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# UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS FOR THE SIX-PARTY TALKS: NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR CRISIS AND U.S. POLICY

*Choi Jinwook*

The purpose of this article is to analyze the positions of the U.S. and North Korea on the 6-party talks and the prospect for the U.S.-North Korean relationship. The biggest goal of the U.S. through the 6-party talks is to make it known to the world that the U.S. is not the sole concerned party, but one among other countries concerned with this issue. The reason that the U.S. pursued the 6-party talks despite the North's strong resistance is that it wanted to prevent the issue from being aggravated due to North Korea's claim that the nuclear crisis was sparked by the U.S.' hostile policy, as well as possible future arguments involving the security guarantee and the scrapping of the nuclear program. It appears that North Korea agreed to the proposed 6-party talks, not the bilateral talks that it had asked for, because it needed to escape from the international isolation due to the aggravated situation, like the increased U.S. pressure and its own economic distress. North Korea must have wanted to find out the true intention of the U.S. while maintaining dialogue rather than aggravating its isolation by heightened tensions, and also to show the outside world that it has flexible and active

attitude toward dialogue with other countries. Despite the extremely conflicting positions between the U.S. and North Korea, however, the U.S.-North Korean relationship is likely to remain in a state of tension and stagnation rather than to fall into a catastrophic phase. North Korea seems to be interested in the 6-party talks, although it is not fully satisfied with it. But North Korea wants to make the 6-party talks bilateral talks in a real sense. The U.S. effort to pursue a dual strategy of appeasement and pressure is also likely to continue, because of the current situation that the U.S. faces, like the Iraq issue, the economy, and the presidential race. The U.S. also seems to believe that it has some time because North Korea may have technical problems in manufacturing nuclear weapons.

The North Korean nuclear crisis, which emerged with North Korea's admission to its highly enriched uranium nuclear program in October 2002, has eased thanks to the 6-party talks that were held in Beijing in August 2003. However, the future is still unclear. The biggest reason for such an unclear prospect is that North Korea maintains strategically ambiguous stances toward its nuclear program, alternately using threat and appeasement measures towards the international community. In fact, North Korea has upheld the necessity of nuclear weapons as nuclear deterrent, but at the same time, it has shown willingness to dismantle its nuclear programs in return for a U.S. security guarantee for the North Korean regime. This is why there are so many arguments about North Korea's true intention behind its nuclear program, whether it is only a negotiation card or a movement to actually possess nuclear weapons.

The U.S. policy toward North Korea is another factor that makes it difficult to predict the prospects for the nuclear crisis. The Bush admin-

istration has not hidden its strong mistrust in the Pyongyang regime, and even labeled it one member of the "Axis of Evil." However, it has also been emphasizing that the nuclear issue should be resolved through peaceful means. So some questions come to the fore: Is the U.S.-North Korean relationship going to be normalized after a peaceful resolution of the crisis? If negotiations fail, will the U.S. choose a military option against North Korea? Is the U.S. considering the replacement of the Pyongyang regime?

The purpose of this article is to analyze the positions of the U.S. and North Korea on the 6-party talks and the prospect for the U.S.-North Korean relationship. It will also give some suggestions for the "security guarantee," which will be a main issue in the second round of the 6-party talks.

### **The U.S. Position on the 6-Party Talks**

As the War on Iraq ended, the U.S. began to be actively engaged in resolution of North Korea's nuclear issue. The U.S. approach was dual: diplomacy and pressure. For the diplomacy, the U.S. suggested a multilateral approach of 5p + 5 in April, in which five permanent members of the UN Security Council and two Koreas, Japan, Australia, and EU were to participate. The 3-party talks between the U.S., North Korea, and China were held as preliminary talks in May. China, which believed the U.S. might move towards a military option, strongly urged North Korea to accept the talks, even though such a proposal was humiliating to the North.

As "the major combat was completed" on May 1, the U.S. pursued a more realistic multilateral format than a 5p+5 approach. This time the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Russia, and Japan were to participate in 6-party talks. The US negotiation team led by Mr. Kelly intended to figure out the North's true intentions. For example, the U.S. was not nec-

essarily pessimistic about North Korea's announcement in the 3-party talks that it possesses nuclear weapons. North Korea's admission could wipe out the conspiracy view that the U.S. puts pressure on the North using its nuclear program as an excuse, and North Korea moved in the framework of the talks with the U.S.

The biggest goal of the U.S. through the 6-party talks is to make it known to the world that the U.S. is not the sole concerned party, but one among other countries concerned with this issue. The reason that the U.S. pursued the 6-party talks despite the North's strong resistance is that it wanted to prevent the issue from being aggravated due to North Korea's claim that the nuclear crisis was sparked by the U.S.' hostile policy, as well as possible future arguments involving the security guarantee and the scrapping of the nuclear program. In other words, it aimed to prevent the focus of the discussion from moving into a "security guarantee in return for the scrapping of the nuclear program" and to eliminate the arguments that the U.S. is responsible for the nuclear crisis.

Along with its diplomatic efforts, the U.S. has put pressure on the North with the PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative) and such issues as North Korean defectors and human rights. Also, the U.S. has hinted that even if the 6-party talks should fail, it has a stronger option. The peaceful resolution to this issue, as the U.S. believes, is to induce the North to abandon the nuclear program by juggling negotiations with and putting pressure on the North. In short, the U.S. has been making diplomatic efforts while continuing its pressure on the North with little consideration of military strikes on North Korean territory.<sup>1</sup>

In the 6-party talks, the U.S. proposed a three-stage road map. In the first stage, the U.S. expands the humanitarian food aid in return for the North's announcement of the willingness to abandon its nuclear pro-

<sup>1</sup> President Bush repeatedly said that the U.S. would not invade North Korean territory, but the military pressure on the shipping of missiles has not been ruled out.

gram and to return to the NPT. In the second stage, the U.S. analyzes North Korea's energy demand and is prepared to talk with North Korea on the conditions for removing the North from the list of terrorist sponsoring countries, while the North begins to dismantle its nuclear program. In the third stage, the U.S. actively handles North Korea's energy problem, when the North's nuclear program is completely dismantled. The U.S. is willing to discuss the North's security concern in order to normalize the relationship with North Korea in addition to other issues such as WMD, missiles, human rights, and abduction issues, when it is verified that North Korea does not have nuclear weapons.

