

BALANCING CHINESE INTERESTS ON NORTH KOREA AND IRAN

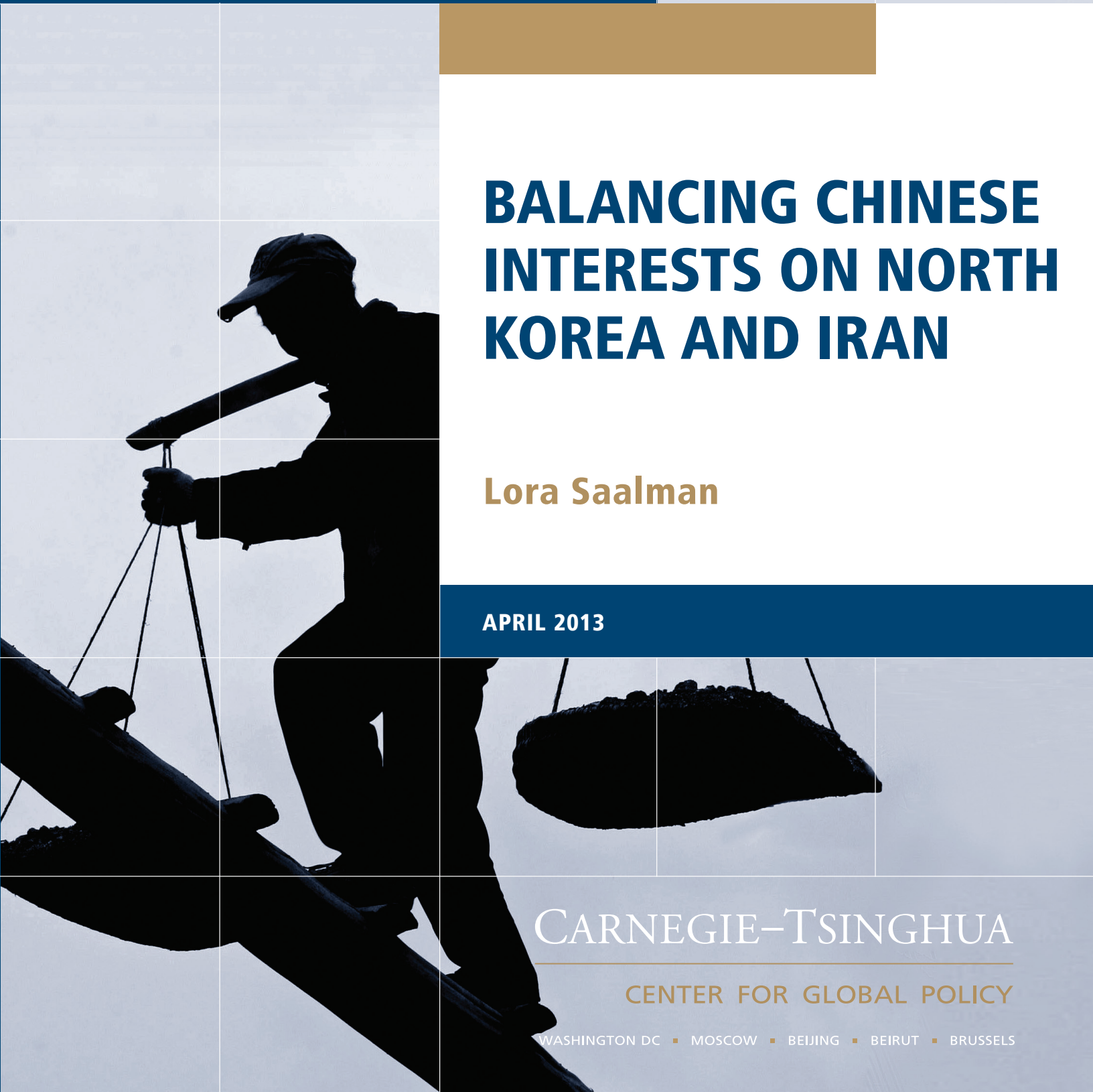
Lora Saalman

APRIL 2013

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KOREA AND IRAN**

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Summary

China recently joined the international community in its response to North Korea's satellite launch and third nuclear test, and it also participated in talks on Iran's nuclear program. Analyses abound that Beijing's strategic calculations have changed. Yet, in China, nonproliferation continues to be framed as an excuse behind which Washington and its allies are able to engage in provocative and destabilizing acts, compromising Beijing's larger security interests and containing its growth. China is frequently reacting more to the United States than to the case of proliferation. And while Beijing may engage to curb instability, this does not necessarily mean that it seeks to find an enduring solution. Instead, China is more likely to continue to seek a balance between keeping the United States preoccupied and dissuading it from an extreme response that would harm Beijing's interests.

Key Themes

- The basic assumption in China when evaluating any U.S. action is that Washington seeks to maximize its national interests, whether resource exploitation, absolute security, or regime change.
- Washington should invest more time in defining the central factors that either compel or dissuade China's involvement in nonproliferation issues, namely Beijing's interest hierarchy.
- China is unlikely to sign onto sanctions that harm its companies' interests and national growth, but it will not necessarily block those that allow it to utilize U.S. isolation of a country to garner greater economic or political leverage.
- While China will not participate in military action to address proliferation, it may be compelled to participate in negotiations, sanctions, or even counterproliferation efforts to avert a destabilizing strike against a proliferant country.

Importance for U.S. Policymakers

- Interest hierarchies can serve as a foundation for an exchange of priorities, allowing Washington to achieve a specific goal in tandem with Beijing's realization of a high-ranking aim. This need not always lead to positive outcomes; often the goal is to simply avoid negative ones.

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- On North Korea, Beijing's aversion to counterproliferation measures, including the Proliferation Security Initiative, could be mitigated through Washington's own efforts to engage China in information exchanges on ballistic missile defense.
- Beijing's cooperation on stricter measures to curb Tehran's program could result from enhanced guarantees on China's fuel supplies in the event of a crisis or a desire to reduce or prevent restrictions on Chinese companies.
- By better understanding China's interest hierarchy, Washington can begin to move away from a crisis-based, action-reaction relationship and engage in an exchange with Beijing that will be more predictable, equitable, and cooperative.

Introduction

Much has been made of Washington's rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, but the country most vigorously trying to recalibrate its regional interests is China. Recent talk in China of pursuing a more active and independent role under the country's new chairman, Xi Jinping, suggests that Beijing may ultimately distance itself from what is perceived as a Washington-driven agenda.

This becomes particularly apparent in the realm of nonproliferation. In this arena, China is trying to balance between the desire to keep the United States preoccupied and the need to dissuade Washington from responding to provocations in an extreme way that would harm Beijing's economic and political interests.

Some may argue that China's support for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2087 that condemned Pyongyang's December 2012 satellite launch, as well as follow-on sanctions issued after North Korea's February 2013 nuclear test and the talks in Kazakhstan on Iran's nuclear program in the same month, means that Beijing is leaning toward greater comity with Washington on nonproliferation. Yet, this is not the entirety the case.

Beijing continues to exhibit a preexisting pattern that prioritizes regional peace and stability for economic growth, prefers mediated multilateral negotiations, and seeks to avert the use of force and sanctions. Thus, before assuming that these cases are ushering a new era of Sino-U.S. cooperation, the logic underpinning China's policies merits a rethink. To this end, defining China's interest hierarchy and how Beijing perceives Washington's aims is essential.

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Trust Versus Interests

A survey of hundreds of Chinese-language articles covering the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues provides insight into the ways in which Beijing and Washington rank their interests and evaluate proliferation crises.¹ These analyses may not explain all official behavior in China, but they do reflect frequently encountered Chinese strategic, military, academic, and retired-official-level views on China's and the United States' interests in North Korea and Iran.

To this end, a lack of "strategic mutual trust" (*zhanlue huxin*) between China and the United States is an oft-repeated trope at strategic conferences and in

arms control papers in China. Even a recent statement by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, Hong Lei, referred to the importance of strategic mutual trust between countries in ensuring “regional strategic balance and stability” (*diqu zhanlue pingheng yu wending*).²

Yet, differences in strategic interests, more than mistrust, drive miscommunication between Beijing and Washington. In essence, China sees proliferation as less of a threat to its interests than does the United States. As such, Beijing is often responding more to Washington than it is to an act of proliferation itself.³

In China, the United States is viewed as pursuing a dual role of both stabilizer and destabilizer. Most Chinese analysts surveyed contend that the United States would likely intervene to prevent allies and partners, like Japan or Turkey, from “going nuclear” in response to Pyongyang’s and Tehran’s nuclear

programs. However, proliferation threats are also framed as excuses behind which Washington and its allies are able to engage in provocative actions, compromising Beijing’s larger security interests and containing China’s growth.

By contrast, Chinese experts describe Beijing as locked in a “reactive” (*beidong*) or responsive mode. When Washington’s approach is expected to be extreme or destabilizing for Beijing,⁴ China has served as a mediator between the nuclear “haves” and “have-nots.” Yet, analyses in China reveal that even this role is growing difficult

to play. The closer China ties itself to a Washington agenda, the harder Beijing finds it to serve as the impartial intermediary among capitals like Pyongyang and Tehran.

When faced with reservations about the ultimate intent behind Washington’s nonproliferation efforts, Beijing is left fundamentally conflicted. Thus, even when Sino-U.S. cooperation on nonproliferation does occur, it often does not take the form or depth that the United States seeks. As a result, Washington needs to more carefully assess how China perceives nonproliferation within the context of the U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific. More than rebalancing, a recalibration of Chinese and U.S. interests is needed.

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Views on Nonproliferation

Like any two countries, China and the United States possess divergent interests. However, this does not mean that they are completely at odds, as both share a number of mutual aims. Nonetheless, stark differences in interest hierarchy and perceptions cause Beijing and Washington to evaluate proliferation crises differently (see appendix).

Even Chinese views regarding their own national interests can often be contradictory. For example, support for North Korean denuclearization often occurs in tandem with arguments for regime survival and stability. If one act

threatens the other, then China's nonproliferation goals would be working at cross-purposes. This is why gaining a better sense of the hierarchy of interests is crucial to understanding the degree to which China is capable of supporting and implementing any nonproliferation measure.

Despite evident disparities in how Chinese experts rank their own interests and how they view those of the United States, their analyses praise China's cooperative efforts to resolve the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues.⁵ Without question, China's current stance on nuclear issues marks a departure from its former chairman Mao Zedong's era. China no longer promotes proliferation and has gradually come on board with the nonproliferation regime since the early 1990s, now steadfastly supporting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Yet, while a break has occurred with a past in which nonproliferation was tantamount to cementing discrimination and inequality, these sentiments have not been entirely eradicated. Furthermore, there remains implicit recognition in China that countries seeking nuclear weapons are frequently trying to guarantee their security and survival in the face of external threats, often seen to be emanating from the United States.⁶

Imbalances in perception and ranking of mutual interests are revealed both in China's policies and semantics. In China, "nonproliferation" is a loaded word and is best evaluated on a spectrum that ranges from the more positive to negative, extending from arms control through nonproliferation to counterproliferation.

