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**The Six-Party Talks and the North Korean
nuclear weapons programme: negotiation
analysis**

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Abstract

This thesis is aimed at analysing the Six-Party Talks and why they failed to generate a viable solution to the North Korean nuclear weapons programme. Employing theoretical approaches of negotiation analysis, this analysis is conducted under the presumption that a zone of possible agreement did not exist due to the involved parties' irreconcilable positions. Two hypotheses addressing factors that are exogenous to the negotiations such as the parties' underlying interests and North Korean domestic politics are explored so as to find an explanation for the negotiators' pursuits within the Six-Party Talks. The findings reveal that on the one hand, North Korea can hardly dissociate from its nuclear weapons programme due to the gains in international leverage and for ideological reasons. On the other hand, the other five parties are each concerned with their own priorities revolving around the Korean Peninsula. These underlying interests are related to enhancement and maintenance of influence in the region, Korean unification, economic expansion or solving other bilateral issues with the DPRK. Thus, cooperation, commitment and common agreement in the multilateral setting of the Six-Party Talks is severely limited.

Keywords

Six-Party Talks, North Korea, USA, China, South Korea, Russia, Japan, nuclear weapons, negotiations, negotiation analysis

Range of thesis: 116,382 characters

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that she compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

In Hamburg, July 28, 2017



Signature: Maika Malina Sdun

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List of Abbreviations

BATNA	Best alternative to negotiated agreement
DMZ	Korean Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IR	International Relations
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NTI	Nuclear Threat Initiative
OOPS	Outside option principle
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZOPA	Zone of possible agreement

Explanatory note regarding Chinese, Japanese and Korean names:

Names of persons are written in the order that is customary in East Asian cultures – family name first, followed by given name.

1 Introduction

The Korean Peninsula is home to one of the most unpredictable threats to regional and global security of the 21st century. In September 2016, the diplomatically largely isolated regime in North Korea has once again reminded the international community of the fragile security constellation in East Asia by conducting another successful nuclear test. It was the fifth in a series of tests since 2006, dissipating even the last bit of doubt that today the North Korean regime is in possession of Nuclear weapons. The threat originating from North Korea is not new and tensions in the whole region are rising. Longstanding rivalries between major regional powers such as China and the US as well as between China and Japan; territorial and maritime disputes involving most countries in the region, most notably China and Japan that are not only involved in a dispute with each other, but also in several conflicts with other neighbours; questionable future US commitment to the region under the leadership of current president Donald Trump, which indicates a probable end to the Obama administration's 'Pivot to Asia' policies; possibly intractable inter-Korean issues and finally, recent alarming tensions between China and South Korea over THAAD¹ deployment on South Korean territory, make it seem as though security in East Asia is more uncertain and unstable than ever.

Attempting to contain North Korean nuclear ambitions, Chinese leaders have repeatedly expressed the desire to resume the Six-Party Talks in recent years. Since 2003, the major actors in the region – China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the US – have engaged in multiple rounds of negotiation with North Korea, after bilateral negotiations between North Korea and the US in the 1990s had already failed to achieve the dismantlement of North Korean nuclear armament. The Six-Party Talks were aimed at developing a

¹Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) is an anti-ballistic missile system used by the US Army, which is designed to shoot down short to intermediate range ballistic missiles. As of May 2017, a THAAD system in South Korea is operational, but further deployment has been halted.

peaceful solution to the threats and concerns caused by the North Korean nuclear weapons programme, but despite various efforts and intermittent progress, the parties did not reach an effective agreement leading to a sustainable solution. The negotiations were eventually discontinued in 2009 and the North Korean regime has been continuing nuclear armament ever since.

This thesis sets out to examine possible causes for the Six-Party Talks' deadlock and the resulting discontinuation of talks in 2009 when North Korea decided to abandon this multilateral framework. The main objective is finding an answer to the central question why the Six-Party Talks have not led to a sustainable agreement between the participating parties. Commencing by scrutinising whether the prospect of reaching an agreement was realistic in the beginning or never actually existed in the first place, conceivably contributing factors such as the influence of North Korea's specific ideological motivation and domestic circumstances as well as the other parties' general geopolitical interests in the region will also be delved into. Naturally, this thesis cannot and will not claim to uncover and disclose all factors that influenced the outcome of such complex multilateral negotiations, but it aspires to offer one plausible explanation based on some of the most relevant aspects. Even though deadlock analysis might serve as an initial step towards suggestions for break-through or trigger further research, proposing a solution to the Six-Party Talks or attempting a prediction of future developments regarding the North Korean nuclear crisis in general, lie beyond the scope of this thesis.

Under the assumption that the involved parties' positions did not leave space for the existence of a zone of possible agreement (ZOPA), this thesis argues that each actor's position builds upon its own rationale. While North Korean nuclear policy and motivation are based on the domestic ideological construct and severely constrain the country's

foreign affairs, the other actors' positions in the Six-Party Talks are largely determined by underlying geopolitical interests on the Korean Peninsula and the East Asian region.

The theoretical approaches of negotiation analysis offer a suitable basis for a qualitative analysis of the Six-Party Talks and their eventual standstill. Reaching beyond the scope of game theory and decision analysis, negotiation analysis broadens the perspective on bargaining situations by making allowances for more than one dimension and avoiding exclusive focus on the interactive process of negotiation itself. Hence, negotiation analysis does not neglect to integrate the influence of dimensions beyond the actual bargaining process and includes structural elements such as well as bargaining power and exogenous factors into the assessment of bargaining situations. In addition, the theories of negotiation analysis provide practical concepts to specifically analyse deadlocks and their causes. Drawing on the ideas of Raiffa, Putnam and others, this work attempts to approach the main problem from different angles. Building on a negotiation analytic foundation, two hypotheses, which address the research question, are designed to guide the examination of the Six-Party Talks and uncover probable determining factors for the deadlock. Against the backdrop of the six parties' varying positions in the negotiation setting, I will first attend to explain the underlying assumption of non-existence of a ZOPA. The two hypotheses will then address North Korea's as well as the other countries' rationales for the positions they have adopted during the negotiations.

The verification of the hypotheses will largely rely on relevant scholarly literature, but also on available primary sources, such as unilateral and multilateral statements by the relevant governments, as well as supporting material such as established media publications.

The next chapter will elaborate on the conceptual framework of this thesis, which encompasses a detailed definition of the research question, an introduction to key elements of the theoretical approach of negotiation analysis, a description of the methodological approach and the thorough presentation of the guiding hypotheses. The following chapter will present the course of events, providing the historical background and overview of the Six-Party Talks' development necessary to understand the circumstances of the negotiations. The subsequent fourth chapter will revolve around the scrutiny of a ZOPA by focussing on the negotiation setting as a whole and discussing whether an agreement between the six parties was possible or not. Chapter five will then target the two hypotheses in the endeavour to investigate the reasons why a sustainable agreement was not reached by examining North Korea's domestic situation as well as the other parties' geopolitical interests as possible influencing factors. Finally, the results of the analysis will be summarised and discussed along with concluding remarks in the last chapter.

2 Conceptual framework

This thesis is a qualitative analysis of the negotiations concerning the North Korean nuclear weapons programme, which took place in several rounds between 2003 and 2007. As such, it aims to provide an explanation for the outcome that made the whole process seem like a rather vain endeavour. By setting a footing in the theories of negotiation analysis, I will investigate the dynamics and reasons that may have influenced the course and outcome of the Six-Party Talks.

2.1 Research question

For the purpose of building a conceptual framework, this thesis will be guided by the previously indicated research question: Why have the Six-Party Talks not led to a sustainable agreement between the participating parties? In order to find a proper answer to this question, following aspects will be examined:

- Existence of the possibility of finding a solution that is acceptable for all parties
- Each party's goals and interests as well as how each party's position and behaviour influenced the processes and outcomes of the negotiation rounds
- Influence of change in external/environmental circumstances over the course of the negotiation rounds

The theoretical and methodological foundation, on which I will elaborate in the next sections, revolve around providing a solid basis for the analysis of the Six-Party Talks and a possible answer to the research question.

2.2 Negotiation analysis

The theoretical foundation for this study of the Six-Party Talks will be based on negotiation analysis. Even though formal definitions of what exactly constitutes a negotiation vary widely, they usually draw upon certain shared fundamental assumptions. Most significant among these common precepts is the mutual belief that entering into negotiation with the other parties serves the purpose of facilitating the satisfaction of one's own goals and concerns, and therefore often triggers the onset of negotiations. Even in cases where parties participate in negotiations for other purposes such as buying time, gaining influence etc., or just pretend the desire to reach a common agreement, for instance negotiate in bad faith, the dynamics caused by the negotiation process itself may – regardless of the actor's actual commitment – produce (intended or unintended) outcomes (Alfredson/Cungu 2008: 6).

Game theory and decision analysis laid the theoretical groundwork for negotiation analytic approaches. Yet, negotiation analysis has developed into a distinct independent approach as it aims at achieving a broader perspective by avoiding sole focus on present interactive processes. Rather than merely attending to the issues and (non-)decisions on the surface, negotiation analysis also takes into account what lies beyond (Sebenius 1992: 18). Further, negotiation analysis in IR addresses negotiation setups and their complexity, determinants for bargaining dynamics and domestic factors. Other important aspects of the analysis of inconclusive or failed negotiations necessarily focus on the possibility and causes of deadlock. The following parts will therefore introduce the most relevant aspects for this analysis of the Six-Party Talks.

Structural elements

Issues, positions and underlying interests

The inspection of various elements of a negotiation commences with the identification of the issues that are object to bargaining, the number of involved parties, their positions on the disputed issues and their underlying interests. It is important to keep in mind that actors' positions do not necessarily reflect their actual interests, so that positions and underlying interests must be carefully distinguished (Sebenius 1992: 26). Additionally, it is worth noting that as opposed to traditional game theory, negotiation analysis tends to de-emphasise actors' rationality and acknowledges that most likely the actors' knowledge about the elements of the 'game' are limited. Therefore, the 'game's' structure and its change are also subject to actors' perceptions (Sebenius 1992: 21ff). The structural complexity of a negotiation increases with increasing number of parties, addition and linkage of issues, coalitions among parties or division inside a party (Odell 2012: 380ff).

Zone of possible agreement and best alternative to negotiated agreement

In order to estimate whether finding a solution acceptable to all parties possibly exists or not, it is required to identify each party's reservation point. The reservation point represents the absolute minimum an actor is willing to settle for in a negotiation. Raiffa maintains that any outcome beyond the reservation point is not worth negotiation for (Raiffa 1982: 126f). Building upon the parties' reservation points, a ZOPA can be ascertained if there is an overlapping range between the various reservation points. This however merely means that agreement might be possible, but it is not at all certain. In addition, the ZOPA can change over the course of a negotiation. E.g. if issues are added to the bargaining table, it is most likely that the ZOPA will be affected in one way or the

other, as additional issues can widen, reduce or even destroy the ZOPA (Odell 2012: 382).

Notwithstanding the above, alternatives to negotiated agreement must be considered also. The real existence as well as the perception of outside options or best alternatives to negotiated agreement (BATNA) may not only determine a party's bargaining power, but also its willingness to commit to negotiation in the first place. It is implied that a negotiation can only produce a joint agreement, if all negotiators believe the agreed deal to be superior to abandoning the negotiations (Wheeler 2000).

Bargaining power

The terms describing bargaining power (e.g. 'bargaining strength', 'bargaining skill') prompt that negotiation outcomes usually benefit the – in traditional realist understanding – stronger or more powerful parties to a negotiation, which have recourse to more financial and economic resources, greater military capacity or larger ability to compensate losses etc. Naturally, these qualities do play a certain role in some situations and should not be completely disregarded, however as Schelling emphasises, "these qualities are by no means universal advantages in bargaining situations: they often have a contrary value" (Schelling 1960: 22). According to him, bargaining power may just as well be the power to fool or bluff the adversaries by deceiving or making tactical use of these skills (Schelling 1960: 23). Further aspects such as information asymmetry and time – meaning advantages for those negotiators that are relatively less patient – also qualify as determinants for bargaining power (Muthoo 2000: 148ff). Similar to the principle of an actor's BATNA, he additionally introduces the outside option principle (OOPS) as he sees an increase in bargaining power for those parties who have credible

and sufficiently attractive outside options that can be employed (e.g. as means of threat) to their advantage (Muthoo 2000: 155f).

Exogenous factors: domestic politics

Beside the aforementioned structural elements of a negotiation setting, exogenous elements also wield influence on negotiation processes and outcomes. These elements determine the context a negotiator is settled in, but they are at the same time placed outside the negotiator's sphere of control during the actual bargaining situation.

