

**Vakhtang Davitashvili**

PhD student

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Email: [vakhtang.davitashvili806@sps.tsu.edu.ge](mailto:vakhtang.davitashvili806@sps.tsu.edu.ge)

## **Three No's Principle: China's Policy Toward North Korea's Nuclear Program**

### **Abstract**

China identifies nuclear non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula as a central interest but remains North Korea's main political, military, and economic partner. Despite Beijing's potential leverage, Pyongyang has steadily advanced its nuclear program, even writing nuclear weapons into its constitution in 2023 as vital to its survival. China's approach is guided by the long-standing "Three No's": no war, no chaos, and no nuclear weapons. The first principle reflects Beijing's determination to prevent military conflict, which would destabilize East Asia and impose heavy political and economic costs. The second stems from fears that excessive pressure could collapse the North Korean regime, triggering refugee flows, undermining Chinese stability, and inviting greater U.S. military presence near its borders. North Korea's role as a buffer state further reinforces Beijing's desire to preserve the regime. Although preventing conflict and instability outweighs denuclearization, Beijing also views a nuclear-armed North Korea as a threat to its interests. Pyongyang's nuclear tests have provoked military buildups among U.S. allies and raised the risk of regional proliferation, outcomes directly opposed to China's strategic goals. Moreover, North Korea's pursuit of "Juche," or independence from foreign powers, limits Beijing's ability to control its neighbor. To address these challenges, China has promoted diplomacy and multilateralism. It was a key participant in the Six-Party Talks, which offered North Korea economic aid and security guarantees in exchange for denuclearization. However, the failure of these talks and Pyongyang's continued weapons development left Beijing balancing international demands for sanctions with its overriding interest in regime stability.

Ultimately, China's policy reflects a careful balancing act: it seeks denuclearization but prioritizes stability. The "Three No's" remain the foundation of Beijing's approach, yet they also constrain its ability to halt North Korea's nuclear advance — a dilemma that could increasingly undermine China's regional influence.

**Keywords:** North Korea, China, nuclear weapons, denuclearization, regime stability

## **Relevance of the topic**

North Korea's nuclear program remains one of the most pressing and enduring security challenges in East Asia and beyond. Since withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests and codified nuclear weapons into its constitution, solidifying them as central to regime survival. Efforts to halt Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions—including sanctions imposed by the UN and United States, as well as several rounds of diplomatic negotiations—have consistently failed.

In this context, China's role is particularly pivotal. Despite Beijing's official support for denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, it remains North Korea's most significant political, military, and economic partner, accounting for over 90% of North Korea's foreign trade. However, China's strategic calculus is more complex than simple support or opposition. Guided by its "Three No's" doctrine: no war, no chaos, and no nuclear weapon, China prioritizes regime stability and regional peace over immediate denuclearization. This balancing act has shaped Beijing's seemingly contradictory behavior, such as supporting UN sanctions at times while also easing their implementation to prevent Pyongyang's collapse.

The relevance of this topic has only grown in light of the war in Ukraine. As Russia and North Korea have drawn closer, with Pyongyang supplying weapons to Moscow in exchange for political backing and possibly technological aid, a new axis of authoritarian solidarity has emerged. This development not only illustrates why North Korea's nuclear proliferation cannot be ignored but also shows that Russia's newfound closeness to North Korea challenges China's traditional leverage over Pyongyang. If Russia begins to supply North Korea with critical resources or nuclear-related technology that China cannot control or monitor, it could undermine China's ability to shape security outcomes on the Korean Peninsula, a matter of strategic concern given Beijing's long-standing interest in maintaining regional stability.

Given that peace, regime stability, and strategic balance in East Asia remain fundamental to global security, understanding China's approach toward North Korea's nuclear program is essential. This article examines the constraints and contradictions inherent in China's policy, offering insight into why denuclearization has remained elusive and why it is likely to remain so amid intensifying geopolitical competition.

## **The aim of the research**

Chinese leaders and senior officials have repeatedly declared publicly that nuclear non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula constitutes an important regional interest for China. On the other hand, China is North Korea's primary economic, military, and political ally. At first glance, this suggests that China should have sufficient leverage to compel North Korea to abandon the development of its nuclear program. In contrast, North Korea acquires the financial and material resources necessary for advancing its nuclear program largely through trade with China. Therefore, the aim of this research is to determine China's motivations for facilitating the development of North Korea's nuclear program.

