

**The life and near-death of an alliance:  
China, North Korea and autocratic military cooperation**

Sebastian Harnisch  
Universität Heidelberg  
Email: Sebastian.Harnisch@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de

Version 1.0

*Paper prepared for the WISC Conference in Taipeh, April 1.-4. 2017*

## 1. Introduction

Autocratic foreign policies have assumed substantial significance over the past two decades. The re-emergence of China, the revisionist policies of Russia and the authoritarian collaboration to preserve and foster autocratic rule in the aftermath of (colored) revolutions in Central Europe, the Middle East and Northern Africa as well as Central Asia all do attest to this phenomenon (Gat 2007; Kneuer forthcoming; von Soest 2015). Further, the end of the third wave of democratization has culminated in a new age of autocratic cooperation across a diverse set of policy areas (Eisentraut 2013; Mattes/Rodriguez 2014). Autocratic regional powers, such as Venezuela in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA-TCP), and authoritarian Great Powers, such as Russia in the Eurasian Union, have used international organizations to encourage autocratic rule abroad and to bolster a variety of authoritarianism at home (Conrad 2014; Tansey 2016).

Military alliance decisions by autocracies have a profound effect on the dynamics of regime behavior: formal as well as informal alignments may bolster internal state repression (DeMeritt 2012; Krain 2012) or they may induce risk-prone behavior, such as the manipulation of elections or the initiation of a military conflict (Colgan/Weeks 2015; Weeks 2012). Understanding the sources of autocratic alliance cohesion and management is therefore essential. However, no systematic scholarship exists so far.

The lacunae of studies on autocratic alliance behavior is surprising. In fact, there has been a recent surge in military alliance research of democratic regimes (Chiba et al. 2015; Fang et al. 2014; Garztko/Gleditsch 2004; Leeds et al. 2002; Mattes 2012). And yet, there has also been a dearth of scholarship on the alliances between most likely opponents – authoritarian regimes (Weeks 2008). This is all the more unfortunate since military alliances and their management have been found as an important reason why international crises escalate into military conflicts (Benson et al. 2012; Gibler/Vasquez 1998, Filson/Werner 2004). It follows that autocratic military alliance should become a research focus both for theoretical and practical reasons.

I address this gap in the current literature by examining one of the longest lasting formal autocratic alliances, the “Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea”.<sup>1</sup> Although there are substantial limitations to generalizing from a singular case, covering a single-party regime and a personalist regime only, the re-emergence of China and the emergence of North Korea as a “Nuclear State” promise to advance our theoretical and practical understanding of this and other autocratic military alliances. Very few studies, however, have specifically

---

<sup>1</sup> The treaty, signed on 11 July 1961, can be accessed at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2830542-1961-Treaty-of-Friendship-Co-Operation-and.html>.

addressed the nexus between autocratic regime type and the development of the Sino-North Korean military alliance.<sup>2</sup>

My argument starts with a brief review of two strains of literature: recent scholarship on autocratic cooperation and the effects of formal alliance treaties on behavior. With regard to the former literature, Mattes and Rodriguez (2014) have analyzed how institutional incentives in autocratic regimes shape the preparedness and demand for international cooperation. They hold that the cooperation aptitude, a quality that makes autocratic regimes attractive for other autocrats, depends on the belief that the cooperating autocracy will keep its promises and follow through with commitments. Based on the scholarship on comparative authoritarianism, Mattes and Rodriguez further purport that “autocracies vary in leader accountability, policy-making constraints, and transparency – factors that affect states’ ability to cooperate internationally” (Mattes/Rodriguez 2014: 536). In their study, they ascertain that single party regimes, such as the PRC, exhibit a cooperation aptitude similar to democracies. In turn, military and personalist regimes feature considerably less of these qualities.

In the latter literature on alliance institutions, Benson et al. (2013: 57) detect that alliances with unconditional alliance commitments are established when members feel that their partners need to have flexibility even to engage in provocative behavior in order to deter the target state(s) of the alliance. It follows, then, that members should try to renegotiate the alliance treaty if they want to restrain their partners and mitigate the moral hazardous effects of the original deterrent alliance obligations (Fang/Johnson/Leeds 2014).

I extend these approaches by (a) focusing on the specific institutional arrangements of the alliance treaty provisions that impact Sino-DPRK alliance behavior (see below) and (b) differentiating the effects of sub-regime type institutions on the security policy roles taken in the alliance. To do so, I introduce role theory as a theoretical approach than can account for changes in basic security policy motives, including alliance politics (see below). Empirically, I argue that, despite featuring the same sub-regime type, the security policy roles taken by China and North Korea have varied substantially over time, resulting in the virtual death of the Sino-DPRK military alliance in the aftermath of the Kim Yong-nam killing.

The analysis starts with presenting the theoretical considerations about autocratic alliance behavior and their empirical modulations in role theory. I then introduce the research design, which is based on the method of a structured, focused comparison, employing a categorical scheme to measure variance in alliance behavior over time. I explain the variance in Sino-DPRK alliance behavior in three historical episodes, resulting in (quasi-)termination of the alliance (dependent variable), by referring to changes in security policy roles of both alliance partners (independent variable). After doing so, I present my systematic results on role shifts and respective behavioral changes, which substantially specify the institutional factors,

---

<sup>2</sup> For studies on the Sino-DPRK alliance behavior in general, see Bechtol 2014; Chambers 2005; Chung/Choi 2013; Freeman 2015a; Scobell 2004; Wang 2014.

established in the literature on comparative authoritarianism. In conclusion, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of my findings for future research.

## **2. Theoretical considerations on autocratic alliance behavior**

Rationalist and social constructivist literature on autocratic collaboration suggests that authoritarian regimes do collaborate with other autocratic regimes because of the material and immaterial benefits these collaborations entail. All else equal, collaboration among autocracies should become more likely for both approaches when autocracies face a strong group of democracies, because these democracies may question their legitimacy and undermine their sovereignty. As democracies tend to cooperate in promoting human rights norms and the rule of law as well as in fostering intra-democratic trade, autocracies should have both material and immaterial incentives to seek collaboration among themselves (Tansey 2016).

### *2.1. Conceptualizing autocratic security collaboration*

Traditional alliance theory, as based on structural realism, postulates that the relative power disparity should inform the institutional structure of the alliance commitment. In asymmetrical alliance, where one member is considerably stronger than the other, the alliance obligation should be strong and detailed enough to deter an adversary. But these alliances should also be contingent enough to restrain weaker allies from provoking conflict, i.e. limiting the entrapment effect of the alliance (Benson et al 2013:48).

Liberal alliance theory, in turn, argues that (military) cooperation occurs when state preferences – i.e. ranked state interests – are similar or at least compatible so that mutual gains can be realized (Pohl 2016). In this case, the asymmetry of state preferences, called policy interdependence, and not the asymmetry of power relations determines the structure of the cooperation (Moravcsik 1997). In its republican strain, liberal theory is compatible with the institutionalist approach in comparative studies of autocracies (Mattes/Rodriguez 2014). Republican liberalism focuses on the ways how domestic institutions aggregate societal interests and how these preferences are transformed into state policies. Autocracies, then, are conceptualized as political systems, in which political representation is biased in favor of particular groups (other than the majority of the electorate), such as a single-party, the military or a governing clique, a personalist regime or monarchy (Moravcsik 2003: 173-175).

Mattes' and Rodriguez' (2014) concept of "cooperation aptitude" prominently features that the policy institutions of leadership accountability, policy-making constraints and transparency reduce the discretion of autocratic leaders and create audience costs when they renege on alliance commitments. To gauge the effects of the variance among these institutions, they use Geddes (1999) classification, which is based on assessing who controls policies and

appointments in an autocratic sub-regime type, i.e. single-party, military junta or personalist regime. While their findings are plausible and provide important new insights – single-party regimes are more likely to cooperate than other subtypes – Mattes and Rodriguez (2014) assume that all autocratic regimes want to cooperate in the first place. However, the pertinent literature suggests that regimes and their subtypes tell us little about the motivations to enter into cooperative agreements (Colgan 2013; Colgan/Weeks 2015).