One of the exogenous factors that have been most widely discussed in negotiation analysis is the influence of domestic politics. In his article on crisis bargaining, Fearon discusses audience costs and argues "that they may be most significant in states where foreign policy is conducted by an agent on behalf of a principal, as in democracies" (Fearon 1994: 579). This in turn means that regardless of a party's underlying interests, it is bound by their domestic audience, especially when representing the people in a democracy.

Fearon's approach is complementary to Putnam's model of diplomacy as a two-level game. The logic of diplomacy as two-level games is based on the similar fundamental assumption that politics on the international level and on the domestic level can influence one another reciprocally. As Putnam explains, both the international and the domestic level are subject to their own dynamics and game logic so that central decision makers who play a role on both levels have to be mindful of both. He elaborates that "[a]t the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximise their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimising the adverse con-

sequences of foreign developments” (Putnam 1988: 434). Additionally, he emphasises that two-level games are unusually complex because despite weighty incentives for consistency between decisions on both levels, “moves that are rational for a player at one board [...] may be impolitic for that same player at the other board” (ibid.). Still, clever moves on one board may occasionally have the potential to prompt realignments on the other board, making for previously unexpected developments and possibilities.

Using Putnam’s terminology, international agreement is only possible if it falls within the negotiators’ ‘win-sets’ on their respective domestic levels. A win-set includes all possible arrangements that are acceptable to a decision-maker considering domestic demands. Naturally, international agreement is only possible if there is an overlap between win-sets. Consequently, the larger these win-sets the more likely an agreement between the negotiators and the smaller these win-sets the more likely a negotiation breakdown (Putnam 1988: 437f). Nevertheless, Putnam also points out that the relative size of a negotiator’s domestic win-set can affect the distribution of joint gains of a potential international agreement, meaning that a smaller win-set can make for a bargaining advantage (Putnam 1988: 440). He further highlights several factors that primarily determine win-set size. On the domestic level, the size of a win-set is dependent on relevant constituents’ preferences, possible coalitions and power distribution on the one hand – implying that the lower the cost of not reaching an agreement and maintaining the status quo for national decision-makers, the smaller the win-set – and institutions or ratification procedures to be more exact on the other hand (Putnam 1988: 442ff). On the international level, win-set size is majorly determined by negotiators’ strategies that draw back on the exploitation of side payments and ‘good will’ (Putnam 1988: 450ff). Putnam further addresses how uncertainty about the opponent’s win-set can affect bargaining tactics as well as the risk of defection, as “[d]eals can only be struck if each

negotiator is convinced that the proposed deal lies within his opposite number's win-set and thus will be ratified" (Putnam 1988: 453).

Deadlocks

Lastly, it must be noted that negotiations may conclude in different outcomes. Even though it may seem like negotiations are set out to reach a common agreement eventually, the outcome can just as likely be an impasse or deadlock. However, it is too simple to generally consider deadlocks a failure, because to some parties avoiding an agreement can be preferable or even the main goal (Odell 2012: 383).

Narlikar defines deadlock as a still point of all negotiation that occurs under two distinct conditions. The first condition is that an "extended situation of non-agreement exists" in which "parties adopt inconsistent positions and are unable or unwilling to make the concessions sufficient to achieve a breakthrough on the particular issue" (Narlikar 2010: 2). The second condition, which must also be fulfilled for a negotiation to qualify as deadlocked, is "[a] landmark moment in the negotiation process [...] [which] despite having set up expectations towards a compromise, is unable to trigger the necessary concessions to ensure an agreement on the particular issue" (ibid.). She further distinguished between three types of deadlocks – stalemate, extended delay and breakdown – that entail various consequences. Stalemates are characterised by de-escalatory dynamics and have the potential to trigger concessions by the mutually hurt parties that eventually lead to revival of negotiation or even facilitate agreement. Yet, extended delays occur when non-agreement persists beyond landmark moments and is usually followed by disengagement and a major decrease in the probability to reach an agreement. Finally, a deadlock can be classified as a complete breakdown when it persists for so long that the deadlock deteriorates to a point where negotiating parties quit and walk away

(Narlikar 2010: 3ff). In general, if overcome successfully, deadlocks can eventually generate pay-offs, but also usually generate very high costs when they remain unbroken. According to Narlikar, there are various causes for deadlocks. While in some cases they can stem from idiosyncratic factors, they are often the result of distributive strategy – representing value claiming rather than value creating (integrative) interests (Narlikar 2010: 6). More concretely, she presents the following six factors that determine the occurrence of deadlocks. They may occur,

- when negotiators believe their BATNA to be superior to an agreement.
- when there are high levels of dishonesty causing distrust and uncertainty.
- the more equal the power distribution and the more diverse the culture of the negotiators constituting the balance of power.
- due to institutional structures.
- when parties set great store by fairness.
- due to specific domestic circumstances (Narlikar 2012: 7-12).

Conflicts over identity related issues are particularly prone to result in deadlock and similar to Narlikar, Fearon sees the reasons for deadlock – in his research the specific case of war as a result from negotiation failure – mainly in private information, commitment problems and issue indivisibility (Fearon 1995: 381f).

2.3 Methodological approach

The theories of negotiation analysis, as summarised above, offer a useful basis to reflect and explain the dynamics of the Six-Party Talks, as they factor in various dimensions of multilateral negotiations that are also relevant in this specific case. Therefore, they will be applied in this qualitative analysis of the Six-Party Talks.

Based on the guiding research question, I will explore two hypotheses, which shall be corroborated or disproven. They are aimed at answering the fundamental question of why the Six-Party Talks have not produced a persevering agreement based on the aforementioned structural elements of multilateral negotiations. These hypotheses will be subordinated to a fundamental assumption that the Six-Party Talks have not led to a sustainable agreement between the participating parties, because there was no zone of possible agreement.

Concretely, the initial step of the analysis will be the identification and description of basic structural elements, meaning the involved parties, the disputed issues, each party's position at the beginning of the Six-Party Talks in 2003, but also the linkage of issues. Closely connected to this basic outline and necessary in order to underline the fundamental assumption, the following step will be the derivation of the negotiators' reservation points and the assessment of whether the reservation points allowed for the existence of a ZOPA. It is crucial to first explore the existence of a ZOPA at the point of the negotiations' start in order to assess how the situation has changed over the course of the talks until 2009 when the North Korean government officially abandoned the negotiations, and whether the ZOPA has decreased, vanished or never existed in the first place. BATNAs are closely connected to the ZOPA and the negotiators' reservation points and shall therefore also be explored. Based on these factors the initial assumption about the ZOPA will be substantiated in order to utilise it as a precondition for the two hypotheses.

Subsequently, I will explore the two hypotheses, since I believe it is important to factor in other dimensions as well, and presumably the structural setting alone has not determined the outcome of these multilateral negotiations. Building on domestic politics as a

potential determining factor for negotiations and considering the DPRK's unique political situation, the first one (H1) reads as follows:

H1: The unique domestic politics and ideology of North Korea impede an agreement with the other involved parties.

The following step will therefore revolve around canvassing the influence of domestic politics. Especially in the case of North Korea, which maintains a unique, isolated and largely impenetrable political system, having a basic idea about its domestic politics and ideology may be key to understanding the government's interests, position and behaviour in the Six-Party Talks.

Based on Narlikar's six factors that possibly influence the outcome of negotiations such as the level of dishonesty, institutional structures or power distribution among others, the second hypothesis (H2) will pivot on the remaining five actors, their presumable underlying interests and the role they played over the course of negotiations:

H2: The varying geopolitical interests of the surrounding powers hamper finding a solution that all six parties can commonly agree on.

Unlike H1, which explicitly focalises on domestic circumstances in North Korea, the analysis of H2 will factor in all involved parties and possibly existing idiosyncrasies such as specific geopolitical interests or pre-existing conflicts among each other. Furthermore, exploring domestic politics and public interests in South Korea and Japan might help understand their specific interests and demands, too. For an in-depth analysis of the negotiation outcome, I will discuss if and how – based on Narlikar's conditions and classifications of deadlocks as presented above – it can be categorised as a stalemate, extended delay or even breakdown. Moreover, the six factors determining the occurrence of deadlocks will also be applied in order to facilitate finding an answer to the research question.

So as to explore H1 and H2 and find concrete reasons for the Six-Party Talks' outcome, each actor's bargaining power and their respective use of it should be investigated during the steps of analysis in order to appraise how they may have influenced the course and outcome of the talks. It is important to note that the two hypotheses are not necessarily competing and will each be assessed on their own. The findings will also be underlined by examining how the actors' bargaining power manifests itself in possibly resulting BATNAs, OOPS, actual concessions or (non-) decisions etc.

As this thesis is a qualitative analysis of the Six-Party Talks, it is based on a variety of primary sources such as official government statements and policy papers, treaties and relevant international organisations' reports. Specifically, I will use any available primary source on the Six-Party Talks, which includes chairman statements, unilateral statements, joint statements and press communiqués. Furthermore, supporting secondary sources such as contemporary scholarly literature, reports by independent research institutes and established journals/media etc. will be consulted for the analysis.

3 Course of events

3.1 Historical background

In order to develop a deeper comprehension for the issues concerning the North Korean nuclear weapons programme as well as how and why the Six-Party Talks were brought into being in the first place, a basic awareness of Korean history is necessary. Without fundamental knowledge of the events of more recent decades in particular, it will be hardly possible to grasp the involved parties' interests and positions in their entirety. The purpose of this brief summary of the historical background is to provide an overview of the course of events prior to the start of negotiations.

Today, Korea is divided into two separate sovereign states, the Democratic People's Republic or North Korea on the northern half of the Korean Peninsula and the Republic of Korea or South Korea in the southern part of the peninsula. However, for the longest part of its history – at least since the Kingdom of Goryeo set an end to the Later Three Kingdoms era by annexing Silla and defeating Baekje in the years 935 and 936 respectively, up until the end of the Pacific War in 1945 – Korea has been a single unified nation albeit not always sovereign (Ch'oe 1980: 24f). The division of Korea was a result of the Japanese Empire's surrender in August 1945, which concluded the Pacific War and ended the Empire's 35-year rule over Korea. With the goal of preparing Korea to become a stable and independent state, the USSR and the USA put the country under their administration. Divided into two zones of control separated by the 38th parallel, the northern part was under Soviet occupation, while the southern part was occupied by US American forces. Yet, the dawning of the Cold War prevented the two occupying forces from reaching the initial goal of rebuilding a unified Korean state by joint efforts (Buzo 2002: 59ff). In 1948, the ROK was established in the US-controlled south after holding

UN-supervised elections. Still in the same year, the Soviet Union responded by supporting the establishment of the DPRK in the north. Since then, both governments have been claiming sovereignty over the whole Korean Peninsula and have repudiated the respective other's legitimacy.

Escalation of this conflict resulted in the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, when North Korean troops – backed by Soviet and Chinese forces – invaded South Korea. Upon the UNSC's decision, South Korean forces were supported by UN forces, which consisted of contributions by 21 member states and were led by US command (UNSC 1950). In July 1953 an armistice was signed and combat ended. This armistice agreement defined the Military Demarcation Line (MDL), which serves as the de facto border between the two Koreas and created the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a four kilometre wide buffer zone along the MDL that crosses the original 38th parallel boundary diagonally (*Korean Armistice Agreement* 1953). Technically speaking, the two countries are still at war as until today, no peace treaty has been signed.

After the war, the two Koreas diverged politically and economically. Undergoing varying phases of democracy and autocratic military rule, the ROK has stabilised into a liberal democracy since the late 1980s. The country's rapid economic development, the 'Miracle on the Han River' transformed South Korea from one of the poorest countries in the world into a developed country, which ranks among the largest economies in the world today (Seth 2016). It is part of the G20 and as a member of most major international organisations, it is deeply integrated into the international community. In contrast, the DPRK developed into a hereditary dictatorship under Kim Il-sung that builds on a pervasive personality cult, Stalinist norms and its own *Juche*² ideology. Post-war reconstruction was mainly supported by extensive aid from China and the Soviet Union and

²Usually translated as 'self-reliance'.

the country enjoyed economic growth until the 1970s (Armstrong 2010). Internationally, the DPRK government maintained friendly relations with communist regimes and joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1975 (Buzo 2002: 128f). The desire for less dependence on China and the Soviet Union sparked the DRPK's motivation to expand its military power, which included the aspiration to become a nuclear power. Ignoring arising economic problems, the regime continued investing in prestigious projects. Until 1988 Soviet involvement in North Korean economy increased, but with the dissolution of the USSR and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, North Korea lost its main source of aid (Buzo 2002: 149ff). Apart from its close relations with China, the DRPK found itself largely isolated from the international community. In 1991, the General Assembly simultaneously admitted both Korean states to the UN (UNGA 1991).

