

**OFFSETTING, CONTAGION, AND NEUTRALIZATION:  
THE EFFECTS OF “THICK REINFORCEMENT” IN THE SIX-PARTY  
TALKS**

by

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

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submitted by Andrei Golobokov in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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## **Abstract**

This paper addresses gaps in the existing literature on competition and accommodation dynamics among great and middle powers within multilateral security institutions, such as Six-Party Talks. The thesis asks why such security institutions show so much variation in outcomes, despite similar long-term power dynamics. For example, what explains the fluctuations in performance of the 6-party talks over two decades: why were the 6-party talks initially successful, before experiencing stalemate, and, eventually collapse?

In response, this paper conducts a plausibility probe in the case of Six-Party Talks. Most existing studies focus on the behavior of North Korea, the US, and China through a power lens. In contrast, I argue that a high degree of cooperation at the bilateral level among the majority of participants is a determining factor for the success of the talks. In particular, strong reciprocal engagements, or “thick reinforcement” resulted in clear unity among participating states and decisive collective action. When such conditions existed, we observe an uptick in the performance of Six-Party talks; and success in softening the hard stance of North Korea.

The paper finds that different combinations of thick reinforcement and weak engagement across dyads cause different effects. A simple ‘contagion effect’ was sufficient for the success of the talks in 2007. Low levels of cooperation across dyads led to ‘offsetting’ and ‘neutralization’ effects, which then led to stagnation of the talks in 2003 – 2004 and to their collapse in 2008 – 2009.

## **Lay Summary**

This work explains the phenomenon of “thick reinforcement” in the multilateral institution. It shows that bilateral engagements and unity, in addition to non-proliferation, are key to resolving nuclear crises.

The paper develops a new metric to measure the various combinations of bilateral relations among China, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the U.S. It offers a score of reciprocal engagement in each dyad, as well as an aggregate score.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Andrei Golobokov.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

NPT Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

SPT Six-Party Talks

UNSC United States Security Council

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I also own particular thanks to Salta Zhumatova for her comments and help, and I must express my gratitude to other faculty and staff members at the Department of Political Science, UBC.

Special thanks are owed to my family that prepared me to pursue my degree.

## **Dedication**

To Parker Li, Lisa Sundstrom and Salta Zhumatova.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

States' engagement in international frameworks has been studied within the realist approach in international relations literature. This approach is characterized by states' competitions for power, while international institutions are deemed as reflections and tools of power.<sup>1</sup> Following power politics literature, it is credible to envision great powers as being the ones who benefit the most from international institutions.<sup>2</sup>

However, there is a countervailing argument that suggests that it is the lesser powers who gain most from institutions because they can present a joint front, under some circumstances, against the great powers.<sup>3</sup>

This is due to the decoupling status of powerful states: for example, the relative decline of the American regional military primacy<sup>4</sup> means that the US has far less cumulative power over time, triggering a possible search for new frameworks<sup>5</sup>, and engagement within multilateral security institutions. As the power of the states in such frameworks varies, the interests of those different states are not necessarily the same, leading

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<sup>1</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). *The tragedy of great power politics* (Updated ed.). New York, NY: W.W. Norton; Gilpin, R. (1981). *War and change in world politics*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press; Foot, R., MacFarlane, S. N., Mastanduno, M., & UPSO (University Press Scholarship Online). (2003). *U.S. hegemony and international organizations: The United States and multilateral institutions*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press; Cha, V. D. (2000). Abandonment, entrapment, and neoclassical realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea. *International Studies Quarterly*, 44(2), 261-291

<sup>2</sup> Martin, L. L. (1992). Interests, power, and multilateralism. *International Organization*, 46(4), 765-792

<sup>3</sup> Panke, D. (2017). The institutional design of the United Nations General Assembly: An effective equalizer? *International Relations (London)*, 31(1), 3-20; Thompson, A. (2006). Coercion through IOs: The Security Council and the logic of information transmission. *International Organization*, 60(1), 1-34

<sup>4</sup> Rollo, S. (2020). The 'Asia threat' in the US–Australia relationship: Then and now. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 20(2), 225-252.

<sup>5</sup> Zheng, Y., Chu, Y. (2020). *The decline of the western-centric world and the emerging new global order: Contending views*. Milton: Taylor and Francis

to inherently opposing policy preferences and actions. Overall, there has been no consensus to qualitatively explain the link between states' engagement and the dynamic of international institution.

A driving question behind this paper is: why are institutions able to yield significant progress for a period of time, and then suddenly collapse? What can we learn about the conditions for such success or failure?

For example, Six-Party Talks (SPT), a non-formal multilateral institution<sup>6</sup> was relatively successful in forcing North Korea to shut down some of its nuclear facilities in 2005-2007. However, it stagnated in the absence of such success in 2003 and collapsed in 2009, leaving behind many questions on its success' conditions.

In 1994, the U.S. and North Korea signed an agreement-the Agreed Framework to suspend the nuclear weapons program in exchange for two proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors. Later, in 2003 joint statement from the U.S., Japan and South Korea reaffirmed that they had "no intention of invading" North Korea<sup>7</sup>. The SPT was based on these principles, like a "gentlemen's agreement". Parties can withdraw if they are forced or urged into commitments that are not outlined in the agreements they sign.<sup>8</sup>

This approach has been criticized: for example, the lack of a legally binding

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<sup>6</sup> Six-Party Talks (SPT): a series of multilateral negotiations held from 2003 to 2009 by South Korea, DPRK, U.S., China, Japan, and Russia for dismantling DPRK's nuclear program and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The talks were hosted in Beijing, chaired by China, and suspended in 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Davenport K.. The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance. Arms Control Association. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework>

<sup>8</sup> There were legally binding decisions towards DPRK by Security Council Resolutions: UN Security Council Resolution 1695 (2006), July 15, 2006, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1695; UN Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006), Oct. 14, 2006, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1718 (hereinafter S.C. Res. 1718).

agreement may create the problem of common-pool resources<sup>9</sup>. However, albeit not binding from a strictly legal perspective, principles such as DPRK denuclearization or peace agreement between the two Koreas were accepted by the involved parties. Therefore they could accommodate their interests.

Many scholars argue that the negotiations stagnated and failed primarily due to DPRK's withdrawal and its unwillingness to take any steps forward in the talks.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, this paper attempts to explain the success and the failure of such an institution by observing the specific conditions explaining the relations and degrees of engagement among its member states. The combination of favorable conditions, such as agreements and attempts to reducing tensions, and unfavorable conditions such as conflicting issues and negative sentiments, have resulted in particular degrees of accommodation, hedging, or bandwagoning among the SPT parties, particularly between the dyads of states. When the degree of mutual accommodation among the five powers outside North Korea was high, they were able to collectively signal a degree of unity. This unity, in turn, was sufficient to change the hard stance of North Korea, i.e. its unwillingness to agree to nuclear non-proliferation. In this regard, this paper builds upon Buszynski's idea of states' ability to negotiate positively due to mutual commitments.

This study argues that a strong reciprocal relations or "thick reinforcement" among the majority of the SPT participants caused a 'contagion effect' in 2005 - 2007, when strong dyadic activity spread out and affected other parties. The increasing degree of common

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<sup>9</sup> Ostrom E, et al. Rules, games, and common-pool resources. University of Michigan Press, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Davenport K.. The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance. Arms Control Association. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework>; Reiss, M. (2008) North Korea: Getting to Maybe? In: Cronin, Patrick M. (ed.) Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security. Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Security International.

interests between China and ROK was particularly salient, along with cooperative moves from Japan and Russia. The clear unity and decisive actions among all participants of Six-Party talks was influential in changing the hard stance of DPRK. As a result, North Korea shut down the Yongbyon nuclear facilities and pledged to participate in the historical Inter-Korea summit with South Korea. The study also found a high number of thick reinforcements in 2018, when North Korea demolished the Punggye-ri nuclear test site and participated in summits with the U.S. and South Korea.

A high degree of cooperation at the bilateral level among the majority of participants is a determining factor for the success of the talks. In particular, a large number of thick reinforcements among the middle powers and the great powers is correlated with progress in the negotiations.