The term "arms control" (*junbei kongzhi*) speaks to the ideal of equitable responsibilities of both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states under the NPT. By contrast, "nonproliferation" (*fangkuosan, bukuosan*) focuses on keeping nuclear weapons out of the grasp of states that do not possess them, while not necessarily taking them out of the hands of states that do. The most imbalanced and crisis-prone of this set is "counterproliferation" (*fankuosan*), since it indicates use of interdiction or force by nuclear-weapon states against non-nuclear-weapon states to aggressively stem proliferation.

The concepts attached to these terms have serious implications for such programs as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a U.S.-led effort that aims through interdiction and other counterproliferation measures to limit the transfer of equipment and materials that can be used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

China continues to adhere to the principle of noninterference and is a strong advocate for sovereignty. As long as endeavors like the PSI, which receives scarce mention within Chinese analyses, retain a distinctive counterproliferation hue, they will continue to be met with discomfort in Beijing and to remain far removed from its interest hierarchy.⁷

It is also difficult for Beijing to reconcile the logic that underpins its maintenance and modernization of its nuclear arsenal, while demanding that other

countries should forgo the nuclear-weapon path to national security. This is, in part, why Beijing's support for the NPT has become so steadfast over time. Even in the face of challenges to its validity and charges of its discriminatory nature, this multilaterally agreed upon treaty provides basic international guidelines. While not perfect, the NPT is at least not ad hoc and arbitrary, which is how Beijing regards many of Washington's initiatives,⁸ with counter-proliferation the most capricious of all.

According to this argument, it is not simply the decision of countries to proliferate that is doing damage to the regime. Instead, it is also the nuclear-weapon states—the United States in particular—that condone and perpetuate inconsistency in words and deeds, combined with the use of force against states without such weapons.

In the cases of Iraq and Libya, Chinese experts view these countries' relinquishment of their nuclear-weapons pursuits as tantamount to regime change and collapse.⁹ In other cases, like North Korea and Iran, sanctions are viewed as thinly veiled efforts to achieve just such an outcome.¹⁰ As Sun Degang at the Middle East Institute of the Shanghai International Studies University notes:

The West hopes, in the same way in which it dealt with Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction, to continue to increase sanction efforts. This is to consume Iranian national strength, and then wait for an opportunity to overthrow the regime.¹¹

Empathy with arguments emanating from North Korea and Iran easily germinates in this environment.¹² Charges of "double standards" (*shuangzhong biaozhun*) when it comes to the nonproliferation regime's unequal treatment of Iran, Israel, North Korea, India, and Pakistan remain common in China.¹³

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As such, Beijing's self-identification as both part of the UNSC's permanent membership and one of the "haves" as well as a developing country among the "have-nots" places it in a position to cross dividing lines. Yet, the stronger Beijing identifies itself with the nuclear-weapon-state agenda, the weaker its influence over the non-nuclear-weapon states becomes, leaving China to redefine its role.

Defining a Role

Despite its conflicted stance, China seems to have temporarily resolved the contradiction of fitting into two camps by assuming a role as an intermediary or mediator that can walk the dividing line between the nuclear-weapon states and the non-nuclear-weapon states.¹⁴ Prominent examples include China's role as host of the Six-Party Talks on North Korea and shuttle diplomacy for

multilateral talks on Iran. Chinese analysts cite these cases as opportunities for Beijing to prove its diplomatic mettle, serving as a responsible power.¹⁵

This involvement is not without a catalyst. China has demonstrated greater advocacy for nonproliferation measures when counterproliferation or military activities threaten to lead to tension or conflict.¹⁶ This is clear in articles written around the first set of Six-Party Talks in August 2003 that refer to the North Korean nuclear issue potentially precipitating a “battleground” (*zhan-zheng chang*) between the United States and North Korea.¹⁷

In fact, when referring to what would later be called the North Korean “nuclear issue” (*he wenti*), such experts as Senior Colonel Xu Weidi, a senior researcher at China’s National Defense University, opted to use the term “nuclear crisis” (*he weiji*) and made references to U.S. potential blockading of North Korea that same year.¹⁸ Similarly, Beijing’s recent support for multilateral negotiations surrounding Tehran’s nuclear program has been accompanied by domestic debates over whether the United States or Israel would use force against Iran and the potential impact on China’s oil imports.¹⁹

When the U.S. reaction is forecast to precipitate an attack or destabilization, either through its own actions or those of its allies, China is more likely to get involved to tip the balance away from extreme measures. In each of these cases, as long as Beijing has maintained its autonomy from Washington, it has been able to minimize its loss of political capital and come forward as the honest broker in the face of other powers trying to exert greater control and leverage over smaller ones.²⁰

In undertaking crisis mediation, China seeks to balance what Zou Xiangfeng and Yang Cheng of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) call the United States’ “excessive pursuit of absolute security” (*guofen zhuiqiu juegui anquan*), in which large countries stand behind small to midsize ones and push them toward achieving interests on behalf of the larger power.²¹

These analyses suggest that for Chinese analysts the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues are about more than simply stemming proliferation. They point to larger questions of U.S. alliance behavior and regional interests. To this end, North Korea and Iran illustrate the degree to which Washington’s response to proliferation through its own actions and those of its allies serves as an impetus for Beijing’s involvement on nonproliferation.

North Korea

Of all of the global cases of proliferation, it is the North Korean nuclear issue in which China has proven itself the most amenable to serving as a mediator. This proclivity is revealed in part by the level to which Chinese experts are willing to explore Beijing’s role and the impact of Pyongyang’s nuclear pursuits on China. Not only is Beijing’s participation extolled, but these analyses

also touch upon Sino-U.S. cooperation.²² In doing so, they reveal a symbiosis of action and reaction.

Following North Korea's 2006 nuclear test, a common refrain heard among Chinese analysts was that Beijing was waiting to see what Washington would do and to react accordingly. While consternation was evident in official statements using a term historically reserved for the United States, “wanton” (*hanran*), to refer to North Korea's decision,²³ by the time of North Korea's 2009 test, this word was nowhere to be seen.²⁴ With the nuclear test in 2013, this pattern of rhetorical restraint has continued. Beijing has worked to soften the wording and impact of UNSC resolutions, even by Chinese accounts.²⁵

Ultimately, China's reactions to the North Korean nuclear issue have been more about Washington than Pyongyang. Even with China's agreement to

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UNSC Resolution 2087, there are suggestions that this stemmed more from Washington's pressure on Beijing than from Pyongyang's satellite launch, previously characterized in Chinese discourse as civilian.²⁶ Moreover, North Korea's third nuclear test took place following UNSC Resolution 2087 and, according to Pyongyang, in response to it. Thus, despite the fact that plans for a test no doubt long predated the resolution, the UNSC action and North Korea's reaction may simply bolster Beijing's future arguments against sanctions as destabilizing.

The evolution of Chinese responses indicates that coming to terms with North Korea's provocative actions has often been easier than doing the same with potential U.S. ones.²⁷ This results, in part, from China's conflicted attempts to relate to both the nuclear “have” and “have-not” countries.

Still, even with its efforts to maintain autonomy, China has become increasingly alienated from its “have-not” position the closer that it hews to the U.S. stance, as evidenced by Pyongyang's harsh reaction to Beijing's support for UNSC Resolution 2087. And other countries recognize this. North Korean declarations, in the lead-up to its third nuclear test, stated that it would not give up its nuclear weapons until “the denuclearization of the world is realized.”²⁸ This phrasing clearly mirrors that used by China early on in its nuclear weapons program and shows that Pyongyang is keenly aware of how to play to Beijing's history and sentiments.

So while there may be recognition in China that North Korea has undertaken actions that have made reaching a negotiated settlement more difficult—whether via nuclear tests and long-range rocket launches, the shelling of South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island, or the sinking of the South Korean *Cheonan* naval vessel²⁹—there remains a tendency to castigate Washington more than Pyongyang.

Throughout these events and in their aftermath, the United States is viewed in Chinese analyses as attempting to use these actions as an “excuse” (*jiekou*) to strengthen regional alliances, to expand military exercises, as well as to hasten missile defense and other military deployments into the Asia-Pacific

region.³⁰ By cooperating with Washington, Beijing is seen to be harming its regional interests, as well as its autonomy and regional influence. Simply put, Chinese and U.S. interests are out of sync.

A comparison of two cases of interest-ranking add perspective. Xu Jin of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences describes China's interests in North Korea as ensuring that war does not erupt, pursuing denuclearization, allowing for the continued survival of North Korea,³¹ guaranteeing peace and stability on the peninsula, containing the strategic expansion of the United States in Northeast Asia, and maintaining stability in Sino-U.S. strategic relations.

By contrast, Chen Ru of the Chinese Institutes for Contemporary International Relations describes U.S. interests as containing China and Russia, protecting and controlling Japan and South Korea, stabilizing the situation on the Korean Peninsula, eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons, preventing nuclear proliferation, and maintaining the nuclear nonproliferation regime.³²

When comparing these lists, one key difference becomes immediately apparent. Denuclearization is cited as one of China's aims; yet, much more emphasis is placed on stability and security. Furthermore, the highest aim for Washington in the view of any number of Chinese experts is containment of Beijing and Moscow, as well as increased control and influence over Seoul and Tokyo.³³ If U.S. interests are seen as reflecting such intentions, this is hardly a recipe for greater collaboration.

It could be argued that these factors point to a lack of mutual trust. But, in essence, what lies behind trust are interests. So while Sino-U.S. areas of agreement may include the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, Chinese analysts continue to assert that the two disagree on strategic objectives, in other words strategic interests. Those disagreements stem from differing views of the importance of denuclearization versus stability, the role of an honest broker versus stakeholders, as well as whether or not the North Korean issue is simply a nuclear one or has to do with the country's overall political and economic situation.³⁴

Even though Chinese analyses mention the term denuclearization, they rarely if ever address whether or not North Korea is justified in its nuclear pursuits.³⁵ Denuclearization is a stated foreign policy objective in Beijing, but again and again Chinese experts emphasize that it is not China's highest priority, which instead remains peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.³⁶ The fact that North Korea feels an existential threat from the United States supersedes any questions about its right to nuclear weapons.³⁷

Divergence of priorities aside, Chinese analysts still see a viable role for Beijing in mediating other countries' disparate positions. While allowing Beijing to remain engaged, the role of mediator does not require China to necessarily take sides or to violate its interests.³⁸ Instead, it allows Beijing to shape the outcome. The following excerpts from the journal *Social Development* (*Shehui fazhan*) best encapsulate such an approach:

(1) Avoid an Overly Tough Stance Toward North Korea: If China's statements reveal that its North Korea policy is inconsistent with that of the United States, this is actually to contain hardline U.S. policies against North Korea. . . .

(2) Cultivate an Ambiguous Policy Toward North Korea to Afford It Time: In order to avoid the United States undertaking a pre-emptive military strike against North Korea, China can undertake a policy of delay. . . .

(3) Reduce the Emphasis of Propaganda on the "Traditional Friendly Relations" Between China and North Korea: Once a military conflict breaks out between the United States and North Korea, China would be placed in a very awkward position.

