

Some Observations on the Obama Administration's Policy to DPRK

By Sun Guoqiang and Huang Fengzhi
Institute of Administration, Jilin University

Abstract: Drawing in research results through screening the policy content, background and effect of the Obama Administration's DPRK policy, this paper structures a quadrennial framework from multilateral, alliance, U.S.-China relations and unilateral perspectives to summarize main contents of the Obama's DPRK policy; in terms of understanding its decision-making process, the paper brings in the environmental policy factor; and hopes to comprehensively explain reasons for the Obama Administration's DPRK policy through exploring the emerging new culture on Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asian region, and comes up with some observations on an impact of Obama's DPRK policy on China's security.

After Obama took office, the situation on the Korean Peninsula gets further deteriorated. One is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) has carried out the second and third nuclear tests, and succeeded in launching a satellite, continuously attained breakthrough on the road to own nuclear, thus, resulting in increasing pressure on maintenance of the denuclearized Peninsula. Two is the bilateral conflict between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK) plus the United States is spiraling, instability of the Peninsula is increasing, and the situation of peace and stability gets even more severe. Three is the difference on dialogue between the DPRK and the ROK plus the United States is still there, resumption of the Six-Party Talks is still very difficult, which in turn reinforces DPRK's determination to develop nuclear weapons. Generally, the U.S.-DPRK relations play a pivotal role in the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue and security orientation.¹ Therefore, the study of the Obama Administration's DPRK policy has important theoretical and practical significance.

I. The main contents of the Obama Administration's DPRK Policy

The United States still occupies a leading position in the international system, and can also

fully mobilize the global and regional resources in addition to using its own resources in implementing its DPRK policy. Concretely, the Obama Administration's DPRK policy mainly focuses on three aspects, i.e. the world's perspective, regional perspective and its own perspective, among which the regional perspective is the most important foundation for the United States to structure its DPRK policy. In this perspective, there are U.S. allies—Japan and ROK, a regional major country such China, whose DPRK policy is especially different with the U.S., Japan and the ROK strong coordination in their DPRK policy, showing a obvious phenomenon of coexisting cooperation and differences. Based on this, the author will further subdivide the regional aspect into aspects of alliance and Sino-U.S. relations. The global, alliance, Sino-U.S. relations, and the U.S. perspectives structure the Obama Administration's "four in one" framework policy toward the DPRK.

First, from the global perspective: focusing on constructing a multilateral cooperation platform for the DPRK issue

After Obama assumed office, the U.S. foreign policy orientates from the George W. Bush unilateralism to multilateralism. In the course of designing and implementing its DPRK

policy, the Obama Administration attaches relative importance to the role of the international multilateral mechanism in dealing with DPRK's nuclear issue and human rights issue and diplomatic behavior, etc. According to the different institutional development levels, multilateral mechanisms can be divided into three levels: the pure cognitive community, the international mechanism and the international organization.² The Obama's multilateral mechanisms applied to the DPRK include the international nuclear non-proliferation mechanisms, the United Nations and the Six-Party Talks, among which the international nuclear non-proliferation regime is a formal international mechanism, while the Six-Party Talks is an informal mechanism.³

(1) Checking the DPRK nuclear plan in the international nuclear non-proliferation framework

Since taking office, Obama vigorously adjusts the U.S. nuclear policy, his "Nuclear-Free World" speech in 2009 and "Nuclear Posture Review Report 2010" earmark formation of the Obama Administration's nuclear policy. The most attractive point of the policy is proposed for the first time to rebuild and strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation goal, and prioritize on the U.S. nuclear agenda.⁴ This helps recover the authority of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Integrating the DPRK's nuclear issue into the international nuclear non-proliferation regime framework, the Obama Administration can get a certain constraint on it. One is the United States identifies the DPRK nuclear issue as the nuclear proliferation, and its "urgent threat". Obama has worries about the DPRK nuclear issue in three aspects: a threat to U.S. homeland security, damages to Northeast Asian strategic stability, and nuclear weapons proliferated to terrorists. Two is the nuclear non-proliferation regime provides an institutional pressure on DPRK's nuclear behavior, i.e. the tool value, or rigid hard constraint value.⁵ Although the DPRK has withdrawn from the NPT, which as of now has world's 189 countries as parties to the treaty, it still constitutes an effective constraint on DPRK's acquisition of nuclear material and the nuclear technology as well as its exports. Another is the moral value, i.e. soft constraint value. The constraints provided by the international nuclear

non-proliferation regime highlights the DPRK nuclear behavior short of legitimacy.

(2) Imposing pressure on DPRK's nuclear and human rights issues with the help of the United Nations.