A low number of thick reinforcements in 2003 – 2004 resulted in the absence of binding agreement and SPT stagnation. A larger number of conflicts in 2008 – 2009 triggered a ‘neutralization effect’, a situation where divergences in various bilateral engagements lead to mistrust and grievances between most of the parties. DPRK maintained the hard stance which led to SPT collapse. (see Table 2).

This study contrasts periods of stagnation (2003 - 2004 and 2008 - 2009), with periods of progress (2005 - 2007). It also analyzes the post - 2018 period when negotiations went out of the SPT framework.

Considering DPRK as a “common ground” of the other SPT participants’ security, the study took a closer look at the evolution of engagements between the U.S., China, ROK, Russia, and Japan to explain under what conditions they achieved strong reciprocal relations in different periods of the SPT.

The research data was mostly based on annual national diplomatic summaries and official statements of each of the five states: Diplomatic Bluebooks of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Diplomatic White Papers of Korea, China Defense Ministry White Papers, U.S. White House's official statements, and reports on National Defense, "Russia and the World" annual reports. For the variables, we bring more clarity in the Appendices by defining and operationalizing them with specific empirical indicators. Based on the operationalization of variables (conditions), we measured the degrees of states' engagement in each of the observed SPT dyads.

To deal with the problem of aggregation due to the different institutional power of each dyad, we ranked the dyads into different categories and obtained specific aggregate scores that signaled unity in each of the SPT periods. Furthermore, we denoted changes over-time according to the results of each of the SPT periods to see, whether they correlated with the progress or collapse of the SPT.

The study found that an increasing number of thick reinforcements (between Russia and China, South Korea and China, Russia and South Korea, etc.) correlates with the success of the talks. Specifically, there were seven dyads showing thick reinforcement and only two dyads in situations of weak reciprocal engagements in 2005 – 2007. This resulted in a high aggregate score, in contrast to lower degrees of thick reinforcement and lower aggregate scores in 2003 – 2004 and in 2009.

Simultaneously, there had been tough and consistent actions by the five states of the SPT against Pyongyang. North Korea pledged to shut down the Yongbyon etc. nuclear facilities and return to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2005 – 2007, and when



North Korea pledged to demolish the Punggye-ri nuclear test site in 2018<sup>11</sup>. In both periods North Korea also pledged to participate in the historical Inter-Korea summits with South Korea.

Conversely, no significant progress has been seen in 2003 – 2004 and in 2009, when DPRK intensified confrontation. When the negotiations regressed in 2008 – 2009, the number of symmetrical engagements (measured by the percentage) was also less. Finally, the study estimated states' engagements in the “post - SPT” period (2018) and found that a large number of thick reinforcements is sufficient to yield some results.

The paper seeks to explain the phenomenon of thick reinforcement in the multilateral international frameworks. It shows that in addition to non-proliferation and global security order, the resolving of the nuclear crises is a matter of bilateral engagements and clear unity. The paper also aims at categorizing dyadic symmetries in multilateral diplomacy of East Asia.

The larger implication of this paper is that institutions of global cooperation and global governance require degrees of mutual toleration and engagement at the bilateral level between most significant powers. The paper also shows that relations between middle powers, as well as those between middle powers and great powers have a significant impact on the success of global institutions. It is not just about the bilateral relation between the two or three apex super powers.

The rest of this paper proceeds in four steps. Section One provides a literature review and identifies the research gaps. Section Two elaborates on the theoretical framework of engagements, with a particular focus on defining its favorable and unfavorable conditions.

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<sup>11</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook, 2019. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/index.html>

Section Three is the methodology section where the empirical cases of the Six-Party Talks, as well as the after-SPT period, are discussed. The last section concludes and comments on future research.

## Chapter 2: The Nature and the Conditions for Thick Reinforcement

### 2.1 Literature review

According to the neorealist approach, great power states are those who attempt to install themselves as regional and global hegemons,<sup>12</sup> while a middle power is one that follows a “retaliation-based” order and attempts to deter coercion from great powers.<sup>13</sup>

Relations between great and middle powers are often viewed through the anarchy lens, espoused by the rationalists. Under this framework, the overall structure of the international political system forces competition, which implies a bleak situation for long-term cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

Another study suggests that this form of interaction is not the absence of conflict, but a process that involves the use of discord to stimulate mutual adjustment through a process of policy coordination<sup>15</sup>. However, the extent of states’ engagement is not clearly defined, and the engagement behavior impact on the international frameworks is understudied.

Classic literature on power politics explored such interactions between great powers middle powers through a realist lens. Balancing derives from the balance of power theory, where states implement policies to balance against a potential hegemon.<sup>16</sup> According to Quincy Wright, bandwagoning (opposite of balancing) is a type of behavior when the cost of opposing the

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<sup>12</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). *The tragedy of great power politics* (Updated ed.). New York, NY: W.W. Norton;

<sup>13</sup> New World Order after COVID-19 series II. Post-Corona Order in the Asia-Pacific. (2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ISuzALd920>

<sup>14</sup> Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist explanations for war. *International Organization*, 49(3), 379-414

<sup>15</sup> Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press

<sup>16</sup> Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics* (1st ed.). New York: Random House

hegemon exceeds the benefits, and so the weaker states decide to align with the hegemon for safety<sup>17</sup>. Bandwagoning and balancing are often put together to examine states' engagement<sup>18</sup>.

Another type of behavior, described by scholars as a qualifier function of balancing is hedging, defined as 'soft' balancing<sup>19</sup> or realist-style balancing<sup>20</sup>. Collier and Mahon labeled hedging a classic example of conceptual stretching<sup>21</sup>, while Korolev referred to it as a regional and issue-focused behavior.<sup>22</sup>

In general, hedging implies trying to diversify one's stakes and pursuing multiple policy options. In the abovementioned studies, hedging and bandwagoning are not used to describe the strategy of particular states.

Moreover, there are plenty of cases when states' behavior refers neither to hedging nor bandwagoning. Instead, scholars apply accommodation, sometimes deemed as shared leadership. For example, Schroeder's study on XIX Century European politics argues that "the new European order was based not on a balance among the five great powers, but rather on the

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<sup>17</sup> Wright, Q., & HathiTrust ETAS Collection. (1942). A study of war. Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago press.

<sup>18</sup> Schweller, R. L. (1994). Bandwagoning for profit: Bringing the revisionist state back in. *International Security*, 19(1), 72-107; Roy, D. (2005). Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or bandwagoning? *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 27(2), 305-322; Kang, D. C. (2009). Between balancing and bandwagoning: South Korea's response to china. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 9(1), 1-28

<sup>19</sup> Goh, E., HathiTrust ETAS Collection, & East-West Center Washington. (2005). Meeting the China challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian regional security strategies. Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington; Cheng-Chwee, K. (2008). The essence of hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's response to a rising china. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 30(2), 159-185

<sup>20</sup> Medeiros, E. S. (2005). Strategic hedging and the future of asia-pacific stability. *The Washington Quarterly*, 29(1), 145-167

<sup>21</sup> Collier, D., & Mahon, J. (1993). Conceptual "Stretching" revisited: Adapting categories in comparative analysis. *The American Political Science Review*, 87(4), 845-855

<sup>22</sup> Korolev, A. (2016). Systemic balancing and regional hedging: China-russia relations. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 9(4), 375-397

‘shared hegemony’ of the two flanking powers, Great Britain and Russia.” Schroeder’s survey of European diplomacy from the Napoleonic Wars suggests that accommodation characterizes secondary states’ responses to dominant powers.<sup>23</sup> However, these studies have not clearly explained the differences between accommodation and other types of behavior.