To further specify the motivation of autocratic regime for cooperation in order to secure their survival, I complement the approach by Mattes and Rodriguez with the concept of “omnibalancing” by David (1991). David assumes that autocracies in the Third World face a double-edged security dilemma: at home by domestic opponents and from abroad by stronger neighbors and enemies (see also Job 1992). Facing two enemies, the regime will align with the less threatening opponent against the mortal enemy (David 1991). It follows then that when foreign opponents align with domestic enemies, autocratic regimes will use autonomous strategies to contain and deter both opponents at the same time.

These findings tie in nicely with two as of now unrelated literatures: First, the scholarship on nuclear proliferation among autocratic sub-regime types (Way/Weeks 2014). In their comparative and quantitative analysis, Way and Weeks found that personalist regimes are much more proliferation prone than other autocratic regime subtypes because they have an especially intense fear of regime overthrow. To contain the risk of a (military) coup, personalist regimes will use different strategies to weaken domestic opponents while keeping foreign enemies at bay. Domestically, a strong personalist cult ensures that coup leaders will have a hard time to persuade the public that a potential coup is legitimate; externally, seeking nuclear weapons, under centralized command, will deter stronger conventional adversaries. In addition, nuclear weapons allow to keep the conventional capacities of the own military at a minimum (Way/Weeks 2014).

Jacques Hymans (2008) elaborates on this line of argument: he purports that while several (autocratic) regimes may seek active nuclear weapons research programs, only those who hold an “oppositional nationalistic” state identity, i.e. who define themselves in contrast to the international community while striving for respect, do seek a nuclear weapons capacity (2006). In the North Korean case, he finds that the North Korean regime started to define itself as an “oppositional nationalistic regime” but that bureaucratic inertia, resulting from the neo-patrimonial personalist regime subtype, prevented the Kim regime from acquiring a weapons capacity earlier (Hymans 2008: 274).

The second strand of literature explains purges of rivalling factions in autocratic regimes. For Ken Gause (2015, 2016) and Yongho Kim (2011, 2013) autocratic regimes do not only use external provocations to strengthen their alignment with external partners. For the case of North Korea, Gause and Kim also found credible evidence that the Kim regime, starting with the purges against the Yunan group in 1956, has used the repression and killing of rivalling factions to prevent an alignment between internal and external foes (Gause 2016).

## *2.2. Role theory and autocratic alliance policies*

Role theory systematically addresses domestic and foreign expectations towards a country's (social) position in the international community. It follows that detecting changes in the role set of autocratic regimes may help to improve our understanding when and under what conditions an autocratic alliance member may seek to terminate its role as an "ally" and seek another, more autonomous role set. More specifically, we may expect that regime survival motives, i.e. the concern to fend off domestic and foreign opponents and a combination thereof, clearly drive the military cooperation behavior of autocratic regimes.

During the Cold War, Ole Holsti (1970) started to gauge the behavioral patterns of classes of states toward their external environment, detecting national role conceptions such as "non-aligned", "ally" or "satellite". Holsti and the first generation of role theorists focused solely on the ego part of roles, i.e. the self-conceptualization of a state's purpose in the international community by its leadership (for an overview see Walker 1987). In the last two decades, however, role scholarship has come to stress the relational roots of the concept in symbolic interactionism, i.e. the constitutive effects of counter-roles and the recognition by others for international roles (Harnisch et al. 2011; McCourt 2012). In this view, roles, because they hinge on the acceptance by other through their commensurate role taking, are not determined by one state alone. Instead, they are social phenomena, emerging from co-action by leaders and followers, aggressors and opponents, aligned and non-aligned etc.

When it comes to the initiation, maintenance and termination of military alliances between autocracies, interactionist role theory asserts that autocratic regimes – even in asymmetrical relationships – will seek strong and formal alliance obligations when they share a strong common opposition towards both revisionist democratic and autocratic states. However, autocratic regimes will avoid foreign troop deployments because of their potential role in a coup d'état, especially if alliance members have a history of interfering in their domestic politics through supporting rivaling factions.

Unqualified alliance agreements, in turn, signal an alliance partner's commitment, so that the lesser partner, convinced that their partner will come to their defense, may seek other, more aggressive roles. Aggressive behavior by lesser partners is more likely when opponents appear to be weak, i.e. experience role strains, so that the aggressor may successfully establish a new social relationship: dominance or even occupation. And yet, when stronger alliance members seek additional roles outside the alliance with potential or actual opponents, their weaker partner may take on more independent roles to stabilize their own position through additional relationships.

In order to assess my role theoretical argument and compare the impact of varying internal and external security dilemmas on the North Korean and Chinese cooperation behavior, I use a

structured, focused comparison of several alliance episodes. Because I aim at gauging the effect of oppositional nationalism vis-à-vis democratic and autocratic others, the episodes stem from the Post WW-II period and the Post-Cold War period. Concerning the assessments of the alliance behavior, I use a simple matrix, as introduced by Chalmers (2005), which identifies the provision of nuclear deterrence, formal arrangements for common defense in the event of an attack, the transfer of arms and weapon systems, the joint training of military forces and diplomatic support to each other's security as the most pertinent indicators of alliance obligations and reliability (Chambers 2005).

Moreover, this study considers the acquisition of nuclear weapons systems and capable launch vehicles, the development of a nuclear doctrine as well as the conduct of purges against (alleged) oppositional factions as additional indicators of an increased external and internal security dilemma. In combination, it is argued here, the deterioration of external alliance behavior and the increase of domestic balancing practices indicate a de facto erosion of an alliance commitment. However, it does not imply that the missing formal abrogation of an alliance treaty is negligible. To the contrary: Even if states cease to cooperate militarily, they may still benefit from consultative clauses or reputational benefits by not terminating existing alliance obligations.

### **3. A near-death experience: the Sino-DPRK case in three episodes**

The near-death experience of the Sino-DPRK alliance is largely a product of the changing international roles the DPRK and China have pursued in a changing international community. The socialist solidarity, which shaped China's intervention in the Korean War (1950-1953), the intra-socialist rivalry between China and the Soviet Union in the late 1950s, which resulted in two almost identical Sino- and Soviet-DPRK Friendship Treaties in 1961, and the rapprochement between Beijing and Washington in the early 1970s, which triggered a similar rapprochement between Pyongyang and Seoul, were largely discredited when China started its economic opening towards the capitalist world economy in the late 1970s. Ever since then, Beijing has tried (unsuccessfully) to induce the Kim regime onto a similar economic development pathway (Lin 2015). But rather than following the Chinese model and thereby re-invoking historical patterns of Chinese preeminence, the Kim regime has expanded its autonomy by seeking nuclear weapons, and alternative sources of financial support, such as the United States, and by repressing a potential domestic opposition.

### *3.1 Episode 1: The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation*

Long before the People's Liberation army came to help the North Korean regime resist UN-led troops during the Korean War (1950-1953), China had regarded Korea both as a model tributary, fervently following China's ideology and statecraft, and a geostrategic challenge. Although highly controversial in the Chinese Party elite at the time, Chairman Mao envisioned that North Korea would serve as a first line of defense (lips), whereas China itself would be the second line (teeth) in a common struggle against Western capitalism (Chung/Choi 2013: 246).