Although inter-Korean relations had always been tense, both sides agreed on signing the *Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula* in 1992. Its goal was “to eliminate the danger of nuclear war through the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, to create conditions and an environment favourable to peace and the peaceful unification of Korea, and thus contribute to the peace and security of Asia and the world” (*Joint Declaration* 1992). Among other things, both Korean states commonly declared their renunciation of nuclear weapons and agreed on using nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes (*ibid.*). However, only one year later North Korea made its first announcement of withdrawal from the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) after clashing with inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (NTI 2016). The UNSC immediately called on the North Korean government to reconsider these intentions and allow the previously expelled IAEA inspectors back into the country (UNSC 1993). Sanctions were not imposed at this point and China abstained the vote.

After Kim Il-sung's death and efforts on behalf of the US government, North Korea agreed to halt its withdrawal from the NPT and sign the *Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* in 1994. The agreement's objective was not only maintaining North Korea's commitment to the NPT and replacing its existing graphite-moderated reactors with more proliferation-resistant light-water reactors under US support, but also the normalisation of diplomatic relations between the two countries (*Agreed Framework* 1994). In order to support the implementation of the Agreed Framework's goals and ensure energy stability for North Korea, the US along with South Korea and Japan founded the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). The organisation started operating soon after it was set up in 1995.

Yet, neither the US nor North Korea were satisfied with the implementation of the *Agreed Framework's* goals and the crisis emerged once again, when US intelligence confirmed evidence of a North Korean uranium enrichment programme (NTI 2016). This meant that North Korea was violating the 1992 *Joint Agreement*, the 1994 *Agreed Framework* as well as the NPT. Consequently KEDO stopped its support for North Korean energy development and after bilateral negotiations between the US and North Korea failed to defuse the tensions, North Korea officially withdrew from the NPT in January 2003.

3.2 The rounds of the Six-Party Talks

Initially, the multilateral dialogue aimed at putting an end to North Korea's nuclear weapons programme only included North Korea, the US and China, but the setting soon expanded to include South Korea, Russia and Japan, too. Hosted in Beijing and chaired by then Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi (succeeded by Wu Dawei after the

third round), the negotiations took place in numerous rounds over the course of several years.

Rounds I-III

The first round of the Six-Party Talks was launched in August 2003, and as stated by the Chinese government, the objective of the talks was a peaceful resolution of the Korean nuclear issue. The six delegations confirmed their commitment in order to reach the objective and consensually agreed to take North Korea's security concerns into consideration; to avoid acts of aggression, which would only exacerbate the situation; and to continue creating trust and common ground through dialogue (PRC Mission 2003). Nevertheless, apart from the official promise to continue negotiations as soon as possible, this first round did not produce any noteworthy achievements regarding the actual matter of discussion.

The second round took place approximately half a year later in February 2004. While Japan and South Korea supported the US' call for elimination of all nuclear activities, the DPRK regime announced through its state news agency, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) that it considered this demand an obstacle to the negotiations (KCNA 2004). China and Russia presented themselves milder and more reserved (Liang 2012). Hence, like in the previous round, there was no notable progress regarding the main objective and the official statement by the Chairman merely sums up all parties' reaffirmation of commitment and the set up of preparatory working groups before the next round (Chairman's statement 2004)

In June 2004, the parties reconvened for a third round of negotiations, but yet again they were not able to reach consensus on the details of denuclearising the Korean Peninsula and instead re-endorsed their engagement (PRC Mission 2004).

Round IV

Partly due to presidential elections in the USA, which were held in November 2004 and confirmed George W. Bush for a second term in office, it took more than a year until the next round of negotiations commenced in July 2005. In the meantime, North Korea had even threatened to abandon the process, but could be convinced to return to the talks (Liang 2012). Contrary to the previous rounds, the fourth round lasted considerably longer and stretched over two phases. The framework also included numerous bilateral consultations. Owing to a change in attitude by the US administration, which had until then strictly refrained from bilateral dialogue with the DPRK, delegations from the US and North Korea came together for bilateral consultations for the first time during the Six-Party Talks (PRC Mission 2005). Moreover, the fourth round marked a breakthrough and concluded in the release of a first joint statement that contained more concrete goals. The statement consists of six articles with agreements addressing following major issues:

- Reaffirmation of verifiable denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula as the principal goal of the negotiations; North Korea's commitment to denuclearisation and return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards; commitment by both Korean states to stick to the 1992 Joint Declaration
- North Korea's statement to its right to peaceful use of nuclear energy; other parties' respect and agreement to discuss this particular issue "at an appropriate time",
- Security guarantees by the US to North Korea: affirmation that the US does not have nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and that it will respect North Korea's sovereignty,

- Normalisation of relations in accordance with principles of the UN Charter and recognised international norms; especially bilateral relations between the US and the DPRK as well as between Japan and the DPRK,
- Promotion of economic cooperation; especially commitment to energy assistance for North Korea by all other parties,
- All parties' commitment to joint efforts for regional peace and stability in Northeast Asia; however inter-Korean peace is to be dealt with separately among involved parties
- Commitment to implementation of agreements under the principle of “commitment for commitment, action for action” (*Joint Statement 2005*).

Rounds V and VI

Only several weeks later, the parties reconvened to open the fifth round of talks, which can be subdivided into three distinct phases. The first meeting in November 2005 did not bring about any new developments. In short, all parties reaffirmed their commitment to the principles they had previously agreed on and pledged to cooperate in developing an appropriate plan of implementation (Chairman's statement 2005). Although the parties intended to reassemble for the second phase at the soonest possible time, the process of the Six-Party Talks underwent major disruptions. The DPRK regime boycotted the continuation of talks after US authorities froze North Korean assets held in the Banco Delta Asia in Macau, declared its intentions to continue military build up in the meantime and threatened to test nuclear weapons (BBC 2006a). Not long after, the first North Korean nuclear test was verified in October 2006, resulting in a unanimous resolution by the UNSC in which the member states condemned the test, endorsed the Six-Party Talks' *Joint Statement* of September 2005 and imposed a sanctions regime. The

sanctions mainly targeted the trade of weapons, technology and luxury goods (UNSC 2006). Nevertheless, the negotiations resumed for a second phase in December 2006, over a year after the first phase. The talks continued mainly due to Chinese diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis North Korea and despite Japanese refusal to resume the Six-Party Talks as long as the DPRK does not dismantle (BBC 2006b).

The third phase took place in February 2007, but during the last two phases of the fifth round the parties did not conclude any major new principles. Yet, they managed to agree on an implementation plan for the principles that were agreed on in 2005. This plan set specifics for the DPRK to shutdown its nuclear programmes and invite back the IAEA, designed the framework for US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK dialogue aimed at diplomatic normalisation and determined the amount and time of aid that North Korea was to receive from the other parties (*Initial Actions plan 2007*). In addition, the US agreed to unfreeze the North Korean assets in Macau.

Shortly after the end of the fifth round, the first phase of the sixth – and for the time being last – round took place in March 2007. However, talks soon had to be interrupted, because a delay in the release of the frozen North Korean assets prompted North Korean negotiators to refuse continuation of talks until their funds had been transferred. As the Banco Delta Asia was technically still target of US sanctions, most of the international financial community – in fear of facing legal consequences – was reluctant to get involved in the transfer of funds. The issue therefore dragged on until a Russian bank agreed to take on the task in June 2007 (NTI 2016). Following the resolution of the financial issue, the parties continued to effectuate the *Initial Actions plan*, even though the original deadline of 60 days had already passed. South Korea provided fuel aid and North Korea shutdown the Yongbyon nuclear facility, which was supervised and verified by IAEA inspectors (CNN 2007). Following this progress, the parties reconvened

in July 2007 to express their satisfaction with the constructive progress and stated their commitment to enhance the positive development (Hankyoreh 2007). The second phase of the sixth round was held in September 2007. Previously set up working groups reported, implementation of initial actions was confirmed and most importantly, measures for the next phase of implementation concerning denuclearisation, normalisation of diplomatic relations as well as economic and energy assistance were decided upon. Among other things, the North Korean regime “agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in accordance with the February 13 agreement [Initial Actions plan] by 31 December 2007” (*Second-Phase Actions plan 2007*).

Yet, optimism did not last long as the DPRK failed to meet the December deadline and submitted an inchoate and inadequate declaration about half a year later (NTI 2016). Tensions between the US and North Korea about the removal of the DPRK from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism and delays in verification of North Korean denuclearisation efforts adjourned the next six-party meeting until December 2008. The talks’ focus was the verification of the disablement of North Korean nuclear facilities, however the parties did not manage to agree on a solid verification protocol (ibid.). The lack of a solid agreement on a verification process was caused by North Korean efforts to keep such a binding commitment off the agenda. All previous progress was due to “temporary achievements that could easily be reversed, however, as the North had avoided a commitment to anything that would tie its hands over the nuclear issue” (Buszynski 2013: 158).

In May 2009 North Korea conducted its second nuclear test, confirming what had been widely suspected – that the DPRK had secretly continued its nuclear programmes. The UNSC responded by unanimously adopting a resolution in which deep concern was expressed and previously imposed sanctions were extended (UNSC 2009). Prior to this

nuclear test, the DPRK had already announced to continue nuclear armament and that it neither considered it necessary to continue the process of the Six-Party Talks nor intended to abide by previously reached agreements (KCNA 2009).

By expelling previously readmitted IAEA inspectors and announcing its unwillingness for further cooperation within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, the DPRK effectively reversed all progressive negotiation outcomes and left the international community at a loss. The dictatorial regime's demeanour has remained unchanged even after the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011. In the years that have passed since the end of the Six-Party Talks, it has not only continued to launch missiles, but also conducted further nuclear tests. The fifth and most recent nuclear test in September 2016 has been a renewed reminder of still existing and most likely even aggravating tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Concurrently, UN sanctions seem to have remained rather ineffective and disappointing while a resumption of the Six-Party Talks or any constructive negotiations in regard to the North Korean nuclear programme as well as the country's isolation appear to be improbable at present. In the absence of any reliable public information about the DPRK's nuclear capabilities, most recent estimates about the North Korean nuclear arsenal amount to at least ten warheads (SIPRI 2016: 22f).

4 Possible ZOPA in the Six-Party Talks

As depicted afore, the analysis' initial stage consist in identification and exploration of the Six-Party Talks' structural elements, which will then benefit the derivation of the possible existence of a ZOPA within these negotiations. Besides the sheer number of parties, the disputed issues, their linkage as well as the negotiators' positions have to be taken into consideration in order to subsequently deduce each parties' reservation point, possible BATNAs and ultimately a potential ZOPA.

4.1 Disputed issues and issue linkage

Evidently, the framework of the Six-Party Talks was created in order to deal with the North Korean nuclear threat. Yet, it is by far not the only issue the six parties discussed throughout the rounds. Before the first round of talks had even started, then Vice Foreign Minister of the PRC Wang Yi, who headed the Chinese delegation and also chaired the first three rounds of the talks, explicitly expressed the possibility of further issues being added to the table by saying “the nuclear issue is very complicated and acute, and it is impossible to solve all problems through one or two discussions. Moreover, other issues may still arise during negotiations [...]” (Wang 2003). This statement does not only indicate that the Chinese delegation, and most probably the other delegations as well, were well aware that the targeted issue of North Korean nuclear programmes is a multifaceted one and that it is likely that other issues will be disputed in the process, too. During the same interview, Wang mentions that “[a]t the same time, the DPRK's security concerns should also be addressed through the only means of dialogue and peaceful talks so as to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula” (ibid.) and therefore already raises two additional aspects – the DPRK's security for one thing as well as

peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula for another thing – that are linked to the core nuclear issue.

Indeed, China is not the only party to be concerned with further issues that are connected to the mainly targeted nuclear issue. From the beginning, the DPRK has emphasised the threat it perceives by ‘hostile’ US foreign policy, demanded a security guarantee from the US in exchange for renunciation of nuclear weapons and insisted on a package deal (KCNA 2003b). This necessarily builds a link between US commitment to respect North Korean sovereignty and North Korean commitment to denuclearisation.