This article adopts a qualitative research design grounded in process tracing and supported by document analysis to examine China's strategic motivations for enabling North Korea's nuclear development. The study focuses on three key crisis moments in North Korea's nuclear program (2003–2006, 2009–2013, and 2016–2018) and assesses how China's behavior varied in response to shifting perceptions of threat from the United States.

Primary sources include official statements from Chinese government representatives, UN Security Council documents, and trade data published by Chinese and international agencies. Secondary sources include academic articles, policy reports, and expert analyses of China–North Korea relations.

The analysis applies Stephen Walt's Balance-of-Threat Theory as the theoretical framework to explain China's support for North Korea in the context of regional power dynamics. Process tracing is used to identify causal mechanisms linking perceived threats to policy responses across the crisis periods, while document analysis supports data triangulation and the validation of findings.

### Three No's Principle: China's Policy Toward North Korea's Nuclear Program

North Korea's nuclear development has been a major security issue not only for East Asia but also for the wider international community. As demonstrated by Russia's war in Ukraine, a relatively small state possessing nuclear weapons can generate instability far beyond its immediate region. The North Korean nuclear issue has been recognized and addressed for decades. Since the beginning of the 21st century in particular, key international actors—including the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea—have sought to resolve it. Multiple diplomatic efforts have been undertaken to reach a negotiated settlement with North Korea. However, every attempt has failed, and no state, whether major or minor, has succeeded in persuading North Korea to denuclearize.

In 1994, the United States and North Korea reached an agreement under which Pyongyang pledged to halt its nuclear program and close its main nuclear facility at Yongbyon. In return, Washington agreed to provide heavy fuel oil and construct a light-water reactor by 2003. The agreement also envisioned the normalization of North Korea's relations with the United States and South Korea. Although initially considered a major breakthrough and a potential foundation for lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, the deal collapsed in 2003. That year, North Korea admitted it was continuing to enrich uranium and withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The failed Agreed Framework was followed by the Six-Party Talks, the most multilateral and sustained diplomatic initiative with North Korea to date, which took place between 2003 and 2009. The participants included the United States, China, Russia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan. The talks sought to secure North Korea's denuclearization, its return to the NPT, and the admission of international inspectors into the country. While at times the negotiations appeared

promising, progress unraveled when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in 2006 and a second in 2009. Thereafter, the Obama administration adopted a policy of “strategic patience,” and following the breakdown of the Six-Party Talks, no major diplomatic engagement with North Korea occurred for nearly a decade. The next- and thus far the last - serious diplomatic initiative emerged in 2018 during President Trump’s first term, after North Korea had carried out three nuclear tests in 2016–2017.

This led to the UN Security Council imposing comprehensive sanctions. Tensions between the United States and North Korea reached unprecedented levels, with the leaders of both countries openly threatening military strikes against one another. Nevertheless, the two sides eventually agreed to negotiate the denuclearization issue. The rhetoric shifted rapidly: President Trump began praising Kim Jong-un and, in a symbolic gesture of reconciliation, crossed the North Korean border together with South Korean President Moon Jae-in to signal trust and a shared desire for peace. Although these gestures appeared promising to many observers, two rounds of negotiations between the U.S. and DPRK delegations ended without tangible progress. Deep mistrust persisted, the language in the documents remained vague, and the process ultimately collapsed. In 2023, North Korea amended its constitution to enshrine its nuclear policy, explicitly affirming its intent to develop more advanced nuclear weapons as a guarantee of its survival (Choi & Shin, 2023).

Across these diplomatic initiatives, different leaders were involved, operating under different contexts and citing different reasons for failure. Yet the most consistent obstacle was mutual mistrust. From a realist perspective, North Korea views the United States and its allies as hostile rivals, and nuclear weapons as its best means of maximizing regime survival and safeguarding sovereignty. While this logic is persuasive, North Korea remains an outlier among authoritarian states that have attempted to pursue nuclear weapons. Iraq, Syria, and Libya all launched nuclear programs but ultimately abandoned them under the weight of international isolation and external pressure. Similarly, the U.S. and Israeli strikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities in 2025 illustrate the high risks faced by authoritarian states pursuing nuclear capabilities. North Korea, however, has defied these patterns. Despite enduring extensive sanctions and severe economic hardship, it nevertheless succeeded in advancing its nuclear program and developing nuclear weapons.