Instrumental to the common effort was a group of Korean communist veterans who participated in the Chinese Civil War – the Yan'an faction. As the Yan'an faction rose in influence, due to its privileged access to China's military and political leadership, the Manchurian faction in North Korean leadership and Kim Il-Sung became increasingly concerned about a possible coup. After demoting several members during the war effort, Kim Il-Sung introduced the Juche ideology, stressing that the Korean revolution had to be carried out by Koreans and in accordance with Korean principles to achieve "self-reliance" in all spheres. This struggle first came to a head, when Kim purged large parts of the Yan'an faction at KWP Central Committee plenary session in August 1956 and then faced a concerted effort by the Chinese and Soviet Communist party to mediate between factions and reinstate the Yan'an members. While Kim first made concessions to Chinese and Soviet emissaries, he later waged more massive purges, consolidated his dictatorial leadership and demanded the withdrawal of all PLA troops from North Korea to "end the violation of North Korea's sovereignty and prevent further meddling in internal affairs" (Chen 2003).

To avoid further alienation of the North and to seize the leadership in the global communist movement, Chairman Mao conceded the Chinese withdrawal and considerable additional economic assistance. As the Soviet Communist party struggled with the impact of the Stalin era and the Polish-Hungarian crisis, the Chinese Communist party under Mao constrained its criticism and actively helped Kim Il-Sung to further bolster his grip on North Korea. Seizing this opportunity, the North Korean leadership immediately expanded its discussions with Moscow beyond economic support to include defense cooperation. After starting discussions in 1957, both sides concluded the Soviet-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on 6 July 1961 (Shen/Xia 2015: 98).<sup>3</sup>

To better understand how skillfully Kim Il-Sung used the increasing competition for leadership in the communist world, one has to acknowledge that North Korea succeeded in extracting considerable military, political and economic concession by China in the early 1960s. After having successfully pressed for the withdrawal of Chinese troops from the North in 1958, the North Korean leadership let it be known to the Chinese Communist party that it was negotiating a mutual defense arrangement with the Soviet Union, including a draft text of the

---

<sup>3</sup> The text of the treaty can be found at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3005971-1961-Treaty-of-Friendship-Cooperation-and-Mutual.html>.

later Soviet-North Korea Friendship Treaty. Thus, before leaving for the Soviet Union, Kim agreed with the Chinese ambassador to Pyongyang that he would immediately sign a similar treaty with China (Shen /Xia 2012: 32-35).

In contrast to the Soviet-DPRK treaty, the Chinese-DPRK treaty features several special characteristics: First, the Chinese drafters of the treaty sought to devise a comprehensive security alliance treaty, which renders military assistance not only in the event of an attack but foresees comprehensive arrangements for consultation and military assistance. In the central clause, Art. 2, the parties agree that “the two parties undertake jointly to adopt all measures to prevent aggression against either party by any state”. Art. 2 then goes on to specify the conditions under which military support will be given: “In the event of one of the contracting Parties being subjected to the armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other contracting party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal”. This provision is not only considerably broader and more specific than the equivalent in the Soviet-DPRK treaty. It also contains language that assuages the respective concerns of the parties on an equal basis: On the one hand, the treaty renders military support only in the event of an external military attack on one of the parties. Moreover, Articles 1, 4 and 6 commit the contracting parties (read especially) North Korea to the peaceful conduct of foreign affairs and particularly Korean unification. This clearly addressed the concern by the Chinese leadership that Kim Il-Sung may use the ongoing turmoil in South Korea to provoke a military conflict (Lee 2012). On the other hand, Art. 2 specifically calls for an “immediate” military response with “all means at its disposal”, reflecting China’s hesitating and often halting military assistance during the Korean War (see Shen 2012).

Moreover, and in contrast to the Soviet-DPRK treaty clause spelling out a 10-year effectiveness, the treaty between Beijing and Pyongyang contained no expiration date. Rather, in Art. VII, the treaty requires both parties to agree on its amendment or expiration, thereby setting a high standard for its abrogation. In practice, both parties have agreed twice to extend the treaty, un-amended for another 20-year period, while the Soviet-DPRK friendship treaty was revised, dropping the military cooperation clause, in 1999. The treaty also contains an all-inclusive “consultation clause” (Art. IV), which stipulates that “parties will continue to consult with each other on all important international questions of common interests to the two countries”. Interestingly, the accord also constrains the parties in that “neither contracting party shall conclude any alliance directed against the other contracting party or take part in any bloc or in any action or measure directed against the other contracting party” (Art. III). While this certainly is directed against either party cooperating with Western powers, it also may be interpreted as a plea for neutrality in conflicts between a contracting party (China) and other socialist or neutral states (read Soviet Union and India) (Lee 2012).

In sum, the respective military alignment behavior by China and North Korea in this first episode can be interpreted as follows: During the Korean War, the PRC rendered military support only hesitatingly – and with Mao overruling most of the Communist Party of

China (CPC) leadership – to consolidate the Soviet-Sino relationship, viewed as central for the consolidation of the communist rule in China itself. At the same time, this military solidarity helped to protect socialism in North Korea after the US-led United Nations (UN) forces advanced over the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. But in siding with communists in the North, China and the Soviet Union jointly decided and implemented major military and logistic operations, leaving Kim Il-Sung dependent on their “socialist solidarity”. After the war and with Chinese troops still located in North Korea, Mao then tried to consolidate his influence in North Korea as a “leader of the Asian revolution” through supporting the Yan’an group. He agreed to the withdrawal of Chinese troops only after the failed intervention on their behalf in August 1956 and against the background of the increasing socialist competition with the Soviet Union. In contrast to the temporary military commitment during (and after) the Korean War, the permanent military alliance with the now consolidated Kim served additional functions: On the one hand, it sought to pull North Korea into the Chinese orbit in the “socialist competition” with the deviating Soviets, thereby casting North Korea into a (fragile) ideological ally role against the reformist Khrushchev. On the other hand, in addition to North Korea, Mao sought military cooperation agreements with Vietnam and Mongolia to consolidate China’s borderlands, while struggling with India and the Soviet Union. As a consequence, the Chinese-DPRK treaty contains several Chinese concessions, i.e. an (almost) unlimited defense and consultation clause to accentuate equality between the contracting parties, despite China’s overwhelming military and political superiority.

For North Korea, and Kim Il-Sung in particular, the humiliating experience of dependence upon Soviet and then Chinese support during the Korean War provided the background for the following military alliance behavior. This experience was further amplified by the two Great Powers’ intervention on behalf what Kim considered renegade factions in the mid-1950s. This historical experience not only shaped his surge for autonomy, or Juche. It also directly shaped North Korea’s military alignment behavior. First, to prevent any rivaling domestic factions from benefiting disproportionately from cooperation with an outside power, Kim had to cut them off and consolidate his reign. The domestic purge of the Yan’an and Moscow factions was therefore instrumental in facilitating the later military alliances with Moscow and Beijing, because they neutralized the potential for a coup d’état. Secondly, to safeguard against any direct physical intervention by foreign powers, military assistance under the treaty had to be strong and effective, so as to maximize its deterrence value. But, and in contrast to the situation before the Chinese withdrawal in 1958, it should not contain a physical troop dislocation on North Korean territory because this may change the domestic balance-of-power between the Kim clique and rivalling factions or call for a direct foreign occupation. Lastly, the Kim Il-Sung regime, deprived of economic resources by its failed economic policies, learned during the Korean War and in subsequent years that it could trust neither socialist Great Power.

As a consequence, by simultaneously agreeing to two (slightly different) military cooperation agreements, the Kim regime casted both powers as a potential balancer of the other.

As long as China could not provide advanced military technology, e.g. anti-aircraft weapons to deter United States (US) planes from violating DPRK airspace, or nuclear technology, the North would lean on the Soviet Union. Especially when China radicalized its foreign relations during the Cultural Revolution or itself sought a rapprochement with Washington, North Korea could claim an independent but yet crucial role as a “linchpin” of the socialist movement, connecting those who could not cooperate among themselves.