An additional issue that is actually of comparatively little to none interest to the other parties has been actively promoted by Japan. Repeatedly, Japanese officials have tried to underscore that their cooperation in the Six-Party Talks as well as normalisation of diplomatic relations with the DPRK depend on a simultaneous solution of the abduction issue³. This specific issue enjoys high priority status among Japanese policy makers in regards to the country’s foreign policy towards North Korea. It is a bilateral point of contention that has no substantial connection to the nuclear issue, but the Japanese government has even refused to provide economic aid to the DPRK unless the issue is resolved (Chanlett-Avery 2008). Further, Japan has also shown extended interest in shifting the Six-Party Talks’ focus to include the issue of North Korean ballistic missiles, which have repeatedly been fired into the seas surrounding Japanese territory and therefore pose a potential threat to the Japanese people. In the beginning, the US too has initially attempted to pressure the DPRK on these topics along with other issues such as human rights and refugees, but has soon dismissed this idea (ibid.). By freezing North

³Between 1977 and 1983, North Korean agents abducted numerous Japanese citizens, presumably to support the training of North Korean spies. As of today, the Japanese government has officially identified 17 cases as victims related to this crime; however there might be hundreds more. In 2002, North Korea has admitted its responsibility in some of these cases and allowed some of the victims and their families to return to their home country. As the issue is still unresolved, Japan insists on continuation of thorough investigations (Headquarters for the Abduction Issue 2011).

Korean assets in Macau, the US – perhaps not unintentionally and even meant as a means to build leverage – also brought another issue, which is of bilateral nature into the Six-Party Talks.

These examples excellently prove that denuclearisation alone is not the only disputed issue of the Six-Party Talks. Although certain issues have been dropped from the surface during the course of the talks, it is possible that they remain in the back of negotiators' minds and – perhaps even unintentionally – continue to exert influence on the parties' further demands, actions and commitments. Moreover, the *Joint Statement 2005*, which was concluded after the fourth round, clearly illustrates that a number of issues have still remained as official matters of discussion in the Six-Party Talks. Besides renunciation of nuclear weapons by the DPRK, the statement also addresses security guarantees by the US and South Korea to respect North Korean sovereignty and not deploy nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula respectively; North Korea's right to peaceful use of nuclear power; acquiescence to the principles of the UN Charter and recognised international norms; normalisation of relations between the DPRK and the US as well as the DPRK and Japan; promotion of bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation such as energy assistance; security cooperation in Northeast Asia; and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula (*Joint Statement 2005*). In effect, this means that the 2005 *Joint Statement* alone comprises nine (sub-)issues, of which some are more and others less directly linked to the main objective of North Korean nuclear disarmament. The fact that apparently at least Japan and the US have advocated for even more issues at some point during the talks implies that over the course of the Six-Party Talks, at least ten to fifteen issues have been addressed in one way or the other. Several of the issues that have been put on the negotiation agenda do not concern all involved parties.

Nonetheless, it is not unlikely that a party has (possibly covered) interests in an issue it is not directly involved in but conceivably affected by.

This aspect is also reflected in the way parties prioritise different issues. In his article, John S. Park illustrates the varying degrees of prioritisation regarding four of the disputed issues – nuclear proliferation, refugees, ballistic missiles and Korean reunification – of the Six-Party Talks. Based on interviews with government officials of all six countries, he summarises that to Russia and South Korea the issue of nuclear proliferation is only of medium priority while the other four parties regard it as high priority. On the other hand, North Korean refugees are of rather low priority to the US, Japan and Russia, while South Korea, China and North Korea give more weight to this particular issue. Ballistic missiles however are of high priority to the US and Japan, while the remaining four parties only ascribe medium to low importance to this topic. Finally, Korean reunification is a high priority issue to both Koreas, the US and China, while Russia and Japan attach less value to it (Park 2005: 78). Park's comparison evidently reveals that not only various issues are at stake, but prioritisation of these issues diverges wildly, too. A connection to the parties' underlying interests is standing to reason and will be object of more detailed examination in chapter 5.2.

As cited previously, not only the number, but also linkage of issues is a complexity-increasing factor in negotiations that may affect the ZOPA, and as Odell accurately points out, every negotiation that covers more than one issue necessarily has linkage (Odell 2012: 382). Applied to the Six-Party Talks, it becomes apparent that the parties not only increased the talks' complexity by simply adding issues, but also by explicitly linking them and therefore complicating the process of making concessions, incurring committing and finding agreement. The guiding 'commitment for commitment, action for action' principle that the parties pledged to abide by and even included in the 2005

Joint Statement can be considered a way of expressing the allowance for linkage. The principle roots in North Korea's desire to receive considerations by the other parties in return for nuclear dismantlement efforts (KCNA 2003a). Concretely, North Korea introduced demands for security guarantees and economic assistance in form of a 'package of solutions' and thereby linked several issues. On top of that, other linkages were created for instance by Japan and its attempt to include the abduction issue, which is of extreme importance to the Japanese public. Critical for the process and progress of the talks was also the problem revolving around North Korean financial assets in Macau. Although the US claimed that connecting this issue to the contents of the Six-Party Talks did not reflect their intentions and was considered a purely bilateral one by the US administration, the DPRK did not treat the nuclear and the financial issues as separate ones, and as mentioned earlier made its return to the negotiations dependent on a solution.

As a consequence, the plurality of issues and just as much their direct and indirect linkage severely raised complexity and caused counter-productive dynamics, because some parties, such as North Korea and Japan, often made their actions and commitments conditional on the outcome of other parties' efforts, thus contributing to impediments and delays in the whole process of the negotiations.

4.2 Parties' positions

Failure to reach a sustainable agreement insinuates wide dispersion of participating parties' positions and at closer look, it emerges that indeed the six negotiating parties had different standpoints on the negotiated issues. As analysing the parties' positions regarding all related and linked issues would be too wide-ranging for this thesis' framework

and in part difficult in terms of verification, this analysis will focus on the positions directly concerning the central issue of nuclear proliferation.

Disagreement over maintaining, advancing, freezing or dismantling the North Korean nuclear weapons programme constitutes the core of the Six-Party Talks and the parties hold contradicting stances towards this issue. Needless to say, North Korea occupies the centre stage by being the originator of the disputed nuclear issue. According to the Deputy Director General of the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Li Gun, the DPRK conditions the dismantlement of its nuclear weapons programme on a change in US foreign policy towards North Korea (Li 2003). In detail, the DPRK regime demands a non-aggression guarantee by the US, establishment of diplomatic relations between the US and the DPRK, US non-interference in North Korean economic affairs with South Korea, Japan or other nations, and compensation for energy loss due to delays in the construction of light-water reactors⁴. The claim for compensation is based on the perception that the US, not the DPRK, were the first to violate the 1994 *Agreed Framework*. In exchange, the DPRK offers not to build nuclear weapons and allow inspections, ultimately dismantle its nuclear programme and place a moratorium on its missile programme (ibid.).

Absolutely unconvinced by North Korean appeals and pledges, the US has remained steadfast in its demand for elimination of all nuclear activities in North Korea for quite a long time and entered into negotiations pressing their point. As the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly has remarked before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee shortly after the beginning of round II, the US delegation has called for “complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement of North Korean nuclear programs” (Kelly 2004), which encompasses nuclear weapons programmes as

⁴North Korea is referring to the light-water reactors that were supposed to be built under US assistance according to the 1994 *Agreed Framework*.

well as nuclear programmes for civilian use, and has stressed this as the US' main objective in the Six-Party Talks. Furthermore, the US has only shown little receptiveness to the idea of deferring to the concessions the DPRK has asked for.

Along with the US, Japan has been a strong advocate of demanding North Korean commitment to complete nuclear dismantlement. From the beginning, the Japanese government has made immediate and irreversible dismantlement of the nuclear weapons programme a precondition for any further cooperation. As declared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan after the first round of talks, that includes economic cooperation and energy assistance, which are however only possible under the circumstance that other issues such as the abduction issue or the North Korean missile programmes are resolved and normalised diplomatic relations have been established (MOFA of Japan 2003).

Similarly, the South Korean government has shared the US' and Japan's fundamental view that the Six-Party Talks are set out to bring about North Korean efforts for complete dismantlement. However, the ROK's approach is less stringent as the government has shown higher disposition to engage in economic cooperation and the willingness to accept freezing of the nuclear weapons programme as an initial sign of commitment. Reinforcing South Korea's position in favour of a peaceful solution to the issue, then ROK President "Roh⁵ rejected any idea of military action against North Korea in dealing with its nuclear weapons. He was opposed to the 'all options on the table' position adopted by the United States, which alluded to the possibility of using military options as bargaining leverage" (Moon 2008: 75).

Unlike the US and Japan, Russia takes a more flexible stance in the negotiations. While obviously supporting the officially declared goal of denuclearisation, Russia's position

⁵Roh Moo-hyun: South Korean president (2003-2008) who built on his predecessor Kim Dae-jung's 'Sunshine Policy' towards the North.

is more amenable to the DPRK's demands. Prior to the launch of the Six-Party Talks' first round, then Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Yuri Fedotov met with the DPRK's ambassador to Russia Pak Ui-chun and "stressed the need for a political settlement of existing problems via negotiations on the basis of securing a nuclear-free status of the Korean Peninsula and the security of the states located there" (MOFA of the Russian Federation 2003). Although the press release remains vague and rather abstract, the rhetoric suggests that Russia does consult North Korean interests in a security guarantee by the US, as a 'nuclear-free status of the Korean Peninsula' would encompass potential deployment of US nuclear warheads to South Korea, too. Further, the expressed concern for the 'security of the states located there', i.e. on the Korean Peninsula naturally includes both Korean states.

China's position is comparable to the one expressed by Russia. Then Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi has been even more distinct in expressing tolerance for the DPRK's demands than his Russian counterpart. In an interview preceding the first round of talks, he states, "the Korean Peninsula should be nuclear-free. At the same time, the DPRK's security concerns should also be addressed through the only means of dialogue and peaceful talks so as to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula" (Wang 2003). While showing awareness for China's mediating role, Wang further voices that China is "against such actions as sanctions or coerce, least to mention war" (ibid.), which complements the South Korean apprehension of an 'all options on the table' US policy.

Despite the fact that some concessions have been made over the course of the talks, none of the parties has committed to significant shifts from its basic original position. The 2005 *Joint Statement* only shows that the US along with its close ally Japan has agreed to officially declare to respect North Korea's sovereignty and the parties agreed to adopt the principle of reciprocity 'commitment for commitment, action for action',

which North Korea in particular was asking for. However none of the parties has made substantial changes to its original position.

4.3 Possibility of a ZOPA

Russia, China and to a certain extent also South Korea have evidently adhered to relatively more flexible and less stringent positions concerning the details and timing of North Korean nuclear dismantlement efforts. Moreover, based on the available evidence, especially the reservation points of China and Russia are hard to ascertain. At the same time, the other three negotiators' have followed more rigorous directives. Therefore, their positions and reservation points effectually set the limits of a potential ZOPA in the Six-Party Talks.

As a non-nuclear power, Japan has considerably less bargaining power and can presumably only exert little leverage on the direction of an agreement, however its position is generally in accordance with US policy. Inasmuch as the US has guaranteed to respect the DPRK's sovereignty, but has not made any concessions beyond that, the 2005 *Joint Statement* can be considered as the mark where the US as well as Japan, which also supported initial US reluctance towards a security guarantee, reached their reservation points. The other agreements that have followed since did not include new compromises, but rather built on the 2005 *Joint Statement*. Apart from that, this *Joint Statement* – as the name itself even implies – was not an agreement on fundamental differences, but merely a summary of the parties' demands, slightly altered from the original at most. Most importantly, it neglected to address the different positions regarding the influential aspect of timing and sequence of actions. While the US and Japan stipulated irreversible nuclear dismantlement as a term for further cooperation and establishment of diplomatic relations, North Korea's position saw economic aid and the establishment of diplomatic

relations prior to nuclear dismantlement. Though the two plans that were agreed on in 2007 were set out to induce all parties to fulfil their commitments simultaneously, this can hardly be recognised as a solution to the nuclear issue and reality proves that under mutual distrust, simultaneous action is not viable. Moreover, at the time of conclusion in 2007 North Korea had already conducted its first nuclear test, essentially demonstrating that it has maintained its initial unfavourable attitude regarding dismantling its nuclear programmes and showing the regime's obvious unwillingness to comply with any multilateral agreements. Whether North Korea's demands corresponded to its reservation point for an agreement and were therefore not amendable or the regime was from the start strategically negotiating in bad faith to acquire time for the development of its nuclear programme, is a matter of conjecture. Yet, based on the reluctance to implement verification procedures, one can assume that the latter corresponds to the regime's intentions. Either way, the DPRK's attitude had counter-productive effects regarding the conclusion of an agreement and certainly played a decisive role for the inconclusive outcome of the talks.