(4) In Promoting Denuclearization, Establish a Bilateral Mechanism with the United States: this will allow China to increase its influence over U.S. policies toward North Korea.³⁹

Throughout such analyses, China is given the role of delaying, curbing, and avoiding destabilizing moves on the part of the United States. Moreover, the nuclear issue itself is viewed as being between Washington and Pyongyang.⁴⁰ Two scholars in *Modern International Relations (Xiandai guoji guanxi)* note, "The Six-Party Talks face a basic conundrum in that the conflict between U.S. hegemonic interests and North Korea's security interests is difficult to resolve, such that there is no way to build strategic trust between the two."⁴¹

Hostility and rigidity of U.S. policies toward North Korea are common themes throughout these essays.⁴² An analysis in *Public Administration and Law (Xingzheng yu fa)* states, "It could be said that the emergence of the North Korean nuclear crisis is a logical and direct result of hostile U.S. policy."⁴³ Pyongyang's nuclear program is portrayed as a reaction to outside pressure and lack of strategic trust, interestingly not unlike the manner in which tensions between Washington and Beijing are discussed in China.

As such, there is an implicit rhetorical linkage that pervades these analyses that use the terms "self-protection" (*zìwèi*) and "forced" (*beipò*) to refer to North Korea's development of nuclear weapons. Such wording also continues to emerge in descriptions of the historical and current logic behind China's deterrent.⁴⁴ So while Chinese experts continue to cite North Korea's nonproliferation obligations, there is a tendency to do so in tandem with the caveat that they comprehend its motivations.⁴⁵

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These are not rhetorical coincidences. Chinese experts have a deep understanding of and even empathy for the logic behind North Korea's nuclear-weapons program. Beijing also developed its capabilities in the face of threats and the oft-cited "nuclear coercion" (*he weiyu*) of the United States. This trend makes direct and overt Sino-U.S. cooperation on nonproliferation difficult to accept on a number of levels.

In fact, interpretations of overall U.S. strategic intent are increasingly infiltrating analyses on North Korea. The terms "pivot to the Asia-Pacific" (*chongfan yatai*) and "rebalancing" (*zai pingheng*) appear in more than one-fifth of the articles reviewed, which is extremely high given the relative newness of these concepts.⁴⁶ Among the harsher, but not uncommon, assessments of U.S. policy on the North Korean nuclear issue is that it is an extenuation of U.S. hegemonic ambitions.⁴⁷ Liu Hongyang and Chen Dengyong at Sichuan University's Institute of Politics argue:

The United States' overall national core strategy is to maintain its global hegemony, as well as to contain and weaken all forces that potentially challenge or threaten U.S. hegemony. In the Asia-Pacific region, the United States has used the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula to intervene in regional affairs, to consolidate its alliances with South Korea and Japan, as well as to contain China's influence and slow down its strong economic development. The Korean Peninsula nuclear issue is only one part of the U.S. global strategy and serves its core interests.⁴⁸

This quote elucidates the conflicted interests often expressed by Chinese analysts. While at one level, finding a solution to the nuclear crisis would lessen Washington's ability to use the North Korean nuclear issue to intervene in regional affairs, strengthen alliances, and contain China, at another level resolution of the issue and improvement of North Korean relations with the United States could strengthen the latter's regional role.⁴⁹ It is little surprise that such a conflicted attitude is unlikely to yield concrete or lasting results in bilateral cooperation on nonproliferation.⁵⁰

In the face of such challenges, a small Chinese analytical circle has begun advocating a more active role for China on the North Korean nuclear issue.⁵¹ But this shift does not necessarily equate to calling for greater Sino-U.S. cooperation. Xu Jin of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has, for instance, advocated China aligning itself closer to North Korea's position.⁵² And even though Colonel (retired) Teng Jianqun, the director of the Department for American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, has asserted that China is likely to undertake a more active role on North Korea under its new chairman, Xi Jinping, he has also noted that this means greater policy independence for Beijing.⁵³

Such steps indicate that rather than just looking at the North Korean nuclear issue as between Washington and Pyongyang, some Chinese analysts are advocating moving beyond this construct. This could assist in, but

more likely complicate, future U.S. efforts to form a coalition or consensus. Regardless, with the February 2012 U.S.-North Korean nuclear negotiation held in Beijing and China's role one year later in agreeing to UNSC Resolution 2087 in response to Pyongyang's satellite launch, Beijing is likely to be compelled to undertake the role of a conflicted intermediary for years to come.

Iran

Chinese discourse tends to link the Iranian nuclear question with North Korea.⁵⁴ However, the overall number of articles covering Iran and the depth of China's role in these analyses is markedly less than in the case of the discourse on North Korea. In part, this is because the dispute with Pyongyang has been going on longer and China is geographically closer to North Korea.⁵⁵ Still, Beijing has significant interests regarding Iran that, as with the North Korean case, are often seen to be disconnected from those of Washington.

Overall, Beijing has overarching economic and energy-based motives in seeking to preserve its connection to Iran, which is perceived as a relatively stable supplier of oil.⁵⁶ In contrast, the United States has isolated itself from the Iranian energy market, and European countries have also undertaken efforts to curb their imports. Jiang Lin of the Communist Party of China's Jiangsu Provincial Party School and his colleague note:

China's foreign policy in the Middle East is based on expanding oil and energy supplies, while the United States is more concerned about the entire Middle East's geopolitical significance and the condition of each country within the balance of power. The United States seeks dominance and control in this region, as well as implementation of a hegemonic strategy, backed by a powerful military force that is used as a means to oppose terrorist activities and to promote democratization of the region. By contrast, China unceasingly strives for a balanced strategy of multilateralism, striving to maintain the equilibrium among the various forces and ensuring that its legitimate regional interests are met.⁵⁷

Because of its connections to the Iranian energy market, Beijing has largely benefited from enhanced bargaining leverage with Tehran. As such, a number of Chinese analysts see closer integration with a U.S.-led agenda as harming Beijing's ability to maintain a stable link to Tehran. Chen Lianqing and Yang Xingli at Xinan University argue:

If China were to oppose Iran's development of nuclear weapons, China and the United States would then cooperate more closely on the Iranian nuclear issue. However, this would worsen the relationship between China and Iran. If this happens, Iran might use the "oil card" or the "Islamic nation card" in its hands to retaliate. China's coefficient of Middle East oil security would be greatly reduced. . . . At the same time, if China were to oppose Iran's nuclear program, this could make Islamic nations and the world see that China can be subject to embarrassment by the United States on major issues.⁵⁸

Although such analyses question the wisdom and practicality of Beijing taking on a central position when it comes to the Iranian nuclear issue, China does have a role to play.⁵⁹ In fact, with China's ever-growing interests in energy security and engagement of the Middle East, the Iranian nuclear issue in some ways promises to have more long-term implications for Beijing's economic and political policies than does the North Korean nuclear issue.⁶⁰ These include "safeguarding the dignity of the NPT; striking back at double standards on nuclear issues in the West; preventing even greater turmoil in the Middle East to ensure China's energy security; and maintaining the security of the north-west frontier."⁶¹

The majority of Chinese analyses, however, do not forecast Beijing following Washington's lead on the Iranian nuclear issue. Instead, as in the case of the North Korean nuclear question, they perceive the issue pointedly and primarily as a problem of the relationship between Washington and Tehran.⁶² Even when other countries are mentioned as part of the "great power game" (*daguo zhejian de boyi*), Washington takes center stage, with Beijing serving as a "relatively detached" (*xiangdui chaotuo*) party.

While such analyses acknowledge China's UNSC function, much as in the case of the North Korean nuclear issue, they tend to downplay Beijing's overall level of influence. Former Chinese ambassador to Iran Hua Liming writes:

Iran is of strategic importance in U.S. efforts to win control of the Middle East and Eurasia. . . . For the United States, the nuclear issue is just an entry point for effecting regime change of the current leadership in Iran. . . . On the Iranian nuclear issue, it is not possible for China to undertake the role of host as it has on the North Korean nuclear issue. . . . China will not play a leading role, but has a key vote. . . . The United States has used its suspicions to misread Sino-Iranian relations, has unrealistic expectations toward China's position on the Iranian nuclear issue, and through this seeks to "test" whether or not China is a "responsible country." This will inevitably have a negative impact on Sino-U.S. relations that is not conducive to the smooth settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue.⁶³

The tendency is to downplay Beijing's overall level of influence. Given that Hua Liming is a retired Chinese official, his analysis indicates that Beijing harbors questions regarding U.S. motives and the level of Beijing's own stake in managing the nuclear issue. As such, China continues to act crisis by crisis. Nonetheless, there are signs that some Chinese analysts are looking beyond this ad hoc approach. Xu Lifan in *China Times (Huaxia shibao)* notes as early as 2006 that:

At the meeting of six in London, China was the only Asian country, and also [the country] with the closest economic ties to Iran: Iran is China's largest crude oil supplier. Additionally, China and Iran's traditional cultural ties are far longer and more harmonious than those among the other five countries. China better understands Iran's concerns. This determines that the role of China in the six-party meetings is irreplaceable: China's unique perspective can bring new opportunities for the peaceful resolution of the crisis.⁶⁴

Such quotes, whether in journals or press reports, turn the oft-repeated comment that China lacks leverage on its head. The potential for Beijing to play a more prominent role in the Iranian nuclear issue became even more pronounced in 2010, when articles that still emphasized the U.S.-Iran dynamic also began to talk of the triangle formed by the United States, Iran, and China.⁶⁵

Ironically, whereas China's economic interests have kept it from getting involved in the Iranian nuclear issue in the past, when it comes to sanctions or censure against Tehran, Beijing's interests in stabilizing its energy supply compel greater involvement. Beijing seeks to prevent a loss of balance in international negotiations with Tehran, the potential for attack on the part of Washington or Tel Aviv, and the chance of international opprobrium or isolation that might harm China.⁶⁶

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In particular, the question of whether the United States or Israel would engage in an attack on Iran captivated China, especially in 2012. Collapse or instability would send shockwaves through China's oil supply chain, so it is not surprising that energy security and China's overall economic development feature in recent Chinese discussions of the Iranian nuclear question.⁶⁷ And in this context, Beijing has again found an opportunity to serve as intermediary. Sun Degang of Shanghai Foreign Languages University writes:

Iran represents a challenge to China's diplomacy, but also an opportunity . . . Through pursuing peace, creating sound foreign policy, serving as a mediator to prevent bloody conflicts and humanitarian disasters in the Middle East, China should move closer toward peaceful development and the building of a harmonious world.⁶⁸

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Clearly, the Iran issue is not just a question of nuclear proliferation concerns but is also being folded into China's broader rhetoric and agenda around becoming a great power while pursuing a "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie*). Some may view these aims as contradictory or even disingenuous, but in Chinese discourse, they are part of the same trend. Beijing's role is increasingly seen as a balancing act to mitigate destabilizing moves on the part of Washington, whether in Syria, North Korea, or Iran.⁶⁹