### *3.2 Episode 2: The first nuclear crisis in 1993/1994*

With the Cold War coming to an end also in Asia, the United States started to withdraw its short-range nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula. In return, both Korean states engaged in bilateral negotiations on a Denuclearization Agreement, thereby setting the stage for wider normalization of diplomatic relations in the region. In August 1992, after much haggling, China normalized its diplomatic relations with South Korea, thereby, arguably, triggering the consultation clause of its Friendship Treaty with the North (see Kim 2001). But Pyongyang rejected any further opening towards the South and soon the implementation of the Joint Denuclearization Agreement of 31 December 1991 came to a halt. In December 1992, Pyongyang threatened to suspend bilateral exchanges with China and demanded relief from its bilateral debt (US\$ 3 Bio.). China’s leadership then invited Kim Jong-Il, the heir apparent to Kim Il-Sung, to China, but Pyongyang rejected the invitation. In return, the Chinese side decided to substantially reduce its bilateral relations with the North in early 1993. Under the so-called eight principles (from February 1993), Beijing not only decided to push for bilateral negotiation for the peaceful reunification of the Peninsula but also to limit political and military ties with the DPRK. Specifically, the Chinese side suspended political and military conferences with the North, failing to recognize contacts for these meetings and stopping to supply modern military technology to North Korea (Lee 2012).

Against this background of already strained Sino-DRPK relations, the first so-called North Korean Nuclear Crisis erupted in February 1993.<sup>4</sup> At the time, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found substantial discrepancies in Pyongyang’s declaration of nuclear activities under its IAEA Safeguards Agreement. When IAEA inspectors demanded additional access to critical sites and the IAEA Board Governors called for special inspections, the DPRK regime announced on 12 March 1993 that it intended to leave the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which it had entered upon urging by the Soviet Union in 1985. Upon request from the US, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 825, which called upon the DPRK to reconsider its withdrawal from the NPT, to cooperate with the IAEA and to engage in diplomatic talks in order to defuse the dispute. While the DPRK suspended its withdrawal

---

<sup>4</sup> The best accounts of the first North Korean nuclear crisis are: Martin 2002; Mazarr 1995; Sigal 1998; Wit/Poneman/Gallucci 2004.

decision after bilateral negotiations with the US, Beijing held several secret bilateral meetings with Pyongyang, insisting on the DPRK's cooperation (Wit et al 2005: 154-155).

The crisis reached its hiatus in early June 1994 when the Kim regime refueled its reactor in Yongbyon without proper IAEA monitoring, leaving the possibility to use 8.000 used fuel rods to produce weapons-grade plutonium after reprocessing. In early June, China signaled for the first time to its ally that it would abstain on an IAEA Board of Governors resolution to suspend technical aid to North Korea. It also explicitly warned Pyongyang that if their actions provoked Washington to a military reaction, they should not expect Chinese military support. Already in April, Pyongyang had unilaterally withdrawn from the Armistice Committee – without prior consultation with the Chinese government – and called for a new bilateral peace mechanism between the DPRK and the US, leaving the PRC out of the process (Chung/Choi 2013: 252).

The crisis was diffused only after former President Jimmy Carter proposed a temporary freeze on critical DPRK nuclear activities during a track-two mission to Pyongyang, followed by a negotiated comprehensive settlement, the so-called Geneva Agreed Framework, trading nuclear restraint by North Korea against economic support and the normalization of relations between Pyongyang and Washington. Subsequently, an international consortium was established – the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) – which supplied critical energy support and should have transferred proliferation-resistant Light-Water Reactor technology to the DPRK. By the time critical components of the first LWR should have been installed in exchange for Pyongyang's full cooperation with the IAEA regarding its nuclear past, the second North Korean nuclear crisis broke out (2002/2003) (Harnisch/Roesch 2011).

The DPRK's role as a military ally to China and the Soviet Union (then Russia) changed dramatically over the course of the first nuclear crisis, as both of its allies came to establish good and even privileged relations with archenemy South Korea. The relationship between the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had been in decline by then for several decades. Some military-to-military visits continued during this period despite the suspension under Premier Li Peng (February 1993). But more often than not, these meetings appeared to be symbolic in nature. In contrast, Beijing started to hold regular and high-level military and defense policy talks, functional exchanges and research cooperation with South Korea (Allen/McVaden 1999: 66-67).

The 1990 Soviet decision to normalize its relations with South Korea and the subsequent demand to start to pay back its debt (estimated around US\$ 4.6 Bio.) came as a complete shock to the regime, clearly posing an existential threat. As the Soviet Union accounted for 50% of overall DPRK external trade in 1990, it comes as no surprise that the Party newspaper, *Rodong Shimun*, used no unclear terms to describe the Soviet "betrayal".<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The Soviet Union/Russian-DPRK Friendship Treaty was soon amended (2000), from then on lacking a military cooperation component.

„When it comes to the USSR, it is the country that was responsible for the division of the Korean peninsula together with the US after the World War II and also conceded the DPRK as the sole legitimate state of the Korean nation... If there exists the power of hegemonism, weak states and nations would be victimized... According to South Korean newspapers, South Korea is going to give 2.3 billion dollars to the USSR. That means that the USSR sold out its dignity as a socialist superpower and its trust from alliances at the price of 2.3 billion” (Rodong Sinmun, 5 October 1990 as cited in Nam 2012: 181).

With the Soviet trade and assistance in free fall, China`s relative impact on North Korea`s external trade rose substantially, from 10% in 1991 to 30% in 1996. But China, trying to accommodate Pyongyang`s fear of abandonment while normalizing relations with the South through extensive secret diplomacy, also demanded from the Kim regime to pay back its substantial debt and to adjust its basic economic line (Kim 2001: 384-386). Faced with a dire economic situation and a deepening food crisis, the Kim regime again lashed out against what it once had considered an alliance as close as “lips and teeth”:

„Opportunists and betrayers of socialism have discarded the socialist task regarding people`s thought, and instead encouraged individualism and selfishness through the introduction of a capitalist market economy. They claimed multiplicity in ownership and thus, caused the total destruction of the socialist economic system, which is based on socialist ownership. There is no need for discussion that schemes by opportunists and betrayers of socialism are anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary [Their schemes] distort socialism in favor of imperialists, paralyze the superiority [of socialism], and open a way for the collapse of socialism and a return to capitalism” (Rodong Sinmun, 21 June 1995 as cited in Nam 2012: 182).

Facing a present and clear economic danger to the political survival of the regime rather than a rivalling faction to exploit the leadership transition after the death of Kim Il-Sung (June 1994), the North Korean leadership again diversified its alignment behavior in the mid-1990s. This time the regime leaned towards the US (and the KEDO implementing the Geneva Agreed Framework), hoping for additional economic assistance. Accordingly, Kim Jong-il himself called upon the US in August 1997 to improve the bilateral relationship, as foreseen in the Geneva accord:

„The US should fundamentally change its anachronistic policy toward us, and should no longer impede the peaceful unification of Korea. We will not see the US as an unswerving enemy, and we want to normalize relations with the US” (as cited in Nam 2012: 178).

In sum, during this episode, the interplay between a clear and present economic threat to the regime, caused by the abandonment by the Soviet Union and China, tilted the North Korean

towards a nuclear hedging strategy. Only after the successful US diplomatic intervention did the regime forego (temporarily) the capacity to produce 4-6 nuclear weapons (on short notice) to protect the Kim dynasty militarily.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the regime did not produce nuclear weapons right away, despite the fact that the Chinese government – in obvious contradiction to its treaty obligations with the DPRK – explicitly refused to grant military and diplomatic support in case of the DPRK further escalating the crisis in June 1994. In less than two months’ time, Beijing abstained from vetoing UN SC Res. 825, refused to veto a IAEA Board of Governors resolution suspending the agency’s technical assistance and threatened to abstain again from a UN SC resolution clearly condemning and sanctioning the DPRK after unloading the 8.000 burned fuel rods. Moreover, as the Soviet Union dissolved and abandoned North Korea economically, the Chinese Communist leadership did little to allay the respective fears. Rather, during the existential food crisis in 1996, Beijing offered merely 10% of the economic aid demanded by Pyongyang and refused to hold bilateral high-level talks at the time.