Ross continues the study on accommodation. He argues that once a rising power can fundamentally affect the security of a secondary state, the latter will accommodate rather than balance this new dominant power.<sup>24</sup> However, this work falls short and does not clearly categorize states’ behavior. For example, according to Ross, Russia and South Korea have very different understandings of Chinese intentions, but all are accommodated [by] China’s interest in a periphery.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, most of the studies have not paid much attention to the conditions that systematically defined states behavior. Commitment has been treated as a useful tool in international relations<sup>26</sup> literature to ensure peaceful relations in addition to trust. According to Buszynski, “the ability to get one’s way in negotiations is not automatically assured by [one state’s] national power, given all kinds of constraints and limitations”. But their engagement will

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<sup>23</sup> Ingraio, C. (1994). Paul W. Schroeder’s balance of power: Stability or anarchy? *International History Review*, 16(4), 681-700; Ingraio, C. (1994). Paul W. Schroeder’s balance of power: Stability or anarchy? *International History Review*, 16(4), 681-700

<sup>24</sup> Ross, R. S. (2006). Balance of power politics and the rise of china: Accommodation and balancing in East Asia. *Security Studies*, 15(3), 355-395

<sup>25</sup> Ross, R. S. (2020). Sino-Russian relations: The false promise of Russian balancing. *International Politics* (Hague, Netherlands), 57(5), 834-854

<sup>26</sup> Kydd, A. H., & Princeton University Press eBook Package Backlist 2000-2013. (2005). *Trust and mistrust in international relations*. Princeton;Oxford:: Princeton University Press.; Torgler, B. (2008). *Trust in international organizations: An empirical investigation focusing on the united nations*. *The Review of International Organizations*, 3(1), 65-93.; Maoz, Z., & Felsenthal, D. S. (1987). Self-binding commitments, the inducement of trust, social choice, and the theory of international cooperation. *International Studies Quarterly*, 31(2), 177-20; Ruzicka, J., & Keating, V. C. (2015). Going global: Trust research and international relations. *Journal of Trust Research*, 5(1), 8-26

be more positive if they face mutual commitments.<sup>27</sup> This is in line with Ross's conclusion that neither economic dominance nor domestic politics and intention-based threat perceptions are necessary to compel state alignment.<sup>28</sup> However, most of the studies have not tried to identify the effects of commitment between different states in a multilateral structure. Another question will be: what is the outcome of different types of states' engagement in a multilateral institution?

For example, studies by Hur and Buszynski depicted the dynamic interactions of the states at the different rounds of Six-Part Talks. Hur argues that the SPT framework and process itself played a substantial role in shaping how states developed their policies and interacted with each other.<sup>29</sup> But he does not address the question of whether states interactions shaped the result of the SPT. Some other scholars are critical of argue that SPT is a rigid and static process or presumed to be too sporadic and the Korean peninsula does not need such an institutional framework anymore.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike existing studies, this paper examines the impact of states' bilateral relations on the result of Six-Party Talks. The SPT agreement tried to embed states' pledges in a regional system of accountabilities, but it failed to sidestep distributional interest conflicts of the states, instead establishing a firm ground of variety in bilateral engagements, such as hedging, bandwagoning

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<sup>27</sup> Buszynski, L. (2013). *Negotiating with North Korea: The six party talks and the nuclear issue*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

<sup>28</sup> Ross, R. "Balance of power politics and the rise of China: Accommodation and balancing in East Asia." *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (2006): 355-395

<sup>29</sup> Hur, M. (2018). *The Six-Party Talks on North Korea: Dynamic interactions among principal states* (1st 2018 ed.). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

<sup>30</sup> Bajoria, J. and Beina X. (2013) *The China-North Korea Relationship*. <http://www.cfr.org/china/chinanorth-korea-relationship/p11097>; Reiss, M. (2008) *North Korea: Getting to Maybe?* In: Cronin, Patrick M. (ed.) *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Security International.

and accommodation. This study argues that states' engagements through strong accommodation and bandwagoning were the most important for the success of the SPT. We call such strong reciprocal engagements "thick reinforcement". The next section will advance theoretical framework and explain the effects of this phenomenon.

## 2.2 Thick reinforcement: the theoretical framework

I argue that in a non-formal multilateral institution without strong commitments, parties need to generate commitments through strong bilateral engagement. The directionality of such engagement is important, meaning that reciprocal engagement is more effective than non-reciprocal engagement. If both parties of a dyad consistently improve their bilateral relations through bilateral commitments, this may result in thick reinforcement: either strong reciprocal accommodation or bandwagoning. Large number of thick reinforcements increases the chance of institutional success.

In a multilateral structure, different combinations of thick reinforcement and weak engagement may result in various effects:

1) ‘Offsetting effect’: *The thick reinforcements are able to offset the negative relationships.* At this level, states follow the realist logic of conflict mitigation. Some parties in thick reinforcement support the same claim. But their common institutional vision is quite superficial and they do not generate commitments. Because of many uncertainties in bilateral relations that negate the expected commitments, some other states prefer keeping the status quo. Positive and negative conditions cancel out and offset each other, resulting in weak multilateral rapprochement. The negative impact of this offsetting is that despite the creation of non-formal institutions, there is no clear unity and no binding agreement. However, at this level, the frictions do not touch the key preferences of the states. The expectations of the institutional logic and attempts to mitigate conflict through commitment are promising. Despite this entry stage does not initiate a spillover effect yet and does not lead to a change in behavior on major priorities, it leaves room for further negotiations.

2) ‘Contagion effect’: *The number of thick reinforcements exceeds the amount of*



*negative relationships*. Increased strong dyadic activity spreads out and affects other parties, for example, by way of security concerns. States demonstrate continuity in mutual interests and their bilateral relations are helpful to rethink the deeper issues around the common ground. The commitments between the states are stronger. There are plenty of parties in thick reinforcement, and they may modify the position of a third party to accept a joint agreement. Middle power relationships are strong enough to neutralize great power politics. This generates momentum building, stronger unity, and accentuating the decisive actions among more conservative actors. A large number of thick reinforcements across the dyads can generate institutional success, despite some of the weak engagements. The aggregate reinforcement effect among the totality of memberships plays a decisive role in contagion. However, the modified position of some states might be temporary, due to the lack of socialization and commitments through the institution itself.

3) ‘Neutralization effect’: *The number of thick reinforcements is less than the number of negative relationships*. At this level, most of the parties follow realist logic. There are considerably more divergences in various bilateral engagements. This is due to fundamentally opposite approaches of the key stakeholders. For instance, one party thinks of deterrence while another prefers easing tensions.

Due to many uncertainties across the dyads, parties maintain a self-assertive policy or prefer to keep the status quo. This leads to mistrust and grievances between most of the parties. The effect neutralizes commitments and causes a huge negative impact on the negotiations. It blocks institution from further improvement. Momentum is weak and states fail to come to a binding agreement. A deadlocked negotiation is the most likely outcome.

Overall, this set of effects demonstrates that complex institutional cooperation is more

likely to succeed when all the participants have positive cooperative relations through thick reinforcement.

A number of scholars have tried to compare states' commitments to align with each other for safety through a variety of engagements: from balancing to bandwagoning.<sup>31</sup> If we follow this logic, it is unlikely that the results of negotiations are dramatically affected by the actions of other states. However, the conditions that influenced state behavior might have caused the emergence of thick reinforcement in some of the dyads.

There are favourable and unfavourable conditions that affect the emergence of thick reinforcement and upon which the abovementioned effects vary. The study will discuss favourable conditions first and unfavourable conditions second.

1) Favorable conditions such as joint statements and attempts to reduce tensions, will advance positive bilateral relations through commitment, and strengthen bandwagoning.

Mutual agreements between the states, as well as joint statements made by the leaders are a way to demonstrate strong commitment. States officially adhere to one another position, sign agreements within a dyad another state and commit high-level visits. States can also either a) reach a temporary consensus on the conflicted issue, or b) find another cause that is more important for all involved parties to put their differences aside temporarily, at least for temporary benefits. This is consistent with the idea that the states engagements played a substantial role in developing negotiations.

2) Unfavorable conditions, such as conflicting issues and negative sentiments, will lead to conflicts, negative sentiments, and strengthen hedging.

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<sup>31</sup> Kang, D. C. (2009). Between balancing and bandwagoning: South Korea's response to china. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 9(1), 1-28; Cladi, L., & Locatelli, A. (2012). Bandwagoning, not balancing: Why Europe confounds realism. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 33(2), 264-288

When the aggregate degree of states' engagement was low, due to the lack of commitments, conflicts, or negative sentiments, DPRK either intensified the confrontation level or guard their interest by intentionally decoupling from the talks.

It should be noted that the study considers DPRK as a “common ground” for SPT participants. First, it is neither a great power (like the US, China, or Russia) nor a middle power (like the Republic of Korea/Japan). Instead, it is a completely asymmetric power, oversized on military (nuclear) components, but very weak on many other things, such as economic power, international commitments, and alignments.