This approach has the potential to allow China to elevate its international stature, while remaining above the fray.⁷⁰ Beijing's support for multilateral meetings among Iran and the five permanent UNSC members and Germany launched in Kazakhstan in February 2013 demonstrate this trend.⁷¹ Even prior to these talks, Sun Wei, a scholar at the People's Liberation Army's Institute of International Relations, underscored the importance for Beijing to facilitate negotiations along the lines of the Six-Party Talks with North Korea.⁷²

The fact that these meetings are intended to continue where talks left off in 2009 bears more than a striking resemblance to recent efforts to restart negotiations on the North Korean nuclear issue that stalled in that same year. China may not have the role of host as it does in the case of the North Korean nuclear issue, but given its interests in protecting its investments and energy supply, it will most likely serve as an integral intermediary in the multilateral Iran nuclear talks in 2013 and beyond.⁷³

Responding to Crises

Overall, China's nonproliferation policies are more about balancing the United States' reaction to proliferation than they are about the act of proliferation itself. In China, proliferation is often interpreted as being more symptomatic of U.S. policies and actions than anything else. By representing what is frequently characterized as a hardline approach, U.S. policies are seen as often accelerating, exacerbating, and sometimes even inducing proliferation.⁷⁴ An article in the *Social Sciences Review (Sheke zongheng)* explains:

From start to finish the United States has not changed its policies of containment and even overthrow of the current North Korean regime. North Korea remains aware of the intentions of the United States. In order to safeguard its own security, North Korea was forced to develop nuclear weapons. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons has caused the United States to worry that it will proliferate nuclear materials, nuclear facilities, nuclear technology, and even nuclear weapons. This encourages escalation of the security dilemma between the United States and North Korea. If the United States does not change its policy on North Korea, the North Korean nuclear issue will be very difficult to solve.⁷⁵

On North Korea, nonproliferation is spurred by Washington's refusal to give Pyongyang security guarantees. On Iran, U.S. threats and willingness to look the other way on Israel's nuclear program exacerbate the potential for proliferation. The prevailing view in China that the United States is a major source of these problems makes it difficult for Beijing to coordinate with Washington on resolving them. This is not an administration-specific complaint but rather one that pervades Chinese analyses spanning decades of U.S. nonproliferation diplomacy.

Nonproliferation is increasingly viewed as a cover for a larger U.S. regional strategy and a trigger for potential conflict. As such, Song Da of China's Central Party Committee School notes that the dogged U.S. focus on the North Korean nuclear issue serves as the "biggest threat to security within Northeast Asia and the security risk most likely to lead to great power conflict. . . . Northeast Asian security is, in fact, closely related to adjustments of U.S. policy."⁷⁶

Analysts at the Nanjing Army Command College also tie U.S. nonproliferation to its greater regional aims: "Obama on the one hand claims to respect

China's core interests, on the other hand the United States often challenges China's core interests, frequently holding deterrence-style joint military exercises around China, pulling neighboring countries into disjointedness, and instigating individual countries to stir up trouble.⁷⁷

In countless analyses, U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific has been linked to the North Korean nuclear issue. Rather than stabilizing or defusing flash-points, expanded U.S. regional commitments are seen as upsetting the equilibrium and bolstering provocative behavior on the part of U.S. allies.⁷⁸ This trend has reemerged in discussions over the U.S. and South Korean military drills of March 2013, which were followed by Pyongyang's abandonment of the sixty-year-old armistice.⁷⁹ In the wake of such actions, it is no wonder that Beijing has returned to calls for a negotiated settlement and qualified its level of support for UNSC Resolution 2087.⁸⁰

Even prior to these developments, alliance behavior, couched in the concept of U.S. rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, has become an extenuation of perceived U.S. efforts to use the North Korean nuclear issue among its "excuses" (*jiekou*) for justifying its expanded deployments, arms sales, military drills, and missile defense.⁸¹ China not only finds itself marginalized by these activities but, according to many Chinese analyses, it is also the ultimate target of these activities.

An argument frequently heard in China is that the United States is not considering Beijing's interests and yet continues to "demand" (*yuogin*) its compliance on resolving what are seen to be largely U.S. problems, for example with the sanctioning of North Korea or Iran.⁸² Pan Rui at Fudan University's Institute of American Studies writes, "On the one hand, the United States has asked China to cooperate with it and yet on the other hand regards China as a threat and seeks overtly or covertly to undertake measures to harm China's core interests, including on the Taiwan issue. This is unacceptable. The two sides should establish a clear set of rules in dealing with each others' interests of major concern."⁸³

Thus, while some advocate greater coordination on crisis management,⁸⁴ Washington and Beijing remain largely locked in an action-reaction cycle. Beijing remains "reactive" (*beidong*) to external stimuli, as in the lead-up to the 2003 Six-Party Talks and the 2013 negotiations with Iran. Whether punctuated by nuclear tests, the potential for an attack, or sanctions harming its interests, China's response to the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues remains shaped more by U.S. actions than the act of proliferation itself. The question that remains is how the two countries can move beyond this degenerative spiral of actions and reactions and crisis-by-crisis response toward something more cooperative.

Conclusion

While Chinese experts often mention strategic trust, the greater cooperative lynchpin between the United States and China remains strategic interests. Even dissimilar interests can be coordinated so that both parties' aims are met. In attempting to garner greater Chinese participation on nonproliferation, it is essential that both the manner in which Chinese experts rank interests and their perceptions of both domestic interests and those of the United States are factored into the discussion.

When a weak case is made for Chinese involvement, or one based on abstract nonproliferation ideals, it is unlikely to gain much traction with Beijing. The basic assumption in China when evaluating any U.S. action is that it is undertaken to maximize national interests, whether declared or hidden. From resource exploitation to regime change, Washington is perceived in Beijing as pursuing a host of realist goals with its nonproliferation activities.⁸⁵ This interpretation is underscored in Chinese analyses of statements by former U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton emphasizing the Asia-Pacific region as a U.S. "core strategic interest" (*hexin zhanlue liyi*).⁸⁶

Convergence and divergence of U.S. and Chinese strategic interests are topics of extensive analysis in China.⁸⁷ The same evaluation should be occurring in the United States. Comparing and contrasting China's basic assumptions and interests would give Washington more insight into Beijing's pressure points, whether stability and regime preservation in North Korea or access to oil and industrial markets in Iran. Moreover, a cogent argument and interest-based rationale needs to be presented as to why it is in Beijing's best interest to get involved with any nonproliferation endeavor. As transactional as it sounds, whether China stands to profit or lose from a course of action should be determined.

China, for instance, is unlikely to sign onto sanctions that will harm its own companies' interests and national growth, but it will not necessarily block those that allow for it to utilize U.S. isolation of a particular country to gain greater access to that country's markets.⁸⁸ Sanctions that hinder other countries' market access can actually benefit Beijing, if the measures avoid targeting its own companies. In fact, China has purportedly received increased pricing leverage and access to isolated Iranian oil markets as a result of international sanctions on Iran. While China may not always institute or enforce sanctions, it will not always veto such moves, unless they impinge upon its economic or political interests.

In terms of military action, China is unlikely to demonstrate either the intent or will to strike when it comes to proliferation. Yet, when faced with the credible potential for an attack or similarly destabilizing moves from the United States or its allies, China is more likely to move to thwart such an outcome. This is what occurred in the case of Iran. Much of the domestic coverage promoting

the negotiation process focused on whether or not the United States or Israel would attack and the resulting impact on China's oil supply and markets.⁸⁹ This is, once again, not an issue of proliferation, but rather what U.S. actions will be and how they may adversely impact China's interests.⁹⁰

Still, the tendency for the United States among others to exclude itself from markets or to become bogged down in military adventurism can again lead to windfalls for China.⁹¹ This has occurred with the U.S. role in tamping down Japan's and South Korea's potential pursuit of nuclear weapons through its policy of extended deterrence. It also emerged with the U.S. pre-pivot focus on the Middle East.

The issue, however, is one of degree. When these actions lead to the destabilization of China's markets or supply routes, Beijing is likely to become more involved to stave off such an eventuality. And when U.S. support is seen as emboldening its allies to undertake more provocative regional actions, Washington can easily shift from being viewed as a stabilizer to the role of a destabilizer in China's eyes.

Beijing still tends to characterize nonproliferation as an issue between the United States and proliferant countries. Thus, even though China sees itself with a growing role to play in the international order, and even if China undertakes a more active role in the future, Beijing's position is likely to continue to be one of a mediator.⁹² This is not necessarily negative—there is a need for a “bridge” (*qiaolin*) between the nuclear “haves” and “have-nots.” If China maintains its autonomy and does not ally itself too closely with the United States, its leverage could increase.⁹³

But that influence may not always be applied in a manner sought by the United States. Extremes are anathema to what Beijing perceives as essential stability for its continued growth. Its approach suggests that while China may make an effort to stave off conflict, it may also not be intent on fully resolving the problem. If proliferation is fundamentally a greater harm to the United States than to China, Beijing's incentive to find an enduring solution decreases. Having Washington preoccupied while serving as a mediator and friend to all sides provides Beijing with a “win-win” (*shuangying*) scenario.

Thus, China's mediator role has been important in getting Pyongyang and Tehran to the negotiating table, but it is not a panacea. If greater Chinese participation is sought, more time should be invested in defining the central factors that affect its involvement, namely Beijing's interest hierarchy. A trade-off of interests that allows the United States to achieve a specific goal in tandem with a high-ranking Chinese aim will achieve greater sustained traction.

On Iran, Chinese cooperation with measures to curb Tehran's program could come through enhanced guarantees on fuel supplies for China. On North Korea, China's aversion to counterproliferation efforts could be

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mitigated by information exchanges on U.S. ballistic missile defense. Ballistic missile defense has risen markedly in China's interest calculations with the U.S. announcement of its intent to reallocate more of these resources away from Europe toward greater targeting of the Asia-Pacific.⁹⁴

Thus, while China's and the United States' interests in dealing with proliferation may often be misaligned, there are still opportunities for cooperation. Moreover, interests need not always lead to positive outcomes; often the goal is to simply avoid negative ones. In the case of Washington, it is looking to prevent Iran and North Korea from developing and exporting nuclear-weapons systems that alter the balance and threaten U.S. assets and allies. In the case of China, it is seeking to limit damage caused by U.S. nonproliferation measures to its energy and geopolitical interests in Iran and by U.S. missile defense and military expansion in response to North Korea.

Given the disconnect between U.S. and Chinese perceived and actual interests, efforts to find common ground should take into consideration how Washington's interests are viewed in Beijing and vice versa. Without doing so, the United States will continue to operate on the mistaken assumption that nonproliferation goals are the same for both countries. Similarly, Chinese perceptions that Washington seeks to use nonproliferation as an excuse for regional interference and to contain Beijing will not change.

A recalibration of Washington's and Beijing's interests may not address all of the concerns that the two countries have. Yet, it will go a long way toward turning the current Sino-U.S. pattern of balancing between crisis and response into something more manageable and ultimately more cooperative.

Appendix

The following tables list the interests that are frequently raised by Chinese analysts when reviewing Beijing's and Washington's stances on the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues. They show that not only are there a range of Chinese interests that require better understanding on the part of the United States, but also that Chinese views of U.S. interests must be addressed before an exchange of interests may occur.