Keeping in mind that the participating parties would only commit to a joint agreement if the negotiated outcome were perceived as superior to any alternative, it is not unreasonable to assume that the involved parties had BATNAs that barred them from committing to concessions that would require the alteration of their reservation points. Although the North Korean regime and its obscure plans and intentions present to be a source of uncertainty for China and Russia, too, the matter of solving the nuclear issue has never as been as pressing for them as it is for the US and their allies. As states with a traditionally friendly relationship with the DPRK, China and Russia therefore did not feel directly threatened by North Korean nuclear armament. Safe in the knowledge that they were unlikely to become a target anyway, North Korea could not be considered a threat to

national security and an agreement under all circumstances presumably did not occupy a priority position. Consequently, it can be judged that for China and Russia, maintaining the status quo and observing further developments is an acceptable alternative to a negotiated agreement. Similarly, awaiting further unfolding might not have been South Korea's most desirable course of action, but still tolerable as a serious threat to its national security was not to be apprehended. In the early 2000s, inter-Korean relations marked a historical high under the 'Sunshine Policy' introduced by the Kim Dae-jung administration that even led to a more embracing South Korean collective identity (Cho 2009: 120ff).

Albeit advocating the most stringent conditions towards North Korea, it can plausibly be assumed that the US as well as Japan would rather adjust to the status quo as an alternative to negotiated agreement than committing to disadvantageous concessions. Especially in the first rounds of the Six-Party Talks when the DPRK had probably not even acquired nuclear weapons yet, but also after the first nuclear test in 2006, the threat originating from North Korea was seemingly not perceived as imminent enough for a radical change in strategy. As stated by the Ministry of Defense of Japan in its white paper of the following year, North Korean actions such as launching several ballistic missiles and conducting a nuclear test "pose serious threats not only to Japan but also to the peace and stability of East Asia and the international community and evoked considerable debate in Japan" (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2007: 35). For that reason, the Japanese government stresses the necessity "to keep an eye on the country's future movement, including the downsizing of nuclear weapons and deployment of nuclear warheads" (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2007: 37). At the same time the threat is put into perspective by assessing North Korea's ultimate goal to be regime survival (*ibid.*),

which alludes to a lower likelihood of an imminent attack that could seriously imperil the security of Japan or the US.

On the basis of the available evidence, it seems fair to suggest that within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, a ZOPA has never existed in the first place. In fact, the chance of creating a ZOPA even deteriorated over the course of the talks, which is not only due to the DPRK's general attitude of unwillingness, but also due to the fact that perceptions of timing were irreconcilable. Another highly salient issue that became apparent especially after the fourth round and could not be solved due to irreconcilable positions was the implementation of a verification procedure. Considering positions alone however cannot give a satisfactory answer to why the Six-Party Talks have failed to reach a sustainable agreement. All of the above does not yet explain the reasons and motivations behind the parties' positions, which will therefore be explored in the next chapter.

5 Parties' interests and rationales

The previous chapter has shown that it is fair to make the assumption that the parties' positions have made the existence of a ZOPA in the Six-Party Talks hardly possible. However as stated earlier, it seems natural that the structural setting alone is not the only determinant of the negotiations' outcome. This chapter aims at examining the supporting conditions as determinants for the parties' positions and their influence on the negotiations. Based on the conditions Narlikar ascribes to a deadlock, the Six-Party Talks' outcome can already be labelled as such, because both conditions are fulfilled. Not only did a situation of non-agreement and unwillingness to make concessions that would trigger breakthrough exist for an extended period of time, but also did the hope-raising landmark moment – the conclusion of the 2005 *Joint Statement* – not lead to compromise and an expected turn in the negotiation process. More concretely, in terms of Narlikar's distinction of deadlocks, the Six-Party Talks' deadlock can be classified as a breakdown. This is due to the fact that non-agreement not only persisted beyond the landmark moment, but North Korea even quit and subsequently the other parties disengaged as well, meaning that an extended delay escalated into complete breakdown. As mentioned earlier, Narlikar offers various explanations for deadlocks. Given the nature of North Korean foreign relations with most countries as well as rivalries between several involved states, high levels of distrust and uncertainty can be assumed to be one explanatory factor. Yet, for a deeper understanding of the negotiations' result and how it came about, it is necessary to examine further aspects that possibly played determinant roles during the Six-Party Talks.

The following parts will explore the North Korea's specific domestic circumstances as well as the other parties' underlying geopolitical interests, the role of possibly influen-

tial BATNAs and rivalries in the regional balance of power so as to deduce their possible impact on the course and outcome of the Six-Party Talks.

5.1 Domestic politics: North Korea

Multilateral negotiations are often inextricably linked with negotiators' domestic politics. Especially in the case of North Korea, an insight into the country's unique ideology and political situation will undoubtedly support the understanding of the regime's behaviour, positions and claims in the setting of the Six-Party Talks.

***Juche* and *Songun* as ideological foundation of the political system**

The internationally largely isolated DPRK describes itself as a “self-reliant socialist state” in the preamble of the then effective version of its constitution (Socialist Constitution of the DPRK 1998: Preamble), which excessively references the *Juche* ideology. The *Juche* ideology, which is claimed to be Kim Il-sung's original revolutionary body of thought, is the DPRK's official state and unique state ideology. Often translated as ‘self-reliance’, the North Korean government itself explains in its English language publication on the ideology that the core of *Juche* is the idea that true socialism can only be achieved by national strength and self-reliance (Juche Idea 2014). Originally based on Marxist-Leninist views, this ideology strongly emphasises the individual, the nation state and national sovereignty (French 2014: 24ff). In a speech delivered by Kim Il-sung in Indonesia in 1965, the three fundamental guiding principles of *Juche* were outlined to be political independence, economic self-sustenance and self-reliance in defence (Kim 1965). The then effective DPRK constitution also declared the National Defence Committee to be the highest military organ of state power and its chairman the most senior

position in state hierarchy (Socialist Constitution of the DPRK 1998: Art. 100). On top of that, in 2009 the constitution was amended to adopt additional articles, which further consolidated the country's *Songun* or 'military first' policy. This policy is designed to prioritise the Korean People's Army's training, maintenance and needs over all other aspects of state and society by granting primary allocation of resources and superior position within the North Korean government (Hoare 2012: 352f).

While there is no uniquely definable reason for the strong shift towards *Songun* policy since the 1990s, certain plausible rationales are prevalent in debates revolving around this policy shift. It is widely suggested that as an aggressive move to bolster the military even at the expense of other parts of North Korean society, *Songun* represents the government's desire to overcome the country's precarious international standing by demonstrating military strength (Cumings 2004: 102). Since the early 1990s, the DPRK has been confronted with a series of critical situations such as the dissolution of the USSR, which had been a long-time ally, the death of North Korea's first dictator Kim Il-sung in 1994 as well as natural disasters and the famine between 1994 and 1998. Contrary to widespread assumptions and predictions regarding the regime's limited capabilities in the post-Cold War era and even a possible collapse (Eberstadt 1999; Oh/ Hassig 1999; Stares/ Wit 2009; Snyder 2010), the North Korean regime has proven surprisingly resilient under the shift to *Songun* – at least so far. According to Kwon, these crises have possibly triggered the demand and motivation for a new way of power consolidation – especially for Kim Jong-il himself who took over after his father's death – resulting in efforts to enhance military capabilities so as to secure regime survival in the international arena (Kwon 2003: 293f).

In practice, the strict reliance on the philosophies promoted by the *Juche* ideology as well as the *Songun* policy impinge upon North Korea's diplomatic relations and defence

policy. Since *Juche* is a doctrine for national self-reliance in the economic, military and political spheres, the North Korean rhetoric is that it safeguards the country from being subordinated to an imperial power by protecting it from domination or exploitation. As stated in a North Korean publication on the *Juche* ideology, “the implementation of self-reliance in national defence is a military guarantee for the political independence and economic self-sufficiency of a country” (Kim 1984: 324). This explains why the military enjoys top priority status in North Korean policy making and makes the following shift and even stronger emphasis of the military under the *Songun* policy appear like a logical consequence. However there have already been voices in the 1980s, even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, that point out how the ideology poses a constraint to the DPRK’s foreign policy. In reality, the regime’s performance does not measure up to the proclaimed rhetoric. Apart from receiving military and other assistance from its main allies, the Soviet Union and China, the DPRK has for instance also willingly bought helicopters from the US through informal channels in the past, proving that there is “an unbridgeable gap between the ideals of self-defence and the actual behavior of the North Korean regime” (Park 1987: 36). In that way, it seems as though ironically the *Juche* ideology can be bent flexibly in the attempt to achieve the goals it promotes. Realistically speaking however, “[d]iscrepancy of this nature is and will be inevitable due to the perpetuation of arms race on the peninsula and the relative superiority in the quality of military technology by the U.S.-backed South Korea” (ibid.). Nevertheless, flexibility of the *Juche* ideology for the sake of justifying measures that might be necessary for economic and military development is ultimately limited, for the North Korean regime cannot afford deviation from the core ideals and principles of the ideological foundation promulgated by Kim Il-sung, because such a move would basically imply self-criticism (Park 1987: 44).

No less idealistic, but slightly more pragmatically oriented than the *Juche* ideas which it builds upon, the *Songun* policy has been North Korea's major governing principle since the end of the 1990s. As such, it naturally defines the outlines for the country's foreign affairs too, even though the political power and influence of the military as an institution remains relatively weak (Woo 2016). However, it is noteworthy that the military economy, which includes all economic activities of production, distribution and consumption within the military, constitutes the most important parallel economy of the country by accounting for up to 70% of the DPRK's domestic economic output in the early 2000s (Pinkston 2003: 9). As indicated in an analysis presented by the South Korean government, the military-first policy has been the last resort for regime stabilisation amidst internal and external crises. Thus, it cannot and probably will not be abandoned by the North Korean government despite international isolation, especially if the regime fails to stabilise on economic grounds (Institute for Unification Education 2012: 37).

Implications for the Six-Party Talks

Now, regarding its nuclear weapons programme, the North Korean regime has several motivations to maintain proliferation efforts. First, the regime, which has been repeatedly claiming to be confronted with hostilities from neighbouring states in the region and especially the US (Li 2003), has an interest in developing nuclear weapons for the sake of national security, because nuclear capabilities provide a solid deterrent. Nevertheless, it is only natural to assume that there are other motivations beyond national security. If the motivation for acquiring nuclear weapons were purely a matter of national security, an agreement addressing security concerns and concluding confidence building measures and mutual concessions should have been relatively easy to achieve (Habib

2011: 44). Additionally, the North Korean regime has an interest in being equipped with nuclear weapons, because these enhance the country's international standing and provide leverage in bargaining situations with other countries. In a way, this additional diplomatic weight is essential for North Korean economy is dependent on gains such as foreign aid that is often won in exchange for de-escalation after self-induced crises (ibid.).

Aside from outward directed motivations like national security and increase in bargaining leverage, there is a third important motivation for nuclear proliferation that cannot be neglected. In his article on the issue, Habib convincingly contends that the nuclear weapons programme is actually critical to the consolidation of the current political system under guidance of the *Songun* doctrine. In detail, the nuclear weapons programme has domestic value as "it provides the ideological pretext to divert the nation's resources to the military" (Habib 2011: 49) and thereby basically legitimises the *Songun* policy on the one hand and serves as a "defining symbol of North Korea's unique anti-American nationalism" (ibid.) on the other hand. Furthermore, it contributes to internal bureaucratic stabilisation by serving the interests of institutions within the DPRK military (Habib 2011: 60). Thus, the North Korean nuclear programme also has to be considered in the context of the domestic *Songun* system rather than solely in the context of an international dispute.