The Obama Administration attaches great importance to the role of the United Nations in putting pressure on the DPRK, and believes that this helps increase the pressure intensity and legitimacy. The U.S. pressure imposed on the DPRK through the United Nations is mainly embodied as follows: pushing the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on the DPRK's satellite launch and nuclear test. So, focusing on pushing the formulation and implementation of the UN Security Council sanction resolutions, the United States invests a large amount of resource to strengthen consultations and negotiations with Japan, the ROK and Russia particularly China, and has also set up an inter-agency group responsible for coordinating sanctions actions at the international level, and monitoring implementation of the sanction resolutions by various countries. On the other hand, pushing the UN Human Rights Council to condemn human rights situation in the DPRK. In this regard, the United States has joined the council after Obama taking office, directed Robert King, a Korean American, special envoy for the DPRK human rights, responsible for coordination on the DPRK human rights in the United Nations; the UN Human Rights Council set up a committee to investigate the DPRK human rights pushed by Robert King.⁶

(3) Intending to shift the Six-Party Talks functions

Since Obama assumed office, the Six-Party Talks has failed to restart, but it does show that Six-Party Talks has lost significance in the Obama Administration's DPRK policy framework. In summary, as a non-formal international mechanism,⁷ the Obama Administration intends to shift the function of Six-Party Talks from a negotiation platform into a tool for applying pressures. One is the Obama Administration takes a double-trick tactics on Six-Party Talks restart, leveling pressure both positively and negatively. On the one hand, the United States adheres to preconditions set for the Six-Party Talks restart, which requires the DPRK to show sincerity for nuclear disability; on the other hand, the United States also makes a positive statement that if the

DPRK shows sincerity for nuclear disability, the United States is willing to resume talks, and will strive to achieve the normalization of bilateral relations, including the signing of a permanent peace treaty to replace the current "Korean Armistice Agreement". From upholding the double-track policy of advancing the bilateral talks with help of the Six-Party Talks, to mentioning less and less bilateral talks but emphasizing the Six-Party Talks, and from setting conditions to restart the Six-Party Talks to focusing on strengthening the U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance coordination mechanism and actively seeking to expand consensus and strengthen cooperation with China and Russia regarding the DPRK policy, it is obvious to find the U.S. DPRK policy priority is changing.

Second, from the alliance perspective: strengthening ROK-Japan alliance mechanism

In the U.S. view, the U.S.-Japan alliance in East Asia faces two major threats, i.e. the rising China & the uncertainty it may create and the DPRK's nuclear power & hostility.⁸ In traditional sense, the U.S.-ROK alliance mainly responds to the DPRK threats, but the U.S. Asian strategy adjustments are pushing the U.S.-ROK alliance developing in the direction of supplement to and docking with the U.S.-Japan alliance, and becoming a dual deterrent to both of DPRK and China.⁹ In general view, the United States views the DPRK and the rising China as two major Security threats to U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK Alliances.

The Obama Administration regarding its DPRK policy has two main considerations: One, strengthening the "extended deterrence" in terms of response, and fulfill security commitments to the Allies. Two, using the DPRK threat to upgrade bilateral alliance, and build the U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral coordination mechanism, and to maintain Northeast Asian security structure.

(1) Strengthening the "extended deterrence"

The most outstanding performance for the Obama Administration to strengthen the "extended deterrence" for two allies Japan and ROK is to upgrade its "tailored deterrence".¹⁰ This strategy will seek to divide the overall deterrence strategy into different parts to adapt to different counterparts and situations. Since the "tailored deterrence" was first put forward in

2006, the U.S. scholars in academic and strategic circles have carried out a deep study on the concept. Professor Elaine Bunn of Strategic Studies of U.S. National Defense University said that the "tailored deterrence" has least three aspects: One, to distinguish deterrent targets: during the cold war, the U.S. deterrence directed at the Soviet Union, while the "tailored deterrence" targets can be divided into "rogue state", terrorist forces and great powers. Two, to adjust the U.S. deterrence: traditional deterrence mainly relied on trinity "strike capability" of intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers, while the "tailored deterrence" relies on a new trinity capability of offensive strike systems, missile defense systems and defense infrastructure, adding the conventional deterrence and defense deterrence, a good combination of nuclear deterrence and conventional deterrence and of offense and defense. Three, to deliver more tailored information to opponents: Information can be transmitted through both words and actions, but it is more important to understand these words and actions.¹¹

The United States upgrades its "extended deterrence" to "tailored deterrence" to the DPRK, which can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the tailored threat is clearer, which can be divided into the following two categories: One is possible threats of the unstable situation in the DPRK. Two is a possible offense may be taken by the DPRK, which can be subdivided into: (1) Responding to the DPRK's nuclear offense. Both the U.S. and ROK sides view that the DPRK nuclear weapons pose a real threat to U.S. troops in the ROK and the ROK itself, so a response strategy is adopted to deal with the DPRK nuclear provocation. (2) Responding to the DPRK's missile threat. In view of the DPRK's missile threat intensified, the United States and the ROK have established a operational concept of comprehensive response, namely mobilizing the combat and surveillance equipment capacity of U.S. troops in the ROK, enhancing the U.S. missile defense system on the Korean Peninsula and to curb the DPRK's missile threat; assisting the ROK to build a missile defense system and planning to deploy a THAAD system. (3) Responding to the DPRK assault. The United States and the ROK believe that the DPRK may

attack the ROK by artilleries with a help of ballistic missiles in a form of surprise attack. In this regard, a rapid response program is adopted for a quick counter attack. (4) Responding to local conflict on the Korean Peninsula: After the Yeonpyeong Island shelling, the United States and the ROK discussed how to deal with it, and the two countries signed a "joint plan" to respond to local provocations. (5) Responding to the cyber warfare threat of the DPRK. The United States believes that the DPRK cyber warfare is becoming a latest threat to the U.S.-ROK alliance, which is discussing to set up cyber network security protocol system.