North Korea^a

China's Top Five Interests
1) Maintain regional peace and stability via talks, as a responsible power and mediator
2) Mitigate U.S. threats, isolation, or sanctions that exacerbate and elicit proliferation
3) Preserve North Korean geopolitical buffer for China's economic development
4) Avoid proliferation outside of North Korea and regional arms racing
5) Advocate denuclearization but not at expense of stability or via confrontation or force
The United States' Top Five Interests
1) Control peninsula, secure regime change, and encroach on China via denuclearization
2) Contain China and Russia to maintain regional and global hegemonic status
3) Eliminate asymmetric threat from North Korea through nonproliferation
4) Keep region disjointed via weapons exports, missile defense, joint exercises with allies
5) Seek tactical nuclear weapon deployment in South Korea, using North Korea as an excuse

Iran^b

China's Top Five Interests
1) Protect energy supply and flexibility, avoiding "game" (<i>youxi</i>) among Western powers
2) Seek to prevent military strike against Iran and protect economic interests
3) Mitigate U.S. threats, isolation, or sanctions that exacerbate and elicit proliferation
4) Seek equilibrium to avoid U.S. control or political and economic model in Middle East
5) Safeguard Iran's right to peaceful nuclear use and nonproliferation regime
The United States' Top Five Interests
1) Garner China's help for consensus, while hindering Beijing's efforts to pursue its energy and economic interests
2) Combat terrorism, seek democratization, backed by military force and regime change
3) Use Iran as testing ground for counterproliferation efforts, such as Stuxnet cyberattacks
4) Control Iran to protect U.S. energy interests and access to region as well as security of allies
5) Maintain position as only superpower, preserving global and regional hegemony

Appendix Notes

Initial research for this paper surveyed 430 Chinese-language articles, to which 395 new articles were added to update the findings and conclusions. This research was initially conducted as part of a project sponsored by the Science Applications International Corporation, the Center for Strategic and International Studies Pacific Forum, and the Chinese Arms Control and Disarmament Association. An abbreviated overview of some of the points in this paper appears in a publication issued by the project sponsors, entitled *Building Toward a Stable and Cooperative Long-Term U.S.-China Strategic Relationship* and available at http://csis.org/files/publication/issuesinsights_vol13no2.pdf. An earlier version of this paper appears in Chinese under the author's Chinese name: Si Leru, "Shixi meizhong hebukuosan hezuo" (Analysis of China-U.S. Nonproliferation Cooperation), *Zhongguo guoji zhanlue pinglun 2012*, (*China International Strategic Review 2012*), *Shijie zhishi chubanshe*, Issue 5, September 2012, 303–18.

- a All of these points come from Chinese expert analyses derived from 825 articles; none are taken from U.S. experts. They are meant to illustrate the impact of perceptions and ranking of interests on Sino-U.S. cooperation on the DPRK and Iran nuclear issues. Journals surveyed included, but are not limited to, the following: *Dangzheng ganbu xuekan* (*Journal for Party and Administrative Cadres*), *Guofang keji daxue qikan* (*National Defense Technology University Journal*), *Zhongguo shiyou shibua* (*China Petroleum and Petrochemical*), *Zhongguo guoji zhanlue pinglun 2012* (*China International Strategic Review 2012*), *Shijie Zhishi* (*World Knowledge*), *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*), *Shijie guancha* (*World Affairs*), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Politics and Economics*), *Jingji yu fazhi* (*Economics and Law*), *Meiguo yanjiu* (*American Studies*), *Dangdai yatai* (*Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*), *Guoji zhanwang* (*International Outlook*), *Shehui kexue* (*Social Science*), *Zhongguo baogao* (*China Report*), *Guangming ribao* (*Guangming Daily*), *Guoji guancha* (*International Survey*), *Guancha yu sikao* (*Observation and Reflection*), *Dongfang zhaobao* (*Oriental Morning Post*), *Bingtuan jianshe* (*Corps Building*), *Jiangsu jingmao zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao* (*Jiangsu Economic and Trade Vocational and Technical College*), *Shiji jingji baodao* (*21st Century World Economic Report*), *Wajiaopinglun* (*Foreign Affairs Review*), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Modern International Relations*), *Dangdai shijie yu shehui zhiyi* (*Contemporary World and Socialism*), *Zhengzhi yanjiu* (*Political Studies*), *Fazhi yu shehui* (*Legal System and Society*), *Yafei zongheng* (*Asia and Africa Review*), *Dangzheng ganbu xuekan* (*Journal for Party and Administrative Cadres*), *Xinhua wang* (*Xinhua News Online*), *Taipingyang xuebao* (*Pacific Journal*), *Guoji jingji pinglun* (*International Economic Review*), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Modern International Relations*), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi luntan* (*Forum of World Economics and Politics*), *Beihua daxue xuebao* (*Journal of Beihua University*), *Qumwen tiandi* (*Group Language World*), *Guoji guanxi* (*International Relations*), *Qiyedaobao* (*Industry Leader*), *Shehui fazhan* (*Social Development*), *Xingzheng yu fa* (*Public Administration and Law*), *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (*International Relations Studies*), *Ningbo guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* (*Journal of Ningbo Radio and Television University*), *Shehui fazhan* (*Social Development*), *Meiguo wenti yanjiu* (*Fudan American Review*), *Changchun ligong daxue xuebao* (*Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology*), *Xueshu tansuo* (*Academic Exploration*), *Shijie yangguang* (*World View*), *Xingzheng yu fa* (*Public Administration and Law*), *Shijie yangguang* (*World Vision*), *Riben xuekan* (*Journal of Japan Studies*), *Dongbei shida xuebao* (*Journal of Northeast Normal University*), *Fazhi yu shehui* (*Legal System and Society*), *Renmin luntan* (*People's Forum*), *Guoji jingji pinglun* (*International Economic Review*), *Sixiang lilun jiaoyu daokan* (*Guide to Ideological and Theoretical Education*), *Dongbeiyu luntan*

(Northeast Asia Forum), Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development), Hubei jingji xueyuan xuebao (Journal of Hubei University of Economics), Huanqiu Jingwei (Global Latitudes), Changyi xueyuan xuebao (Changyi College Journal), Huaxia shibao (China News), Sheke zongheng (Social Sciences Review), Hunan xingzheng xueyuan xuebao (Journal of Hunan Administration Institute), Luoyang shifan xueyuan xuebao (Journal of Luoyang Normal University), Guoji wenti yanjiu (International Studies), Dangdai shijie yu shehui zhuyi (Modern World and Socialism), Guoji shiyou jingji (International Oil Economy).

b Ibid.

Notes

- 1 The 825 articles surveyed by the author include all available Chinese-language analyses from the *Zhongguo zhibang* (CNKI) database covering the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issue from the first available date in the database January 1915 through January 2013. For a list of the journals surveyed, please see notes 96 and 97.
- 2 Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu (Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China), "2013 nian 3 yue 18 ri waijiaobu fayanren honglei zhuzhi lixing jizhahui" (March 18, 2013, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hong Lei Presides Over Routine Press Conference), March 18, 2013, www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/fyrbt_602243/t1022385.shtml.
- 3 In addition to reporters and editors for *Shijie Zhishi* (*World Knowledge*) and *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*), Zhang Liankui is a professor in the Department of International Strategy of the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China, and Yu Meihua is the director of the China Reform Forum Center for Peace on the Korean Peninsula. Luo Jie, Zhang Liankui, Xu Baokang, and Yu Meihua, "Gaoshao butui' chaoxian bandao zhixiang sheibian?" ("Unending High Fever": The Korean Peninsula Turning to Who Knows Which Side?), *Shijie guancha* (*World Affairs*), issue 11 (November 2012): 15–24.
- 4 While not the subject of this paper, the author is conducting research into the often-underappreciated role of Russia in China's decisionmaking. For example, Sun Wei provides an overview of Sino-Russian strategic ties in *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Politics and Economics*), "[...] Iran has ushered in a crisis period for China and Russia's strategic interests, as Iran has a strategy of relying on China and Russia to engage in confrontation against the United States and Europe. This is something that the international community does not want to see and that China and Russia are trying to avoid. [...] It could be said that China and Russia have basically the same position on the Iranian nuclear issue. However, Russia sees Iran as a pillar of its Middle East policy and seeks to strengthen economic and military cooperative relations with Iran. Therefore, Russia has a greater stake in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue than does China. China will actively support Russia and will push Russia to the forefront in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue. Russia's relations with Iran are like the relationship between China and North Korea. If Russia cannot be like China in its treatment of the North Korean nuclear issue and persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear program, Russia will face a diplomatic dilemma in determining whether to veto sanctions or to agree to them." Sun Wei, "Yihe wenti de shengwen yu huajie" (Warming and Resolution of the Iran Nuclear Issue), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Politics and Economics*), date unavailable, pages unavailable.
- 5 Lu Xiao, "Zhongmei zai junkong lingyu de jiaoliu ji qi lilun fenxi" (Sino-U.S. Exchanges in the Field of Arms Control and Its Theoretical Analysis), *Guofang keji daxue qikan* (*National Defense Technology University Journal*), issue 3 (March 2012): 94–95, 199; Lu Xiao Chen Yongmei and Zhang Nan, "'Tebao' cuoshi zhengzhi jingji pingxi" (Analysis of Political and Economic "Special Protection" Measures), *Jingji yu fazhi* (*Economics and Law*), issue 4 (April 2012) 247–50; Liu Yuanling and Xie Yun, "Di sanlun zhongmei zhanlue yu jingji duihua hou de zhongmei guanxi: Xianzhuang