The U.S. proposal seemed to be more flexible than its previous position that it would not present concessions in return for the North's scrapping of its nuclear programs. However, it was still far from North Korea's demand of a non-aggression pact before dismantling the nuclear program.

The U.S. effort to resolve North Korea's nuclear crisis diplomatically is attributed to limitations that it faces with regard to a military option. First, the U.S., which already waged two major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, needs some time to build up its military and diplomatic strength. Particularly, the U.S. is preoccupied with the Iraq issue due to the increasing number of casualties and the cost for reconstructing Iraq. President Bush announced that the U.S. would "Adjust and Adapt" in its policy towards Iraq in September. The U.S. began to seek international cooperation for the post-war Iraq policy, and asked for a U.N. Security Council resolution for an international force and a financial contribution by the international community. Moreover, it is time for the Bush administration to focus on the domestic economy in preparation for the 2004 presidential election.

Secondly, it is all but impossible to take a military option against North Korea without South Korea's full cooperation. The South Korean government, which believes that the North's nuclear program is noth-

ing more than a bargaining chip to gain a security guarantee from the U.S., however, has been determined to oppose the military option. According to a national survey conducted by KINU in May 2003,<sup>2</sup> only 11.6 percent of South Korean people responded that the purpose of North Korea's nuclear program is to possess nuclear weapons, while those who responded 'bargaining chip' and 'North Korea's domestic purpose' accounted for 41.6 percent and 46.8 percent respectively.

Thirdly, the possibility of North Korea's counterattack is another concern for the U.S. Sixty percent of the North's 1.2 million-soldier military force is forward deployed south of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line, and 11,000 artillery pieces are aimed at the Seoul metropolitan area. Thus, a huge number of casualties and destruction is expected at the early stage of war on the Korean Peninsula.

Although the above factors limit the U.S. military options, the hawkish group in Washington had not changed its negative perception towards North Korea and never considers concessions to the North. On the contrary, they believe that the rationale for the war on Iraq - WMD and liberation of the oppressed - could be applied to North Korea. In fact, the U.S. pursues international pressure on North Korea, along with diplomatic efforts. First, the U.S. has tried to squeeze the source of cash input through PSI. PSI is being implemented to interdict the shipping of drugs, missiles, counterfeit notes, and weapons in the name of law enforcement. PSI was proposed by President Bush on May 31 and 11 countries joined it.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. also is trying to strengthen its military power on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. plans an 11 billion dollar military buildup<sup>4</sup> and South Korea also increased its 2004 defense budget by 8.1 percent.

<sup>2</sup> The face-to-face interview was done with the sample size of 1,000.

<sup>3</sup> North Korean ship which was carrying heroin was interdicted near Australia in April 2003, and 29 crew members were indicted and still in an Australian jail.

<sup>4</sup> The military buildup includes 24 AH-64 D Longbow Apache helicopters, 300 Patriot Missiles (PAC-3), MSRS, HARPY, AN/TPQ-36, 37.

The U.S. is also working on troop relocation. The troop relocation effort is being pursued in the context of a global military transformation, which aims at creating a more flexible, more lethal, lighter military. However, the troop relocation to the south of Han River would increase the counterattack capacity of U.S. forces against the North's invasion, and must be taken as a serious warning signal to the North.

Finally, the U.S. is paying more attention to North Korea's human rights and defectors. The U.S. Congress is trying to pass the Korean Peninsula Security and Freedom Act, which provides 200 million dollars to support democratization of North Korea and defectors. This act also urges the U.S. government to provide political asylum for North Korean defectors.

### North Korea's Position on the 6-Party Talks

The North seemed to believe that it could get more concessions from the U.S. by putting pressure on it before the war on Iraq was over. North Korea's effort to start talks with the U.S. failed, however. Now North Korea is forced to decide whether it will possess nuclear deterrence against the U.S. military threat or seek a diplomatic solution by using its nuclear program as a bargaining chip.

North Korea shows an ambivalent message. In fact, North Korea's dual strategy of developing nuclear weapons and continuing negotiations at the same time is making the prospect for U.S.-North Korean relations all the more bleak. Although the North decided to participate in the 3-party talks, it said that the War on Iraq demonstrates the importance of a strong military deterrence to protect the national safety and sovereignty. It also tried to put pressures on the U.S. by escalating tension before and after the 3-party talks. North Korea said, "we are successfully reprocessing more than 8,000 spent fuel rods at the final phase."

In the 3-party talks, frustrated with the failure to have bilateral talks, the chief North Korean delegate, Lee Geun, said to his American counterpart, James Kelly, that the North possesses nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup> North Korea's admission of nuclear weapons is similar to the situation of October 2002, when the North confessed to its highly enriched uranium nuclear program. North Korea tried to defend itself from the U.S. pressure by showing a strong bargaining chip. It also wanted to induce the U.S. to stay in the negotiation room, since it was desperately running out of bargaining power due to its deteriorating economic situation. In sum, it tried to continue the dialogue with the U.S. on North Korea's agenda, not the U.S. agenda, while the U.S. insists on the dismantling of the nuclear program first.

It appears that North Korea agreed to the proposed 6-party talks, not the bilateral talks that it had asked for, because it needed to escape from the international isolation due to the aggravated situation, like the increased U.S. pressure and its own economic distress. North Korea must have wanted to find out the true intention of the U.S. while maintaining dialogue rather than aggravating its isolation by heightened tensions, and also to show the outside world that it has flexible and active attitude toward dialogue with other countries.

Also, against the backdrop of the intensifying nuclear crisis, the conflicts between the U.S. and South Korea as well as the internal conflict within South Korea were beneficial factors for North Korea. However, it was against the expectations of the North that the U.S.-South Korea conflicts were resolved with the summit meeting between the two countries, and that the conservative groups came to have greater say in South Korea. As the international opinions about the North's nuclear development are worsening, China's strong pressure on North Korea appears to have made it difficult for North Korea to resist any longer.

In the 6-party talks, the North suggested a principle of "package

deal, simultaneous action." In the first stage, North Korea expresses its willingness to give up its nuclear program, while the U.S. resumes the supply of crude oil and expands food aid to a large extent. In the second stage, North Korea freezes its nuclear facilities and accepts inspection, while the U.S. signs the non-aggression pact and makes up for loss of electricity. In the third stage, North Korea resolves the missile issue in return for the normalization of diplomatic relations with the U.S. and Japan. In the fourth stage, North Korea completely dismantles its nuclear program, when the construction of two light water reactors is completed.