Secondly, composition of the deterrent is more enriched. The "extend deterrence" provided by the Obama Administration for ROK and Japan from simply relying on nuclear weapons shifts to a combination of nuclear power deterrence and conventional power deterrence. On the one hand, nuclear deterrence remains a key component. The Nuclear Posture Review Report states that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against parties to the NPT or those countries are abiding by the nuclear non-proliferation obligations.¹² The U.S. nuclear deterrent for Japan and the ROK mainly includes the forward deployed nuclear weapons in the Asia-Pacific region and those nuclear weapons stationed inside the United States, which can be quickly called for deployment in response to regional emergency. On the other hand, with increasing advantages of U.S. conventional weapons, strengthening conventional deterrence has become an important guarantee for a new trinity. As commander of the U.S. strategic command, James Cartwright has proposed nuclear weapon is still important part in the U.S. arsenal, but it is not a panacea, we hope to develop conventional weapons in order to provide a broader and more appropriate choice.¹³ In February 2011, the United States revised the "conventional prompt global strike promulgated in 2008, and replaced it by a new one consisting of ground-based and air-based combat and space-based support system and combat system, which forms the new trinity of prompt global strike system.¹⁴ Completion of this system will greatly enhance the U.S. conventional deterrence against the DPRK.

Thirdly, the categories of deterrence gets further closer to actual combat operation

The Tailored Deterrence is no longer confined to the passive simple deterrence, but getting closer to more active combat deterrent.¹⁵ Among them, retaliation deterrence is a typical pure deterrence, area denial deterrence is a typical combat deterrence.¹⁶ Based on retaliation deterrence, great efforts are made to develop area denial deterrence, whose specific measures include: One is to provide anti-missile umbrella to the ROK, i.e. in Guam and Hawaii deploying missile defense systems; the deployment of Aegis anti-missile destroyers in the waters off the Korean Peninsula; continuing to strengthen cooperation with Japan to build anti-missile defense system; strengthening cooperation between the ROK anti-missile system and the U.S. theater missile defense system, etc.. Two is launching preemptive strike against the DPRK nuclear facilities before it uses nuclear weapons. In order to deal with DPRK missiles, the United States and ROK structure a "kill chain system" against the DPRK to launch a missile.¹⁷

(2) Using the DPRK threat to push upgrading of the Alliance

Firstly, using the DPRK threat to promote the U.S.-ROK alliance to comprehensive strategic alliance. The U.S.-ROK alliance's vision expands from the Korean Peninsula to the Northeast Asia and even the whole world. With the United States in the financial crisis, and the ROK rising international status, the Obama Administration hopes the U.S.-ROK alliance in the world to play a more important role.¹⁸ On June 16, 2009, the two countries issued the U.S.-ROK Joint Vision, and decided to build a comprehensive strategic alliance in the Korean Peninsula, the Asia-Pacific region and the world.¹⁹ The U.S.-ROK alliance cooperation in economic, political and military fields gets deepened. Economically, the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement has come into effect, which promotes U.S.-ROK economic ties, and leads the development of Asian trade liberalization, but also helps to consolidate the U.S.-ROK alliance. Politically, to repair the damaged bilateral ties, bilateral DPRK policy reaches a high degree of consensus. Research Report of the U.S. Congress believes that during 2009 to 2014, the U.S.-ROK relations are in the best period of decades.²⁰ ROK President Lee Myung-bak and President Obama reached a consensus on the principle of "strategic

patience".²¹ Militarily, the U.S.-ROK level of military cooperation has been greatly improved, i.e. carrying out a wide range of joint military drill, improving the U.S.-ROK military cooperation capacity to respond to different emergencies.

Secondly, using the DPRK threat to strengthen U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation. The U.S. efforts in this regard mainly include: One, structuring a DPRK policy coordination mechanism within the U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance framework from the political and military areas. Politically, the United States strengthens unity and synchrony of the U.S.-Japan-ROK policy position to the DPRK at the three levels of summit, foreign minister and Six-Party Talks delegation leader. Militarily, it strengthens the U.S.-Japan-ROK security cooperation. Two, the United States actively seeks to resolve the Japan-ROK tense relations existing in the U.S.-Japan-ROK coordination mechanism. The United State always has a contradictory mentality on the Japan-ROK military cooperation.

Therefore, the current Northeast Asia situation -- China is rising more rapidly, pressure from the DPRK threat is escalating, and the U.S. power is relatively weakened --- makes the stable relationship between Japan and the ROK important to the United States. Regarding the main obstacles to development of Japan-ROK relations: On the comfort women and other historical issues related to human rights, the Obama Administration had to explicitly support the ROK;²² on the maritime disputes, it rejects the established positions, and hopes the two sides to exercise restraint and work for peaceful settlement of disputes.

