

Chapter IV

Conclusion

In accordance with the previous explanation, the author managed to find two key findings in this research. First, DPRK nuclear tests in 2016 signify the advancement of the country's nuclear technology. Second, the DPRK nuclear tests in 2016 actually present the opportunity for both great powers to expand their own influence in Northeast Asia instead of raising prospects for the unification of countries in the region to curb the DPRK nuclear threat.

The advancement, as signified in the first finding, can be seen where the DPRK was able to carry out two nuclear tests in the same year and only spanned for several months. The tests were definitely a 'sucker punch' to the international community since the time span from one nuclear test usually takes three to four years before they carried the next nuclear test. Unbeknown to them, however, the two nuclear tests were a prelude to bigger complications that will follow in the future.

This is where we get to the second finding. According to the great power politics, great powers will always look for the opportunities to shift the international balance to their favor. The nuclear tests, rather than bringing all states in Northeast Asia into cooperation, seems to provide the opportunity for

each great power to alter the balance of the region to their favor. While the US is now restlessly pursuing the agenda of ‘expanding its global missile system,’ China—along with Russia—are now working to curb the expansion of US influence by engaging in military cooperation and issuing a foreign policy that urge the ‘small to medium countries’ in Northeast Asia to not side with the US as it endangers the stability in the region and capable of triggering a Cold-War standoff in the region. By combining the two key findings, it can be concluded that the 2016 DPRK nuclear tests are the primary factors that leads to an increase of great power politics between US and China in 2016, especially since the nature of great power is to seek the opportunities to shift the international balance to their favor.

However, rather than restoring regional stability, these actions will only prolong the perpetual competition between great powers in Northeast Asia while seemingly ignoring the initial plan after the nuclear tests in 2016; that is, to mitigate the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK. The grim reality of this situation is that the power competition will not subside any time soon, especially if the US continues to insist on maintaining THAAD in ROK. During this dire time, in fact, all countries in Northeast Asia are supposedly working together to stem the DPRK growing nuclear threat. The cooperation is possible if a state, or certain group of states, did not unilaterally take actions that could potentially be harmful to other states. Therefore, it should be noted that US decision-makers supposedly consider any possible repercussions before jumping into a decision to deploy THAAD to prevent unnecessary hostility from other great powers, especially from China

which has been irritated with the US presence in the region. Hence, a more prudent action is in order if similar events are happening in the near future.

This research, however, can still be developed by continuously monitoring the developments that will be occurred between the US and China due to the act done by DPRK. After all, the hermit country did not show any reduction in its nuclear activities by 2017, such as nuclear test conducted by DPRK at September 2017. Not to mention that THAAD is now has been deployed in ROK, which was definitely met with constant condemnation from China. Both cases could become the basis to analyze the progress of power politics between US and China. For further research, the author believes this thesis is useful as a prelude to analyze power politics relationships between US and China in Northeast Asia, especially after the nuclear tests in 2016.

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