After the 6-party talks in Beijing, the North did not hide its frustration, saying that the U.S. request that the North give up its nuclear program first is a foolish game that even a 5-year-old child wouldn't like to play.

### Prospects for the 6-Party Talks

The future prospects for the U.S.-North Korean relationship will be affected by North Korea's intention and U.S. policy: What does North Korea really want, nuclear weapons or negotiation? How is the U.S. going to harmonize diplomatic means and pressure? The following four scenarios are possible based on the above two factors.

#### *Scenario A: Compromise*

Scenario A is that North Korea's intention is to negotiate with the U.S. and the U.S. also continues diplomatic efforts. In this scenario, it is highly likely that both sides continue negotiation. This is the most promising scenario, and at least the 6-party talks are likely to go on in this case.

<sup>5</sup> *Washingtonpost.com*, December, 7, 2003.

&lt;Table 1&gt; Four Scenarios

		North Korea's Intention	
		Negotiation	Nuclear Weapons
The U.S. Policy	Diplomacy	A	B
	Pressure	C	D

### ***Scenario B: From Tension to Conflict***

Scenario B is that North Korea's intention is to possess nuclear weapons but the U.S. relies on a diplomatic resolution. In this case, the tension gradually increases but the stagnation in the relationship between the U.S. and North Korea will continue for a while. The U.S. is not properly responding to North Korea's nuclear program.

The worst case in this scenario is that North Korea considers the U.S. appeasement as its weakness and tries to take advantage of it to move ahead to the development of nuclear weapons. The U.S. will move from a lower level of pressure to a higher level of pressure. Selective interdiction, expansion of economic sanctions, and diplomatic and military pressure will be taken step by step as policy options, and surgical strike cannot be ruled out as the last option.

### ***Scenario C: Standoff***

Scenario C is that North Korea wants to negotiate with the U.S. for gaining security guarantees and economic assistance, but the U.S. puts a high level of pressure on North Korea, ignoring a meaningful negotiation. The state of standoff may continue for the time being, however, if North Korea does not cross the red line.

The worst case in this scenario is that North Korea considers the U.S. pressure as an attempt to change the Kim Jong-il regime and vio-

lently responds. For example, North Korea might challenge the PSI.<sup>6</sup> North Korea may launch missile tests or reprocess spent fuel for plutonium in order to get the U.S. re-engage. It is likely, however, that Bush administration raises pressure rather than give in.

### ***Scenario D: Clash***

Scenario D is that North Korea's goal is to have nuclear weapons and the U.S. exerts a high level of pressure. The 6-party talks will collapse and the U.S.-DPRK relations will develop into the worst situation.

### ***Summary***

Considering the conflicting interests between the U.S. and North Korea, it will be difficult to anticipate that the 6-party talks will bring an easy solution to this situation any time soon. Furthermore, the two countries are employing both threats and appeasement towards each other, making the future of the situation more unpredictable. Whatever North Korea's true intention is, it is unlikely that North Korea will abandon its nuclear programs without securing the U.S. security guarantee for its regime. Even though North Korea gains a security guarantee, it is not certain that it will give up nuclear program. North Korea's nuclear program is the most important leverage to attract attention, food, and assistance from the outside. North Korea without a nuclear program will become an international orphan. North Korea has also been developing nuclear arms as a prerequisite for its security, and it has recently been focusing on its nuclear development in order to cut its military spending.

<sup>6</sup> North Korea said that international containment aiming at the North is encroachment of sovereignty and prelude to nuclear war.



In the meantime, the U.S. aims to dismantle North Korea's nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. The situation that the U.S. is now facing may not change the ultimate goal of the U.S. If the goal is clear, difficulties can be overcome and endured. The U.S. has proclaimed that it may employ all possible policies if its efforts for a peaceful resolution fail. If it fails to find a solution to the nuclear crisis, it may enter another crisis situation.

Despite the extremely conflicting positions between the U.S. and North Korea, however, the U.S.-North Korean relationship is likely to remain in a state of tension and stagnation rather than to fall into a catastrophic phase. North Korea seems to be interested in the 6-party talks, although it is not fully satisfied with it. But North Korea wants to make the 6-party talks bilateral talks in a real sense. For that purpose, North Korea tries to minimize the roles of South Korea and Japan. North Korea refused to talk about nuclear issue with South Korean delegates who participated in the 12th round of ministerial talks that was held in Pyongyang on October 14 right after the 6-party talks.

North Korea also criticized Japan by saying on October 7, "Japan lost its position as a reliable member of the 6-party talks and is nothing but an obstacle to the peaceful resolution of nuclear issue between the U.S. and North Korea." North Korea also said that it would not tolerate the participation of Japan in any type of talks to resolve the nuclear issue. What North Korea tries to do is to keep Japan from raising the abduction issue and supporting the U.S., although it is not possible to get Japan out of the talks.

The U.S. effort to pursue a dual strategy of appeasement and pressure is also likely to continue, because of the current situation that the U.S. faces, like the Iraq issue, the economy, and the presidential race. The U.S. also seems to believe that it has some time because North Korea may have technical problems in manufacturing nuclear weapons.

North Korea's crossing the red line, such as conducting nuclear test

or reprocessing, would not necessarily be negative to the U.S. If the North does so, it will make the U.S. policy options more flexible because it can justify whatever it does. The U.S. can go to the UN Security Council without opposition, and even the option for a surgical strike could be on the table.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The U.S.-North Korea relationship is now in a breakdown condition due to the conflicting arguments of the two and the mutual mistrust. In addition, even if it is not such an extremely dangerous situation such as North Korea's acceleration of its nuclear development and the U.S. pursuit of military strikes against North Korea, there still exists a possibility that U.S.-North Korea relations could be aggravated at any time due to mistrust. For example, if North Korea takes advantage of the U.S. limitations for putting pressure on North Korea by intensifying the crisis, or if North Korea recognizes the U.S. pressure as a movement to topple its regime, the U.S.-North Korea relationship may enter another crisis situation. In addition, it is still unclear whether the resolution of the nuclear crisis without any fundamental changes in the North Korean regime would lead to the normalization of the U.S.-North Korea relationship.