Third, from the Sino-U.S. perspective: promoting interactions on policies with China

The United States is well aware that the solution to the DPRK issue cannot be achieved without China's participation. The Sino-U.S. policy interactions mainly focus on two topics, the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue and the peace & stability. In addition, the internationalization of the DPRK human rights is getting touched in the policy interactions.

(1) On pushing the DPRK nuclear disability, requesting China to join the United States to impose pressure on the DPRK.

How to deal with the DPRK nuclear issue is

an important topic on strengthening the Sino-U.S. policy interaction. Firstly, the United States continues to cook the so-called "Chinese responsibility", and requests China to share the main responsibility for the solution, and even shifts the delayed nuclear issue solution responsibility to the Chinese side.²³ One is the U.S. side argues that the Chinese energy and food aid to the DPRK ensures it to develop nuclear weapons; two is the Obama Administration has lost confidence through engagements and negotiations, and three is the Obama Administration views the DPRK nuclear issue more of a regional security issue in addition to a nuclear proliferation. The United States also urges China to implement the UN sanction resolutions against the DPRK and refuses to accept China's proposals to restart the Six-Party Talks. It is true that China has made tremendous efforts for the restart, but the Talks since the end of 2008 interruption are not restarted because the U.S. -set threshold is too high for the DPRK to get across.

(2) Strengthening communication with China to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula

The maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is another key issue for the Obama Administration to carry out the policy interactions with China. First of all, the United States briefs to China that it has no intention to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue through the means of war, signaling its willingness to maintain peace and stability on the Peninsula.

Secondly, the United States requests China to define the responsible parties of the issue, and in essence forces China to choose a side, in an attempt to put pressure on the DPRK via China. Thirdly, the United States actively proposes to China to discuss how to respond to the DPRK if unstable situation emerges, but China does not take it up. Because China does accept the U.S. judgment on the DPRK situation, since China and the United States can have consultation within the UN Security Council framework if emergency occurs in the DPRK, and there is also lack of strategic mutual trust between China and the United States.

(3) Promoting internationalization of the DPRK human rights issue, and putting pressure on China by human rights issue

With internationalization of the DPRK

human rights issue, human rights issues in the U.S.-China policy interactions are gradually getting more important. The United States wantonly whips up attacks on the DPRK human rights, which affects China in two aspects. One is demonizing China's international image. The UN human rights report on the DPRK spreads to the international community the so-called violations of human rights in the DPRK,²⁴ As China is DPRK's aid providing country, its international image is inevitably subject to damage. Two is urging China to stop repatriation of "North defectors". The United States believes that "North defectors" are refugees, and should be treated so, this issue has very limited impact on the United States, which means putting pressure on China by the issue.²⁵

Fourth, from the unilateral perspective: upgrading and strengthening its DPRK policy

The so-called unilateral perspective is how the United States itself responds to the DPRK issues by relying on multilateral institutions, alliance mechanisms and interactions with China, which reflects the flexibility of the Obama Administration's policy toward the DPRK, and also constitutes an effective supplement to the U.S. policy.

(1) Strengthening the military deployment, and defending the homeland security

The DPRK's threat to the U.S. security includes: one is the DPRK nuclear weapons vertical and horizontal proliferation constitutes a threat to the U.S. homeland and its overseas military bases; two is the potential conflict between two sides on the Peninsula is likely to drag in the United States again.

Firstly, targeted at the DPRK's nuclear threat. The Obama Administration believes that the DPRK currently does not have the ability to launch a ballistic missile carrying nuclear warheads,²⁶ but its continuous development of nuclear tests and satellite launch tests will lead to constantly elevating of its threat to the United States. Responding to the nuclear threats, the United States has stepped up efforts to build a missile defense system, strengthened missile intercepting capacity, and deployed a THAAD system, which is kicked off in Japan, and also applied pressure on the ROK for deployment of the same system.

Secondly, to avoid the so-called "DPRK provocations" likely to trigger a conflict on the

Korean Peninsula. The United States also further enhances its own military response capabilities, including moderately strengthening of the USFK to maintain the balance of military power on the Korean Peninsula; significantly reinforces the combat capability of the U.S. military bases in Guam, which can assume the logistics and reinforcement functions once something happens on the Korean Peninsula.

(2) Increasing the unilateral economic sanctions to delay and block the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons

Since 2005 the United States has applied sanctions on a Macao bank, which forced the DPRK to agree to carry out negotiations for returning to the Six-Party Talks. The economic especially financial sanctions have become an important means to impose pressure on the DPRK. The United States, in addition to actively promoting the United Nations to pass sanction resolutions on the DPRK, has also developed a unilateral sanction program against the DPRK, so as to delay and block the DPRK from further building nuclear capacity.

The Obama Administration's unilateral economic sanctions against the DPRK includes: economic sanctions particularly financial sanctions playing substantial role. For example, after each emergency created by the DPRK such as the second nuclear test, "Sinking of the Cheonan", "Yeonpyeng Island Shelling", "Satellite Launch", third nuclear test and hacker attacks against Sony Entertainment Program, etc., the Obama Administration introduced new escalated economic sanctions. The targeted economic sanctions frozen the individuals and entities assets, and cut off financial transactions by the DPRK and bank trading companies, which is directed at the DPRK leadership-used resources.