Reverting to Putnam's model of diplomacy as a two-level game and the DPRK's behaviour over the course of the Six-Party Talks, the implications of adhering to the *Juche* and *Songun* philosophies evidently surface in light of the negotiations' outcome. North Korea has been seeking to maximise their gains – in form of energy assistance, economic aid, non-aggression commitments by the other parties or the prospect of improved diplomatic relations – in the international sphere of the multilateral negotiations, ex-

exploiting the reciprocal game logic of the Six-Party Talks by drawing upon tactics of negotiating in bad faith while serving domestic needs. Based on Habib's findings, one can argue that these domestic needs do not exclusively consist in economic ones, but rather include the need for ideological consolidation and regime survival. Remembering that the win-set is dependent on the preferences of the relevant constituents and domestic power distribution (Putnam 1988: 442ff), which in the DPRK's case is accumulated in the authoritarian leadership, their needs and motivations are what determine the country's negotiating position. In that sense – utilising Putnam's terminology – an international agreement determining nuclear dismantlement does under no circumstances fall into the North Korean government's win-set as it would undermine the leadership's need for domestic ideological consolidation. Since the other parties, outstandingly the US, Japan and South Korea, have always insisted that a continuing existence of the North Korean nuclear programme does not fall into their win-sets, the consequence is that ultimately there can hardly be an overlap of win-sets large enough to reach agreement on nuclear dismantlement. Moreover, since low cost of not reaching an agreement and maintaining the status quo make for a smaller win-set (*ibid.*), North Korea's long history of developing nuclear weapons and the repeated nuclear tests, which have already started while the Six-Party Talks had still been going on, indicate that a genuine intention from North Korea's side to dismantle the programme is highly unlikely, which Habib also correctly points out (Habib 2011: 44).

Accordingly, the seemingly possible deal after the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks and North Korea's bad faith negotiating can partly be explained on the basis of Putnam's theory, too. Win-set size on the international level also being shaped by negotiators' application of strategies that include good will and the exploitation of side payments (Putnam 1988:450ff), North Korea has seemingly been feigning good will and

the intention to cooperate so as to extract gains, but has reverted to creating a crisis, i.e. conducting the first nuclear test in 2006, as soon as the gains ceased to be satisfactory. Against this backdrop, the damaging influence of the North Korean domestic politics for an international agreement can undoubtedly be ascertained at this point. In particular, the strong emphasis of the *Juche* and *Songun* ideologies and the practical implementation of the latter especially, impede an agreement with the other five parties of the Six-Party Talks to a great extent. This allows for the judgement that H1 is true and the influence of the DPRK's ideology on its foreign policy negatively affect efforts of finding a sustainable solution to the nuclear weapons issue.

5.2 Underlying geopolitical interests of the other parties

North Korean domestic politics and resolute adherence to their unique ideology have impaired accomplishing a constructive and sustainable deal regarding its nuclear programme within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. Still, the DPRK leadership has been actively involved in negotiations for several years, leaving room for doubts about the other involved parties' underlying interests and whether their motivations were solely aimed at successfully and sustainably resolving the North Korean nuclear issue itself. Hence, this part is dedicated to assessing the impact of pre-existing idiosyncrasies such as the parties' underlying geopolitical interests as well as exploring the possible influence of pre-existing conflicts and relevant domestic circumstances.

US interests in Korea and East Asia

As mentioned before, the US' position has been steadfast in demanding a halt and complete dismantlement of North Korean nuclear activities whilst demonstrating little to

none willingness to allowing concessions for North Korean demands. Since the 1990s, even before the Six-Party Talks were established, the US has been asking for ‘verifiable denuclearisation’ of North Korea (Chung 2013: 5). In the pursuit of this goal, efforts have included bilateral dialogue in the early 1990s that has led to the conclusion of the *1994 Agreed Framework*. After North Korea’s violation thereof, the US government under the Bush administration decided to turn to China and eventually the other three parties in an attempt to find a common solution and share burden and responsibilities (Chung 2013: 6). The significance of the North Korean nuclear issue to the US and its foreign policy can only be understood in the context of fear that the DPRK might even sell nuclear technology to rogue states and hostile non-state actors as well as US interests in the region.

Close alliances with both South Korea and Japan that date back to 1953⁶ and 1951⁷ respectively, closely bind the US to the East Asian region, as the US holds defense obligations for the two Asian countries. At the same time, these close military alliances guarantee the US access to the region and involvement in regional matters. In fact, the number of US troops deployed to East Asia has steadily risen during the first Bush administration (2001-2004) from about 92.000 in 2001 to almost 100.000 in 2003. Out of these, approximately 45.000 were stationed in Japan and 40.000 in South Korea (FRONT-LINE 2004). Although the number of overseas troop size are usually subject to frequent change, particularly in light of the sitting administration’s response to crises in the Middle East, East Asia is still a major destination of US military personnel’s overseas deployment. Of the approximately 200.000 troops that were deployed overseas in 2015, more than 39.000 were stationed in Japan and over 23.000 in South Korea, making Ja-

⁶ *Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea*, signed in 1953 shortly after the Korean Armistice Agreement

⁷ *Security Treaty between the United States and Japan*, signed in 1951 and succeeded by the *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan* in 1953

pan the country hosting the largest number and South Korea the third largest number of US overseas troops (Desjardins 2017). These numbers certainly reflect the US' desire to maintain a strong presence in the region and the North Korean nuclear issue's priority status in US American foreign policy considerations.

Japan and South Korea were among the first in their region to establish liberal democracy and market economy following the Western model. In that respect they play an important role as ideological strongholds for US influence in Asia-Pacific, since historically, the US has always applied policies of power balancing in order to prevent domination of the region by imperial powers, Japan or Soviet and Chinese communism (Shuja 2002: 74). In a broader perspective, the US pursues to foster the expansion of market economy and liberal democracy in the belief that democracy makes for a safer and more prosperous world, but also fears the possible competition with a rising China on a regional as well as a global level (Shuja 2002: 77f). In the 2002 National Security Strategy, the reality of US apprehension in regards to a rising China already looms. While welcoming cooperation with a confident China for the sake of stability, peace and prosperity in Asia-Pacific, the importance of democratic development is stressed and the fear of threats to neighbours in the region by a militarily advanced China are expressed, too (White House 2002: 27).

In any case, the claim to global hegemony surely contributes to nurturing the US' self-image of being the 'world police' that necessarily means involvement in important issues concerning regional security and the current world order. For a period of several decades, the US' objectives in Korea were perceived to be oriented at defusing the conflict and maintaining the status quo as a balance between North and South, with the long-term goal of generating minimum cost for the USA and eventually achieving peaceful unification under a moderate government (Shuja 2002: 74). Special Advisor to

the President and the Secretary of State William Perry also reflects this in a report in 1999, where he states, “even they [the DPRK] must know that the prospect of such a destructive war is a powerful deterrent to precipitous U.S. or allied action” (Perry 1999). However during the Six-Party Talks, it became apparent that unlike China, Russia and South Korea, the US has tried to create pressure instead of engaging North Korea within the negotiations’ framework, suggesting that their underlying interests are now more targeted at coerced regime change. Some argue that the US’ ‘all options on the table’ policy and its intransigent attitude towards the DPRK has been aimed at using the Six-Party Talks’ framework to induce externally provoked regime change upon the country, because unlike North Korea’s immediate neighbours it would not be as directly affected by negative consequences thereof (Blank 2007: 2). By implication, the most desirable outcome of the North Korean issue for the US, which has always been main target of aggressive North Korean rhetoric, can be assumed to primarily be verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation, but ultimately also regime change in North Korea.

Chinese interests in Korea

While advocating for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, China’s top priority is stability in the region and the motivating underlying interests are based on their very own rationale. As a major ally during the Korean War and being one of the few countries that actually maintains more or less friendly diplomatic ties with the DPRK, China – although of course it comprehends the gravity of the issue – does not perceive the North Korean nuclear weapons programme as an imminent threat to its own national security. Still, China is deeply involved in finding a solution to the issue, because the Korean Peninsula is traditionally considered to be part of the Chinese sphere of influence where China has direct interests (Chu/ Lin 2008: 30f).

On closer consideration, it becomes apparent that the North Korean nuclear issue actually signifies an immense dilemma to China. While China's relation with South Korea has improved over the past decades, it cannot afford abandoning North Korea despite the fact that it constitutes a certain liability and their bilateral relations are increasingly strained (Chung/ Choi 2013; Zhu 2016). As host of the Six-Party Talks and the one actor that has successfully convinced North Korean leadership to return and participate in the multilateral framework, China is aware of its role and position as a mediating actor. Depending on North Korea's stability and the assessment of a likelihood of US military intervention, China has applied slightly varying engagement patterns vis-à-vis North Korea (Song/ Lee 2016). However, in general China has by tendency opposed heavy sanctions towards the Kim regime and preferred engagement instead of pressure as incentives for the DPRK. Moreover, by providing more than half of the food and fuel in North Korea, it has substantially assisted in sustaining it. In 1999 for example, fuel and energy commodities of 370 million US Dollar worth were traded between China and North Korea. By 2005, this number had already gone up to 1,6 billion US dollars (Diamana 2015: 96).

Nevertheless, certain aspects may also limit the effectiveness of Chinese attempts to induce North Korea. Some scholars argue that given the DPRK's sensitivity towards external interference, a major constraint for China on implementing drastic measures against the DPRK is its preoccupation with regional stability (You 2001: 387f; Wang 2005: 265ff; International Crisis Group 2006: 8ff). In contradiction to expectations the Chinese leadership is often met with, others contend – mainly based on the argument that economic dependence does not directly translate into leverage in areas concerning other issues – that the influence China can wield over North Korea in the nuclear issue is intrinsically limited (Chung 2004; Snyder 2009: 130ff, 157f). From a critical distance,

it might even look as though “[t]hese limitations mean that China has looked to use its mediation role as a way of avoiding crisis escalation rather than as engaging in fundamental problem solving” (Zhu 2011: 215).

For the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of China’s interests and its motivations to maintain diplomatic ties with the DPRK as well as contributing to the preservation of the Kim regime, it is therefore necessary to explore the link between Chinese national security concerns and the existence of North Korea. Survival of the North Korean regime is essential to China, because as an immediate neighbour it would not only have to manage a huge influx of refugees if war were to break out again or the regime were to collapse, but it would also have to deal with the likelihood of a unified Korea under a Seoul government that maintains a strong alliance with the US. Since China is already displeased about the deployment of missile defense systems in Japan and South Korea, the prospect of having a US ally as a direct neighbour and possibly even US troops on its borders is even more undesirable. Hence China seeks to avert this scenario and aspires to keep North Korea as a buffer zone in the attempt to contain US influence in the region (Plant/ Rhode 2013: 61f). Borrowing the words of former US National Security Council’s director for Asian affairs Victor Cha, this anticipation has been reason enough for China to refrain from exploiting its full potential leverage over the North Korean regime and comprehensibly explains Chinese underlying interests, because China and the DPRK are “caught in a mutual hostage relationship – the North needs Chinese help for their survival, and the Chinese need the North not to collapse” (Cha 2012: 17).

South Korean interests in the North Korean nuclear issue and Korean peace

As mentioned above, the 2005 *Joint Agreement* that was concluded after the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks recorded the understanding that inter-Korean peace was to be dealt with as a separate issue among the involved parties. Yet, from a South Korean perspective the issues of North Korean denuclearisation, inter-Korean peace and the prospects of unification are inextricably linked and therefore determine South Korea's stance.

Despite seeking close cooperation with the US and Japan, South Korean governments have supported US demands for North Korea to dismantle all nuclear programmes, although with the qualification that it is clearly opposed to the US' 'all options on the table' policy. Instead, South Korean leaders have stressed its zero-tolerance of war as well as the desire to resolve matters in a peaceful way (Moon 2008: 75). Considering the certainty that destructive effects would directly affect South Korea much more than any other neighbour of the DPRK if war were to break out again on the Korean Peninsula, it is only natural that South Korean governments reject the idea of increased military tensions. Moreover, the two Korean states are technically still at war since the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement ended combat, but a peace treaty has never followed. Occasional hostilities and violent incidents between the North and South that include the deaths of military personnel⁸ and even civilians⁹ are a regular reminder that peace on the Korean Peninsula has yet to be created.

Under the 'Sunshine Policy' – South Korea's foreign policy towards the DPRK between 1998 and 2008 – that was initiated by the Kim Dae-jung administration and continued

⁸ One of the most prominent examples is the *Panmunjom axe murder incident* in 1976 where North Korean soldiers killed two US American officers in the Joint Security Area (JSA) of the DMZ.

⁹ During the time of the Six-Party Talks, in 2008 North Korean soldiers in the Mount Kumgang Tourist Region, a specially administered region in the North that South Koreans were allowed to enter, shot a South Korean tourist.

by the succeeding Roh Moo-hyun government, inter-Korean relations peaked and economic cooperation in the Kaesong Industrial Zone was initiated. At the time, hopes for peaceful unification were high and the South Korean Minister of Unification expressed his optimism in the *White Paper on Korean Unification 2001* prior to the onset of the Six-Party Talks, as “South and North Korea [had] just opened the door for peace, reconciliation, cooperation and prosperity” (Lim 2001: 4). Yet, not only during promising times, but as a general underlying interest of the South Korean government have peace and unification long been part of their core pursuits. The existence of a whole ministry that is dedicated to tasks revolving around unification is an expression of this central mission. Furthermore, this desire is enshrined in the country’s constitution, which states that “[t]he Republic of Korea shall seek unification and shall formulate and carry out a policy of peaceful unification based on the principles of freedom and democracy” (Constitution of the ROK, Art. 4) and determines that “[t]he President shall have the duty to pursue sincerely the peaceful unification of the homeland” (Constitution of the ROK, Art. 66, 3).