As the nuclear crisis gets worse, North Korea tries to approach the South more actively. North Korea wants to show its sincerity to the international community for reform and opening as well as reconciliation with the South. It also tries to make mischief between the U.S. and South Korea. The conflict in the relations between the U.S. and North Korea will inevitably have a negative impact on inter-Korean relations in the long-run. Therefore, South Korea should prepare for the situation in case a peaceful resolution fails. It is undesirable not to prepare a contingency plan because of the concern that such a preparation may

increase tension. More specifically, South Korea should prepare for all possible scenarios: selective interdiction, diplomatic and military pressure, and even surgical strikes.

As for the security guarantee, North Korea demands a security guarantee for the Kim Jong-il regime as well as for the country. It is impossible to give a security guarantee for the regime, however. A non-aggression pact will affect the U.S.-ROK alliance, which assumes North Korea as a potential enemy. It is desirable that all the countries sign a document in which no country should threaten or attack any other country. North Korea triggered two naval clashes despite South Korea's sunshine policy and is escalating tensions in the region by developing a nuclear program. South Korea is also under the threat of North Korea's chemical and biological weapons. Therefore, not only North Korea but also South Korea and Japan need security guarantees.

It is time to bring peace on the Korean Peninsula by ending North Korea's nuclear program. For that purpose, cooperation between the U.S. and South Korea and political stability and unity in the South are indispensable elements.

## OVERCOMING THE KOREAN CRISIS: SHORT- AND LONG-TERM OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS BY A RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE

*Georgy Toloraya*

A military solution to North Korean nuclear crisis is now widely regarded as unacceptable. The US administration's new policy was seen by Kim Jong Il as aiming at regime change. The failure to address this concerns in October 2002 led to North Korean creating the "nuclear deterrent." Even short of a war the collapse of Pyongyang regime would mean the disappearance of the country itself—absorption of North by South. The occupation won't be peaceful, given the differences between Northerners and Southerners. "Slow-burning" conflict can continue for decades as a far-eastern edition of Israel-Palestinian conflict. The change in paradigm of the regime could instead ease not only WMD but other concerns. Kim Jong Il's state differs from that of his father, it can no longer be described as Stalinist. The economy has already changed from a centrally planned one to a mixed type, combining state, capitalist, semi-private and "shadow" sectors. Further transformation could include main power bodies (military, party, local, secret services) creating economic conglomerates resembling South Korean "chaebols." Nationalistic ideology becomes a basis for legitimacy of Kim Jong Il's clan power and for deeper integra-

tion with South Korea. But Pyongyang would probably try to keep its nuclear weapons at all costs, even if in the course of 6-party talks which could agree to forego the nuclear program as well as other WMD production and exports (Indian model). Sanctions and isolation cannot be a final option, and provided the conditions for regime transformation would be secured, such a solution could be better than any other.

In the current nuclear standoff, Pyongyang's goals were clear from the start: self-preservation of the regime. It was equally clear from the beginning, at least for those who spent some time studying North Korea's behavioral patterns that Pyongyang is not likely to succumb to pressure or surrender, relinquishing its only trump card for nothing in exchange.<sup>1</sup> One full year elapsed before a formulation of comprehensive and future-oriented concept of Korean policy. The United States' approach, now shared by China, Russia, Japan and South Korea, provides for multilateral security guarantees to the DPRK in exchange for complete dismantlement of the nuclear program.<sup>2</sup>

Why did it take so long to accept such an elementary equation—the nuclear program and security trade-off—which was in fact suggested by North Korea from the initial onset? The answer is simple; at least

1 See for example simultaneously published in Russia and the USA in February 2003 collectively authored reports by Gorbachev Foundation, "*Russia and Inter-Korean relations*" and the report of a special group on the Korean policy under the leadership of Selig Harrison, "*Turn-point in Korea. New dangers and new possibilities for the USA.*" In August 2003, Russian Center for Contemporary Korean Studies at IMEMO published a comprehensive analysis, "*Fifty Years Without War and Without Peace,*" supporting this logic. The Nautilus institute-sponsored report, "*A Korean Krakatoa? Scenarios for the Peaceful Resolution of North Korea Nuclear Crisis*" is also worth noting as suggesting realistic alternative to then US administration policy.

2 *The New York Times*, Oct. 20, 2003.

from North Koreans' viewpoint. The West, they believe, views toppling Pyongyang regime (either through military actions, inner cataclysm, or at best, the demise of the regime in a "soft landing" manner) as the optimum recipe for final solution of not only the nuclear but also all other involved issues and concerns. While North Korea is ready to engage in a large scale-war, it is imperative to prevent such warfare through the maximum use of national efforts by preparing for such conflict.

Is there any other way out of the impasse? Provided the resolution of the nuclear issue, how long should North Korea remain and be regarded as a threat? Many believe a dictatorship as such cannot be reformed and is incapable of system transformation and modernization. However, our view is different and cautiously optimistic: the undergoing changes in North Korea could provide a key to the solution of the WMD issue in the short run, but it can also ease other concerns in due course. On the other hand, without eliminating the divide between the DPRK and the rest of the world, any efforts to neutralize its consequences—including the over-militarization of the peninsula (and not only in the area of WMD)—will have little effect. Although not a direct aim at this stage, is it possible to work out a viable formula for harmonious co-existence of North and South Korea in a broader international framework in the road to their eventual convergence? We believe such a possibility exists, although currently this may not be the only nor the most probable outcome.

### Pyongyang's Logic and Strategy

We can begin by analyzing Pyongyang's internal logic and understanding of the situation; not only in nuclear terms, but in a broader framework encompassing a peaceful solution to the nuclear crisis as well as continuity and change in North Korean society.

North Korean vision and motives are often ignored by its opponents as sheer nonsense, hypocrisy, propaganda or a bluff as they are immersed in their own brand of methodology and ridiculous language. In fact, this is one of the factors that prevented a viable formula for DPRK's continuing interaction with the international community throughout the 1990s. That does not mean we now have to agree with Pyongyang, but certain ideas and possibilities should at least be explored in search for compatibility with policy goals and aims of other nations. Above all, the nuclear problem cannot be isolated and it must be solved as a part of a new security framework in Korea.

This calls for interaction and engagement with North Korea. Current ideas in Pyongyang are different from those ten years ago. Kim Jong Il's regime is diverging further away from that of his father. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea can no longer be described as a Stalinist country (there are rumors that even its name might change, omitting the reference to a "Western-style" democracy). Therefore, it would be wrong to believe *a priori* that current Pyongyang is aggressive and dangerous as during the time of Kim Il-Sung—the continuer of "Stalin's deed" in advancing the socialist revolution at least in the Korean peninsula, if not in the world scale. Consequently Pyongyang's attempts to guarantee its security should not be deemed illegitimate without a thorough analysis.