(3) Attacking the DPRK government and promoting peaceful evolution

The Obama Administration believes that to disable the DPRK nuclear has very little effect through negotiations, therefore, turns to resolve the DPRK governance problems behind the nuclear issue, i.e. seeking the regime change by peaceful means. Therefore, on the one hand, the U.S. government continuously exposes its various illegal acts such as producing fake U.S. bank notes, and engaging in drugs deals and illegal arms trade, etc.²⁷ to demonize its international

image. And on the other hand, the DPRK is defined as typical governance of human rights suppression by the United States, which promotes the United Nations to make the DPRK human rights investigation and report, and intends to apply various means except military options to pressurize the DPRK to go in the direction of peaceful evolution

(4) Carrying out the tactical bilateral diplomacy to seek local deals and compromises

After the U.S. special envoy Bosworth's visit to the DPRK at the end of 2009, especially the DPRK-U.S. agreement was reached on February 29, 2012, which was later torn up between the two sides, and then has dealt a heavy blow to the U.S. confidence in engaging in DPRK through talks. However, this does not mean that the Obama Administration has severed all ties with the DPRK. At the tactical level, the United States still maintains some communications with the DPRK as follows: keeping the New York channels open and smooth to carry out direct communications and negotiations with the DPRK; carrying out covert diplomacy with the DPRK to achieve specific goals; maintaining communications with the DPRK in the field of human rights; experts with U.S. government background engaged in informal contacts with the DPRK at the civil level.

II. Factors Affecting the Obama Administration's Decision-making on the DPRK Policy

Starting with the new changes emerging in the regional environment of Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula, exploring the impact of the external environmental factors on the Obama Administration's decision-making on DPRK policy

First, the structural changes in Northeast Asia make the Obama Administration's DPRK policy targeted more at China

In recent years, the rising China highlights some structural changes in Northeast Asia, of which different views can be divided into three categories. The first view is China's influence is improved, but there is still a big gap compared with that of the United States, in the current Northeast Asia there is still a monopoly structure.²⁸ The second view is that a rising China in essence is changing the Northeast Asian pattern, binary pattern is formed in the region with an

economic centre and security center under separate control between the two countries.²⁹ Since 2009, with the accelerating Sino-U.S. relative strength shift, the previous mutually beneficial and compatible situation is replaced by competition and repulsion between the two countries.³⁰ The third view is that changing strength of the United States and China in recent years in the Northeast Asian region has shaped a more balanced binary pole pattern.³¹ The author believes that the above-views seem still different, but recognize this rising China process in progress only with some differences.

The Northeast Asian regional structural changes have an important bearing on the Obama Administration's policy toward the DPRK. In general, the new structural changes in the Northeast Asian region generated by a rising China make the Obama Administration policy to the DPRK more biased toward China. This leads to the following two phenomenon: on the one hand, the Obama Administration is short of motive to seek a solution to the DPRK issue, thus, being in the deadlock. On the other hand, the main thrust of the Obama Administration's policy toward DPRK is to take advantage of it to check the rise of China. It is specifically reflected in the following: One is to take advantage of a so-called DPRK threat to increase military deployment in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthen the bilateral alliance and build trilateral alliance directed at China. Two is to demand China to take the main responsibility to solve the DPRK issue, but also refuse to cooperate with the Chinese approaches, thus, making the Chinese diplomatic efforts heavy frustrated. Three is constantly asking China to put pressure on the DPRK, in attempt to undermine the Sino-DPRK traditional relationship. Four is to damage China's international image by the DPRK human rights issues.

Second, the impact of changing Korean Peninsula regional environment on the Obama Administration decision-making toward the DPRK

(1) The Korean Peninsula strategic imbalance induces the Obama Administration supporting the ROK to carry out "absorbing" unification process.

Since the Obama Administration took office, the existing Korean Peninsula strategic imbalance gets further aggravated, which stimulates the

ROK enthusiasm for unification, but also induces the Obama Administration to support the ROK to adopt the way of "absorbing" the DPRK for unification. Economically, the DPRK economic situation in recent years has stabilized somewhat, but the foundation and GDP growth rate are weaker than that of the ROK, the GDP gap between the two sides will get further expanded. Politically, whether the new leaders can consolidate the ruling power is still uncertain after the death of Kim Jong-il. Diplomatically, the DPRK adherence to development of nuclear weapons behavior becomes more isolated in the international community since nuclear non-proliferation has become an international consensus. The ROK after the financial crisis has gained rapid economic recovery, hosted the Seoul Summit of Group-20 and the Seoul Nuclear Summit, so its international status has continuously improved. The ROK sets up the Unification Preparatory Committee headed by ROK President. Under this background, the U.S. focus on the Peninsula issue is also further tilted to the ROK side, and supports the ROK to adopt the "absorbing" way to unite with the DPRK side. Currently, the U.S. media has begun campaigning for it.³²