### *3.3 Episode 3: The near-death experience of the Sino-DPRK alliance*

In the current episode, starting in 2006, the Sino DPRK alliance is experiencing a near-death experience because both alliance partners regularly violate their alliance obligations and openly and militarily challenge their partner. This state of affairs substantially differs from a “virtual alliance”, in which it remains unclear whether partners remain committed to their obligations (Scobell/Cozard 2014: 56), but where their respective behavior does not openly contradict these obligations.

Systematically, both partners have not consulted each other regularly. Political and military consultations are at an all-time low since the mid-2000s. The DPRK’s current leader Kim Jong-un has neither met President Xi, nor has he travelled to China or received senior Chinese dignitaries.<sup>7</sup> In fact, as Victor Cha and Andy Lim (2017) have found, China-DPRK high-level exchanges have dramatically decreased under Kim Jong-un’s reign and each nuclear test has extended the time period between the test and the next high-level meeting. Moreover, while China has started to support UN SC resolutions sanctioning the DPRK regime in 2006, North Korea has openly defied the pressure by the international community, and specifically China, to refrain from building and testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile systems. Responding

---

<sup>6</sup> Without the Geneva Accord, the regime is believed to have been able to amass about 100 warheads by the year 2000.

<sup>7</sup> While Xi Jinping has reportedly sent a telegram in 2016, commemorating the 55th anniversary of signing the SINO-DPRK Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (Lee 2016), China has reportedly rejected a North Korean proposal for a joint military maneuver and cooperated in interdicting illegal DPRK weapons exports on a Chinese ship to Syria (cf. Perlez/Choe 2013; SCMP 2012).

to the censure of the NPT review conference about its ongoing nuclear weapon's activities, the North Korean foreign ministry stated:

“The DPRK does not want anybody to recognize it as a nuclear weapons state nor feels any need to be done so. It is just satisfied with the pride and self-esteem that it is capable of reliably defending the sovereignty of the country and the security of the nation with its own nuclear weapons” (as cited in Hayes/Bruce 2011, FN 16).

In return for North Korea's unabashed nuclear activities, China's leadership has not only exerted increased political and economic pressure on Pyongyang – including the ad-hoc suspension of energy supplies – but it has also repeatedly called its defense obligation under the treaty into question. In 1997, Foreign Minister Tang called the treaty a “remnant of the Cold War, no longer relevant to the situation”. In 2002, Pyongyang refused a Chinese proposal to modify alliance clause “immediately render military and other assistance”. Against the background of the US intervention of Iraq, Shen Jiru, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, publicly called in 2003 for the treaty's mutual defense clause to be revoked (Glaser/Billingsley 2012: 7-8). While several scholars supported Shen, a plurality of analysts appears to have argued for keeping the treaty in its existing form, so as to deter North Korea from further developing its nuclear weapons capacity (Freeman 2015b; Ru 2016).<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, the Chinese leadership decided to keep the treaty (clause) intact after 2003, but also reportedly continued to press for its revision (Glaser/Billingsley 2012: 8; Zhu/Beauchamp-Mustafaga 2015: 46).

Against this background, it is plausible to suggest that China's ambivalent position on its alliance obligations may have added to the North Korean motives to advance its nuclear program. But most likely it has not caused the DPRK to become a nuclear weapons state with a substantial operational arsenal. As Joseph Bermudez (2015) has argued, it is more plausible that the US intervention in Iraq in combination with the failure of the 9 September 2005 agreement in the Six-Party Talks and the Israeli destruction of the DPRK-supplied reactor in Syria on 6 September 2007 first triggered the DPRK's decision to develop an operational nuclear weapons capacity. But a detailed tracking of the key developments of the nuclear doctrine and weapons as well as ballistic missile system suggests that only under Kim Jong-un did the DPRK produce and test all the necessary components and establish the necessary procedures and policy guidelines to operate its growing arsenal (Lewis 2015; Mansourov 2014; Smith 2015).

---

<sup>8</sup> Thus, when North Korea shelled South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island, raising inter-Korean tension to the brink of war, then Chinese leader Hu Jintao's emissary, Dai Bingguo, warned the late North Korean leader Kim Jong-il: "If North Korea would first attack South Korea and, as a result, there were full-scale arms clashes, China wouldn't aid North Korea." (cf. Lee 2012).

More specifically, while the DPRK leadership under Kim Jong-il conducted only one nuclear test and 17 missile tests between 1994 and 2008, the number has risen since then to 62 missile tests and 4 nuclear tests in total, including 20 missile tests and 2 nuclear tests in the past year under Kim Jong-un alone (Cha 2017). The quantity and quality of the DPRK weapons program, as well as the speed of growth over time (i.e. 20 warheads until the end of 2016 and 50 operational warheads until the end of 2020), also suggests that the new DPRK leadership seeks a second-strike capacity against the US and other Great Powers by dislocating its missile launch sites close to the Chinese border and building solid-fuel missiles with short launch-on time and submarine-based missiles for extended distance with miniaturized warheads.<sup>9</sup> This indicates that North Korea has left the transactional period of its nuclear doctrine development and has entered the phase in which it seeks “Mutually Assured Destruction” capacity (see Table 1).

*Table 1: DPRK Nuclear doctrine development since 1994*

<b>Nuclear doctrine</b>	<b>Primary goals</b>	<b>Transparency</b>	<b>Nuclear Arsenal: Size/Diversity</b>	<b>Operational Complexity</b>	<b>Problems</b>
<b>Political/ Diplomatic 1994-2003</b>	Bargaining/ blackmail	Low: demonstrate nuclear components	None	None	Trustworthiness over time
<b>Transactional 2004-2012</b>	Internationalize, facilitate third party assistance	Low: demonstrate technical prowess	Small: crude weapons capacity on standby	Low: central authority	Relies on third party calculations
<b>Assured Strategic Destruction 2013-??</b>	Deter regime-threatening attacks/coercion	Medium: second-strike capacity	Medium: survivability of counter-weapons	Medium: central or delegated authority; weapons assemblage	Credibility against conventional threats
<b>Nuclear War doctrine</b>	Deter or Defeat on broad spectrum of threats	High: demonstrate survivability	High: large, diverse arsenal for first use/second strike	High: prepared for pre-delegation; integrated into military doctrine	Expensive and pressure on command & control

*Source: based on Smith 2015: 12*

As the 2013 DPRK “Law on the consolidation of the position of a Nuclear Weapons State for Self-Defense” states:

“Having an independent and just nuclear force, the DPRK put an end to the distressed history in which it was subject to outside forces’ aggression and interference and could emerge a socialist power of Juche which no one dares to provoke” (as cited in Mansourov 2014: 4).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. for analysis on the quantity and quality of the DPRK nuclear weapons program: Wit/Sun 2015; Wallerstein 2015, Chanlett-Avery et al. 2016; on miniaturization: Lewis 2015; on submarine based DPRK missile systems: Schilling 2016.