- yu qushi” (Sino-U.S. Relations After the Third Round of China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue: Status and Trends” Workshop Summary, Comparing Sino-U.S. Soft Power Operations), *Meiguo yanjiu* (*American Studies*), date unavailable, 149–53; Han Xiandong, “Dongya guoji tixi zhuanxing: Lishi yanhua yu jiegou bianqian” (Transformation of the International System in East Asia: Historical Evolution and Structural Change), *Dangdai yatai* (*Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*), issue 4 (April 2012): 78–99; Ye Zicheng and She Peng, “Shijie xingshi da tiaozheng da biange zhong de zhongguo wajiao” (Chinese Diplomacy in the Midst of Great Changes Under Major Adjustments to the Global Structure), *Guoji zhanwang* (*International Outlook*), issue 3 (March 2012): 19–24; Wang Wei and Wang Chen, “Zhongmei ‘linghe’ gainian pingxi” (Comment on China and the United States’ “Nuclear Zero”), *Shehui kexue* (*Social Science*), issue 8 (April 2011): 28–37; Wang Yizhou, “‘Hexie shijie,’ Zhongguo de guoji gongxian” (“Peaceful World,” China’s International Contribution), *Zhongguo baogao* (*China Report*), issue 9 (September 2012): 37–39; Zhang Yunan, “Wei du zhongguo lun’ meiyou shichang” (No Market for “China Containment Theory”), *Guangming ribao* (*Guangming Daily*), June 15, 2012, 1.
- 6 Wang Xiaobo and Song Jinquan, “Chaohe wenti: Neizai luoji yu zhongguo de wajiao zhengce xuanze” (DPRK Nuclear Issue: Internal Logic and China’s Foreign Policy Choices), *Guoji guancha* (*International Survey*), issue 3 (2011): 50–57.
 - 7 As one example, of the 825 articles surveyed on the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues, only 26 made direct mention of counterproliferation and only nine mentioned the Proliferation Security Initiative by name, indicating that both remain far removed from the Chinese interest hierarchy. Newer methods of counterproliferation, such as the Stuxnet virus used against Iranian nuclear infrastructure, emerge in Chinese writings as troubling precedents in preemption and destabilization, eliciting questions over U.S. standards and response, particularly in the new sphere of cyberattack. Shen Yi, “Meiguo wangluo zhanlue ‘mohe’ jiaoluan shijie” (U.S. Internet Strategy a “Magic Box” That Disrupts the World), *Renmin luntan* (*People’s Forum*), issue 8 (August 2011): 26.
 - 8 Fan Jishe is deputy director of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Studies and a senior fellow at the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His work indicates the level to which the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty informs Chinese experts’ analyses of the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issue. Fan Jishe, “Chaohe yihe kaoyan fangkuosan jizhi: Yao hewu haishi yao heping?” (The DPRK and Iran Test of the Nonproliferation Regime: Nuclear Weapons or Peace?), *Guancha yu sikao* (*Observation and Reflection*), issue 21, November 1, 2006, 22–25.
 - 9 This comment is based on observation of a range of television programming and expert articles on each of these subjects, including a television program in which the author participated. Lora Saalman, “Yilang he wenti hui fou sunhai zhongguo de liyi?” (Will the Iran Nuclear Issue Harm China’s Interests?), *Yihu yidu tan* (*Tiger Talk*), Fenghuang dianshitai (Phoenix Television), February 12, 2012, <http://v.ifeng.com/news/world/201202/3455e070-baf7-4147-b1d0-8355ceda9355.shtml>.
 - 10 This article quoted Wu Bingbing, associate professor, Department of Arabic Language and Culture, Peking University, on the intention and potential behind harsh sanctions leading to the collapse of the Iranian regime. Zhang Xi, “IAEA yihe baogao kaoyan zhongguo wajiao” (IAEA Report on Iran Is a Test of China’s Foreign Diplomacy), *Dongfang zaobao* (*Oriental Morning Post*), November 10, 2011, A13; “Yilang—You yige yilake” (Iran—Another Iraq), *Bingtuan jianshe* (*Corps Building*), issue 3 (2006): 40–41.
 - 11 Sun Degang, “Zhongguo ke jiang yihe zhuanhua wei di san ci zhanlue jiyu qi” (China Can Transform the Iranian Nuclear Issue into a Third Period of Strategic Opportunity), *Dongfang zaobao* (*Oriental Morning Post*), November 11, 2011, A15.
 - 12 Li Hengyang, “He anquan yu diqu kuosan xingshi” yantaohui zongshu” (“Nuclear Security and the Regional Nonproliferation Situation” Workshop Summary), *Meiguo yanjiu* (*American Studies*), 157–58.

- 13 Zhang, “IAEA yihe baogao kaoyan zhongguo waijiao” (IAEA Report on Iran is a Test of China’s Foreign Diplomacy).
- 14 There have even been efforts to start Six-Party Talks on the Iranian nuclear issue at the Track 2 level at Fudan University in China. Zhou Yun, “Zhongguo shouci zhuban yihe ‘liufang huitan’” (China Holds for the First Time Iran Nuclear “Six-Party Talks”), *Dongfang zaobao* (*Oriental Morning Post*), April 17, 2008, A13. At the official level, just prior to the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit on March 31, Japan, China, the United States, England, Germany, and France, which are countries concerned with the Iran nuclear issue, had representatives engage in a conference via telephone. Xiong Yuwen, “‘Zhongguo jin xiandai shi gangyao’ jiaoxue ruoyu wenti sikao” (“Chinese Modern Contemporary History” Reflections on Certain Teachings), *Jiangsu jingmao zhibyue jishu xueyuan xuebao* (*Jiangsu Economic and Trade Vocational and Technical College*), issue 1 (January 2012): 86; Li Jing, “Zhongmei xianghu shihao” (China-U.S. Mutual Good Show Iran Nuclear Issue Not Tied to Exchange Rate), *21 Shiji jingji baodao* (*21st Century World Economic Report*), April 2010, 3.
- 15 In both cases, particularly on North Korea, the Six-Party Talks continue to receive reference as an indicator of China’s commitment to the nuclear issue and as the one viable solution. China’s role in resolving the Iranian crisis is also starting to receive increased attention. Jin Liangxiang, “On Coordinating Two Major Situations, Achievements and Challenges of the First Decade of the New Century” (Shilun xin shiji qian shinian zhongguo tongchou liangge daju de chengjiu yu tiaozhan), *Guoji zhanwang* (*International Perspectives*), issue 4 (April 2012): 31, 35. While some Chinese experts are beginning to question the viability of the Six-Party Talks as a mechanism in both private and public, as revealed in works by Tsinghua University professor Sun Xuefeng, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences researcher Xu Jin, and at events at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, the overall discourse remains trained on determining when the parties will be able to return to the table. Sun Xuefeng, “Dongya zhun wu zhengfu tixi yu zhongguo de dongya anquan zhengce” (East Asia Quasi Anarchic System of Governance and Security Policy in East Asia), *Waijiao pinglun* (*Foreign Affairs Review*), issue 6 (June 2011): 41; Xu Jin, “Dongya duobian anquan hezuo jizhi: Wentu yu gouxiang” (East Asian Multilateral Security Cooperation Mechanism: Issues and Concepts), *Dangdai yatai* (*Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*), issue number unavailable, year unavailable, pages unavailable; Paul Haenle, Li Hong, Lora Saalman, “The DPRK and Six-Party Talks After Kim Jong-II,” event summary, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, January 17, 2012, http://carnegietsinghua.org/events/?fa=3559&solr_hilite=Saalman; Huang Fengzhi and Jun Xin, “Chaohe wentu liu fang huitan jizhi pingxi” (Commentary on the North Korean Nuclear Issue Six-Party Talks Mechanism), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Modern International Relations*), issue 12 (2011): 9–15; Zhang Shirong, “Meiguo ‘yatai zai pingheng zhanlue’ ji dui zhongmei guanxi de yingxiang” (U.S. “Asia-Pacific Rebalancing Strategy” and Its Impact on Sino-U.S. Relations),” *Dangdai shijie yu shehui zhubi* (*Contemporary World and Socialism*), issue 4 (April 2012): 29–33; Liu Hongyang and Chen Dengyong, “Jianxi chaohe wentu dui zhongguo anquan de yingxiang ji duice” (Brief Analysis of the Impact of the North Korean Nuclear Issue on China’s Security and Countermeasures), *Fazhi yu shehui* (*Legal System and Society*), January 2010, 208–209; Shao Feng is a Researcher at the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. Shao Feng, “Chaohe wentu zouxiang ji zhongguo de yingdui” (Trends in the North Korea Nuclear issue and China’s Response), *Yafei zongheng* (*Asia and Africa Review*), issue 1 (2007): 43–48; Zou Xiangfeng and Yang Cheng, “Cong chao, yi he wentu kan daguo xietiao jizhi” (From the North Korea and Iran Nuclear Issue, a Look at Coordinating Mechanism Between Great Powers), *Dangzheng ganbu xuekan* (*Journal for Party and Administrative Cadres*), issue 2 (2007): 48.
- 16 Zhang, “IAEA yihe baogao kaoyan zhongguo waijiao” (IAEA Report on Iran is a Test of China’s Foreign Diplomacy).
- 17 Chen Jiru is the director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. Chen Jiru, “Weihe dongbeiya anquan de

- dangwu zhiji—Zhizhi chaohe wenti shang de weixian boyi” (Maintain Top Priority of Northeast Asian Security—Stop the Dangerous Game on the North Korean Nuclear Issue), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and Politics*), issue 9, 2003, 53–58.
- 18 Senior Colonel Xu Weidi is a professor at China’s National Defense University. Xu Weidi, “Chaoxian bandao he weiji de huajie yu bandao zouchu lengzhan” (Resolving the Nuclear Crisis and Exiting the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and Politics*), issue 9 (2003): 62.
 - 19 “Aobama: Mei huo junshi daji yihe sheshi de jinggao fei xuzhang shengshi” (Obama: America’s Warnings of Military Strikes Against Iranian Nuclear Facilities Not Bluffs) Xinhua wang (Xinhua News Online), March 3, 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/2012-03/03/c_122784523.htm.
 - 20 Li Kaisheng and Li Xiaofang, “Anquan jieguo shiye xia de chaohe wenti zouxiang” (Toward the North Korean Nuclear Issue From the Perspective of Security Structure), *Taipingyang xuebao* (*Pacific Journal*) 19, no. 4, April 2011, 78–90.
 - 21 Whenever “absolute security” (*juedui anquan*) is used in Chinese writings, it is a thinly veiled reference to the United States and in this case the pressure that it exerts on negotiations, even in multilateral mechanisms. Zou and Yang, “Cong chao, yi he wenti kan daguo xietiao jizhi” (From the North Korea and Iran Nuclear Issue, a Look at Coordinating Mechanism Between Great Powers), 48.
 - 22 Electronic database research reveals that out of 384 primary source articles and papers that made mention of China’s role in connection with the North Korean nuclear issue, 79 connected the United States and China in their discussion.
 - 23 Historically, the term “wanton” (*banran*) was used in China to refer to behavior on the part of the United States or other foreign powers that were seen as engaging in imperialist or extreme behavior. It would not have been used in the past against a country like North Korea, which China regarded as a sympathetic neighbor.
 - 24 Xu Jin is an assistant researcher at the World Economics and Politics Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Xu Jin, “Chaoxian he wenti: Zhongguo ying qiangli jieru hai shi zhongli woxuan?” (North Korean Nuclear Issue: Should China Engage in Strong Involvement or Neutrality?), *Guoji jingji pinglun* (*International Economic Review*), issue 6 (2011): 146–59.
 - 25 Ibid.
 - 26 Based on domestic observation on Chinese reactions to the North Korean April and December 2012 satellite launches and the author’s own appearance on “Chaoxian fashe weixing shifou hui yinfa bandao chongtu?” (Will North Korea’s Launch of a Satellite Lead to Conflict on the Peninsula?), *Yibu yidu tan* (*Tiger Talk*), Fenghuang dianshitai (Phoenix Television), April 7, 2012, and on “Will the DPRK Nuclear Test Cause Northeast Asia to Lose Its Balance?” (Chaoxian he shiyan huibuhui rang dongbeiya shiheng?), *Yibu Yidu Tan* (*Tiger Talk*), January 31, 2013.
 - 27 When it comes to China’s official response toward North Korea, the same could be said of the Cheonan incident and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island.
 - 28 Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Vows Nuclear Test and Threatens the U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 24, 2013.
 - 29 Zhu Feng is deputy director of the Center for International and Strategic Studies at Peking University. Zhu Feng, “‘Hou tianan jian shidai’ bandao wuhua jincheng pingxi” (“After the Cheonan Ship Incident” Analysis of the Process of Denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Modern International Relations*), issue 10 (October 2011): 7–14; Zhan Debin, “Tianan jian shijian hou hanguo dui zhonghan guanxi de fansi” (South Korean Reflections on China-ROK relations After the Cheonan Incident), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi luntan* (*Forum of World Economics and Politics*), issue 6 (November 2011): 116–24; Liu Boran, “Tianan hao shijian’ hou zhongguo dongya diyuan zhanlue de kunjing yu chulu” (After the “Cheonan Incident” Dilemmas and Ways Out for China’s Geopolitical Strategy in East Asia), *Beihua daxue xuebao* (*Journal of Beihua University*), issue 3 (June 2012): 84–88.