The common belief, at least of the 1990s, that Pyongyang cannot be trusted because it did not "keep its word" under a score of treaties, should not be taken for granted. Evidence shows that in most cases, North Korea stopped fulfilling their obligation out of what they considered to be a violation by the opposite party. And although the regime may seem paranoid to the most part of the world, concluding Pyongyang as unpredictable and adventurous would be an inaccurate and dangerous miscalculation. What is usually implied is not the illogical or uncontrollable character of Pyongyang's action, but rather their aims, character, timing and results—which are more often than not dis-

agreeable, incomprehensible and beyond the accepted models or "common sense" to the opponents.

We should not apply conventional wisdom to these actions. Kim Jong Il has come to prove that he is an experienced state leader (his aims are not similar to a democratically elected one and comprise survival of the regime, rather than survival of the people—but this has to be taken for granted) and a seasoned diplomat.<sup>3</sup> He, unlike many of his opponents, plans several moves ahead and seems to fully employ Oriental tactics of preparing to fight a stronger adversary. Ancient Chinese stratagems (about three dozen) can elucidate North Korea's seemingly illogical behavior. To name a few: "to make crazy gestures while keeping the balance," "extract something out of nothing (to bluff)," "to openly build a bridge, secretly commence the march to Chungquan (let the enemy believe he understands your plans and win with an unexpected maneuver)," "to deceive the emperor to make him cross the sea (to seek for a stronger position for a battle)," and "to change the role of guest to that of a host." Many of these strategies remind us of crucial moments in the nuclear standoff and subsequent negotiations, where North Koreans did not share the traditional Western moral views that bluffing and deceit are deplorable (if only because the political practices—especially in the wake of the search for Iraqi WMD—testify to the opposite).

From this point of view, the nuclear crisis can be regarded as a case of "clash of civilizations," wherein different value systems suspiciousness generate conflicts under the guise of a concrete cause. Misunderstanding mounts on both sides—North Korea, feeling discriminated and resented—has assured itself of complete distrust and created its own justifications for its behavior in accordance with its own value system. Based on the priorities of "national sovereignty," Pyongyang sincerely believes the amoral, hypocritical and malicious nature of West-

3 See *The New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 19, 2003.

ern actions. How would you expect North Korea to tie its hands by abiding to the norms of traditional (Western=alien) morals when fighting for “higher values” in its own understanding? Russia, while sharing the universally accepted civilized values of today, realizes at the same time (through its own bitter Communist past experience) the inflexibility of certain ideological dogmas and strongly advise against any attempts to challenge them in dealing with North Korea. Time should be granted in sparring efforts to let North Koreans fully understand the real aims and concerns of the Western world. This is not impossible to achieve; the explanations provided below are not confrontational and are made with due respect to this difficult partner.

### Change of Regime or Change of Paradigm?

Pyongyang views the world as a huge conspiracy against itself, and in fact the concern about its opponents’ is well grounded. The history of the country itself as well as recent international events convinced the North Korean leaders that in the absence of strong allies (like USSR and China in the past) only military might can deter “the enemies of Korean Socialism” from trying to overthrow the regime. This conjecture is probably not totally inaccurate; the US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s November 2003 remarks in Seoul regarding the desirability of a regime change in Pyongyang and even the possibility of using US nuclear weapons against North Korea provided useful clues to the real motivations and desires of US conservatives. We omit here the widely publicized possible consequences of a military solution as it would not only amount to a national catastrophe for the whole Korean nation, but also undermine regional stability and enormously impact the world economies. What is usually overlooked is that, even short of a war, the collapse of Pyongyang regime would probably be an unparalleled disaster for the Korean peninsula as well as the region and it

would have much more negative implications than regime change in any other country of the world.

Can we take Iraq as an example? The regime change in Iraq (even bearing in mind the current problems of governing post-war Iraq) in fact produced only minor difficulties in comparison to Korea. The crucial difference from Iraq, or any undivided sovereign country of the world, is that regime change in the North Korean case will mean *the disappearance of the country itself*. North Korean statehood as such would be finished, as South Korea—in referring to its constitution—cannot accept any new power in North Korea formed “on the local base.”

This stands true even if a “hot” conflict is avoided. What would have occurred if Pyongyang complied with seemingly logical demands to confine itself to nuclear non-proliferation in a verifiable manner after being confronted with the accusations of a clandestine uranium enrichment program in October 2002? Pyongyang feared that in case of its obedience to these reasonable demands, even in absence of such a program, there still will be no end to the existing problem. First, the issue of verification, leading probably to intrusive inspections, would rise. Provided none of the nuclear weapons are found, the case of chemical and biological ones would be put on the agenda. Then comes the missile issue, followed by the problems of “excessive” conventional weapons, human rights, religious freedoms, freedom of emigration (does anybody really need North Korean refugees, by the way?), etc. Finally, when the risk of retaliation from North Korea is greatly reduced due to a verified absence of WMD and change in internal situation as a result of the country’s opening, it would suddenly dawn on everybody, that putting up with the existence even of the kneeled totalitarian regime is impossible—it is necessary to be fully sure of the absence of the potential of WMD, to liquidate any possibilities of their reappearance, and finally, to give the oppressed people freedom and democracy. Thus, the regime change would be included in the agenda anyway. Public revelations by the highest-ranking defector Hwang

Jang Yop proves that Kim Jong Il saw this prospect even in 1994; that “in five or six years,” when the issue of international inspections are placed on the agenda, the DPRK would have to confront the US and declare the possession of nuclear weapons.<sup>4</sup> Thus, at the time being, regime change is really not an option.

Even if Kim Jong Il were removed by “natural causes” or by a palace coup/uprising, the final outcome would still remain the same. Why? First, a more conservative force would ascend to power, as there is no internal opposition in North Korea. The regime takes great care to leave nothing to change, at least for an organized democratic movement to take root. This would further aggravate the situation and increase North Korea’s confrontation with the outer world, making the situation even more dangerous and further away from the final solution, leading us back to “square one.” An alternative figure from the existing leadership (Yong Hyong Muk appears as an option as he appears to be popular among US planners<sup>5</sup>) would not have enough authority among the powerful North Korean military to execute a change in the current situation.