Second, having no concrete interest and using nuclear power as bargaining leverage, DPRK did not participate in the talks in a traditional form (i.e. by accommodating, hedging, etc.) It considered the SPT as a domestic issue, while for the others this was an international matter. Thus, DPRK's destructive behavior might have broken the common ground of other countries.

The next part will describe the methodology of measuring states' engagements and capturing thick reinforcements in different periods of the SPT.

## **Chapter 3: The Case of Six-Party Talks**

### **3.1 Methodology**

For the selection of the sub-cases, we looked at the general results and agreements of the Six-Party Talks' from 2003 to 2009. Following the realist or rationalist studies, the study examined long-term power dynamics between the participants of the SPT. To see the dynamics of states' relations and degrees of engagements, we selected three periods 2003-2004 (no agreement reached); 2005-2007 (the temporary success); 2008-2009 (the stagnation).

We looked at SPT dyadic relations to understand whether they explained the temporary success of the talks. We define temporary success of the at the Six-Party talks as a critical breakthrough of negotiations that resulted in changing the hard stance of DPRK through the signed agreements. Such a success happened when North Korea pledged to abandon “all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs” and return to the NPT in 2005. Another critical breakthrough of the SPT was in 2007. At that time, the parties were establishing working groups to implement the earlier agreement of 2005. After that, DPRK committed to shutting down and sealing the Yongbyon, etc. nuclear facilities.

The research observations were based on annual national diplomatic summaries and official statements of each of the five states: Diplomatic Bluebooks of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Diplomatic White Papers of Korea, China Defense Ministry White Papers, U.S. White House's official statements and reports on National Defense, “Russia and the World” annual reports.

To measure the degree of states' engagement based on both favorable and unfavorable conditions, each variable was assigned a range of specific values. We assume that the evolution

of both favorable and unfavorable conditions has resulted in a wide array of SPT states' engagements.

Based on the operationalization of variables (conditions), we measured the degree of engagement in each of the observed SPT dyads, calculated as:

$$Y_i (\text{Eng}) = (\Sigma x_1) - (\Sigma x_2),$$

where  $\Sigma x_1$  corresponds to the mean of favorable conditions' values,  $\Sigma x_2$  corresponds to the mean of unfavorable conditions' values (see Appendix B for operationalization of the variables).

The estimated values corresponded to the particular type of states' engagement, according to the following range:

0% - 25%: Hedging,

25% - 50%: Accommodation (weak),

50% - 75%: Accommodation (strong),

75% - 100%: Bandwagoning. (see Appendix A),

We assumed that "hard" balancing behavior is unlikely to have been happening in the SPT. This was because DPRK broke the regional security and became the "common ground" for all the states. However, we suggest that 'soft' balancing such as hedging, as well as accommodation and bandwagoning were among possible forms explaining the relations.

As mentioned above, measuring degrees of engagement in the SPT dyads did not include DPRK. We found that North Korea is the underlying factor that causes confusion in the estimate. First, member states' preferences towards DPRK issues are different from preferences

towards non-DPRK issues. Second, such preferences are heterogeneous across participants of the SPT.

To avoid such confusion in this study's plausibility probe, this study looked at DPRK-unrelated conditions in the dyads, listed by topics:

- Joint statements;
- Reducing tensions;
- Conflicting issues;
- Negative sentiments.

Based on documental observations, we analyzed the data to estimate each dyad's degree of engagement within each of the selected periods. The study paid attention to the proportion of non-DPRK interactions. The greater the proportion of non-DPRK interactions in the estimate, the more the confidence that states engagement, and not the preferences towards DPRK, were driving the SPT dynamics. We also parsed out DPRK-related issues in order to deal with the problem of reverse causality. This is to ensure that it was states engagement driving the North Korea behavior, not DPRK driving states engagement.

To estimate the number of incidents that belong to each of the observed categories, we used NVivo terms coding search. We selected four categories (conditions) and coded specific search terms that fall in each category. (see Table 1) We then captured these terms in annual national diplomatic summaries and official statements. We excluded instances such as: "North Korea", "Pyongyang", "DPRK", etc. from the observed categories. This is to parse out DPRK-related events.

Table 1. NVivo search terms

Category (Variable)	Search terms (NVivo query)
Joint statements	joint* & statement* & agree* & sign* & agreement* & announce* & issue*
Reducing tensions	reduce* & decreas* & tension* & disagree* & avoid* & cooperative*
Conflicting issues	conflict* & anxiet* & discord* & problem* & issue* & aggress* & problem*
Negative sentiments	sentiment* & anti* & protest* & unfavor* & critic*

The study suggested that the power of each of the SPT parties is different. This might cause the problem of aggregation.

Normally, the U.S., China, and Russia are considered as great powers, and South Korea and Japan as middle powers. Great powers such as the U.S. or China can ensure their safety and security independently and possess substantial economic clout.<sup>32</sup> According to T.J. Pempel, middle powers and can contribute to the system by bringing “cross-cutting” collaboration across a variety of other states.<sup>33</sup>

However, this consideration may fall short of depicting these states in the same way in multilateral institutions such as SPT. Recent studies focused on the traditional forms of “first-” and “second-tier” states engagement, which is often depicted as the evolving competition between the U.S. and China who can block each other’s decisions.<sup>34</sup> In the Six-Party Talks; some of the states such as the US, China, and, to some extent, South Korea had higher motivation and

<sup>32</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2012). Trends in World Military Expenditure. <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/FS/SIPRIFS1304.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> New World Order after COVID-19 series II. Post-Corona Order in the Asia-Pacific.(2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ISuzALd920>

<sup>34</sup> Allison, G. (2017). *Destined for war: Can America and china escape Thucydides trap?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Blustein, Paul. 2019. *Wang, H. (2020). Schism: China, America and the fracturing of the global trading system* by Paul Blustein. London, England: SAGE Publications; Steinberg, J., & O'Hanlon, M. E. (2014). *Strategic reassurance and resolve: U.S - china relations in the twenty-first century*. Princeton University Press

potential in blocking each other's decisions ("first-tier" powers)<sup>35</sup>. The blocking ability of the other states, such as Japan and Russia ("second-tier" powers) was lower, due to their diplomatic potential. This includes relations between great powers and middle powers.

We assume the five parties were cooperative and not antagonist towards each other in the Six-Party talks. However, dyads with "first-tier" states were of bigger difference and could override dyads of "second-tier" states. For example, Russia - Japan relations were not as necessarily as important in the SPT success as China – U.S. relations. Therefore, dyads with "first-tier" states might have been bearing larger value for the result of the talks than dyads of "second-tier" states.

Inspired by work that depicts great and middle powers relations as "the various bilateral hegemonic relations at different levels"<sup>36</sup>; we ranked the dyads into three categories and assigned them a specific score due to their value and weight:

- Primary: 5 points,
- Secondary: 3 points,
- Tertiary: 1 point.

Overall, we denoted the percentages of the dyadic engagements and their aggregate amounts in the different periods of the SPT.

We assumed that large numbers of thick reinforcements across dyads may result in a '*contagion effect*', which is sufficient to improve the talks. Therefore, we converted strong

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<sup>35</sup> While U.S. had a keen interest in pursuing an economic blockade against Pyongyang, China decided to take the central role in defusing mounting tensions on the Korean peninsula, pressured by the US government. But South Korea also had a chance to block their decisions, for example, The Roh government vetoed when the United States proposed conversing the plan in 2005. (Hur, 2018)

<sup>36</sup> Deyermond, R., (2009). Matrioshka hegemony? multi-levelled hegemonic competition and security in post-soviet Central Asia. *Review of International Studies*, 35(1), 151-173.



reciprocal accommodations (50% - 75%) and bandwagoning (75% - 100%) into aggregate scores in each of the rounds of the talks.

We further compared aggregate scores in each SPT round with the results of the Talks. The percentages of the dyads' engagements and the scores are presented in Tables 3 – 6 and in the Appendices C - F.