(2) The impact of the ROK policy to the DPRK on the Obama Administration policy toward the DPRK

In overall view, the ROK Government's policy toward the DPRK is still incorporated into the U.S. policy framework for the DPRK -- when the ROK policy towards the North is in line with the U.S. policy framework, it will get the U.S. support, or will be subjected to constraints. After taking office, President Lee Myung-bak made a substantial adjustments on the ROK's "sunshine policy" and "inclusive policy" for the past ten years, and took DPRK abandoning nuclear weapons as the contact premise, which is naturally supported by the Obama administration.³³

After coming to power, Park Geun-hye Government proposed to promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and South-North exchanges and cooperation, embodying the adherence to principle, which wins support of the Obama Administration. Since the second half of 2014, the Park government hopes to promote South-North dialogue, and sets the year 2015 the "South-North relations golden

era". However, during this period Obama made the "North Korea eventually collapses" remarks, and implemented new sanctions against the DPRK, whose hacker attacked Sony Corp. The Park government engagement policy clearly runs counter to the Obama Administration's DPRK policy framework, which is naturally blocked by the United States. This also shows that the impact of the ROK's policy toward the DPRK on Obama Administration's policy to the DPRK is relatively limited.

III. The Obama Administration's policy to the DPRK damages China's security interests

In overall view, the impact of the Obama Administration's policy to DPRK on China is negative, resulting in damages to China's security interests.

First, U.S. deployment of anti-missile defense system undermines the strategic stability between China and the United States.

First of all, the U.S. deployment of anti-missile defense system is in name to deal with the so-called "DPRK threats", but the DPRK's current nuclear capability is not strong enough to pose a threat to the United States, thus it is obviously directed at China. Whether its carrying vehicles, or nuclear warheads, all have a long way to go technically.³⁴ Secondly, the U.S. deployment of anti-missile defense system undermines the existing strategic stability between China and the United States. In general, effective nuclear deterrence has become the cornerstone of Sino-U.S. strategic stability, which the academic world has no objection.

Among the current nuclear countries, Russia follows the maximum nuclear deterrent while the United Kingdom and France follow the limited nuclear deterrent, both of which are the U.S. allies. Therefore, China, committed to the minimum nuclear deterrent and no-first use of nuclear weapons, is the country most affected by the U.S. anti-missile defense system. Because it offsets the Chinese nuclear deterrent strategy effectiveness; building the U.S.-Japan anti-missile defense system will only further damage the trust between China and the United States since the U.S.-Japan alliance has incorporated Taiwan into the "peripheral emergency"; and Japan choosing to join the U.S. missile defense system also deepens China's strategic wariness in Japan and the

Sino-Japanese relations instability will also produce many negative effects on Sino-U.S. relations.

Second, the U.S. strengthening the alliance mechanism with the ROK and Japan deteriorates China's security environment.

In order to respond to the DPRK threats, the Obama Administration respectively strengthens the alliance mechanism with the ROK and Japan, and is actively structuring the trilateral coordination mechanism of the United States, Japan and the ROK. The above U.S. acts are directed to the DPRK in name only, but actually serve its "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy, and then check and tailor China. The U.S. strengthening the military alliance is far beyond the need to guard against the DPRK. From the strategic posture perspective, the United States has repaired and strengthened the alliance with the ROK and Japan, on which basis the United States intends to build trilateral coordination mechanism of the United States, Japan and the ROK, in order to maintain its advantages in Northeast Asia, which has seriously damaged the strategic balance of the Korean Peninsula and even the Northeast Asia region, has intensified the regional tensions, hindered Chinese efforts for regional integration, and the Chinese security pressures face a sharp increase. From the alliance functional perspective, the traditional view is that the U.S. - Japan alliance is the strategic cornerstone for the United States to curb China in Northeast Asia, while the U.S.-ROK alliance function is meant mainly to deal with the DPRK threats. It should be noted that the functional enlargement, the activities capacity-building, and the docking with the U.S.-Japan alliance via auxiliary means of the U.S.-ROK alliance is shifted in the direction from the traditional single deterrence to the DPRK only toward dual deterrence to both China and the DPRK.³⁵

The United States, in response to the DPRK threats as an excuse, gets the ROK and Japan further unfettered, such as agreeing the ROK to increase missile range to 800 kilometers, lifting the ban on Japan's collective self-defense rights, which all are meant for China behind scene.

Third, the U.S. high-pressure policy towards the DPRK constitutes a potential threat to China's frontier security

At present, the Obama Administration's

policy to the DPRK can be defined as "pressure plus usage" -- neither reaching a package deal with the DPRK through negotiations, nor overthrowing the DPRK governance by the military options. Whether the sanctions pressure can force the DPRK agreeable is still a question. Usage refers to promoting implementation of the "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy with the help of proper tense situation on the Korean Peninsula. The Obama Administration's high-pressure policy toward the DPRK can caused serious challenges to the security of China's Northeast border areas. On the one hand, the instability of the DPRK governance will bring about a series of hard problems to China, such as nuclear materials, nuclear proliferation, and a large number of refugees into China, terrorist attacks, etc. On the other hand, with the U.S. and its allies to escalate deterrence strategy, the possibility of the outbreak of conflicts on the Korean Peninsula greatly increases, which becomes unstable factors affecting security in China's surrounding areas.