Secondly, a power vacuum and chaos would emerge, inviting foreign interference. Even if we presume that a true democratic government can eventually surface out of this chaos (which is highly unlikely simply because there is no human potential for this in the North in the short run), who is going to wait for such a development under a crisis, involving hordes of refugees, local conflicts with arms falling into the hands of warlords, etc? The conclusion being that the change of regime in North Korean case would boil down to the absorption of the North by the South and the North would become an “occupation zone.”

Will this occupation be peaceful? After the World War II, the Korean nation (in the framework of which anyway, regional contradictions

were rather bitter) gave birth not only to two states but to two different civilizations. They have at best 30-40% in common, of which is based on national traditions in the North and South Korean societies (it is enough to mention that even linguistic differences have deepened to an extent that Kim Jong Il, according to his own confession, only understood 80% of Kim Dae-Jung dialogue during inter-Korean summit).<sup>6</sup> Are more than 20 millions of North Koreans ready to become “second rate people” in a unified Korea? What about the large army (2-3 millions of people) in the North Korean nomenclature? They can expect the worst; not just being left out in the cold like their colleagues in East Germany, but repression (by the way, such a concern is not totally ungrounded, if we refer to the experience of legal prosecution and severe sentences to former presidents on the part of democratic leaders of the ROK, as well as Hyundai’s Chung Moon Hun’s tragic fate). This means that they can resort to armed guerilla-type opposition, which would at least be taken sympathetically by the population. Most likely, the plans of such guerilla activities already exist in the DPRK. Lessons of many centuries of Korean history instruct that this “slow-burning” conflict, involving neighboring countries, can continue for decades. The world would then receive a far-eastern edition of Israel-Palestinian conflict. The Iraqi occupation also offers a valuable example, as even the combined forces of US and ROK probably will not be enough to properly govern North Korea. This would derail prospering South Korean economy even if a large-scale military action is avoided. Not to mention the international implications, especially for China and Japan.

So is regime change really an option? Would it be more practical for the world community to accept the continual of existence of DPRK, provided it behaves responsibly in the international context at least in

4 *Choson Ilbo*, Seoul, Nov. 17, 2003.

5 *Dong-A Ilbo*, Seoul, Nov. 10, 2003.

6 See K. Pulikovskiy. Oriental express. *Through Russia with Kim Jong-Il*, Moscow, 2002, p. 156.

the short term? Does it really pose danger to its neighbors? Both in the early times and for a thousand years of history, Koreans never tried to conquer anybody, and presently, the DPRK does not have any reasons for aggression (for instance, an attempt to dictate its ideology to someone, to capture territory or economic resources). Moreover, it does not have the smallest chances to be successful in case of such adventure, which is not unknown to its leaders. More importantly, in the long run, can the dictatorship really change? Is there any evidence to the probability of evolution of the DPRK, provided its security is guaranteed and national sovereignty is not challenged? In other words, *can the paradigm of the regime change occur without the change of political elite?*

Plenty of recent data, at least those acquired by Russian experts through field research and more importantly through recent exclusive access to the higher echelons of Pyongyang hierarchy, suggest that this option is quite realistic.<sup>7</sup> One should not be deceived by North Korean propaganda clichés and ideological zeal; all “military-oriented” rhetoric and over-militarization are meant largely to provide strict control over society and to scare off possible aggressors.

It seems that current North Korean leaders are to understand the inefficiency of the system as well as recognizing the fact that the population’s patience is on the threshold. They are thinking of changes without endangering their power. In fact, unlike former East European socialist countries where evolution proved to be impossible, changes do not seem unlikely in the DPRK simply because this country today, in essence, is not a socialistic country but a bureaucratic monarchy (or theocracy).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the North Korean leaders started to transfer accents from Marxism-Leninism postulate to a traditional Confucian and feudal-bureaucratic one, appealing to national tradi-

7 *The Korean Peninsula and Challenges of the XXI Century*. Reports presented at the VI scientific conference of Korean researchers (Moscow: IDV Publishers, 2003), p. 21.

tions and history and promoting the thesis of inheriting the legacy of the ancient Korean states—Goguryeo and Goryeo.<sup>8</sup> The legendary father of Korean nation, Dangun, who lived two thousand years B.C. was declared to be a living person and even a tomb was constructed, a significant venue for a joint North-South celebration in October 2003.<sup>9</sup> A clear sign of resurrection of Confucian values was illustrated in Kim Jong-Il’s three years’ mourning following the death of his father Kim Il-Sung. A revival of traditional holidays such as Lunar New Year and Choosuk (Thanksgiving), as well as formal reconstruction of religious rights became an integral part of course for cultivation of Confucian heritage and foundation of national-cultural identity. A new concept of state ideology is now a “creation of a powerful state”—without specifications on what kind of social-economic system should be the basis for such a state. The only clue might be “songun”—a military first policy, wherein the army will be the backbone of the state. Does this mean that military leaders will have a say not only in political, but also in economic matters and redistribution of property rights?

The transformation is obvious not only in ideology—although in a highly ideological society it is already a major factor of change. However for Kim Jong Il, any change is a task made twice as difficult because he cannot openly revise the heritage of his father (although sometimes he tried to—for example, apologizing for the Japanese kidnapping incidents). After consolidating his power base in late 1990s, he chose not to risk disorder in the established power structure. However, coming out of the isolation, bridging the gap with the South Korea, pursuing normalization of relations with Japan, European Union, Australia, attempting economic reforms, and creating “open sector” in the economy, Kim clearly showed where the vector of his interest is directed.<sup>10</sup>

8 G. B. Bulychev, *Political Systems of the Korean Peninsula States* (Moscow: MGIMO University Press, 2002), p. 129.

9 *Korean Central News Agency*, Pyongyang, Oct. 6, 2003.

10 A. Vorontsov, “Korean Nuclear Crisis in International Context,” In G. Toloraya et al.



This is exactly the reason why the Russian President Vladimir Putin called Kim “an absolutely modern person” and started to assist him, including his efforts to be an intermediary in the stand-off between the US and the DPRK.

