortium.

In May-June 1995, US and DPRK negotiators met for three weeks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where they reached an accord in which North Korea agreed to accept the decisions of KEDO with respect to the model for the LWR North Korea was to receive and that the organization would select a prime contractor to execute the project.¹⁰⁴⁾ The North Korean media put its own spin on the accord,¹⁰⁵⁾ describing KEDO as being under US

103) *Ibid.*

104) “Joint U.S.-DPRK Press Statement, Kuala Lumpur, June 13, 1995,” at www.kedo.org. (The organization’s executive board would later announce that it had selected the South Korean design as the reference model, and in March 1996 that the prime contractor would be a South Korean firm).

105) “US to Provide American LWRs,” *Pyongyang Times* (June 24, 1995).

leadership, and that the United States would serve as the principal point of contact with the DPRK for the LWR project. Teams of KEDO would be led by US citizens and the promised reactors would be the advanced version of US origin,¹⁰⁶⁾ thus saving face from having to admit the reactors would be the South Korean model. In the Kuala Lumpur accord the DPRK would also agree to negotiate directly with KEDO on all outstanding issues related to the LWR project. This was significant, considering that KEDO was not an agency of the US government, but an IGO.¹⁰⁷⁾ However, the North Koreans did not acknowledge the new organization as an independent actor or its multilateral character; rather a June 1995 official statement by then DPRK Vice-Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan unequivocally clarified the North Korean position on KEDO: “We regard KEDO as an organization which technically supports the US liabilities pursuant to the DPRK-US framework agreement.

106) See Article I, Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization — Supply Agreement, at <http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/SupplyAgreement.pdf>.

107) To some who worked within the organization, KEDO was not an independent actor: “I think KEDO was different from other international organizations in one thing. Every step was instructed from governments. International organizations should be impartial and objective, but KEDO was not. In theory yes, but in reality, KEDO was too much a political organization; it was politically administered and politically organized.” Remarks by Kim Eun Soo, official from the ROK ministry of foreign affairs and director of policy at the KEDO office in New York; “KEDO is a little bit in-between, not solely bilateral but not definitely multilateral. It’s a semi-multilateral setting.” Remarks by Hahn Choong-hee. Quoted in Charles Kartman, Robert Carlin, and Joel Wit, *A History of KEDO 1994-2006* (Stanford, CA: CISAC, University of Stanford, June 2012), p.25.

This means that we are to settle all problems finally only with the United States.”¹⁰⁸⁾ North Korea insisted that KEDO be US-led, thus structurally relegating KEDO’s other two founding partners, South Korea and Japan, to subordinate roles. Pyongyang could not allow South Korea to take a leading role in the organization as it would clash with the belief that the Kim regime is the sole legitimate sovereign of the Korean nation. Furthermore, by insisting on such an organizational structure, organizationally KEDO would reflect “imperialism” and not “multilateralism,” an outcome congruous with the North Korean worldview.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) - The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a multilateral organization created in 2001 and spearheaded by China, North Korea’s sole economic lifeline and remaining ally. The SCO is a permanent IGO based on the prototype “Shanghai Five mechanism.” Its founding members are China, Russia, and the Central Asian nations Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The organization’s stated main goals are to strengthen mutual confidence and good-neighborly relations among its members; promote effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture as well as education, energy, transportation, tourism, environmental protection and other fields; make joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region, moving towards the establish-

108) “DPRK Head of Kuala Lumpur Talks Interviewed,” *Pyongyang Times* (June 17, 1995), p.7.

ment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order. It claims to pursue its internal policy “based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equal rights, consultations, respect for the diversity of cultures and aspiration towards common development,” and its external policy “is conducted in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, non-targeting anyone and openness.”¹⁰⁹⁾

Curiously, the North Korean literature has identified the SCO as a multilateral organization.¹¹⁰⁾ In the North Korean media and literature, the SCO is mentioned in the context of its opposition to the US and the global trend toward multipolarization. It is also mentioned as a possibly “emerging as a political and military bloc in opposition to the NATO,” and thus indirect ally in the fight against Western imperialism.¹¹¹⁾ North Korea media has also mentioned that as the SCO has begun to play an increasing role in regional endeavors for peace, security, and development in Central Asia, and that more countries hope to join it — even those outside the region. However, North Korea is not a member, observer, dialogue partner, nor even a guest attendant of this organization.

109) See SCO website, <http://www.sectsc.org/EN123/brief.asp>.

110) For example, see 허철민, “상하이협조기구를 분렬 와해시키기 위한 미제국 주의자들의 책동,” 『정치법률연구』, 제3호(2011), 53~54쪽.

111) “Imperialists’ Wild Ambition for World Domination Can Never Come True,” KCNA (May 21, 2007); “World Moving toward Multipolarization,” *Pyongyang Times* (April 23, 2011); “SCO Raises Its Profile,” *Pyongyang Times* (May 21, 2011).