This exceptional case has been enabled in large part by China's support, Pyongyang’s strongest ally. Chinese leaders and senior officials have repeatedly emphasized that nuclear non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula is a vital regional interest for Beijing. Yet China simultaneously serves as North Korea’s principal economic, military, and political partner. At first glance, this suggests that China should have sufficient leverage to compel Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear ambitions. In practice, however, North Korea derives much of the financial and material support necessary for sustaining its nuclear program through trade with China. Resolving this apparent paradox requires a deeper understanding of Beijing’s strategic calculus.

China’s strategy towards North Korea can be summarized by the “Three No’s Doctrine.” The Three No’s consist of the following principles: no war, no chaos,

and no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. Although all three are important to China's regional interests, it strategically prioritizes the first two—regional stability over disarmament.

### **Preserving Peace on the Korean Peninsula**

Since the end of the Korean War, there have been numerous instances when the threat of renewed hostilities on the Korean Peninsula was actively discussed. Despite the signing of the armistice agreement, a peace treaty was never concluded, and the war has never been formally ended. This indicates that the resumption of hostilities cannot be ruled out. China is well aware of this, and in light of its geopolitical ambitions, one of its main priorities since the 1990s has been preventing war on the Korean Peninsula, as such a development would run counter to Deng Xiaoping's policy of *Taoguang Yanghui* - "hiding capabilities and biding time." Although Xi Jinping has moved away from this cautious strategy and adopted a more assertive, leadership-oriented foreign policy, China still actively cultivates an image as a responsible peacemaker. It seeks to maintain multilateral diplomacy, especially with Asian states, in order to earn their trust and expand its influence in the region.

China's broader foreign policy objectives are tied to its long-term national vision. One of the central goals is achieving "national rejuvenation" by 2049. Xi Jinping emphasized this during the Chinese Communist Party's 100th anniversary in 2021. The idea of "national rejuvenation" is a key component of Xi's "Chinese Dream." Regionally, this vision includes the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea and Japan, the erosion of American alliances in the Indo-Pacific, reunification with Taiwan, and the resolution of territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas. Through these strategic objectives, China aims to reshape the regional order in its favor and project itself as the central power in East Asia.

Despite China's efforts, several moments have arisen when the risk of war was very real. The most notable occurred in 2010, when a North Korean submarine attacked and sank a South Korean naval vessel in the Yellow Sea, killing 46 people (Batty, 2010). A few months later, North Korea launched a missile strike on South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island, which killed both soldiers and civilians and wounded many (Branigan & MacAskill, 2010). Although South Korea exercised restraint and refrained from retaliating, each such incident renders the prospect of war tangible, compelling both the United States and China to seriously consider whether to honor their mutual defense commitments and extend support to their respective partners.

Since 1992, when China and South Korea officially established diplomatic relations, Beijing has sought to develop economic ties with Seoul, and it has done so successfully. According to the United Nations (n.d.) According to the COMTRADE database, in 2024, China imported 181 billion USD from South Korea, making South Korea China's leading export destination. Similarly, in 2024, South Korea's imports from China reached 139 billion USD. Any conflict on the Korean Peninsula in which China sided with North Korea would rupture the

economic ties it has built with South Korea over decades. Beyond South Korea, such a conflict could trigger a domino effect, undermining China's relations with other key U.S. allies, such as Japan, as well as with some ASEAN countries. In addition to the economic costs, China would lose valuable leverage over South Korea that it has already used to advance its security interests. For example, in 2016, South Korea and the United States announced the deployment of the THAAD missile defense system in South Korea. China opposed the move, claiming THAAD's radar could be used to monitor Chinese missile activities, thereby undermining its security. Although China did not impose official sanctions, it restricted market access for South Korean goods and services in several sectors (Meick & Salidjanova, 2017).

The deterioration of trade relations between China and South Korea implies that Beijing will have fewer opportunities to employ economic tools to advance its strategic interests. Maintaining close economic relations with South Korea is therefore essential for safeguarding China's own security interests. Accordingly, it is evident that, in economic terms, South Korea is a far more significant partner for China than North Korea and that the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula would severely undermine the decades-long economic relationship. Nevertheless, in 2021, China renewed its military alliance with North Korea, demonstrating that despite the economic risks, acting as a shield for Pyongyang continues to serve Beijing's broader strategic interests. At the same time, this also underscores that preserving peace and preventing escalation on the Korean Peninsula remain major priorities for China.