### 3.2 Results

As seen from Table 2, the accumulation of SPT bilateral conversations in 2005 – 2007 has resulted in seven occurrences of thick reinforcement, according to their dyadic scores. This is considerably higher than in 2003 – 2004 and in 2008 – 2009. A ‘contagion effect’ triggered successive institutional achievements in 2005 – 2007. That resulted in the DPRK's return to the NPT. In 2004, negative sentiments and a few positive arrangements in several bilateral relations caused the ‘offsetting effect’. This correlated to muted expectations from the 2nd and 3rd Rounds of the SPT and the hard stance of the DPRK. In 2009, significant divergences in the dyads led to the ‘neutralization effect’ and the deadlock of the talks. The study found that cooperation among the former parties in the ‘post-SPT’ period (2018) also reached high scores. These results are in line with the first-time meetings between the leaders of North Korea and the U.S., and the Panmunjom Declaration signed by the two Koreas leaders.

Table 2. Thick reinforcements, aggregate scores and the SPT results

SPT Period/Score	5 pts	3 pts	1 pts	Aggregate Score	Results
2003 - 2004	US-ROK / ROK-US	RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS US-JAP / JAP-US RUS-US / US-RUS		14 pts	No agreement between the participants reached.
2005 - 2007	CHI-ROK / ROK-CHI US-ROK / ROK-US	RUS-ROK / ROK-RUS RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS US-JAP / JAP-US CHI-JAP / JAP-CHI	JAP-RUS / RU-JAP	23 pts	Joint statement. DPRK committed to shutting down and sealing the Yongbyon etc.
2008 - 2009	CHI-ROK / ROK-CHI US-ROK / ROK-US	RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS US-JAP / JAP-US		16 pts	Denuclearization was rejected by DPRK, Talks suspended
2018	CHI-ROK / ROK-CHI US-ROK / ROK-US	RUS-ROK / ROK-RUS RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS US-JAP / JAP-US CHI-JAP / JAP-CHI		22 pts	Panmunjom Declaration, DPRK meetings with US, ROK

### 3.2.1 SPT states' engagements (2003 - 2004)

Many uncertainties in bilateral relations in the SPT dyads in 2003 – 2004 resulted in four dyads showing weak engagements and in lower aggregate scores. It correlated with no clear unity and triggered a 'neutralization effect'. Correspondingly, no significant progress had been seen.

Some of the parties made improvements toward each other. Japan maintained a strong backing for the U.S. It also sought to sign a peace treaty with Russia through the resolution of the Northern Islands issue. But the agreement looked a bit vague and the Russian side worried it might affect Russian-Chinese relations.<sup>37</sup> Japan protested strongly against the Republic of Korea (ROK) on the subject of Takeshima. However, ROK tried to reduce tensions as a part of the wider warming up<sup>38</sup>.

China maintained good relations with ROK and Russia but was concerned by Japan's development of the missile defense system. The Japanese officials visited China, held consultations, and reached security agreements in this regard.<sup>39</sup> There were some minor tensions between Seoul and Beijing: for example, Korean public anxieties about China's rise as a strategic threat.<sup>40</sup> Only 5.7% of South Korean National Assembly members called China Korea's most important diplomatic partner in 2004, while 80% chose the U.S. This urged Beijing to cooperate and withdraw some of its claims to the ROK. China took part in the ministerial meeting with Japan and ROK on ASEAN bilateral level.<sup>41</sup>

The U.S. improved its relations with ROK and Japan but remained moderate toward China and Russia. Washington consulted with ROK on U.S. military presence on the peninsula and strongly adhered to the U.S. – Japan alliance. Diplomatic Bluebook flagged the fact that The U.S. also held consultations with China on strategic security, arms control, and non-proliferation. It also

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<sup>37</sup> "Russia and the World' 2005 - 2019 Annual Reports, IMEMO.  
<https://www.imemo.ru/en/publications/periodical/rw/archive>

<sup>38</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2004). <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2004/index.html>

<sup>39</sup> Full Texts of 2005 - 2019 Defense White Papers: "China's National Defense in the New Era" (English & Chinese Versions). <https://www.andrewerickson.com/category/documents-prc-government/>

<sup>40</sup> Jae Ho Chung (2012). South Korea-China Relations: Growing Interdependence, Rising Uncertainties. *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 36, 2, 219-236

<sup>41</sup> Snyder, S. (2004). A Turning Point for China-Korea Relations?  
<http://cc.pacforum.org/2004/10/turning-point-china-korea-relations/>

increased arms sales to Taiwan and stepped away from the “one China” policy. Meanwhile, U.S. explored new areas of cooperation with Russia, for example at the U.S.-Russia Energy Summit.<sup>42</sup>

Russia deepened its security relations with ROK in anti-terrorism.<sup>43</sup> It also focused on developing its treaties with the U.S. mainly in nuclear and arms control.<sup>44</sup> Russia - U.S. relations worsened when seven Eastern European countries joined NATO.<sup>45</sup> Russia deepened diplomatic exchanges with China on military exercises and naval visits. But the cooperation was not complete due to unsolved territorial issues.

As seen in Table 3, some dyads demonstrated continuity in mutual interest through the first round of the SPT. However, many uncertainties in U.S. – China, U.S. - Russia, and ROK - Japan bilateral relations led to negative factors in the talks and muted expectations from the 2nd and 3rd Rounds.<sup>46</sup> Despite shared suspicions about the dome of US unilateral intentions<sup>47</sup>, ROK and Japan sought self-assertive foreign policy. U.S. and China were keeping their preferred status quo.

Despite China, ROK, and Russia formed a coalition to pressure the US to offer guarantees<sup>48</sup>; the U.S. and Japan strongly opposed it. This resulted in an ‘offsetting effect’ without clear unity. Only a Chairman’s statement was issued. As there was no direct agreement, DPRK continued to insist upon a treaty that the diverged parties could not provide.

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<sup>42</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2004), 52

<sup>43</sup> Ahn, S. H. (2012) Russian-South Korean security relations reconsidered: The lost two decades of promise and perils. Korean Social Science Journal, 39(2), 27-53.

<sup>44</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2004), 86

<sup>45</sup> 'Russia and the World' (2004)

<sup>46</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2004), 86

<sup>47</sup> Gross, D. (2003) U.S.-Korean Relations: Tensions Escalate as the U.S. Targets Iraq. Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations, Vol. 5, No. 1, 38–47.

<sup>48</sup> Hur, M.(2018). The Six-Party Talks on North Korea: Dynamic interactions among principal states (1st 2018 ed.). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Table 3. SPT states' engagements (2003 - 2004)

Y <sub>i</sub>	China	Russia	U.S.	ROK	Japan
China		62.5%	0%	50%	25%
Russia	50%		50%	37.5%	37.5%
U.S.	25%	50%		62.5%	75%
ROK	37.5%	50%	75%*		12.5%
Japan	37.5%	25%	75%*	25%	
Aggregate Score = 14 pts.*					

\*Thick reinforcements (50 – 100%): US-ROK / ROK-US (Primary: 5 pts); RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS, US-JAP / JAP-US, RUS-US / US-RUS (Secondary: 3 pts).

### 3.2.2 SPT states' engagements (2005 - 2007)

In this period, there were more improvements in bilateral relations. Seven dyads showed thick reinforcements and resulted in a higher aggregate score, compared to the previous period. This correlated with tough and consistent actions by the [SPT] Five against Pyongyang. DPRK then pledged to shut down the nuclear facilities and return to the NPT. This became a certain degree of progress in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

In 2005 – 2007, Japan continued improving relations with Russia and China and pursued more robust cooperation with the U.S.<sup>49</sup>, especially in security and defense<sup>50</sup>. Historical, diplomatic, and economic factors heavily aggravated China-Japan and South Korea-Japan relations. This resulted in a strong reaction from Beijing and Seoul,<sup>51</sup> for example, cancellations of planned high-level visits to Japan.<sup>52</sup> To reduce negative repercussions, Japan held talks with and ROK during APEC and ASEAN+3 meetings.<sup>53</sup> Shinzo Abe visited China in 2006 to ease former tensions and agree with Beijing on the East China Sea and some other issues.<sup>54</sup>

South Korea increased strategic cooperation with China,<sup>55</sup> proactively setting up a hotline between foreign ministers.<sup>56</sup> China – U.S. dyad has initially remained smooth and stable but appeared to be subject to competing reassessments, due to the Taiwan issue. However, China demonstrated some commitment by sponsoring joint events and attempted to accommodate the U.S. through security consultations.