While this may come as no surprise,¹¹²⁾ it does suggest that North Korea remains disinclined to join any multilateral organization spearheaded by a major power ally.

5) Findings

Taking the three dimensions that describe our definition of multilateralism — i.e., importance of rules, inclusiveness of parties, and voluntary cooperation minimally institutionalized — as our lenses, what can we glean from the above investigation about North Korea's perception of multilateralism?

First, in the statements it has made, North Korea demonstrates some regard for abiding by rules and principles in each of the three main cases examined above. In particular with NAM in the post-Cold War, North Korea demonstrated a staunch concern for maintaining the organization's founding principles amid the forces of change (i.e., globalization). In NAM and the UN, North Korea strongly emphasizes the principle of equality among members meaning not just 'sovereign equality' of member states as spelled out in the UN Charter, but also 'political equality', which in the case of the UN is an inequality with respect to the UN Charter's

112) Although in all fairness, even if North Korea wanted to join, the SCO is largely an attempt by China and Russia to establish a joint sphere of influence in Central Asia; there is really no question as to who's sphere of influence North Korea is under (i.e., China's) and the SCO has stated that no country under UN sanctions can become a member.

adoption of great power permanent membership in the UNSC and the right to veto,¹¹³⁾ but is an unwritten facet of NAM. North Korea seeks not only ‘sovereign equality’ and ‘judicial equality’ among states, which are norms endorsed by the UN Charter, but also political recognition and ‘political equality’ in the international system. At the moment, this latter aspiration is something it cannot obtain in a regional multilateral mechanism, as several of the region’s state actors — i.e., Japan, South Korea, and the United States — do not even share official diplomatic relations with the DPRK. Barring a peace treaty to officially end the Korea War and normalization of relations between Pyongyang and Washington — after which one could expect normalization with Tokyo to follow — it is inconceivable that the DPRK would join in seriousness any future regional multilateral security mechanism or institution in Northeast Asia.

Second, with regard to inclusiveness of the parties affected, it appears as though Pyongyang does not fully recognize this. Its statements on NAM suggest Pyongyang’s preference for exclusivity, not inclusiveness. Furthermore, despite its insistence on Russia being included in the Six-Party Talks — which in one sense would reflect North Korea’s recognition of Russia as an affected party to the security concerns in Northeast Asia — Pyongyang’s motivation could equally have been pure self-interest.

113) Amitav Acharya, “Multilateralism, Sovereignty and Normative Change in World Politics,” Working Paper No. 78, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Singapore (May, 2005).

Third, on voluntary cooperation that is minimally institutionalized, it is difficult to determine North Korea's view of this dimension. First, North Korea does hold membership in the three major cases studied; however, in two of the three cases (i.e., the UN and the 6PT), it would be a stretch to say that Pyongyang's decision itself to join was completely voluntary. In the case of the UN, during the Cold War North Korea never sought membership separate from South Korea, but rather had always insisted that Korea be afforded one UN membership only, and that Pyongyang be the holder of that UN seat. However, amid the rapidly transforming international order on account of the unraveling of the Eastern bloc and the inevitability of South Korea's rise from observer to full UN member, in the battle for legitimacy over Seoul, Pyongyang perceived that it had little choice but to seek separate membership. In the case of the 6PT and from an issue-area perspective, North Korea contended that it would never join the US initiative to "internationalize" or "multilateralize" the nuclear issue, which Pyongyang regarded as a bilateral one to be solved between itself and Washington. However, US unwillingness for bilateral dialogue and Chinese pressure on Pyongyang to engage in multilateral talks seemed to give the DPRK little option but to "voluntarily" acquiesce to multilateral negotiations. Second, from the perspective of Cold War relations, North Korea refused to join its socialist comrades in COMECON. Likewise, in the post-Cold War, North Korea has not indicated an intention to participate

even as an observer with its former socialist comrades in the China-led SCO.

Additional points to make are as follows. In the cases of multilateralism on the global level (i.e., with NAM and UN) and from an issue-area perspective, it seems obvious that North Korea uses the NAM summits and UN General Assembly as venues to promote its specific interests such as its battle of legitimacy over South Korea, condemnation of US hegemony, and sovereign right to a civilian nuclear development program, *inter alia*. For decades North Korea has perceived the UN as being a US-controlled international organization. Based on its fundamental confrontation with US imperialism, it is difficult to believe that Pyongyang could genuinely embrace UN norms — such as on human rights — principles, and practices wholeheartedly, as these have been created and fostered by its deeply distrusted archenemy.

In sum, North Korea does not subscribe to the western IR conception of multilateralism. Pyongyang harbors a negative perception of multilateralism. In fact, its involvement in such arrangements as the 6PT and even KEDO could be regarded as situational and opportunistic.¹¹⁴⁾ Despite said willingness to participate in the 6PT, Pyongyang may never have had any real intention of dealing seriously with and within this multilateral mechanism.¹¹⁵⁾

114) Lim Wonhyuk, “Regional Multilateralism in Asia and the Korean Question,” in Green and Gill, *Asia’s New Multilateralism*, p.85.