As the consequence of this escalation, China has most recently supported UN SC Res. 2321 (2016) under Article 41, Chapter VII of the UN Charter, condemning the DPRK's fifth nuclear test conducted on 9 September 2016 and restricting the DPRK's export of coal and iron ore substantially. Moreover, since 2013, China's leadership has allowed a somewhat pluralistic public debate, including senior military officials, over its North Korea policy, ranging from positions calling for the provision of an extended deterrence by China to revoking the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (cf. Beauchamp-Mustafaga 2014, 2015a, b; Gries 2012).<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, after a period of relying on the personnel and structures put in place by his father to facilitate the regime's dynastic transition, the new leader, Kim Jong Un, has systematically purged the upper echelon of the military and most high-ranking party officials associated with China and its economic opening. These officials include among others: Jang Song-thaek, the uncle of KJU (National Defense Commission), Ri Ryong-Ha and Jang Su-Gil (Deputy KWP leaders), Ri Yong Gil (oder abgesetzt) Hyon Yong-chol Ri Yong-ju (all leading officers of the Korea People's Army) (cf. Gause 2016; Harnisch/Friedrichs 2017). Most recently, it appears at least as highly plausible that Kim Jong Un has his half-brother, Kim Jong Nam, killed in a WMD attack at Kuala Lumpur airport, thereby sending a chilling warning to any potential opposition within the country or defector outside of the DPRK (Choe/Gladstone 2017).

To better understand this recent spike in nuclear activity and domestic purges under Kim Jong Un, I have reappraised the quantitative analysis by J. Hymans on North Korean Leader rhetoric under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and supplemented it with coding and analysis for Kim Jong Un.<sup>11</sup> The findings show that the reference group of "generic others" – against which the North Korean "nationalistic oppositional stance" is directed, dominates the sample under KJU (70). Interestingly, the KJU data resembles the findings for Kim Il Sung (0.7) rather than the one's for his father (0.85). The findings for the degree of nationalism under KJI and KJU, however, match each other.

---

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the Chinese military has obviously leaked documents indicating that it is actively planning for a collapse of the regime, following up on reports that PLA forces have been reinforced to protect China against incursions by North Korean individuals and rogue commandos searching for food or bounty (cf. Ryall 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Hymans first counts the DPRK demarcation vis-à-vis specific significant others, such as the US, ROK or China and then determines the degree of opposition and nationalism respectively. The following data is taken from Harnisch/Friedrichs 2017.

Table 2: Relative identification with „significant others“ (1975-2016)

Count of Other	KIS 1975-1979	KIS 1980-1984	KIS 1985-1989	KIS 1990-1994	KJI 1995-1999	KJI 2000-2005	KJI 2006-2008	KJU 2013-2016
Generic foreign others	55	65	77	125	113	149	99	70
SK	31	24	118	107	61	60	22	51
US	34	25	69	62	40	40	18	7
World community	19	20	66	62	22	33	14	30
Imperialist club	2	5	30	38	35	57	12	13
Communist community	8	6	30	21	6	0	0	16
Japan	12	6	16	8	9	16	2	2
Progressive community	9	8	17	7	10	2	2	5
Asia community	1	0	4	3	4	1	1	13

  

Leader	Generic Foreign Others	level of opposition	Level of Nationalism
KIS 1975-1979	55	0.74	0.78
KIS 1980-1984	65	0.76	0.82
KIS 1985-1989	77	0.54	0.75
KIS 1990-1994	125	0.67	0.66
KJI 1995-1999	113	0.84	0.79
KJI 2000-2005	149	0.82	0.89
KJI 2006-2008	99	0.88	0.89
KJU 2013-2016	70	0.7	0.8

Source: own calculation as based on Hymans 2008: 283.

A more detailed analysis, focusing on specific countries displays the following: First, under Kim Jong Un South Korea is explicitly identified as a „significant others“ (DPRK 2015), thereby bracking with the pattern of his predecessors which refered to the ROK always as integral part of a unified Korea against external Great Powers within the framework of a future Korean unification (cf. Cho 2011, Nam 2012: 202-211). Secondly, a clear trend is detectable under Kim Jong Un with regard to the erstwhile military ally, China. Under KJU, the DPRK defines Korea’s independent unification“ as a clear demarcation from China’s rapprochement with Seoul (DPRK 2014). Moreover, the data shows that North Korea’s interest in economic cooperation with the PRC under KJI (Hong 2014) has given way to a more pronounced autonomous stance which combines military independence with economic autonomy. The respective passage of Kim Jong Un’s 2014 New years address reads:

“The construction sector should set up world-class structures representative of the Songun era and build many other structures that could contribute to improving the people's living conditions, thus laying firm foundations of the *self-supporting economy* and providing the people with conditions for a more affluent and civilized life (DPRK 2014, italics added).”

In sum, these findings suggest that the DPRK views any further rapprochement with outside powers as weakening Korea as a future unified entity. Moreover, the data also strongly suggests that North Korea has taken turn away from China under Kim Jong Un which necessitates a much more autonomous course, both militarily and economically. These findings are then corroborated by the recent dramatic increase in violent purges and the public execution of Kim Jong Nam with VX, a vicious nerve agent and sophisticated WMD.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study suggests that autocratic states expecting high domestic and external costs from complying with military alliance agreements may seek to design agreements that limit future costs, i.e. internal vulnerabilities and external obligations. Autocratic regimes, under conditions of a strong and common enemy may therefore form broad and comprehensive commitments to deter democratic rivals. But they will reduce the internal risks of alliances by limiting troop deployments, extensive military integration; war gaming and planning, that could leave them vulnerable to a future denial of support as well as coup d'états supported by their erstwhile ally.

Consider the case of the Sino-DPRK alliance. Using role theory, the study showed that China's level of commitment to the alliance with North Korea depended as much on the competition with the Soviet Union as on its rivalry with the United States. The analysis of the foundational episode of the alliance also indicated that North Korea's role conception foresaw to align with both, the Soviet Union and China, to use the tension between the two to maximize autonomy – to avoid the humiliating dependence during the Korea War – and to limit the probability of foreign-sponsored coup d'états. It follows that the Sino-DPRK alliance (after the purge of the Yan'an group) never allowed for troop dislocation on DPRK territory or developing an integrated alliance military training and defense planning.

There appears to be consistent evidence for the second episode, involving the opening of China towards the West and South Korea in particular, while North Korea, under Kim Il Sung starts to pursue a virtual nuclear weapons program which is then used as an quasi-ally to extort concessions from the United States and the KEDO consortium. Given China's role in the Korea war and Korea's long-time subordinate position vis-à-vis the Middle Kingdom, North Korea's refusal to adopt China's economic reform and opening remains deeply disturbing to the Chinese leadership, fueling an increasing frustration and dissociation from its military ally. A major difference between the second and third episode is that neither the external threat by the United States nor the domestic opposition to the Kim Il Sung regime seemed to be as imminent and deadly as under Kim Jong Un. Current analysis, such as the case studies in Freeman (2015) do not take into account this nexus between internal and external security dilemmas; neither does the literature on autocratic nuclear proliferation or purges, thereby missing the link between domestic regime dynamics and external alliance behavior.

Since an autocratic personalist regime, such as Kim Jong Un – that sees itself in a deadly struggle for domestic and external survival – is more likely to pursue both operational nuclear weapons and domestic purges despite a military alliance, when it dissociates itself from the alliance partner, analyses that do not take into account the nexus between internal and external enemies, i.e. between the ego-and alter part of a role, are likely to come to different conclusions.

These findings for autocratic military alliance, in turn, then may lead to a more nuanced and theoretically sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon. On the one hand, it seems likely

that autocracies do align broadly with each other when facing a strong democratic challenger but that their commitment remains limited when they compete with other autocratic states at the same time or when they face domestic opposition supported by those rivals. This is especially true, as the North Korean experience of abandonment during the Korea War shows, when past events strongly shape the respective regime identity, i.e. Juche under Kim Il Sung and the Byungjin line under Kim Jong Un.