However, amidst the real politic world of Gulf War and Yugoslavia, how can Kim Jong-Il from the onset of his rule forget about strengthening the military and the system of enemies’ containment, which could make use of the period of changes to overthrow his regime? He is always reminded of that by the conservatives in his retinue who are afraid of repetition of Gorbachev’s experience and loss in the decisive competitive edge, the inner unity. Notwithstanding the poverty due to the absence of resources, an irrational structure of the economics and the isolation and the lack of personal freedom the country, particularly due to the relative homogeneity of the society, is characterized with an enviable stability, a fact westerners cannot fully grasp. Of course, Kim Jong-Il wants to keep his power and the state. He is neither Nero, nor Louis XY, who said - ‘après moi—deluge.’ But does that necessarily mean that he, known for his interest for bourgeois life, would see the “barrack-room socialism” as an ideal? More likely he would want “an enlightened monarchy” or an authoritarian state, (resembling a mix of Brunei, Malaysia, South American states and Park Jung Hee’s South Korea or some of the Central Asian states) which is a more attractive option for making his nation independent and accumulating at least minimum wealth (the source of which would be extremely cheap and sufficiently qualified labor force).

Practical actions of the North Korean leadership after a lengthy and cautious study in the international experience of reforms in China, Russia, Vietnam taken last year, confirmed the possibility to realize the above-mentioned scenario. In July 2002 Pyongyang made a number of

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(eds.), *Fifty Years without War and without Peace* (Moscow, IMEMO press), 2003, pp. 201-203.

important, though naive and insufficient from the modern post-industrial market economic point of view, steps to broaden of use of market levers. Rationing system was *de facto* abolished. Wages of workers and employees were increased sharply (by 15-20 times) and the prices for commodities, services and tariffs were increased. Directors of the enterprises were given broad rights to vary wages of the employees and to apply other means of material stimuli and peasants were given the opportunity to engage in individual labor activity.<sup>11</sup> Limited convertibility of national currency was introduced.<sup>12</sup> In autumn of 2003 Pyongyang introduced *de facto* floating rate of won, which is close to market - about 900 won for 1 US dollar.<sup>13</sup> Although this means accepting the hyperinflation (more than 400% in a year elapsed after the start of the reforms), this is the indicator that the market mechanism has started to develop.

A new legislation was adopted in September 2003 by the Supreme People’s assembly, providing for more commercial activities of the populace. New free markets opened in Pyongyang and they are not only trading vegetables as in the past but also manufacture household goods,<sup>14</sup> much of which arriving from China carried by what the Russians call a “shuttle merchant”—this new occupation seems to gain ground and becomes an important source of employment and income, like Russia in early years of reforms.<sup>15</sup> According to Chinese officials, Dandong city annually exports US\$200 million worth of goods to North Korea.<sup>16</sup> You can see the peasant “ajumas” (grannies) selling fruit and vegetables along the roads and lots of “kiosks” are selling essen-

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11 Marina Trigubenko, “Attempts to Renovate Socialism” in DPRK, *Fifty Years Without War and Without Peace...*, pp. 58-60.

12 Alexander Vorontsov, “North Korea at the end of 2002 through the eyes of a Koreanologist,” *KORUS FORUM*, Moscow, no. 5, 2003, p. 65.

13 *Korean Overseas Information Service*, Oct. 5, 2003.

14 *Joongang Ilbo*, Seoul, Oct. 6, 2003.

15 *Vremya Novostei*, Moscow, Oct. 10, 2003.

16 *Korea Insight*, Washington, vol. 5, no. 11, 2003, p. 3.

tials in the cities. Lots of bicycles have appeared in Pyongyang and the first-ever ads offer even locally-assembled Pyonghwa cars (they are made at the facility, invested by Rev. Moon's business empire). Even mobile phones are now a cool gadget among Pyongyang's nomenclature. A new technocrat prime-minister, who was on a mission to the ROK late last year to study South Korean economy, was appointed along with several other technocrat ministers in September 2003.

Cooperation with South Korea is becoming the major driving force of the reforms. North-South cooperation unexpectedly survived the nuclear crisis and even flourished despite political tensions. South Korean investment in the DPRK amounted to US\$1.15 as of August 2003<sup>17</sup> and 400 ROK companies took part in 557 projects producing US\$340 million dollars in bilateral trade.<sup>18</sup> In the end of autumn 2002, legislative acts giving green light for large-scale projects creating Gaesong industrial park of 3.3 million square meters in Gumgang tourism zone, tailored for South Korean needs.<sup>19</sup> The project in Gaesong was officially inaugurated on June 30th, 2003 and (South) Korea Land Corp. plans to build a "model industrial park" of 33 thousand square meters as early as the second half 2004.<sup>20</sup> Seoul sees the Gaesong project as a first step to creating an "economic community" of the North and the South and Geumgang, as a territorial linkage, a joint tourist zone connecting the resorts of the same mountain chain: North Korea's Geumgang and South Korea's Seoraksan.<sup>21</sup> Another grand project, joining the railways of the North and the South of Korea, eventually reaching the Trans-Siberian Railroad (Transsib), is progressing despite the military uneasiness on both sides of DMZ (the official ceremony of the beginning of the railway traffic through DMZ took place

17 *Yonhap News Agency*, Seoul, Oct. 28, 2003.

18 *The New York Times*, Nov. 19, 2003.

19 *Korea Unification Bulletin*, Beijing, no. 49, November 2002, p. 8.

20 *Asia Pulse*, Seoul, Nov. 7, 2003.

21 *Korea Focus*, Seoul, vol. 10, no. 5, Sept., Oct. 2002, p. 82, 83.

on June 14, 2003). The start of inter-Korean integration is already a fact of life and a factor to be increasingly reckoned with.

In fact DPRK economy has already changed from a centrally planned socialist form to a mixed form, combining state sector, capitalist sector (joint ventures and trading companies), semi-private sector (especially in agriculture and services) and "shadow" (criminalized) sector. And there is no way back.

The transformation could have been faster and more successful. We should take into account the fact that in starting the reforms, Pyongyang hoped for improvement of its position in the world, not confrontation with Washington. Most importantly, it probably believed the rapprochement with Japan would result in the inflow of Japanese "compensation" money and goods to the commodity-starved economy, while progress in the North-South relations would bring in even more South Korean capital and technologies.