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<sup>49</sup> Albright, D. (2013) “North Korean Miniaturization,” 38North blog, US-Korea Institute at SAIS, February 22, 2013. <http://38north.org/2013/02/albright021313>

<sup>50</sup> Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Consultative Committee (2005). <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/42490.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2005), 5; Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2005), 14; 54

<sup>52</sup> Snyder, S. (2004). A Turning Point for China-Korea Relations? <http://cc.pacforum.org/2004/10/turning-point-china-korea-relations/>

<sup>53</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2004), 23

<sup>54</sup> China Defense Ministry White Paper (2004), 12 – 13, 35-36

<sup>55</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2005), 55

<sup>56</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2006), 45

The U.S. adopted a somewhat tougher stance on U.S.-China relations.<sup>57</sup> Also, East Asia scholar David C. Kang noted that the “US is angry with South Korea for not going along, and South Korea is angry about the U.S. ignoring all the gains South Korea has made.”<sup>58</sup> There was enhancing the ROK-U.S. economic cooperation, however.<sup>59</sup> The U.S. also continued signing arrangements with Russia on energy, counterterrorism, defense, etc.

Russia positioned itself as relatively insignificant to American foreign policy. It drifted toward China by conducting counter-terrorism exercises and ratifying the joint agreement on the demarcation of Eastern territories<sup>60</sup>. There seemed to be no serious tensions between Russia and South Korea.<sup>61</sup>

Seven dyads showed thick reinforcement and only two dyads were in situations of weak reciprocal engagements in 2005 – 2007. Significantly more improvements in bilateral relations led to the ‘contagion effect’. Such a ‘contagion effect’ was based on increasing common interests between China and ROK, along with cooperative moves from Japan and Russia. States mutually affected each other by accentuating decisive actions.

For instance, being in good relations, South Korea and China both prevailed upon the U.S. in accepting the SPT agreement. China and Russia opposed any use of force and were ready to use their veto in the UNSC. Japan and South Korea shared a similar conception to practice autonomous diplomacy. In Tokyo and Seoul, both governments’ positions to some extent hardened against the U.S. approach, which Moscow was also critical of.<sup>62</sup> Finally, parties softened U.S.’s position towards agreement in September 2005.

This yielded better results in the 5th Round when parties modified the 'commitment for commitment, action for action' principle. North Korea pledged to abandon “all nuclear weapons and

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<sup>57</sup> Dumbaugh, K. (2006). China-U.S. relations: Current issues and implications for U.S. policy. Library Of Congress Washington DC Congressional Research Service.

<sup>58</sup> Bong, Y. (2016). The U.S.-South Korea alliance: Local, regional, and global dimensions. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 8(1), 39-49.

<sup>59</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2005), 44

<sup>60</sup> Maxwell, N. (2007). How the Sino Russian boundary conflict was finally settled: From Nerchinsk 1689 to Vladivostok 2005 via Zhenbao island 1969. *Critical Asian Studies*, 39(2), 229-253

<sup>61</sup> 'Russia and the World' (2007); Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2007), 82

<sup>62</sup> Hur, M.(2018). *The Six-Party Talks on North Korea: Dynamic interactions among principal states* (1st 2018 ed.). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

existing nuclear programs” and return to the NPT in 2005. Another critical breakthrough in the SPT was in 2007 when the parties agreed on establishing working groups and DPRK committed to shutting down and sealing the Yongbyon and other nuclear facilities.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, in 2007, the parties agreed to hold an Inter-Korean summit and promote inter-Korean economic cooperation.<sup>64</sup>

Table 4. SPT states’ engagements (2005 - 2007)

Y <sub>i</sub>	China	Russia	U.S.	ROK	Japan
China		50%*	25%	50%*	50%*
Russia	62.5%*		25%	62.5%*	50%*
U.S.	0%	50%		62.5%*	75%*
ROK	62.5%*	50%*	50%*		0%
Japan	62.5%*	50%*	87.5%*	25%	
Aggregate Score = 23 pts.*					

\*Thick reinforcements (50 – 100%): CHI-ROK / ROK-CHI, US-ROK / ROK-US (Primary: 5 pts); RUS-ROK / ROK-RUS, RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS, US-JAP / JAP-US, CHI-JAP / JAP-CHI (Secondary: 3 pts); JAP-RUS / RU-JAP (Tertiary: 1 pts).

<sup>63</sup> 'Russia and the World' (2006)

<sup>64</sup> Korean leaders in historic talks (2007). <https://web.archive.org/web/20071016062235/http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7023079.stm>



### 3.2.3 SPT states' engagements (2008 - 2009)

Fewer improvements in bilateral relations correlated with different approaches in the SPT. There were four dyads showing thick reinforcement and five dyads in situations of weak reciprocal engagements. This resulted in the 'neutralization effect'. After some progress in 2008, parties delayed in the implementation of economic aid to DPRK and failed to bring together their positions on the denuclearization verification system.<sup>65</sup>

The Senkaku Islands dispute contributed to worsening the relations between Japan and China in 2008.<sup>66</sup> Historical and diplomatic tensions also aggravated in Japan-ROK relations.<sup>67</sup> To reduce tensions; ROK announced a partnership program, including visits and summits. South Korea readjusted the ROK-US alliance and improved the strategic partnership with China, for example by reaching agreements on navy and anti-air systems.<sup>68</sup>

China's relations with the U.S. and Japan continued to stagnate. This was due to incidents around Senkaku<sup>69</sup> and newly discovered Japanese chemical weapons in China.<sup>70</sup> Despite anti-China protests in 2009, Washington agreed to cooperate with Beijing in energy security, and also to transform the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue.<sup>71</sup> Washington also strengthened its relations with South Korea and Japan.

Russia has improved strategic partnerships with China by returning part of Heixiazi island<sup>72</sup>. China and Russia submitted a number of joint security treaties. Russia also improved its relations

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<sup>65</sup> Davenport K. (2018) The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance. Arms Control Association. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework>

<sup>66</sup> Drifte, R. (2008). From 'Sea of Confrontation' to 'Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship? Japan facing China in the East China Sea, *Japan Aktuell*, 3. p. 43

<sup>67</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2009), 48

<sup>68</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2009), 33

<sup>69</sup> Zhang, X. (2010) Why the 2008 Sino-Japanese Consensus on the East China Sea Has Stalled: Good Faith and Reciprocity Considerations in Interim Measures Pending a Maritime Boundary Delimitation, *Ocean Development & International Law*, 42, 1, 61

<sup>70</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2008), 25

<sup>71</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2009), 23

<sup>72</sup> An agreement that finalized the border demarcation and formally ended negotiations was signed in Beijing in 2008 by the Chinese and Russian Foreign Ministers. (RIA, 2008)

with ROK by including economic relations with Seoul in the list of security issues.<sup>73</sup> However, ROK envisioned only the two Koreas, China, and the U.S. at the table. Russia – Japan rapprochement on Northern dispute also failed.<sup>74</sup> U.S.-Russia relations were seriously affected by Moscow's actions against Georgia and Russia's refusal to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty.

Divergences in U.S. - China, U.S. - Russia, and South Korea - Japan relations correlated with considerably different approaches in the SPT. Washington came up with a general strategy of containment, while China appeared to focus more on easing tensions in the different issues. Beijing's approach was to avoid the isolation that would trigger more difficulties in Northeast Asia. Notably, this happened in the wake of serious aggravation of U.S.-China relations in March 2009. The Pentagon lodged a protest on PRC ships and aircraft operating in the South China Sea “in increasingly aggressive ways towards US Navy”.<sup>75</sup>

Due to such a ‘neutralization effect’, the SPT states failed to come to a binding agreement on the denuclearization. Shortly after, North Korea carried out a nuclear test in May 2009, declaring it would no longer be bound by any of the previous agreements reached in the discussions.