On the other hand, as the North Korean shows, the cumulation of internal and external challenges can instill so much paranoia in personalist autocratic regimes that they abandon both domestic and foreign alignments through purging potential foes and pursuing nuclear weapons against the will of their nuclear-armed ally. These dramatic parallel realignments of autocratic regimes will not take place very often because military and one-party regimes do face other domestic alignment dilemmas. However, future research on autocratic military alliances will benefit from paying attention to both of these effects.

\*\*\*

## 5. Literature

- Allen, Kenneth W./McVadon, Eric A. 1999. *China's Foreign Military Relations*, Report No. 32, Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center.
- Beauchamp, Mustafaga, Nathan. 2014. *Assessing North Korea's Nuclear Gambit: A View from Beijing*, <http://sinonk.com/2014/12/03/zhang-liangui-on-north-korea-nuclear/>
- Beauchamp, Mustafaga, Nathan. 2015a. *Chinese Public Opinion and North Korea: Will Anger Lead to Policy Change*, *China Brief* 15 (1), <https://jamestown.org/program/chinese-public-opinion-and-north-korea-will-anger-lead-to-policy-change/>
- Beauchamp, Mustafaga, Nathan. 2015 b. *Deciphering PLA Media Commentary on North Korea: Going Rogue or Staying on Script*, *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series*, [http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei\\_aps\\_nathan\\_beauchamp-mustafaga\\_final.pdf](http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_aps_nathan_beauchamp-mustafaga_final.pdf)
- Bechtol, Bruce E. 2014. *North Korea and Regional Security in the Kim Jong-un Era: A New International Security Dilemma*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Benson, Brett et al. 2012. *Ally provocateur: Why allies do not always behave*, in: *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (1): 47–58.
- Bermudez, Joseph. 2015. *North Korea's Development of a Nuclear Weapons Strategy*, [http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NKNF\\_Nuclear-Weapons-Strategy\\_Bermudez.pdf](http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NKNF_Nuclear-Weapons-Strategy_Bermudez.pdf)
- Cha, Victor 2017. *Countering the North Korean Threat: New Steps in the U.S. Policy*. Testimony by Victor Cha before the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on February 7, 2017, <http://beyondparallel.csis.org/countering-north-korean-threat-new-steps-u-s-policy/>
- Cha, Victor/Lim, Andy. 2017. *New Dataset: China-DPRK High Level Visits since 1953*, *Beyond Parallel Report*, March 17, 2017, <http://beyondparallel.csis.org/china-dprk-high-level-visits-since-1953/>
- Chambers, Michael R. 2005. *Dealing with a Truculent Ally: A Comparative Perspective on China's Handling of North Korea*, in: *Journal of East Studies* 5 (1): 35–75.
- Chanlett-Avery, Emma. 2016. *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation*, CRS Report.
- Chen, Jian (2003). *Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance: An Historical Review of Chinese-North Korean relations*, in: Hildebrandt, Timothy (ed.): *Uneasy Allies: Fifty Years of China-North Korea Relations*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, pp. 4–10.
- Chiba, Daina/Johnson, Jesse C./Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2015. *Careful Commitments: Democratic States and Alliance Design*, in: *Journal of Politics* 77 (4): 968–982.
- Cho, Young Chul. 2011. "North Korea's Nationalist Discourse: A Critical Interpretation." *Korea Observer* 42 (2):311-343.
- CHOE, Sang-hun/Gladstone, Rick. 2017. *Kim Jong-un's Half Brother Is Reported Assassinated in Malaysia*, in: *New York Times*, 14.02.2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/14/world/asia/kim-jong-un-brother-killed-malaysia.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/14/world/asia/kim-jong-un-brother-killed-malaysia.html?_r=0)
- Chung, Jae Ho/Choi, Myung-hae 2013. *Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors? Making sense of China-North Korea relations, 1949-2010*, in: *Pacific Review* 26 (3): 243–264.
- Colgan, Jeff D. 2013. *Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict*, in: *World Politics* 65 (4): 656–90, doi:10.1017/S004388711300021X.
- Colgan, Jeff D./Weeks, Jessica L.P. 2015. *Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict*, in: *International Organization* 69 (1): 163–194, doi:10.1017/S0020818314000307.
- Conrad, Courtenay R. 2014. *Dictatorships and International Cooperation*. ISQ Online Symposium: *Even Dictators Have Friends: Autocratic Cooperation in the International System*, <http://www.isanet.org/Publications/ISQ/Posts/ID/286/Dictatorships-International-Cooperation>.
- David, Steven R. 1991. *Explaining Third World Alignment*, in: *World Politics* 43 (2): 233–256.

- DeMeritt, Jacqueline HR. 2012. International Organizations and Government Killing: Does Naming and Shaming Save Lives? In: *International Interactions* 38 (5): 597–621.
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea. 2015. "New Year Address Made by Kim Jong Un." Accessed 4. September. <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/news-items/kim-jong-uns-speeches-and-public-statements-1/2015-new-years-address>
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea. 2014. "New Year Address Made by Kim Jong Un." Accessed 4. September. <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/news-items/kim-jong-uns-speeches-and-public-statements-1/2014-new-year-address>
- Eisentraut, Sophie 2013. Autokratien, Demokratien und die Legitimität internationaler Organisationen, in: *Zeitschrift für International Beziehungen* 20 (2): 3–33.
- Fang, Songying/Johnson, Jesse C./Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2014. To Concede or To Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances, in: *International Organization* 68 (4): 775–809.
- Filson, Darren/Werner, Suzanne. 2004. Bargaining and Fighting: The Impact of Regime Type on War Onset, Duration, and Outcome, in: *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (2): 296–313.
- Freeman, Carla P. (ed.) 2015a. *China and North Korea. Strategic and Policy Perspectives from a Changing China*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Freeman, Carla P. 2015b. Introduction: Continuity and Change in Chinese Expert Views of North Korea, in: Freeman 2015a, 1–14.
- Gartzke, Erik/Gleditsch, Kristian. 2004. Why Democracies May Actually Be Less Reliable Allies, in: *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (4): 775–95.
- Gat, Azar. 2007. The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers, in: *Foreign Affairs*, no. July/August: 59–69.
- Gause, Ken. 2012. *Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment. An Examination of the North Korean Police State*, Washington, DC: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea.
- Gause, Ken. 2015. *North Korean House of Cards. Leadership Dynamics under Kim Jong-un*, Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea.
- Gause, Ken. 2016. North Korean Political Dynamics of the Kim Jong-un Era, in: *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 25 (1): 33–63.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1999. What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years? In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1): 115–144.
- Gibler, Douglas/Vasquez, John. 1998. Uncovering Dangerous Alliances, 1495-1980, in: *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (4): 785–807.
- Glaser, Bonnie/Billingsley, Brittany. 2012. Reordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula, in: Glaser, Bonnie/Billingsley, Brittany (eds.): *Reordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula*, Washington, DC: CSIS, pp. 1–24.
- Gries, Peter. 2012. Disillusionment and Dismay: How Chinese Netizens Think and Feel About the Two Koreas, in: *Journal of East Asian Studies* 12: 31–56.
- Harnisch, Sebastian/Frank, Cornelia/Maull, Hanns W. (eds.) 2011. *Role Theory in International Relations. Contemporary Approaches and Analyses*, New York: Routledge.
- Harnisch, Sebastian/Friedrichs, Gordon. 2017. Nordkoreas neue Strategie zur Stabilisierung dynastischer Herrschaft: Nuklearwaffen, Provokationen und innenpolitische Säuberungen?, in: Harnisch, Sebastian et al. (forthcoming). *Sicherheitspolitiken in Asien*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Hayes, Peter and Scott, Bruce. 2011. North Korean Nuclear Nationalism and the Threat of Nuclear War in Korea, NAPSNet Policy Forum, Accessed 18. September 2016.
- Hymans, Jacques. 2006. *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation. Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy*, New York: Cambridge UP.
- Hymans, Jacques. 2008. Assessing North Korean Nuclear Intentions and Capacities: A New Approach, in: *Journal of East Asian Studies* 8: 259–292.
- Holsti, Kalevi J. (1970): National Role Conceptions and the Study of Foreign Policy, in: *International Studies Quarterly* 14 (3): 233–309
- Job, Brian L. 1992. *The Insecurity Dilemma: National, Regime, and State Securities in the Third World*, in: Job, Brian L. (ed.): *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