### **Ensuring Regime Stability and Regional Order**

The second principle is the preservation of regime stability in North Korea. This provides an important lens through which to interpret China's actions toward the DPRK. Although both the United States and China formally support the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, their approaches to sanctions differ fundamentally. China seeks to preserve the status quo on the peninsula, while the United States views the current situation as unacceptable and, in addition to denuclearization, favors regime change. From Beijing's perspective, developments in this direction could jeopardize its political stability, economic growth, and security (Gu, 2015).

The collapse of the North Korean regime—already governing a starving population of approximately 26.5 million people—could trigger a severe humanitarian crisis, resulting in a large-scale refugee influx into China, with which North Korea shares a 1,400 km border. In such a scenario, there is a significant risk that a substantial portion of North Korea's 25 million inhabitants would attempt to cross into Chinese territory. In 2012, media reports cited a Chinese military source as saying that the People's Liberation Army had been strengthened to such a degree that, in the event of a contingency in North Korea, Chinese forces could reach Pyongyang within two hours (The Dong-A Ilbo, 2012).

Furthermore, leaked documents in 2014 revealed that the Chinese government had considered strategies to manage large-scale refugee flows from North Korea (Daily

NK, 2014). These developments indicate that a potential migrant crisis would pose a serious challenge to the economy and social stability of China's northeastern border regions—an issue directly linked to the possibility of regime collapse in North Korea.

Chinese state media has also hinted at Beijing's dual concerns. For instance, in *The Global Times*, an article stated that "China should also make clear that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten U.S. soil first and the U.S. retaliates, China will stay neutral"—a clear warning to Pyongyang not to provoke conflict. Conversely, the same article warned that "if the U.S. and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so." (Reuters, 2017) In this sense, China seeks to restrain both sides in order to prevent chaos on the peninsula.

The most critical aspect of regime collapse, however, lies in the geopolitical consequences. The fall of the North Korean regime would deprive China of its buffer state in a region otherwise dominated by U.S. allies. Approximately 70,000 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea and Japan, and in this regional context, North Korea stands as the only state not closely aligned with Washington. It is therefore unsurprising that China's ruling elite views the preservation of influence over North Korea as a matter of national interest. For Beijing, Pyongyang functions as a strategically indispensable buffer state. Consequently, despite the regime's unpredictability, China remains committed to preserving the status quo on the Korean Peninsula—preventing U.S. influence from extending north of the 38th parallel while safeguarding its own strategic position.

In an article published in 2006, Professor Shen Dingli of Fudan University argues that North Korea serves as a Chinese satellite. Despite the efforts of the Six-Party Talks, North Korea has officially become a nuclear-armed state, which, according to Shen, brings more benefit than harm to China. A nuclear North Korea poses an additional challenge for the United States, particularly if it decides to take military action on the Korean Peninsula or in the Taiwan Strait.

Shen further argues that if North Korea relinquishes its nuclear weapons in exchange for a peace treaty with the United States and becomes an "Asian Libya," this would undermine China's strategic interests. In such a scenario, North Korea would join the U.S. alliance alongside South Korea and Japan, making it significantly harder for China to achieve one of its main objectives—peaceful reunification with Taiwan (Shen, 2006).

To this day, China continues to leverage its relationship with North Korea to constrain U.S. power projection in the region. Beijing frequently argues that progress on the North Korean nuclear issue will only be possible if Pyongyang no longer perceives a direct threat from the United States. For this reason, since 2016, Chinese officials have promoted a "dual-track" approach that envisions suspending North Korea's nuclear and missile tests in parallel with the cessation of U.S.–South

Korea joint military exercises. In his article, Kim Heung-Kyu, director of the Institute for Chinese Politics at Ajou University, identifies four main periods in China's self-perception: the Traditional Geopolitics period (1993–2002), the Developing Country period (2003–2012), the Newly Rising Great Power period (2010–2017), and the Great Power period (2018–present). According to Kim's classification, under Xi Jinping, China's self-perception is dominated primarily by that of a Great Power. With that, China is viewed as a major state that will inevitably become a global leader, and competition with the United States is considered unavoidable. Within this context, the Korean Peninsula is regarded as a point of strategic confrontation, and North Korea is perceived as a satellite whose strict control is necessary (Kim, 2020).

