

North Korea threat leaves world on edge

A nuclear North Korea could decisively affect the stability of the region. Any shift in northern Asia's diplomatic and military alignment could threaten the delicate balance in an area where the interests of the United States, China, Japan, Russia and both Koreas collide



1 North Korea, 1998: Leader **Kim Jong-il** successfully test fires *Taepodong-1*



2 China: North Korea's sole ally. **President Hu Jintao** sees North as buffer



3 Russia: In recent years **President Vladimir Putin** has cultivated cordial

missile over north Japan

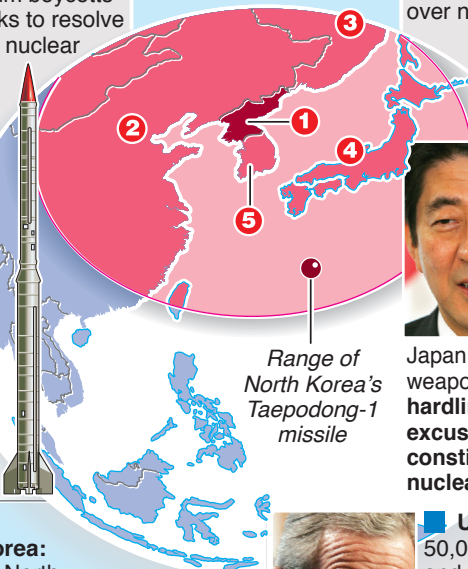
between Beijing and U.S.-backed South Korea

relations with Kim regime. Kremlin now concerned over nuclear smuggling by Pyongyang over its 60km border with North Korea

Nov 2005: Kim boycotts six-nation talks to resolve Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions

Jul 2006: Test launch of seven missiles

Oct 9: Nuclear test



Range of North Korea's *Taepodong-1* missile



4 Japan: Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** says there will be no change in

Japan's non-nuclear weapons policy. **However, hardliners see test as excuse to scrap pacifist constitution and acquire nuclear firepower**

5 South Korea: Divided from North since 1950-53 conflict – technically still at war. **President Roh Moo-hyun** is under domestic pressure to drop **sunshine policy** of peaceful cooperation with Pyongyang. **Seoul abandoned atomic weapons programme in 1970s but might now consider reviving it for deterrence**



United States: Has 50,000 troops in Japan and 30,000 in South Korea. **President Bush** is likely to accelerate deployment of missile defence shield, forcing further arms build-up by both China and Russia. **Both would feel threatened by an America impervious to missile strikes**