- Kim, Samuel P. 2001. The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform, in: Lampton, David (ed.): *The Making of China's Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 371–408.
- Kim, Yongho. 2011. *North Korean foreign policy: Security dilemma and succession*, Maryland: Lexington Books.
- Kim, Yongho. 2013. North Korea's Threat Perception and Provocation Under Kim Jong-un: The Security Dilemma and the Obsession with Political Survival, in: *North Korean Review* 9 (1): 6–19.
- Kneuer, Marianne. (forthcoming). Autocratic Regimes and Foreign Policy, in: Thies, Cameron (ed.): *Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis*, New York: OUP.
- Krain, Matthew. 2012. J'accuse! Does Naming and Shaming Perpetrators Reduce the Severity of Genocides or Politicides? In: *International Studies Quarterly* 56 (3): 574–589.
- Lee, Seong-hyon 2016. China-N. Korea defense treaty, in: *Korea Times*, 26.07.2016, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2016/11/197\\_210355.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2016/11/197_210355.html)
- Lee, Sang-sook. 2011. North Korea China Treaty of Friendship: New Implication and Current Bilateral Relations, in: *Korea Focus* 20 (2).
- Leeds, Brett/Ritter, Jeffrey M./Mitchell, Sara/Long, Andrew G. 2002. Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944, in: *International Interactions* 28: 237–260.
- Lewis, Jeffrey 2015. North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: The Great Miniaturization Debate, 38 North, February 5, 2015, <http://38north.org/2015/02/jlewis020515/>
- Mansourov, Alexandre Y. 2014. Kim Jong Un's Nuclear Doctrine and Strategy: What Everyone Needs to Know, NAPSNet Special Reports, <http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/kim-jong-uns-nuclear-doctrine-and-strategy-whateveryone-needs-to-know/>
- Martin, Curtis H. 2002. Rewarding North Korea: Theoretical Perspectives on the 1994 Agreed Framework, in: *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (1): 51–68.
- Mattes, Michaela. 2012. Democratic Reliability, Precommitment of Successor Governments, and the Choice of Alliance Commitment, in: *International Organization* 66 (1): 153–72.
- Mattes, Michaela, and Mariana Rodríguez. 2014. Autocracies and International Cooperation, in: *International Studies Quarterly* 58 (3): 527–38, doi:10.1111/isqu.12107.
- Mazarr, Michael J. 1995b. *North Korea and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation*, Houndmills, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- McCourt, David M. 2012. The Roles States Play: A Meadian Interactionist Approach, in: *Journal of International Relations and Development* 13(3): 370–392.
- Moravcsik, Andrew 2003. Liberal International Relations Theory: A Scientific Assessment, in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (eds.): *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 159–204.
- Nam, Jongwoo. 2012. *The Geographical Construction of National Identity and State Interests by a Weak Nation-State: The Dynamic Geopolitical Codes and Stable Geopolitical Vision of North Korea, 1048-2010*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Perlez, Janes/Choe, Sang-hun. 2013. North Korean Envoy Visits Beijing Amid Concerns About U.S.-Chinese Relations, in: *New York Times*, 22.05.2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/world/asia/north-korean-leader-sends-envoy-to-china.html>
- Pohl, Benjamin (2016): NATO and liberal International Relations Theory, in: Mark Webber and Adrian Hyde-Price (eds.): *Theorizing NATO. New perspectives on the Atlantic alliance*. London: Routledge 2016, 116–139.
- Ru, Sun. 2016. Beijing and Pyongyang: A Special relationship facing the Final Curtain, ISPI, Analysis, No. 297 Accessed 19. September. [http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analisi297\\_sun\\_ru\\_05.05.2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analisi297_sun_ru_05.05.2016_0.pdf)
- Ryall, Julian 2014. China plans for North Korean regime collapse leaked, in: *The Telegraph* 05.05.2014.
- Schilling, John. 2016. A New Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile for North Korea, 38 North, [http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NKNF\\_Evolving-Nuclear-Strategy\\_Smith.pdf](http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NKNF_Evolving-Nuclear-Strategy_Smith.pdf)
- Scobell, Andrew. 2004. *China and North Korea: from Comrades-in-Arms to Allies at Arm's Length*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Scobell, Andrew/Cozad, Mark. 2014. China's North Korea Policy, in: *Parameters* 44 (1): 51–63.
- Shambaugh, David. 2003. China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term, in: *Washington Quarterly* 26 (2): 43–56.
- Shen, Dingli. 2006. North Korea's Strategic Significance to China, in: *China Security* 4: 19–34.
- Shen, Zhihua. 2012. *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*, Routledge: New York
- Shen, Zhihua/Xia, Yafeng. 2012. China and the Post-War Reconstruction of North Korea, 1953-1961, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP\\_Working\\_Paper\\_4\\_China\\_and\\_the\\_Postwar\\_Reconstruction\\_of\\_North\\_Korea.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP_Working_Paper_4_China_and_the_Postwar_Reconstruction_of_North_Korea.pdf)
- Sigal, Leon. 1998. *Disarming Strangers. Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea*, Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Smith, Shane. 2015. North Korea's Evolving Nuclear Strategy, North Korea's nuclear futures series, US-Korea institute at SAIS. Accessed 19. September. [http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NKNF\\_Evolving-Nuclear-Strategy\\_Smith.pdf](http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NKNF_Evolving-Nuclear-Strategy_Smith.pdf)
- Soest, Christian von. 2015. Democracy Prevention: The International Collaboration of Authoritarian Regimes: The International Collaboration of Authoritarian Regimes, in: *European Journal of Political Research* 54 (4): 623–38, doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12100.
- South China Morning Post/SCMP. 2012. Suspected North Korean missile parts seized on Chinese ship en route to Syria, in: *South China Morning Post*, 14.11.2012, <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1082289/suspected-north-korean-missile-parts-seized-chinese-ship-en-route-syria>
- Tansey, Oisín. 2016. *International Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, Oxford University Press.
- Wallerstein, Mitchel B. 2015. The Price of Inattention: A Survivable North Korean Nuclear Threat? In: *Washington Quarterly* 38 (3): 21–35.
- Walker, Stephen G. (ed.) 1987. *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wang, Tianji. 2014. Small State, Big Influence: China's North Korea Policy Dilemma, in: *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* 1 (1): 5–27.
- Way, Christopher/Weeks, Jessica. 2014. Making It Personal: Regime Type and Nuclear Proliferation, in: *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (3): 705–719.
- Weeks, Jessica L. 2008. Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve, in: *International Organization* 62 (1): 65–101.
- Weeks, Jessica L. 2012. Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict, in: *American Political Science Review* 106 (2): 326–47, doi:10.1017/S0003055412000111.
- Wit, Joel S./Poneman, Daniel B./Gallucci, Robert L. 2004. *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Wit, Joel S./Sun, Young Ahn. 2015. North Korea's Nuclear Futures: Technology and Strategy, US-Korea institute at SAIS, <http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/NKNF-NK-Nuclear-Futures-Wit-0215.pdf>
- Zhu, Feng/Beauchamp-Mustafaga, Nathan. 2015: North Korea's Security Implications for China, in: *Freeman* 2015a, 37–64.