Looking ahead, maintaining North Korea as a satellite state will likely remain an essential element of China's regional strategy. The 2021 renewal of the mutual defense treaty for an additional twenty years reflects this commitment, underscoring Beijing's determination to ensure the survival of the North Korean regime and, with it, the continuation of its strategic buffer.

#### Preventing Nuclear Proliferation

Although avoiding war and maintaining regime stability in North Korea remain crucial for China, Pyongyang's nuclear development continues to be a significant concern. For decades, Beijing has emphasized that a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula aligns with its national interests. A nuclear-armed North Korea presents clear strategic drawbacks for China. As North Korea's arsenal grows stronger and its posture potentially more aggressive, other countries in the region may feel compelled to enhance their own military capabilities.

For instance, Japan's 2022 National Security Strategy notes that "North Korea's military actions pose a more significant and imminent threat to Japan's national security than ever before" (Cabinet Secretariat, 2022, p.9). In response, Tokyo historically increased its defense budget to 2% of GDP. Similarly, Asan Institute for Policy Studies (2025) reports that 76.2% of South Koreans support the development of a domestic nuclear arsenal. In January 2023, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol stated openly that if the threat from North Korea intensified, the South Korean government would actively consider developing its own nuclear weapons (Sang-Hun, 2023).

Ultimately, Yoon reached an agreement with U.S. President Joe Biden in which South Korea pledged not to pursue an independent nuclear program. In return, the United States committed to periodically deploying nuclear-armed submarines to South Korea and involving Seoul in its nuclear planning operations. This arrangement runs counter to China's security interests in the region and is therefore a continuing source of concern for Beijing. The issue is further complicated by North Korea's Juche ideology, which emphasizes self-sufficiency and independence; a strong nuclear arsenal could make Pyongyang increasingly resistant to Chinese influence.

China's North Korea Policy Through the Lens of Balance-of-Threat Theory

Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory which offers a compelling framework for explaining why Beijing continues to support Pyongyang despite ideological divergence and international pressure.

As a refinement of the balance-of-power framework, this theory distinguishes between power and threat, arguing that states form alliances not merely against the most powerful actors but against those they perceive as most threatening. In an anarchic international system, states choose between bandwagoning and balancing, with balancing more common when a significant threat emanates from another state. Walt identifies four key components of threat: (1) aggregate power — a state's overall resources including population, industrial capacity, and military and technological strength; (2) geographic proximity — closer states are perceived as more threatening due to their greater potential for power projection; (3) offensive capabilities — states with strong offensive power are more likely to provoke balancing coalitions; and (4) aggressive intentions — states viewed as aggressive are more likely to be countered through balancing. Walt's theory also challenges the primacy of ideological affinity in alliance formation, suggesting that ideology becomes secondary when perceived threats are high. Economic or military aid alone is insufficient to forge alliances, though such assistance may strengthen existing ones.

Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory provides a useful framework for understanding China's seemingly paradoxical relationship with North Korea. Although many experts have predicted a deterioration in their ties due to diverging ideologies and interests, the core of the China–North Korea alliance remains stable. China continues to be North Korea's primary source of economic, political, and military support, which indirectly sustains Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

According to Walt, alliances form not simply in response to power but to perceived threats. The four key indicators of threat—aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions—help explain China's policies. China and North Korea both perceive the United States as a major threat, particularly due to the U.S. military presence in South Korea and Japan, and its growing security initiatives and regional alliances (e.g., QUAD, AUKUS). China's "dual-track" diplomacy, which seeks denuclearization alongside a reduction in U.S. military presence, further reflects its threat-balancing behavior.

Ideology plays a limited role: during periods of low U.S.–China tension, ideological differences between China and North Korea become more evident. However, when U.S. pressure intensifies, these differences are downplayed in favor of strategic cooperation. China's economic aid to North Korea does not create the alliance but reinforces it in times of heightened external threat.

Overall, the strength of the China–North Korea alliance hinges not on ideology or mutual affinity but on their shared goal of counterbalancing U.S. influence in East Asia. Thus, the future trajectory of their partnership will ultimately depend on the evolving level of perceived threat from the United States.