IV. Conclusion

Through the above-mentioned, comparatively the Obama Administration's policy to the DPRK reflects the following obvious characteristics.

First, importance of the DPRK's issue in the U.S. foreign policy agenda is on the decline.

The Obama Administration, due to the impact of the financial crisis, and the sluggish growth of domestic economy, externally faces the structural changes of a rising China, as well as series of regional hot spots such as Syrian, Afghan, and Iranian issues and Ukraine crisis, etc. These have made the DPRK issue relatively in the back of the Obama Administration's foreign policy agenda. The Obama Administration's approach to the DPRK issue is to "use" it far more than to "respond to" it, and is that the United States is not eager to solve the DPRK issue, but to promote the implementation of its Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy.

Second, the Obama Administration has abandoned the negotiation approach to the DPRK nuclear issue. In order to regain control of the policy initiative towards the DPRK, the Obama Administration adheres to a strong "principle" in the negotiations with the DPRK, i.e. the DPRK's provocations cannot force the United States return to the negotiating table, and the

DPRK must first show its sincerity in denuclearization acts so as to restart the negotiations. Because of the U.S. high threshold, the negotiations with the DPRK has not become a strategic part of the Obama Administration's policy to the DPRK.

Third, the Obama Administration's policy toward DPRK is the U.S. long-term performance.

The Obama Administration has adhered to reaching a package deal with the DPRK within the framework of the Six-Party Talks to attain effective control, which should be a long-term

process. Though the United States will not turn a blind eye to the growing situation in the DPRK, it does not seek a short term resolution, but takes a long-term projection plan. The author argues that there is little possibility for the Obama Administration in the remaining time to carry out negotiations with the DPRK, promote normalization of relations between the two countries, and seek resolution of the DPRK nuclear issue.

(Excerpts of the Chinese from <http://niis.cass.cn>)

Footnotes:

1. DPRK issue covers much more than DPRK nuclear issue, the paper will use the two terms in line with specific context.
2. Re-quoting from Huang Fengzhi and Jin Xin: Assessment mechanism of the Six-Party Talks on the DPRK nuclear issue", the *Contemporary International Relations*, No.10, 2011, p.13.
3. The difference between normal international mechanisms and informal international one is that the former has formal international legal authority, while the latter does not, but only political or moral binding, see Liu Hongsong, "Formal and informal international mechanism concept," *European Studies*, No.3, 2009, pp.98-106.
4. The U.S. Department of Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report", April 2010, P. 9, <http://www.defense.gov/portals/L/features/defenseReviews/NPR/2010-nuclear-posture-review-report.pdf>.
5. Qin Yaqing points out that one of the characteristics of the international system is restrictive, with a penalty function. See Qin Yaqing: "Power, Institution and Culture, International Relations Theory And Research Methodology", Peking University Press, 2005, pp.10, 103.
6. In-depth discussion of moral value of the international institutions, see Hong Hua, "The Wing Of Hegemony - The United States International Institution Strategy", Peking University Press, 2005, pp.51-52.
7. Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks at the ASEAN Regional Forum", July 23, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/Secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/July/126373.htm>.
8. Glyn Davies, "U.S. policy toward North Korea," March 7, 2013. <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ambassador-Davies-testimony.pdf>.
9. The reason to emphasize the Six-Party Talks as an informal international regime is because it's just temporary, loose consultation mechanism set up by the relevant parties to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue and with rather low degree of institutionalization, has neither permanent organ like the international organization, nor legally-binding relationship on rights and obligations as members of the formal mechanism, nor even clear-cut time arrangements, See Huang Fengzhi, Jin Xin, "Discussions on the Six Party Talks Mechanism", p.13.
10. Evans J. Revere, "The United States and Japan in East Asia: Challenges and Prospects for the Alliance. *American Foreign Policy Interests*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2013, P.1.
11. Zhang Jingquan, "The U.S. Asian Rebalancing Strategy and the Role Of the U.S.-ROK Alliance", *Teaching and Research*, No.9, 2013, pp.68-70 pages.
12. "Tailored deterrence" has different Chinese interpretation.
13. M. Elaine Bunn, "Can the deterrence be Tailored?" Strategic Forum, January 2007, pp.1-7.
14. The U.S. Department of Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report".
15. Elaine M. Grossman, "Missiles Within 60 Minutes Strike the Whole World, U.S. Strategic Balance Tilt", translated by Haiyan, *Le Mond*, January 7, 2009, p.16.
16. Regarding the specific structure of the U.S. prompt global strike system, see Zhao Yong, Li Weimin, Zhao Chenhao, Liu Xu, "Analysis of the current situation and developing trend of the U.S. prompt global strike system," *Missiles*, No.3, 2014, p.11.
17. On the difference between pure deterrence and combat deterrence, see Yao Yunzhu, "The Postwar American Deterrence Theory And Policy", the National Defense University Press, 1998, pp.19-20.
18. On the meaning of retaliation deterrence and area-denial deterrence, see Yao Yunzhu, "The Postwar American Deterrence Theory and Policy", p.11,
19. A "kill chain" is a system of attack, to detect motor-based ballistic missiles across the territory of North Korea within 1 minute, to identify the targets and locations within 1 minute, to decide whether to strike within 3 minutes, and to complete the strike in 25 minutes. If the operation is unsuccessful, the last link in the "kill chain" will use a missile defense system to carry out the interception. See Xue Yuwen, "U.S. – ROK kill chain targeted at the DPRK", *World News*, October 31, 2012, p.4.