- 30 Guo Xiaodong, “Meiguo ‘chongfan yazhou’ dui zhongguo waijiao de xiaoji yingxiang” (Negative Impact of the U.S. “Pivot to Asia” on China’s Foreign Diplomacy), *Zhengzhi yanjiu* (*Political Studies*), issue 7 (July 2012): 34–35.
- 31 Xu, “Chaoxian he wenti: Zhongguo ying qiangli jieru hai shi zhongli woxuan?” (North Korean Nuclear Issue: Should China Engage in Strong Involvement or Neutrality?), 147.
- 32 Guan Tao, “Zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang lichang de yitong” (Similarities and Differences Between China’s and the United States’ Position on the DPRK Nuclear Issue), *Qunwen tiandi* (*Group Language World*), issue 6 (2011): 245–46.; Chen Ru, “Zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang de hezuo yu fenqi” (Chinese and U.S. Cooperation and Disagreement on the North Korean Nuclear Issue), *Guoji guanxi* (*International Relations*), issue 10 (2011): 1–6.
- 33 Han Xiandong, “Hanguo de waijiao kunjing: Yihe gaikuoxing kuangjia de jiedu” (South Korea’s Diplomatic Conundrum: A Generalized Framework for Interpretation), *Dongbeiyi Luntan* (*Northeast Asia Forum*), issue 3 (March 2012): 62–71; Ye Lin and Wei Jia, “Dongbeiyi eju yu zhongrimei guanxi: Guoji yantaohui fayan zhaiyao” (East Asia’s New Structure and China-Japan-U.S. Relations: International Symposium Speech Summary), *Riben xuekan* (*Journal of Japan Studies*), issue 6 (June 2011): 15–55; Ling Shengli, “Meiguo yatai lianmeng zhuanxing: Zai Zhongmei quanli yu xinren zhijian” (The United States’ Asia-Pacific Union in Transition: Between Sino-U.S. Power and Trust), *Dangdai yatai* (*Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*), issue 5 (May 2012): 33–55; Wang Linchang, “Hanmei quanmian zhanlue tongmeng guanxi de fumian xiaoying” (Negative Effects of the Korea-U.S. Comprehensive Strategic Alliance), *Dongbeiyi xuekan* (*Journal of Northeast Asia Studies*), issue 1 (March 3, 2012): 10.
- 34 Guan, “Zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang lichang de yitong” (Similarities and Differences Between China’s and the United States’ Position on the DPRK Nuclear Issue).
- 35 As suggested by one Chinese analyst, each party reads the term “denuclearization” (*wuhehua*) differently. He Yuan, “Qianxi chaohe wenti lixing jueze de xin silu” (Analysis of the North Korean Nuclear Issue from a New Conceptual Direction of Rational Choice), *Qiyi daobao* (*Industry Leader*), issue 12 (2011): 254.
- 36 Cai Shuwan, “Lun zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang de liyi boyi ji zhongguo de duice” (On the Game of Sino-U.S. Interests on the North Korean Nuclear Issue and China’s Countermeasures), *Shehui fazhan* (*Social Development*), issue number unavailable, 61.
- 37 Liu Hui and Yang Haifeng, “Zhongguo heping fazhan yu dongbeiyi diqu anquan de lixing sikao” (The Rational Thinking of China’s Peaceful Development and Regional Security of Northeast Asia), *Xingzheng yu fa* (*Public Administration and Law*) (August 20, 2011): 57–61; Lu Yin “Dongbeiyi hebukuosan mianlin de tiaozhan” (Challenges Facing Northeast Asian Nonproliferation), *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (*International Relations Studies*), issue 5 (2010): 36–41.
- 38 Zhang Qinglei, “Zhongguo zai dongbeiyi anquan hezuo zhong de shenfen jiangou” (Identity Building in China’s Northeast Asia Security Cooperation), *Ningbo guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* (*Journal of Ningbo Radio and Television University*), issue 1 (March 2011): 100–104.
- 39 Cai, “Lun zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang de liyi boyi ji zhongguo de duice” (On the Game of Sino-U.S. Interests on the North Korean Nuclear Issue and China’s Countermeasures).
- 40 Song Guoyou, “Zhongmei guanxi, diqu anquan yu quanqiu zhili’ yantaohui zongshu” (“Sino-U.S. Relations, Regional Security and Global Governance” Workshop Summary), *Meiguo wenti yanjiu* (*Fudan American Review*), issue 2 (2011): 179–89; Jiang Tianyao, “Zhongguo tiaoting waijiao de shijian yu fenxi—Jiyu chaohe wenti de shijiao” (Practice and Analysis of China’s Mediation Diplomacy—Based on the Perspective of the North Korean Nuclear Issue), *Changchun ligong daxue xuebao* (*Shehui kexuebao*) (*Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology [Social Sciences Edition]*), issue 6 (June 2011): 8–10; Hu Mingyuan, “Qianxi aobama zhengfu de

- chaohe zhengce” (Analysis of the Obama Administration’s North Korea Nuclear Policy), *Zhengzhi yanjiu* (*Political Studies*), issue number unavailable (2009): 38–39; Lei Caili and Shu Ruifeng, “Chaohe wenti zhi zhongguo zuoyong de shuangzhongxing ji zhanlue xuanze” (China Dual Role and Strategic Choices on the North Korean Nuclear Issue), *Xueshu tansuo* (*Academic Exploration*), issue 3 (June 2008): 31–35; Luo Yuan, “Zhongguo weishenme neng zai liufang huitan zhong qidao teshu zuoyong” (Why Is China Able to Play a Special Role in the Six-Party Talks), *Shijie yanguang* (*World View*), issue 6 (2003): 34.
- 41 Huang and Jun, “Chaohe wenti liu fang huitan jizhi pingxi” (Commentary on the North Korean Nuclear Issue Six-Party Talks Mechanism).
- 42 “In resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, the common consensus is that the key is in the hands of the United States. However, to date, the United States has not made appropriate adjustments to its rigid North Korean nuclear policy. Under the conditions of deadlock on both sides, the attitude of the international community has become an important benchmark in determining guidelines on the North Korean nuclear issue. The question of whether the international community will choose to proceed in lockstep with the United States to put pressure on North Korea, or can sympathize with the plight of North Korea and sit down and pragmatically discuss countermeasures, will result in completely different outcomes when it comes to the North Korean nuclear issue.” Wang and Song, “Chaohe wenti: Neizai luoji yu zhongguo de wajiao zhengce xuanze” (DPRK Nuclear Issue: Internal Logic and China’s Foreign Policy Choices), 50–57.
- 43 Liu Hui and Yang Haifeng, “Zhongguo heping fazhan yu dongbeiya diqu anquan de lixing sikao” (The Rational Thinking of China’s Peaceful Development and Regional Security of Northeast Asia), *Xingzheng yu fa* (*Public Administration and Law*), August 20, 2011, 59; Liu Hui, “Dongbeiya diqu anquan dui zhongguo heping fazhan de xiandai yiyi” (Modern Significance of Northeast Asia’s Regional Security for China’s Peaceful Development), *Shijie yanguang* (*World Vision*), vol. 35, no. 3 (2011): 7.
- 44 This fact is not lost on North Korea, as its statements following the issuance of UNSC Resolution 2087 echo those of China from a bygone era, emphasizing that it will not relinquish its nuclear deterrent until the rest of the world achieves nuclear disarmament.
- 45 Based on the author’s participation and exchanges surrounding an appearance as a panelist on the Chinese-language television program “Chaoxian he shiyan huibuhui rang dongbeiya shiheng?” (Will the DPRK Nuclear Test Cause Northeast Asia to Lose Its Balance?).
- 46 “Meiguo chongfan yata zhanlue beijing xia de zhongmeiri guanxi” (China-U.S.-Japan Relations under the Backdrop of the U.S. Pivot to the Asia-Pacific), *Huanqiu Jingwei* (*Global Latitudes*), issue 3 (March 2012): 115–20; Luo et al., “‘Gaoshao butui’ chaoxian bandao zhixiang sheibian?” (“Unending High Fever”); Guo, “Meiguo ‘chongfan yazhou’ dui zhongguo wajiao de xiaoji yingxiang” (Negative Impact of the U.S. “Pivot to Asia” on China’s Foreign Diplomacy).
- 47 Guan, “Zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang lichang de yitong” (Similarities and Differences Between China’s and the United States’ Position on the DPRK Nuclear Issue); Gao Yingtong, “Chaohe wenti zhong meiguo yinsu de xiandai guoji falv pingxi” (Modern International Law Assessment of the U.S. Factor in the North Korean Nuclear Issue), *Dongbei shida xuebao* (*zhhexue shehui kexue ban*) (*Journal of Northeast Normal University [Philosophy and Social Sciences]*), issue 1 (2010): 17–21.
- 48 Liu and Chen, “Jianxi chaohe wenti dui zhongguo anquan de yingxiang ji duice” (Brief Analysis of the Impact of the North Korean Nuclear Issue on China’s Security and Countermeasures).
- 49 One of the best overviews of the conflicted stance of China was conducted by Qi Haixia, assistant professor in the Department of International Relations at Tsinghua University. Qi Haixia, “Guoji tiaoting lishi yu celue de lianghua fenxi—Jianxi chaohe wenti liufang huitan” (Quantitative Analysis of the History and Strategy of International Mediation—Also on the Six-Party Talks), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and Politics*), issue 6 (2010): 98–117.