It is noteworthy that despite the probably immense burden unification would entail for South Korea and many experts consider it unrealistic or impossible (Noland 2014), the majority of the South Korean public is in favour of it. Even though the percentage of people who agree to the necessity of unification has dropped from 92% in 1994 to 64% in 2007 (Branigan 2013), still more than half were in favour of unification. According to a more recent study, the percentage of the public that is in favour of unification has – despite a temporary decline in 2010 due to the *Cheonan* sinking¹⁰ – even risen again after the Six-Party Talks were suspended, to more than 82% in 2014 (Kim et al. 2014: 18). It is particularly interesting to observe that about a third of the respondents consider

¹⁰ In 2010, a South Korean warship (the *Cheonan*) with more than a hundred people aboard sank in the Yellow Sea, most likely due to a North Korean torpedo. 46 seamen died in the incident, for which North Korea still denies responsibility. The incident is matter of controversy in South Korea.

‘shared ethnicity’ the most important reason for the necessity to reunite (Kim et al. 2014: 20), suggesting that in spite of the reality, the issue of inter-Korean peace is deeply linked to the national identity. Regarding the importance and influence of national identity, one could even argue on constructivist grounds that an improvement in inter-Korean relations under the ‘Sunshine policy’ has also nurtured and re-established a collective inter-Korean national identity in South Korea in relation to the North (Cho 2009: 119).

Against this backdrop, it is hardly possible for a South Korean government to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue as an entirely separate one not only from their national security but also their national identity and deeply rooted interest in reconciliation and unification.

Japanese interests in the Six-Party Talks

Regarding the North Korean nuclear programme, Japan has raised concerns for their own national security and regional stability as well as the implications for the international non-proliferation regime (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2005: 8) and during the Six-Party Talks, it has generally adopted a hard line position in alignment with the US. Japan has been proactive and willing to act in times when North Korea has failed to fulfil its obligations. Despite not being a permanent member of the UNSC, but motivated by its own vulnerability, Japan has been a driving force behind resolutions revolving around the nuclear and missile programmes and has also been quick to implement and enforce sanctions (Auslin 2011: 200). Nonetheless, North Korean nuclear dismantlement alone is not the only matter of interest for Japan.

Prior to the initiation of the Six-Party Talks, the Japanese government held a bilateral summit meeting with the DPRK, during which the *Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declara-*

tion was signed to address the three issues the Japanese government has been most concerned about – the DPRK’s nuclear programme, the missile programme and the issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents (*Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration* 2002). Since the abduction issue has yet to be resolved and therefore maintains priority status for Japanese decision makers in formulating the country’s foreign policy towards North Korea, and ballistic missiles are perceived as a direct threat to the Japanese homeland and surrounding seas, Japanese negotiators have urged to include these within the Six-Party Talks (MOFA of Japan 2004: 25ff; MOFA of Japan 2005: 21ff). Although the abduction issue in particular has little bearing on the other involved parties, Japan creates direct linkage to the solution of the nuclear issue. This is based on the Japanese rationale that resolution of this specific issue is a major condition for the normalisation of diplomatic relations including economic cooperation (Headquarters for the Abduction Issue 2011).

Having to respond to domestic pressures, for the Japanese government possibly “one of the biggest benefits of the six-party talks was the opportunity to promote the abduction issue in the international community” (Auslin 2011: 199). On the downside, the result of this prioritisation has been a negative effect on Japan’s ability to effectively cooperate with the other parties in this multilateral setting (Auslin 2011: 200). Others agree that Japan has only minimally been able to contribute to the multilateral process, because its own commitments to the agreements of the Six-Party Talks have been half-hearted (Okano-Heijmans 2008: 7). Okano-Heijmans further claims that Japan has been trying to gain leverage over North Korea by exploiting the prospect of giving economic assistance after normalised diplomatic relations have been established. She regards this as a way of achieving the interest in a denuclearised and stable Korean Peninsula without having to depend on a multilateral solution too much (Okano-Heijmans 2008: 8).

Whether this assumption is truthful or not, in light of Japan's apparent apprehension of China's enhanced standing, the Japanese government's attempt to push forward their own agenda is understandable to a certain extent. As an international multilateral negotiation framework, the Six-Party Talks have been an important international arena for Japan, which has for a while been striving to maintain its influence in the region or even play a more important role globally while countering the regional and global influence of rising China (Auslin 2011: 201).

Russian interests in the Korean Peninsula and East Asia

Just as much as the other parties, Russia too has its own unique interests in the North Korean nuclear issue as well as the whole region. A major constraint for Russia in the Six-Party Talks is its arguably weak links to the Korean Peninsula and the East Asian region as a whole since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The decreasing superpower status has side-lined Russia from international affairs in East Asia (Moltz 1999). Although Russia's leverage on North Korea is comparatively more limited than China's, the Six-Party Talks have presented an opportunity for Russian involvement in East Asian affairs and demonstrate presence in the region (Chung 2013: 9f). The dispute about the US freezing North Korean assets in Macau could only finally be resolved when a Russian bank stepped in and agreed to transfer the money, because even though US authorities unfroze the assets, most international financial institutes stayed out of the matter due to the fear of negative consequences in the future (Toloraya 2008: 58). Even before the onset of the Six-Party Talks, Russia has tried to re-establish its former superpower status through diplomacy in East Asia and North Korea in particular. In the awareness that North Korea is the most important concern for the US in their East Asia policy, Vladimir Putin promoted bilateral relations between Russia and North Korea

during his first term as president. In 2000, the two countries signed the *DPRK-Russia Joint Declaration*, which despite not clearly naming a common rival, heavily referred to the creation of a ‘multipolar world’, and “aimed at drawing a contrast with the unipolar worldview attributed to US leaders” (Park et al. 2013: 132). The North Korean Peninsula has been an opportunity for Russia to wield influence over regional affairs of East Asia as well as counterbalance or at least challenge US hegemony in the region (Zabrovskaya 1999).

In addition, economic considerations partly account for Russian motivations, too. By expressing the idea of connecting the Korean railway network to the Trans-Siberian Railway, Russian leadership indicated the interest in expanding its links to not only South Korea, but via the Korean Peninsula also to Japan (Funabashi 2007). However, such a scenario is reliant upon a stable and peaceful, but not necessarily united Korean Peninsula. Russian interest in the diversification of gas exports are yet another reason for the strong interest in a stable regional environment in East Asia, as it is a precondition to effectively target the huge potential East Asian market that is mainly constituted by China, Japan and South Korea. Apart from export gains, through such a diversification Russia would also acquire a strategically preferable position in political and economic relations in general, as gas exports are currently focused on the European market (Fernández/ Palazuelos 2011: 1072). Furthermore, the economic development of Russia’s own far eastern regions is noteworthy, too. On the one hand, they would benefit from a stable regional environment. On the other hand, economically more capable far eastern regions would make for a stronger Russian presence in the whole region (Park et al. 2013: 134f). Albeit the potential effects of a North Korean regime collapse would mainly entail a refugee influx in China’s northern regions, Russia would probably not be spared. As the comparatively small population in Russia’s far eastern regions has

already been facing demographic challenges, stability on the Korean Peninsula is in Russia's interest from this perspective, too (Brooke 2005).

Notwithstanding the many unique Russian interests in the Korean Peninsula, Russia has pursued reasonably non-controversial even if flexible policies such as stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula and the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation during the Six-Party Talks (Tolaraya 2008: 55).

Adverse impact on the negotiations

Regarding the multilateral setting of the negotiations, the various geopolitical interests of the involved parties can be considered to have adversely impacted the process of creating a solid solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. Even if not directly, the diverging interests concerning North Korea as well as the whole Korean Peninsula have indirectly affected the talks and the parties' ability to cooperate more productively. As presented above, the topic of Korean unification does play a certain role in most parties' considerations despite the agreement to deal with this particular issue separately. Not only are South Korean decision makers bound by strong public interest, but also the inextricable link between denuclearisation, peace and unification for them is reflected in the stringent opposition to any violent measures and the endorsement of engagement with the North. This stands in contrast to the US' hard line stance and their willingness to ultimately even employ military action to achieve their goal of extinguishing the threat originating from a North Korean nuclear weapons programme, although they would also prefer Korean unification under a moderate Seoul government (Buszynski 2013: 78f). Considering that China as another influential player in the setting has its very own interests that do not coincide with unification, it becomes apparent that although all parties want a stable situation on the Korean Peninsula, the importance they

ascribe to denuclearisation in the context of pursuing their own goals varies highly. While denuclearisation is a major goal for the US, to South Korean governments it is just one piece of the greater inter-Korean peace and reunification puzzle.

Furthermore, in particular Chinese and Russian interests make apparent that countries, which do not necessarily perceive a direct threat by potential North Korean nuclear weapons, rather seek to assert themselves and their influence in the East Asian region so as to balance against other major powers, namely the US. For the Chinese, as well as the Russian leadership the Six-Party Talks represent an arena where political profiling can be achieved. In that sense, dismantling the North Korean nuclear weapons programme might even become secondary in light of rivalries for regional influence and hegemony, which could eventually even be counter-productive and cause damage (Wu 2006: 317).

In addition, the case of Japan has demonstrated that the pursuit of unique interests and their prioritisation – such as the solution to a purely bilateral problem like the abduction issue – severely limits the countries' ability to contribute to the multilateral process effectively (Okano-Heijmans 2008; Auslin 2011). As mentioned earlier, Narlikar maintains that one of the major causes for deadlock is a negotiators' belief in the superiority of their BATNA in relation to an agreement (Narlikar 2012). Using Japan as a prominent example, one could suggest that the prioritisation of the abduction and ballistic missile issues and their linkage to the nuclear issue has possibly led Japan's BATNA – which is non-agreement unless both issues are simultaneously resolved – to become superior to an agreement on the nuclear issue alone.

Idiosyncrasies mainly in the form of distinct geopolitical interests surrounding the Korean Peninsula and East Asia have arguably contributed to exacerbating the process of finding a sustainable negotiated solution to the North Korean nuclear issue, though not all parties equally added to the negative effect. While Russia does have its own underly-

ing interests, they do not necessarily obstruct other parties' core interests such as unification (South Korea) or a preference for North Korean regime survival (China). Russia seeks to maintain a presence and some regional influence and pursues economic interests that require a stable environment on the Korean Peninsula, but are otherwise more or less flexibly adjustable to the surrounding circumstances, i.e. Russian interests neither create support nor opposition to Korean unification. However unlike Russia, Japan can be described to be a spoiler in a certain way. Even though its leverage over the DPRK is small, the unique Japanese linkage of issues and the resulting lack of commitment have complicated multilateral cooperation in the setting of the Six-Party Talks.

Considerably, the most significant constraint to solving the North Korean nuclear issue can be argued to be the US', China's and South Korea's underlying interests regarding the more general issues of inter-Korean peace and unification. While South Korea and the US maintain different attitudes over engagement with the North and the possibility of military intervention, the US and China have rivalling interests regarding regime survival of the DPRK and North Korea as a buffer zone between US American and Chinese spheres of influences in East Asia.

On the basis of these arguments, H2 can conceivably assessed to be true, because at least some of the surrounding states' varying geopolitical interests and their entailing implications hamper finding a solution that all six parties can commonly agree on.

6 Conclusion

When North Korea ultimately abandoned multilateral negotiations with China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the US within the setting of the Six-Party Talks in April 2009, it had already conducted a successful nuclear test and was in preparation for the next one in May 2009. Despite various efforts to resume the multilateral negotiations, the process has been stalled for almost a decade now and continuation is uncertain if not unlikely. In the meantime, North Korea has accomplished further tests and advanced its nuclear capacities. Today, tensions on the Korean Peninsula are rising again whilst the nuclear issue remains unsolved.