Table 5. SPT states’ engagements (2008 - 2009)

Y <sub>i</sub>	China	Russia	U.S.	ROK	Japan
China		75%*	25%	50%*	37.5%
Russia	75%*		0%	50%	12.5%
U.S.	12,5%	0%		75%*	50%*
ROK	62.5%*	37.5%	62.5%*		0%
Japan	37.5%	37.5%	75%*	12.5%	
Aggregate Score = 16 pts.*					

\* Thick reinforcements (50 – 100%): CHI-ROK / ROK-CHI, US-ROK / ROK-US (Primary: 5 pts); RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS, US-JAP / JAP-US (Secondary: 3 pts).

<sup>73</sup> Strategy Of National Security Of The Russian Federation (2015).  
[http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_191669/61a97f7ab0f2f3757fe034d11011c763bc2e593f/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_191669/61a97f7ab0f2f3757fe034d11011c763bc2e593f/)

<sup>74</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2009), 7 – 16; 25

<sup>75</sup> Tyson, A. (2009) Destroyer to protect ship near China, The Washington Post, March 13

### 3.2.4 “Post-SPT” states’ engagements (2018)

In 2018, there were six dyads of the former SPT parties showing thick reinforcement. This resulted in a high aggregate score, similar to the successful SPT period of 2005 – 2007.

Simultaneously, DPRK agreed to give some pledges and took part in a number of historical meetings.

Many dyads improved their relations in 2018. Japan deepened its Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy with the U.S. Relations with Russia were called by Japan as “having the greatest underlying potential”. PM Abe reached an agreement with President Putin to “accelerate negotiations on a peace treaty ...” Japan-China relations have transitioned to collaboration, improved by reciprocal visits and a number of agreements.<sup>76</sup>

The relations between Japan and ROK faced an extremely severe situation amid a series of negative moves by the ROK.<sup>77</sup> President Moon reaffirmed mutual trust with China<sup>78</sup> and reassured the ROK-US alliance ROK-Russia relations also improved.

China confirmed a deeper friendship with Russia and made a number of high-level visits to the ROK.<sup>79</sup> Premier Li Keqiang stated that Japan-China relations had returned to their normal track. However, Chinese vessels kept intruding into Japanese territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands multiple times. That hardened China – U.S. relations.<sup>80</sup> Both China’s Defense White Paper and Trump’s statements flagged the fact that America and China are rivals, in the wake of U.S. – China trade war.<sup>81</sup> Amidst this, the U.S. also worked with mutually aligned visions and approaches such as Japan’s free and open Indo-Pacific vision and the Republic of Korea’s New Southern Policy.

Russia confirmed a defense partnership with China by inviting it to participate in its domestic war games “Vostok 2018” and also held several counter-piracy and rescue naval exercises

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<sup>76</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2019), 55 – 58; 93

<sup>77</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook(2019), 42; 75

<sup>78</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2019), 78; Diplomatic Bluebook (2019), 46

<sup>79</sup> Diplomatic White Paper of Korea (2019), 78

<sup>80</sup> China sets record for activity near Senkaku Islands (2021). <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14366336>

<sup>81</sup> Cordesman. A. (2019) China’s New 2019 Defense White Paper: An Open Strategic Challenge to the United States, But One Which Does Not Have to Lead to Conflict.  
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-new-2019-defense-white-paper>

with Japan.<sup>82</sup> Russia's relations with the U.S. remained strained, amid the U.S. announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.<sup>83</sup>

Many dyads in situations of thick reinforcement correlated with the emergence of new security initiatives at the Korean peninsula. In addition to the first-time meetings between President Trump and Chairman Kim, inter-Korea meetings, three Japan-ROK Summit Meetings, Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting, and eight Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held. Parties confirmed they would work closely on the issues of DPRK. Simultaneously, DPRK pledged to work towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Although, Kim did not explicitly agree to give up the North's nuclear weapons.<sup>84</sup> However, this shows that despite some divergences states demonstrated mutual interests and generated ideas. There is no evidence of the 'offsetting effect', but the favorable dyadic activity in this period confirms the necessity of further security negotiations.

Table 6. "Post-SPT" states' engagements (2018)

Y <sub>i</sub>	China	Russia	U.S.	ROK	Japan
China		62.5%*	12.5%	62.5%*	50%*
Russia	75%*		0%	62.5%*	12.5%
U.S.	0%	0%		75%*	62.5%*
ROK	75%*	62.5%*	75%*		0%
Japan	50%*	37.5%	75%*	25%	
Aggregate Score = 22 pts.*					

\* Thick reinforcements (50 – 100%): CHI-ROK / ROK-CHI, US-ROK / ROK-US (Primary: 5 pts); RUS-ROK / ROK-RUS, RUS-CHI / CHI-RUS, US-JAP / JAP-US, CHI-JAP / JAP-CHI (Secondary: 3 pts).

<sup>82</sup> Golobokov, A.S. (2019) Russian Naval Activity in the Asia-Pacific: the Herald for a New Alliance? The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis. Vol. 31, No. 4, 613—633

<sup>83</sup> Diplomatic Bluebook (2019), 143

<sup>84</sup> Taylor, A. (2018). "The full text of North and South Korea's agreement, annotated". The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/04/27/the-panmunjom-declaration-full-text-of-agreement-between-north-korea-and-south-korea/>

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

The case Six-Party Talks offers a great prism to study the link between aggregate bilateral inter-state engagement and the success of multilateral security institutions. The study shows that the presence of reciprocal accommodative engagement or ‘thick reinforcement’ across a number of bilateral dyads can result in a show of unity among key participants and in overall institutional success. A ‘contagion effect’ caused by thick reinforcement was sufficient to change the hard stance of DPRK in 2005 – 2007 when DPRK shut down the Yongbyon nuclear facilities and pledged to participate in the historical Inter-Korea summits with South Korea.

Dynamic interactions between members show that the ‘contagion effect’ can generate success, despite the existing strains between some of the states. When there was no clear unity and trust between the states, it triggered a lackluster ‘offsetting effect’ in 2004. The negotiations stagnated and the DPRK intensified confrontation. It was able to use the lack of unity to drive wedges in the SPT and to make it a less effective forum. In 2009 the absence of commitments between the main parties led to different approaches generated a ‘neutralization effect’.

One of the implications is that the restoration of multilateral mechanisms such as Six-Party Talks will contribute to a more secure East Asia, which is vibrant, internationally connected, and very critical to security. This is opposed to scholars that argue that the SPT is too sporadic and the Korean peninsula does not need such an institutional framework.

Another implication is that the resolution of the nuclear crises is not just a matter of non-proliferation and global security order, but also a matter of unity. In multilateral security mechanisms such as Six-Party Talks, nuclear negotiations never mean the same thing for each of the parties. For example, greater unity was a key factor explaining the success of P5+1 talks on the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2015. This study confirms the importance of thick reinforcements and

greater inter-state unity for the success of non-formal institutions. In terms of thinking of regional security arrangements, this could become the incentive to bring China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia to advance that dialogue with North Korea.

Though this study focused on the states' relations in the SPT, it faces a number of limitations. It is unable to provide a full picture of the underlying causal mechanisms, such as domestic policy, public opinion, etc. Future research should step forward and use more vigorous quantitative methods, interviews, process tracing, and comparative studies.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Types of states' engagement

Type of engagement	Definition	Range
Hedging	A state's interests are opposite or diverged towards another state in a dyad, which implies 'soft' balancing towards another state in a dyad due to conceptual stretching. This corresponds to states' engagement: $Y_i(\text{Eng}) = 0^{85} - .25^{86}$	<b>0% - 25%</b>
Accommodation (weak)	A state is stretched by another state of the dyad. However, it pursues multiple policy options and shows interest to accommodate another state in a dyad. This corresponds to states' engagement: $Y_i(\text{Eng}) = .25 - .5$	<b>25% - 50%</b>
Accommodation (strong)	A state's interests diverge towards the other state. While the presence of favorable conditions negates the presence of unfavorable conditions to engage, the state's policy showing no conceptual stretches towards another state in a dyad. This corresponds to states' engagement: $Y_i(\text{Eng}) = .5 - .75$	<b>50% - 75%</b>
Bandwagoning	A state's interests are similar towards another state in a dyad, which results in policy alignment. This corresponds to states' engagement: $Y_i(\text{Eng}) = .75 - 1$	<b>75% - 100%</b>

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<sup>85</sup> In the research, outcomes can be reported as negative numbers (for example, if there is a large number of unfavorable conditions in a dyad). Leaving negative outcomes in the data complicates the interpretation of results; therefore, we converted negative outcomes to zero.