- 50 Wang and Song, “Chaohe wenti: Neizai luoji yu zhongguo de waijiao zhengce xuanze,” (DPRK Nuclear Issue: Internal Logic and China’s Foreign Policy Choices), 50–57.
- 51 Cai, “Lun zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang de liyi boyi ji zhongguo de duice” (On the Game of Sino-U.S. Interests on the North Korean Nuclear Issue and China’s Countermeasures).
- 52 Xu, “Chaoxian he wenti: Zhongguo ying qiangli jieru hai shi zhongli woxuan?” (North Korean Nuclear Issue: Should China Engage in Strong Involvement or Neutrality?), 158–59.
- 53 Shin Chang-Hoon, Teng Jianqun, Thomas Plant, Jonathan Pollack, Lora Saalman, Panel on “China and the North Korean Nuclear Issue,” in Asian China Forum 2012 “China in Transition,” Seoul, Korea, December 11–12, 2012. Chairman Xi Jinping has alluded to this greater role and a more regional and holistic approach to relations on the Korean Peninsula in his statements issued early in his tenure. “China’s Xi Says Willing to Promote Dialogue Between Koreans,” Reuters, March 20, 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/20/us-china-korea-north-idUSBRE92J07320130320.
- 54 Zou and Yang, “Cong chao, yi he wenti kan daguo xietiao jizhi” (From the North Korea and Iran Nuclear Issue, a Look at Coordinating Mechanism Between Great Powers), 48; Liu Qing is a Researcher at the China Institute of International Studies. Liu Qing, “2007 nian zhongguo zhoubian anquan xingshi zhanwang” (2007 Outlook for China’s Security Situation), *Sixiang lilun jiaoyu daokan (Guide to Ideological and Theoretical Education)*, issue 1 (2007): 54–55.
- 55 A total of 87 percent of the articles surveyed covered the North Korean nuclear issue, with only 13 percent addressing the Iran nuclear issue. Out of 36 articles and papers that make mention of China’s role in connection with the Iran nuclear issue, only seven connected the United States and China in their discussion.
- 56 Li Guofu, “Yilang he wenti de zhengjie yu zhongguo de lichang” (Crux of the Nuclear Issue and China’s Position), *Dangdai shijie (Contemporary World)* (October 2007): 23–26; Chen Lianqing and Yang Xingli, “Jianlun yilang he wenti dui zhongguo—yilang guanxi de yingxiang” (A Brief Discussion of the Iranian Nuclear Issue and Its Impact on China-Iran relations), *Hubei jingji xueyuan xuebao (Renwen shehui kexue bao) (Journal of Hubei University of Economics [Humanities and Social Sciences])*, issue 9 (September 2010): 79–81.
- 57 Jiang Lin is affiliated with the Communist Party of China’s Jiangsu Provincial Party School, and Jiang Li is connected with the Hefei Teachers College. Jiang Lin and Jiang Li, “Zhongmei zai yilang he wenti shang waijiao zhengce bijiao yanjiu” (A Comparative Study on China and the United States’ Foreign Policy on the Iranian Nuclear Issue), *Dangzheng ganbu xuekan (Journal for Party and Administrative Cadres)*, issue 9 (September 2012): 33.
- 58 Chen Lianqing and Yang Xingli, “Jianlun yilang he wenti dui zhongguo—yilang guanxi de yingxiang” (A Brief Discussion of the Iranian Nuclear Issue and Its Impact on China-Iran Relations), 81.
- 59 Hua Liming, “Yilang he wenti ji qi dui daguo guanxi de yingxiang” (The Iran Nuclear Issue and Its Impact on Great Power Relations), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development)*, issue 2 (April 2010): 37, 39.
- 60 Based on author’s exchanges with People’s Liberation Army officers from the Nanjing Army Command College.
- 61 “China’s consistent position on the Iranian nuclear issue has been recognition of Iran’s right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy; maintenance of the international nonproliferation regime; safeguarding of peace and stability in the Middle East; solution of the Iranian nuclear crisis peacefully through dialogue; opposition to comprehensive sanctions and individual sanctions against Iran, as sanctions are only means rather than a goal; opposition to the use of force or the threat of force to force Iran into submission.” Wang Fuzhong, “He wei ji zhong yilang de tuwei yu zhongguo de lichang” (Iran’s Breakthrough and China’s Position in the Iranian Crisis), *Changyi xueyuan xuebao (Changyi College Journal)*, issue 3 (April 10, 2011): 73–76.

- 62 Sun Wei, “Yihe wenti de shengwen yu huajie” (Warming and Resolve of the Iran Nuclear Issue), *Shijie jingji yu zhenzhi* (*World Politics and Economics*), dates unavailable, pages unavailable; “Yilang—You yige yilake” (Iran—Another Iraq), *Bingtuan jianshe* (*Corps Building*), issue 3 (2006): 40–41; Wang Fuzhong, “He weiji zhong yilang de tuwei yu zhongguo de lichang” (Iran’s Breakthrough and China’s Position in the Iranian Crisis); “Meiyi zhengdou boji zhongguo nengyuan anquan” (U.S.-Iran Battle Spreads to China’s Energy Security), *Zhongguo shiyou shibao* (*China Petroleum and Petrochemical*), issue 2 (January 2007): 38–39; Chu Zhaogen, “Meiguo danbian zhuyi yu yilang he weiji” (U.S. Unilateralism and Iran’s Nuclear Crisis), *Guancha yu sikao* (*Observation and Reflection*), issue 21 (November 2006): 26.
- 63 Hua, “Yilang he wenti ji qi dui daguo guanxi de yingxiang” (The Iran Nuclear Issue and Its Impact on Great Power Relations), 37, 39.
- 64 Xu Lifan, “Yihe jiangju xuyao zhongguo zhihui jihu” (Iran Nuclear Impasse Needs China’s Wisdom to Activate), *Huaxia shibao* (*China News*), January 17, 2006, A2.
- 65 Chen and Yang, “Jianlun yilang he wenti dui zhongguo—yilang guanxi de yingxiang” (A Brief Discussion of the Iranian Nuclear Issue and Its Impact on China-Iran relations), 79–81; Cai, “Lun zhongmei zai chaohe wenti shang de liyi boyi ji zhongguo de duice” (On the Game of Sino-U.S. Interests on the North Korean Nuclear and China’s Countermeasures).
- 66 Chen and Yang, “Jianlun yilang he wenti dui zhongguo—yilang guanxi de yingxiang” (A Brief Discussion of the Iranian Nuclear Issue and Its Impact on China-Iran relations), 79–81.
- 67 Sun, “Zhongguo ke jiang yihe zhuanhua wei di san ci zhanlue jiyu qi” (China Can Transform the Iranian Nuclear Issue into a Third Period of Strategic Opportunity).
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 In addition to a number of media pundits in China, this viewpoint was also voiced by a senior Tsinghua University expert in an off-the-record meeting attended by the author on February 2, 2012.
- 70 Liu Libin, Wang Bo, Zou Dehao, Li Xuejun, and Zhao Yi, “Yihe wenti: Liufang huitan dacheng gongshi” (Iran Nuclear Issue: The Six-Party Talks Reach Consensus), *Renmin ribao* (*People’s Daily*), May 10, 2006, 3.
- 71 Jay Solomon and Lawrence Norman, “U.S. to Probe Iran’s Commitment to Talks,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2012.
- 72 Sun, “Yihe wenti de shengwen yu huajie” (Warming and Resolve of the Iran Nuclear Issue).
- 73 Jiang and Jiang, “Zhongmei zai yilang he wenti shang wajiao zhengce bijiao yanjiu” (A Comparative Study on China and the United States’ Foreign Policy on the Iranian Nuclear Issue), 29–33.
- 74 Wang Jun, “‘2:29 xieyi’ qianshu hou de chaomei jiaoliang” (The DPRK-U.S. Contest After Signing the 2-29 Agreement), *Yafei zongheng* (*Asia Africa Review*), issue 5, May 2012, 25–30; Xu, “Dongya duobian anquan hezuo jizhi: Wenti yu gouxiang” (East Asian Multilateral Security Cooperation Mechanism: Issues and Concepts); Wang Muke, “2012 nian dongbeiyi jushi fazhan de xin tezheng” (New Features of the Development of the Northeast Asian Trends in 2012), *Shijie Zhishi* (*World Knowledge*), issue number unavailable (2011): 63; Zhou Yimin, “Alabo zhichun hou, zhongguo zhongdong zhengce de tiaozheng” (After the Arab Spring, China’s Adjustments in Middle East Policies), *Zhongguo yu shijie* (*China and the World*) (September 2012): 27; Zhang Jie, “Anquan kunjing wenti de jin yibu tanjiu” (Further Exploration of the Issue of Security Dilemmas), *Sheke zongheng* (*Social Sciences Review*), issue 8 (August 2011): 83.
- 75 Zhang, “Anquan kunjing wenti de jin yibu tanjiu” (Further Exploration of the Issue of Security Dilemmas), 82.
- 76 Song Da, “Meiguo dongbeiyi lianmeng de ‘lianmeng yinqi daoxing anquan kunjing’” (The “Coalition-Driven Security Dilemma” of United States’ Northeast Asia Alliances), *Luoyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* (*Journal of Luoyang Normal University*), issue 4 (April 2012): 19.

- 77 Fu Minghua and Ma Rongsheng, “Shixi meiguo quanqiu zhanlue zhuanxing” (Analysis of Global Strategic Transformation), *Hunan xingzheng xueyuan xuebao* (*Journal of Hunan Administration Institute*), issue 5 (May 2012): 112.
- 78 Prior to the U.S. pivot or rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, there was a greater willingness to admit the United States’ stabilizing influence in the region. However, the policy shift has led to a greater extreme in most domestic analyses, suggesting deep-seated concerns that the degree of U.S. regional interference has expanded to such a degree that it has caused an imbalance.
- 79 “North Korea Ends Armistice with South Amid War Games on Both Sides of Border,” *Guardian*, March 11, 2013, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/11/north-korea-declares-end-armistice.
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- 89 Tian Hongliang and Qi Yongying, “Wendao nengyuan fazhan choumou weilai anquan: Zhongguo shiyou jituan jingji jishu yanjiuyuan fuyuanzhang lv jianzhong fangtan” (Questions on Energy Development and Planning Future Security: Interview With China National Petroleum Corporation’s Economic and Technological Research Institute Vice Director Lv Jianzhong), *Guoji shiyou jingji* (*International Oil Economy*), issue 4 (April 2012): 7–13.

- 90 While marking a trend in its proliferation response, however, China's active engagement should not be taken as a given. For example, when it came to Iraq, while China opposed U.S. military actions, its involvement to thwart such an outcome was relatively minimal. In point of fact, such strong reactions on the part of the United States, depending on its target, have at times led to strategic opportunity for China in the view of some analysts. Sun, "Zhongguo ke jiang yihe zhuanhua wei di san ci zhanlue jiyu qi" (China Can Transform the Iranian Nuclear Issue into a Third Period of Strategic Opportunity).
- 91 "After the end of the Cold War, China's peaceful development benefited from two strategic opportunities. The first was after the Gulf War in 1991, when during the United States' containment of Iraq, China won a ten-year period of strategic opportunity. The second was after September 11, 2001, when counter-terrorism in the Middle East became the main task of the United States." The situation in Iran, according to these accounts, represents the third such opportunity. So even while China's short-term interests are compromised, its long-term interests may benefit. Keeping the United States preoccupied leaves China the strategic space to grow. U.S. willingness to sanction its way out of the Iranian oil market and to constrain its ties with North Korea similarly afford China greater economic and political room, particularly when facing the United States' intended "pivot" to the Asia-Pacific. Sun, "Zhongguo ke jiang yihe zhuanhua wei di san ci zhanlue jiyu qi" (China Can Transform the Iranian Nuclear Issue Into a Third Period of Strategic Opportunity).
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