20. See Abraham M. Denmark and Zachary Hosford, "Securing South Korea: A Strategic Alliance for the 21st Century", December 2010, the <http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/BookChapter-Fontaine-Springut-USR0K.pdf>.
21. The white house, "Joint vision for the alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea", June 16, 2009, <http://www.thewhitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2009/06/16/joint-vision-for-the-alliance-of-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-republic-of-korea>.
22. The U.S. Congressional research service, "U.S.-South Korea Relations", June 24, 2014, Summary <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.the.pdf>.
23. "Strategic Patience" mainly includes four points: one is the DPRK taking irreversible steps on denuclearization as the precondition of the Six-Party Talks; two is to seek a gradual change of China's strategic assessment of DPRK; three is to impose more severe sanctions to DPRK's provocations; four is to set improving inter-Korean relations as a precondition for U.S.-DPRK dialogue. See The U.S. Congressional research service, "U.S.-South Korea Relations", May15, 2012, Summary, <http://fpc.state.gov/organization/191602.pdf>.
24. See <http://m.ftchinese.com/story/001049053>.
25. Details refer to the United Nations human rights Council, "Report Of the Detailed Findings of the Commission of Inquiry On the Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", February 7, 2014, pp.45-352, <http://www.ohchr.org/documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIDPRK/report/A.HRC.25.CRP.1-the.ENG.doc>.
26. Studies on the issue of "defectors", see Pu Jianyi, Li Zhifei, "DPRK defectors internationalization and its Impact", *Contemporary International Relations*, No7, 2012, p.10.
27. Refer to "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney". The U.S. judgment is based on: One is doubtful of the claims on miniaturization and nuclear warheads. Two is the reliability of the DPRK long-range ballistic missiles is not high since its "Taepodong 2" missiles tests in July 2006, April 2009 and April 2012 all failed, and in December 2012 "satellite" was successfully sent to orbit for the first time, which only means the DPRK technology moving forward one step, but cannot prove its missiles reliable, the DPRK still needs further tests. Three is the DPRK missile tests have been carried out in the name of launching a "satellite", therefore, the DPRK's missiles test has not been carried out in the atmosphere, and there is still a long distance from a real missile test. See Mary Beth Nikitin, "The North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Technical Issue", April 3, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34256.pdf>.
28. Gao Feng, Zhang Qihang, "U.S. intends to Strengthen Financial Sanctions," *International business*, 10, July 2014, Co4.
29. U.S. State Department Report believes that the North Korean government-related drug trade may have stopped or significantly reduced, but does not rule out the possibility that North Korea is getting more skilled in these activities. See U.S. Department of State, the "country report: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea, <http://state.gov/inl/rls/inrcrpt/2014voll/222877.htm>). The U.S. Congress Research Report believes that North Korea and Iran, Syria had a nuclear deal. See Paul K. Kerr, Steven Hildreth, and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, "Iran, North Korea, Syria ballistic missile and nuclear Cooperation, April 16, 2014, pp.5-9, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43480pdf>.
30. Sun Xuefeng and Huang Yuxing believe that China's economic strength is on the rise, the influence is expanding, but it in the next decade is still difficult to shake the dominant position of the United States in East Asia. Wang Min believes that with rising China, changes in East Asian power redistribution can be described as power change, but there is no power transfer. See Sun Xuefeng, Huang Yuxing: "China is rising and evolving East Asian regional order," *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No.1, 2011, pp.22-28; Wang Min: "New East Asian Security Posture under the Impact of Changing Power", *World Economics and Politics*, No.10, 2012, p.133.
31. Zhou Fangyin, "Rising China: the Changing Pattern In East Asia and East Asian Order Development Direction", *the Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No.5, 2012, pp.2-10.
32. Gao Cheng, "Under the Background of Rising China, the Changing Peripheral Pattern and Strategic Adjustment", *the International Economic Review*, No.2, 2014, pp.33-37.
33. Wang Junsheng, "a Dual Leadership System by China and the United State and Northeast Asia Security: Structural Imbalance, and the Order Rebuilding", *International Politics*, No.4, 2013, pp.106-107.
34. Sue Mi Terry, "Let North Korea Collapse", *The New York Times*, June 16, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/17/opinion/Let-north-korea-collapse.html?_r=0; Priya Sethi, "If North Korea Collapsed, " *The National Interest*, July14, 2014, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/If-north-korea-collapsed-10868>.
35. See Piao Jianyi, "The Basic Characteristics of the Evolving Situation on the Korean Peninsula After the Cold War", pp.28-29.