## **Conclusion**

The article demonstrates that China's policy toward North Korea is driven by strategic anxieties rooted in its regional interests. These concerns are often summarized under the "Three No's": no war, no instability, and no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. 1) China opposes the outbreak of war on the peninsula, as such a conflict could draw China into military involvement, damaging its international reputation and economic development. 2) China is equally opposed to the collapse of the North Korean regime, whether through war or excessive external pressure. Regime collapse would likely trigger internal chaos and a massive influx of refugees across the border into China. Additionally, it would eliminate China's buffer state and potentially enable increased U.S. influence at China's doorstep, jeopardizing its security interests and reducing its leverage over U.S. regional strategy, including the use of North Korea's nuclear program as a counterbalance to U.S. dominance. 3) While China is concerned with North Korea's nuclear development, it also views North Korea's nuclear weapons as complicating U.S. defense strategies and prompting an arms build-up in pro-American states in the region.

Ultimately, the study reveals that China prioritizes weakening U.S. influence in East Asia as a core regional objective. Given this strategic context, North Korea serves as a valuable partner for China. The greater the perceived threat from the United States, the more China stands to benefit from a nuclear-armed North Korea, which can act as a strategic hedge. In such cases, China's motivation to prevent North Korea's nuclear development diminishes, highlighting how alliance behavior is shaped by threat perception rather than ideological alignment or treaty obligations.

## References

- Asan Institute for Policy Studies. (2025, April 28). *Asan poll: "South Koreans and their neighbors 2025" records 76.2% public support for nuclear armament.* [https://www.asaninst.org/bbs/board.php?bo\\_table=s3\\_4\\_2\\_eng&wr\\_id=92](https://www.asaninst.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=s3_4_2_eng&wr_id=92)
- Batty, D. (2010, March 27). *South Korean navy ship sinking leaves 46 feared dead.* *The Guardian.* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/27/south-korean-navy-ship-sinks>
- Branigan, T., & MacAskill, E. (2010, November 23). *North Korea: A deadly attack, a counter-strike – now Koreans hold their breath.* *The Guardian.* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/23/north-south-korea-crisis-conflict>
- Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Japan. (2022, December 16). *National Security Strategy of Japan* (Provisional translation). <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>
- Choi, S.-H., & Shin, H. (2023, September 28). *North Korea amends constitution on nuclear policy, cites U.S. provocations.* *Reuters.* <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/north-korea-parliament-amends-constitution-enshrine-nuclear-policy-kcna-2023-09-27/>
- Daily NK. (2014, May 4). *Report: China's military prepared for collapse scenario.* <https://www.dailynk.com/english/report-chinas-military-prepared-fo/?tztc=1>
- Gu, G. (2015). China's policy toward the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs. In C. P. Freeman (Ed.), *China and North Korea: Strategic and policy perspectives from a changing China* (pp. 157–177). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137455666>
- Kim, H.-k. (2020). *China's evolving North Korea policy.* *Focus Asia: Perspective & Analysis.* Institute for Security and Development Policy. <https://www.isdp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Chinas-Evolving-North-Korea-Policy-FA-02.04.20.pdf>
- Meick, E., & Salidjanova, N. (2017, July 26). *China's response to the U.S.–South Korean deployment of the missile defense system and its implications.* U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission. [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Report\\_China%27s%20Response%20to%20THAAD%20Deployment%20and%20its%20Implications.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Report_China%27s%20Response%20to%20THAAD%20Deployment%20and%20its%20Implications.pdf)
- Reuters. (2017, August 11). *Chinese paper says China should stay neutral if North Korea attacks first.* <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/chinese-paper-says-china-should-stay-neutral-if-north-korea-attacks-first-idUSKBN1AR005/>

Sang-Hun, C. (2023, January 12). *South Korea's debate over nuclear weapons heats up.* *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/12/world/asia/south-korea-nuclear-weapons.html>

Shen, D. (2006). *North Korea's strategic significance to China.* *China Security*, Autumn, 19–34. <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/434/434.pdf>

The Dong-A Ilbo. (2012, January 25). *China can enter Pyongyang within 2 hours in the event of a contingency.* <https://www.donga.com/en/List/article/all/20120125/403014/1>

Trading Economics. (n.d.). *China imports from South Korea.* Retrieved September 10, 2025, from <https://tradingeconomics.com/china/imports/south-korea>

Trading Economics. (n.d.). *South Korea imports from China.* Retrieved September 10, 2025, from <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-korea/imports/china>