Drawing back on the theoretical approaches of negotiation and deadlock analysis with a focus on parties' positions, underlying interests and exogenous factors such as domestic politics, this thesis has explored possible reasons for the inability of the involved parties to create a sustainable solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. The basic presumption maintains that the Six-Party Talks have resulted in deadlock, because the parties' positions made the emergence of a ZOPA impossible. Utilising Narlikar's classification of deadlocks, the outcome of the Six-Party Talks has been assessed to fully qualify as a complete breakdown, as landmark moments have not led to revival and the deadlock has persisted for so long that deteriorating dynamics have resulted in at least one party to quit the negotiations. In particular, the issues concerning verification of nuclear dismantlement led to irreconcilable positions between North Korea and the other parties. While North Korea demanded for economic incentives, especially the US and Japan insisted on more reliable and verifiable commitment to denuclearisation by North Korea.

Subsequent to the exposition about the basic assumption of non-existence of a ZOPA, the two hypotheses addressing the reasons and motivations behind the parties' positions

have been scrutinised. In compliance with Putnam's model of diplomacy as a two-level game, North Korean foreign policy is highly restrained by the country's unique *Juche* and *Songun* ideologies. Not only is the development of nuclear weapons as a deterrent considered to be necessary for national security in light of perceived US hostility, but it is also essential in order to create leverage in the countries' limited foreign relations, because the economy is dependent on the gains that are often won after de-escalation of self-evoked crises. Moreover, the North Korean nuclear programme plays a critical role in consolidating the 'military first' doctrine domestically.

At the same time, it emerges that the other five parties' underlying interests regarding the North Korean nuclear issue and the Korean Peninsula in general vary widely. While the US' main objective is to maintain its sphere of influence in East Asia and eliminate a North Korean nuclear threat ultimately even by the means of military action, South Korean governments tend to reflect the nuclear issue in a broader perspective. Despite the desire to have North Korea free of nuclear weapons, the South Korean approach prefers engagement to violence and is restrained by the long-term goal of peaceful unification as well as the apprehension of the repercussions a war would have on South Korea itself. China's interests are characterised by a unique ambivalence towards North Korea. On the one hand, Chinese leverage on the DPRK is often overestimated and the unpredictable regime presents to be a liability to China. However on the other hand, the Chinese leadership has an interest in sustaining the survival of the North Korean regime and preventing its collapse in order to maintain its buffer zone against US influence in the region. As the state with the weakest links to the region, Russia's interests are based on building and maintaining a high profile presence in the region, which is not only motivated by rivalry with the US and the ambition to be a major global power. Economic interests such tapping new markets for Russian gas exports in East Asia and the devel-

opment of Russian far eastern regions are at the bottom of Russia's interest in a stable and peaceful regional environment. Finally, Japanese ambitions in solving the ballistic missile problem and the domestically highly important abduction issue add to the variety of motivations and confine Japan's ability to commit and cooperate more effectively in the multilateral setting.

Against the backdrop of the presented findings, both hypotheses are corroborated. Judging that H1 and H2 are not necessarily competing or mutually exclusive due to the different angles from which they enlighten the issue, they rather complement each other in explaining why the Six-Party Talks failed to achieve what they were set out to. This result demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of the North Korean nuclear crisis and the Six-Party Talks as a multilateral negotiating setting.

This thesis has focused on some, but certainly not all influential aspects within the framework of the Six-Party Talks and therefore does not claim to present the only answer to the question why these multilateral negotiations have failed to reach a solid agreement. The reality is even more complex and other aspects such as bargaining strategies that lie beyond the scope of this thesis might have played a role as well and could be elaborated on in further research. As almost a decade has past since the Six-Party Talks have stalled and the DPRK has further developed its nuclear weapons, research on the extent of denuclearisation efforts since 2009 and the other five previously participating states' involvement could also be relevant for a more comprehensive understanding of the current situation.

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Thesis Proposal

Master Thesis Proposal

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Proposed Topic:

The six-party talks and the North Korean nuclear weapons programme: negotiation analysis

Registered in SIS: Yes **Date of registration: 23.06.2016**

Topic Characteristics:

Quite recently, North Korea has allegedly conducted its fifth successful nuclear test since 2006. Regardless of the exact verisimilitude of information provided by the North Korean government, the international community is once again reminded of the fragile security situation in East Asia. Since 2003, major regional powers – China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the US – have engaged in multiple rounds of negotiations with North Korea. These so-called six-party talks were aiming at a peaceful resolution to the threats and concerns caused by North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme, but despite various efforts an effective agreement could not be reached and the negotiations were discontinued in 2009.

My thesis will be a negotiation analysis focusing on the course of the six-party talks, mainly examining the possible reasons for the current deadlock. Furthermore, I would like to reflect on the possibility of the six-party talk’s resumption and likely conditions therefor or alternative solutions to the regional instability caused by North Korea and its nuclear weapons programme.

Background:

In 1992, both Korean states agreed on the *Joint Declaration of South and North Korea and the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula* that was aiming to “eliminate the danger of nuclear war through the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, to create conditions and an environment favourable to peace and the peaceful unification of Korea” (Joint Declaration 1992). Nevertheless in the following year, North Korea first announced its withdrawal from the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT).

After Kim Il-sung’s death in 1994, representatives of North Korea and the US negotiated the *Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*,

which prevented North Korea from putting its withdrawal from the NPT into effect and aimed at replacing North Korea's existing graphite-moderated reactors with light water reactors as well as a general normalisation of relations between the two countries (IAEA 1994). In 1995 the *Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization* (KEDO) was founded by the US, Japan and South Korea in order to implement the Agreed Framework's goals. After 1998 and Kim Dae-jung's election as South Korean President (1998-2003), the implementation of his Sunshine Policy produced ground-breaking improvements in inter-Korean relations (e.g. the first summit meeting after the Korean War). However, inter-Korean relations as well as relations between North Korea and the US began to cool down again soon after the beginning of the new millennium and former US President George W. Bush declared North Korea to be part of the 'Axis of Evil' (along with Iran and Iraq) in 2002. Additionally, North Korea's relations with Japan, which have never even been formally established, have deteriorated dramatically after North Korea fired a Taepodong-1 missile across Japan into the Pacific Ocean and the abduction of Japanese citizens by agents of the North Korean government became a major public issue in 2002 (Kawashima/ Ryu 2011: 346f).

After the existence of a North Korean uranium enrichment programme, which violates the 1992 Joint Declaration, the 1994 Agreed Framework and the NPT, was confirmed in 2002 the KEDO stopped its support to North Korea and the country was sharply criticised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The events ultimately led to North Korea officially withdrawing from the NPT in the beginning of 2003. Initially the US and China attempted to find a solution to the problem in three-party negotiations, but soon decided to include Japan, South Korea and Russia and deal with the issue in six-party talks (Kawashima/ Ryu 2011: 348).

Several rounds of negotiation took place between 2003 and 2007, but produced only little progress. The rather few concessions made by North Korea were soon reversed when its government decided to abandon the six-party talks and restart its nuclear enrichment programme in 2009. The six-party talks have not been resumed since, even though the North Korean nuclear weapons programme still poses a major threat to security and stability in East Asia.

Since Kim Jong-il's death in 2011 and the leadership over North Korea was taken over by his third son Kim Jong-un, the situation has rather aggravated. Not only has the country seemingly conducted its fifth successful nuclear test in September 2016, it also claimed the successful test of a thermonuclear (hydrogen) bomb earlier this year, which however was doubted by most media (BBC 2016; Choe et al. 2016; Yan 2016). Nevertheless, the continuing nuclear tests can be regarded as an indicator for the intention to continue the country's nuclear weapons programme, assuming the circumstances remain roughly the same.

Research question:

For the purpose of constructing a conceptual framework, the thesis will be guided by following research question: *Why have the six-party talks not led to a sustainable agreement between the participating parties?* In order to properly answer this question, I will examine following aspects:

- Existence of the possibility of finding a solution that is acceptable for all parties
- Each party's goals and interests as well as how each party's position and behaviour influenced the processes and outcomes of the negotiation rounds
- Influence of change in external/environmental circumstances over the course of the negotiation rounds

Working hypotheses:

As part of the conceptual framework and in connection with the research questions, I will explore several hypotheses that are going to be either corroborated or disproven in my thesis.

Based on the methodology of negotiation analysis, which will be described in the next section, the null hypothesis (H_0) reads as follows: *The six-party talks have not led to a sustainable agreement between the participating parties, because there was no zone of possible agreement.*

Furthermore, I will explore two further hypotheses to analyse the concrete reasons for the outcome of the negotiations. Taking the unique situation of North Korea into account, I will construct following H1: *The unique domestic politics of North Korea impede an agreement with the other involved parties.* In addition, I will explore another hypothesis (H2) that focuses on systemic aspects and the other actors: *The geopolitical interests of the surrounding powers and their conflicts among each other hamper finding a solution that all six parties can commonly agree on.*

Methodology:

The methodological framework of my thesis will consist in a qualitative negotiation analysis. Formal definitions of what exactly negotiations are vary widely, but usually build upon certain common precepts. The most important fundamental assumption is that parties share the belief that entering into negotiation with the other parties facilitates the satisfaction of their goals and concerns. This mutual belief usually triggers the onset of negotiations. Even in cases where a party enters into negotiation for other purposes (e.g. buying time, gaining influence etc.) or just to pretend to be interested in a common agreement, the dynamics caused by negotiation processes may – regardless of the actor's actual commitment – produce outcomes (Alfredson/ Cungu 2008: 6).

In order to find out, if the possibility of finding a solution that is acceptable to all parties existed in the beginning respectively exists today, it is necessary to identify each party's reservation point and the general zone of possible agreement (ZOPA). The reservation point is the absolute minimum an actor is willing to settle for in a negotiation. Raiffa argues that anything beyond the reservation point is not worth negotiating for (Raiffa 1982: 126f). If there is an overlapping range between the negotiating parties' reservation points, a ZOPA exists. This however only means that agreement is possible, but not at all certain.

As strategic and tactical approaches usually assume rationality of actors, which in my opinion does not reflect the reality of the setting of the six-party talks, I will apply other approaches that match the given circumstances.

Structural approaches of negotiation analysis tend to create a better reflection of reality as they focus on characteristics of the negotiation setting such as number of parties and issues and the relative power of competing parties (Alfredson/ Cungu 2008: 9f). The logic corresponds to the theoretical ideas of realist thinking in IR and can potentially explain the six-party talks' dynamics to a certain extent. Nevertheless, I believe it is crucial to take other dimensions into account as well, since power certainly is not the only determining factor for the outcome of these multilateral negotiations. Therefore, I will additionally apply a behavioural approach to analyse the negotiations. Behavioural approaches do not regard actors as rational monolithic entities, but rather as players with individual characteristics, which can play a significant role in the process or for the outcome of negotiations. By taking attitudes, (mis)perceptions (of others, their intentions, threats, one's own role etc.), individual motivation, culture, norms, expectations, relationships and the like into account, behavioural approaches are able to create a more complex image of the situation (Alfredson/ Cungu 2008: 13f). This approach roughly corresponds to the ideas of constructivist theory in IR, which emphasises the impact of social reality in interaction between states.

Concretely, I will start the negotiation analysis by trying to identify each player's overall position and reservation point at the beginning of the six-party talks in 2003 and how the players' interests are based on their power and/ or their social reality. The next step after this is to find out whether or not the parties' reservation points allowed for the existence of a ZOPA in 2003 when the negotiations started. This step is crucial in order to find out how the situation changed over the years and concluded in a (at least momentary) deadlock.

The following steps of the analysis will revolve around identifying the changes (in means e.g. power, as well as in perception of the situation) throughout the course of the six-party talks (including concessions and accomplished agreements) and how these changes affected the parties' reservation points until 2009, when North Korea officially abandoned the negotiations. On the basis of the possibly

changed reservations points, I will then try to find out whether or not a ZOPA (still) exists after the end of the six-party talks.

Sources:

My negotiation analysis will be based on a variety of primary sources such as official government statements, policy papers (e.g. white papers etc.), treaties (e.g. NPT, Agreed Framework etc.), if relevant governments' statistics, relevant International Organizations' reports (e.g. UN, IAEA etc.) as well as supporting secondary sources including contemporary scholarly literature, reports by independent research institutes and established journals/media etc.

Specifically, I will use any available primary source on the six-party negotiations, which includes:

- Chairman statements
- Unilateral statements
- Joint statements
- Press communiqués

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Methodological framework
3. Brief overview of (historical) background
4. Parties' positions
 - a. North Korea
 - b. USA
 - c. China
 - d. South Korea
 - e. Japan
 - f. Russia
5. Analysis of the negotiation
 - a. ZOPA
 - b. North Korean domestic politics
 - c. Surrounding powers' geopolitical interests
6. Conclusion

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