115) Rather, as argued elsewhere, Pyongyang used its post-Cold War nuclear di-

For North Korea, self-help and sovereignty trump multilateralism, at least when it comes to ensuring one's security.¹¹⁶⁾

5. Conclusion

Clearly, North Korea does not hold the western IR view of multilateralism. At best, North Korean statements suggest that Pyongyang believes in the need for agreed upon rules and principles of cooperation in its foreign relations. However, as with its media statements, its use of the term "multilateralism" seems connected superficially to the ideals stipulated in the UN charter. As far as regional multilateral security initiatives are concerned,

plomacy with the United States and other parties not to negotiate a settlement that would see North Korea's denuclearization, but rather used diplomacy as an instrument of statecraft to manage the threat of preemption until North Korea had completed its nuclear weapons program. Matthias Maass, "North Korea's Instrumentalization of Diplomacy: Passing Through the 'Danger Zone' of Its Nuclear Weapons Program," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (September 2012), pp.303~320.

- 116) North Korea reveals this in a most telling statement: "The DPRK's exercise of its legitimate right as a sovereign state is neither bound to any international law nor to bilateral or multilateral agreements such as the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration and the joint statement of the six-party talks. The DPRK is not a signatory to the Missile Technology Control Regime and, therefore, is not bound to any commitment under it. The DPRK's missile development, test-fire, manufacture and deployment, therefore, serve as a key to keeping the balance of force and preserving peace and stability in Northeast Asia." "DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Its Missile Launches," KCNA (July 7, 2006).

without ‘political equality’ among actors or a compelling contingency, and despite its claims of being committed to an agreed upon issue — i.e., denuclearization — Pyongyang is unlikely to rejoin the existing 6PT or any new mechanism that sets denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as one of its core aims; in North Korea’s *songun* (military-first) era of today, maintaining nuclear deterrence is the professed means to protect the regime from existential threat.¹¹⁷⁾ Nevertheless, the transformation in Northeast Asia is ongoing. China and the US continue to engage in security-related confidence-building dialogue and power transition simultaneously that could necessitate the establishment of a regional multilateral security arrangement. But without true recognition of the western concept of multilateralism, however, the Kim Jong Un leadership would simply fall into rather than “voluntarily” fully accept a future arrangement. Circumstances can change as the future is fluid, and North Korea’s interaction with KEDO demonstrated some positive embrace of functional multilateral cooperation.

On the global level, North Korea will likely continue to use the UN and NAM as platforms for its anti-US rhetoric and nuclear politics. Participation in these institutions still offer means to substantiate Pyongyang’s legitimacy on the international stage. As

117) The nascent Kim Jong Un regime’s recent announcement in May 2013 that the country will follow a dual track of development of its nuclear programs and construction of its economy simultaneously — the “*byungjin* line” — simply reinforces this notion.

an actor that sees itself locked in to the realist doctrine of “power” and “self-help” and trapped in an anarchical world dominated by imperialists, the DPRK is likely to remain steadfast only to the exceptionally loose and toothless multilateralism that it enjoys with the Non-aligned Movement.

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다자주의에 대한 북한의 인식

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국제관계학을 연구하는 학자와 안보 전문가들은 동북아시아에 대한 지역 다자안보 협력체제를 지속적으로 주장한다. 지역 다자안보 협력체제를 주장하기 위해서는 이 지역의 가장 고질적인 문제를 안고 있는 북한의 참여와 인식을 동시에 고려해야 한다. 하지만 지금까지의 연구에서는 북한이 다자주의를 어떻게 인식하고 있는지에 대해서는 담론에 포함하지 못했다. 따라서 북한의 다자주의에 대한 인식은 여전히 풀리지 않은 문제로 남아 있다. 만약 우리가 북한의 참여를 원한다면 북한의 다자주의에 대한 인식을 먼저 이해해야 한다.

그러면 북한은 다자주의에 대해 어떻게 인식하고 있는가? 이에 대한 이해를 돕기 위해, 이 글에서는 다자주의의 케이스를 선별해, 북한의 관련 자료, 성명 및 행태를 검토함으로써 다자주의에 대한 북한의 인식을 보여준다. 북한의 세계관에 대한 현실주의 해석은 북한이 국제 자본주의 체제 내의 다자주의를 제국주의로 보고 있다는 점을 시사한다. 몇몇 북한의 선언과 협력적인 행동을 보면 북한이 다자주의의 일면인 규율과 원칙을 중시하고 있다는 점을 시사하지만, 그럼에도 불구하고

하고 북한이 서구 국제관계학의 개념으로서 다자주의에는 동의하지 않는다는 것을 알 수 있다. 오히려 북한은 무정부적 세계에서 북한의 이익을 달성하기 위한 기능적이고 전략적인 도구로 다자주의를 보고 있다.

주제어: 북한, 다자주의(다각주의), 유엔, 빨럭불가담운동, 6자회담, 동북아 안보