<sup>86</sup> See Appendix 3 for the operationalization of variables.

## Appendix B: Operationalization of variables

Variable	Operationalization of variable	Values $x_1, x_2$
Joint statements <b>favorable,</b> (values $x_1$ )	State shows adherence to another state's principal position, as indicated by the national statements or official reports. State shows commitment by signing joint statements with another state of a dyad. <i>For example: The Joint Statement [between the U.S. and Japan] issued in 2005, expressed "support and appreciation for each other's efforts to develop their respective security and defense policies(Diplomatic Bluebook, 2005)</i>	0 (no incidents found in the data), .25 (1 - 3 incident found), .5 (3 - 8 incidents found), .75 (9 – 12 incidents found), 1 (13 and more incidents found)
Reducing tensions <b>favorable,</b> (values $x_1$ )	A state's head or top-rank officials demonstrate the will to reduce tensions with another state of a dyad (if the documents show such tensions). It is expressed in offering concrete measures that will help to reduce tensions, as indicated in the national statements or official reports <i>For example: ROK tried to reduce tensions [with Japan] by removing a ban on all sales of Japanese movies, records, and game software. (Diplomatic Bluebook, 2004, 43)</i>	0 (no incidents found in the data), .25 (1 incident found), .5 (2 incidents found), .75 (3 - 4 incidents found), 1 (5 and more incidents found)
Conflicting issues <b>unfavorable,</b> (values $x_2$ )	A state has one or more conflicted issues with the other state in a dyad State shows dissatisfaction by conflicting issues, as indicated by the national statements or official reports. <i>For example: Tensions in Japan - South Korea relations include unsettled territorial rights over Takeshima (Diplomatic White Paper of Korea, 2009, 48).</i>	0 (no incidents found in the data), .25 (1 incident found), .5 (2 incidents found), .75 (3 - 4 incidents found), 1 (5 and more incidents found)
negative sentiments <b>unfavorable</b> (values $x_2$ )	A state's officials, public, and/or media demonstrate sentiments against the other state of a dyad. Negative sentiments are indicated by the national statements or official reports. <i>For example: Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFAT) protested against Japan's approval of a history textbook based on the distorted historical view of Korea by the Japanese Society. (Diplomatic White Paper of Korea, 2009, 48).</i>	0 (no incidents found in the data), .25 (1 incident found), .5 (2 incidents found), .75 (3 - 4 incidents found), 1 (5 and more incidents found)

## Appendix C: Estimation of states' engagements\* (2003 - 2004)

Condition / Dyad	Joint statements	Reducing tensions	Conflicting issues	Negative sentiments	Y <sub>i</sub> *
RUS-CHI**	.75	.75	.25	0	.625
CHI-RUS	.75	.5	.25	0	.5
CHI-US	.25	.5	.5	.25	0
US-CHI	.25	.75	.5	0	.25
CHI-ROK	.75	.5	.25	0	.5
ROK-CHI	.75	.75	.25	.5	.375
CHI-JAP	.5	.5	.25	0	.25
JAP-CHI	.5	.75	.25	.25	.375
RUS-US	.75	.75	.25	.25	.5
US-RUS	.75	.5	.25	0	.5
RUS-ROK	.5	.25	0	0	.375
ROK-RU	.5	.5	0	0	.5
RUS-JAP	.25	.5	.25	0	.375
JAP-RU	.25	.75	.25	.25	.25
US-ROK	.75	.5	0	0	.625
ROK-US	.75	.75	0	0	.75
US-JAP	.75	.75	0	0	.75
JAP-US	.75	.75	0	0	.75
ROK-JAP	.5	.25	.25	.25	.125
JAP-ROK	.5	.5	.25	.25	.25

\* The degree of states' engagement for each of the dyads is calculated as:  $Y_i (\text{Eng}) = (\Sigma x_1) - (\Sigma x_2)$ , where  $\Sigma x_1$  corresponds to the mean of favorable conditions,  $\Sigma x_2$  corresponds to the mean of unfavorable conditions.

\*\* **Example:** The type of states' engagement for Russia in Russia –China dyad (2003 - 2004):

$Y_i (\text{Eng}) = (\Sigma x_1) - (\Sigma x_2) = ((.75 + .75 / 2) - ((.25 + 0) / 2)) = .625$ , or **62.5%**. Within the range of 50% - 75%, this equates to **strong accommodation**.

## Appendix D: Estimation of states' engagements (2005 - 2007)

Variable / Dyad	Joint statements	Reducing tensions	Conflicting issues	Negative sentiments	Y <sub>i</sub>
CHI-RUS	.75	.5	.25	0	.5
RUS-CHI	.75	.5	0	0	.625
CHI-US	.5	.5	.5	0	.25
US-CHI	.5	.25	.5	.25	0
CHI-ROK	.5	.5	0	0	.5
ROK-CHI	.5	.75	0	0	.625
CHI-JAP	.75	1	.5	.25	.5
JAP-CHI	.75	.75	.25	0	.625
RUS-US	.5	.5	.5	.25	.25
US-RUS	.5	.75	.25	0	.5
RUS-ROK	.75	.5	0	0	.625
ROK-RU	.75	.25	0	0	.5
RUS-JAP	.75	.5	.25	0	.5
JAP-RU	.75	.5	.25	0	.5
US-ROK	.5	.75	0	0	.625
ROK-US	.5	.5	0	0	.5
US-JAP	1	.5	0	0	.75
JAP-US	1	.75	0	0	.875
ROK-JAP	.5	.25	.5	.5	0 (-.125)
JAP-ROK	.5	.5	.25	.25	.25



## Appendix E: Estimation of states' engagements (2008 - 2009)

Variable / Dyad	Joint statements	Reducing tensions	Conflicted issues	Negative sentiments	Y <sub>i</sub>
CHI-RUS	.75	.75	0	0	.75
RUS-CHI	.75	.75	0	0	.75
CHI-US	.5	.5	.5	0	.25
US-CHI	.5	.5	.5	.25	.125
CHI-ROK	.75	.25	0	0	.5
ROK-CHI	.75	.5	0	0	.625
CHI-JAP	.75	.5	.25	.25	.375
JAP-CHI	.75	.5	.25	.25	.375
RUS-US	.25	0	.25	.25	0 (-.125)
US-RUS	.25	.5	.5	.25	0
RUS-ROK	.75	.25	0	0	.5
ROK-RU	.75	0	0	0	.375
RUS-JAP	.5	.25	.25	.25	.125
JAP-RU	.5	.5	.25	0	.375
US-ROK	.75	.5	0	0	.75
ROK-US	.75	.75	0	0	.625
US-JAP	.75	.5	0	0	.5
JAP-US	.75	.75	0	0	.75
ROK-JAP	.5	.25	.5	.25	0
JAP-ROK	.5	.25	.25	.25	.125

## Appendix F: Estimation of states' engagements (2018)

Variable / Dyad	Joint statements	Reducing tensions	Conflicted issues	Negative sentiments	Y <sub>i</sub>
CHI-RUS	.75	.5	0	0	.625
RUS-CHI	.75	.75	0	0	.75
CHI-US	.25	.75	.5	.25	.125
US-CHI	.25	.75	.75	.5	0 (-.125)
CHI-ROK	.75	.5	0	0	.625
ROK-CHI	.75	.75	0	0	.75
CHI-JAP	.5	.5	0	0	.5
JAP-CHI	.5	.75	.25	0	.5
RUS-US	.25	.5	.5	.75	0(-.25)
US-RUS	.25	.25	.5	.5	0(-.125)
RUS-ROK	.75	.5	0	0	.625
ROK-RU	.75	.5	0	0	.625
RUS-JAP	.25	.5	.25	.25	.125
JAP-RU	.25	.75	.25	0	.375
US-ROK	1	.25	0	0	.75
ROK-US	1	.25	0	0	.75
US-JAP	.75	.5	0	0	.625
JAP-US	.75	.75	0	0	.75
ROK-JAP	.5	.5	.5	.5	0
JAP-ROK	.5	.25	0	.25	.25