How might North Korea change in a longer perspective? The most probable transformation would be a mix of Chinese, Vietnamese and Russian experience with certain North Korean flavor. These changes are in fact already discreetly underway.<sup>22</sup>

First, the changes already started in the economic domain would evolve to transform the very nature of the state. Creeping privatization of the state property with the blessing of the higher authority could be a start of a change in political superstructure. Main power bodies (military, party, local, secret services) and their top-managers could benefit. Kim Jong Il's personal know-how might be granting the right to use the facilities and eventually property rights to military and security service's leaders, which in turn would guarantee stability of the regime. The result would be a creation of economic conglomerates resembling South Korean "chaebols" but with a greater role of the state. They

22 Alexander Zhebin, "DPRK: in Search of the Way Out," *Fifty years Without War and Without Peace...*, pp. 27-35.

would bring the economy out of the permanent crisis by attracting foreign (and first of all South Korean) capital and becoming export oriented, employing the most important resource the country boasts - cheap and disciplined workforce.

This would create a new ideological and political reality. Nationalistic ideology, based on exclusiveness of Korean nation, would probably become a basis for legitimacy of Kim Jong Il's clan power as well as for deeper integration with South Korea. The new (or, rather old) elite would combine political power through the political and security institutions with economic power through semi-privatized economic entities. This is, of course, a far cry from a real democracy, but a step forward from a totalitarian dictatorship. The life of the populace would not improve overnight but it would stop the starvation, and the transfer would not be turbulent. Receiving a certain amount of economic freedom and being constantly brainwashed for generations (don't forget the Confucian tradition of reverence to state), North Koreans, seeing their life improving, probably would not oppose these processes. The heir of Kim Jong-Il (and he or she, under the North Korean tradition should be nominated now) 15-20 years from now would reign a completely different country—with mixed government-capitalist economy along with a strong state sector, though not truly democratic, but not less acceptable for the world than many current Islamic, African or Central Asian states.

This new North Korea would have much closer relations with the South and its economy would inseparably be connected with the South Korean economy. This would provide far more stability on the peninsula for the rise of mutual trust will be based on strong nationalistic sentiment. After changes of a couple of generations, when the new ones would not have personal grudges against each other based on 20th century hostilities and unification of Korea could be on the agenda. At the initial stage, it could take the form of a confederation or a commonwealth of the states as life would prompt under circumstantial

development.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Origin of the Current Crisis and Possible Solutions in an International Context**

To put it in a nutshell, the root of the nuclear crisis lies in the conflict of two concepts - that of regime transformation and that of regime change.

In late 1990s, after Kim Jong Il first started making above-mentioned meaningful steps inside and outside the country, China, Russia, the ROK administration of Kim Dae-Jung, European Union and the Koizumi government of Japan saw the window of opportunity for the possible evolution of the regime, although they may disagree in particularities. US President Clinton also opted for “engagement” of the DPRK aiming at its evolution (which, surely, on the tactical level did not exclude and was more likely on the contrary suggested corrosion and elimination of the current regime). It was coined “the Perry process” based on the Agreed Framework of 1994, which provided for normalization of relations and diplomatic recognition.

However, since 2001 the US Republican administration opted for not simply a tougher, but a principally different course, which was perceived by Kim Jong Il as aiming at regime change. The “last stronghold of communism” is not only the ideological dislike of neoconservatives to blame. It could be supposed that the perspective rapprochement of the two Koreas could endanger strategic interests of the US in North-east Asia, including containment of China and control over Japan. On the contrary, a local crisis could offer a valuable opportunity to engage

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<sup>23</sup> See also Georgy Bulychev, “Two scenarios for Korean peninsula,” *Russia in Global Politics*, Moscow, vol. 1, no. 2, 2003, p. 93, 94.

China in a new international system of crisis management under the American guidance.

This is why Kim Jong Il very seriously took the “axis of evil” speech, seeing it as a prelude to hostile actions. North Koreans suspected that for the US hawks, the aim was two-fold: first, to avoid discussing US own violations of a number of clauses of the Agreed Framework—instead, accusing Pyongyang of breaching the agreement and to torpedo the agreement itself,<sup>24</sup> and second, isolating and weakening North Korea to prepare conditions for an eventual regime change.

When confronted in October 2002 by the accusations of a clandestine uranium enrichment program, Pyongyang saw it only as a pretext for unwinding the spiral which would eventually lead to its demise, simply a *casus belli*. North Koreans decided to create ambiguity only with the aim to force the US to agree for negotiations and compromise: they stated that they “could own not only nuclear, but also a more powerful weapon” to oppose the American threat.<sup>25</sup> Contrary to what is publicly believed, they never “confessed” to an existence of any uranium enrichment program and no such evidence has emerged ever since. Now, even CIA grudgingly admits it is “not certain there even is a uranium enrichment plant” [in North Korea] in the first place.<sup>26</sup> In reality, the DPRK probably only had plutonium, or only even crude nuclear devices, produced before 1994, which the US already knew about. North Koreans acted based on the experience of interaction with the administration of Bill Clinton, to whom in case of his visit to Pyongyang, Kim Jong-Il allusively promised to “hand in” the WMD program inherited from his father.

At that point in time, any concerns about North Korean nuclear pro-

24 This is now recognized by American “experts” themselves. See B. Slavin and J. Diamond, N. Korea nuclear efforts looking less threatening, *USA Today*, Washington, Nov. 5, 2003.

25 *Nodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, Nov. 27, 2002.

26 *USA Today*, Washington, Nov. 5, 2003.

gram might have been solved through negotiations. If the negotiations had found out the truth and returned to the process so that the US-DPRK normalization would have started right away, we could have not only forgotten about the nuclear program today, but probably would have had a breakthrough in the DPRK’s relations with the international community, active cooperation with the South and far-reaching economic reforms, etc.

But North Koreans miscalculated. Notwithstanding the intentional ambiguity of this statement, US hawks declared it “confessions” of the DPRK in pursuing the secret nuclear program and the situation began to aggravate: the US stopped heavy oil deliveries, the DPRK “de-froze” the real, not imaginary, plutonium nuclear program, left the NPT and set the task of creation of the “physical deterrent,” which might have been avoided before. Reactions other than trying to create the deterrent could not have been expected from the regime with the mentality of a “besieged fortress.” And all the competent specialists warned the US administration about this. In this case, it was clear from the start that the medicine prescribed by the hawks, was worse than the ailment itself.

The start of the multilateral dialogue in Beijing, in the logic of Pyongyang’s own conservatives, was meant to serve only a “diplomatic cover” for Washington’s preparations for a hard-line scenario, with the aim to assure allies who were hesitating that there is no other way to solve the problem with intractable Pyongyang. But Kim Jong Il decided to give it a try at least to learn what could be achieved by diplomacy. Several variants seem now to be on the drawing board—US Presidential statement, undersigned by China, Russia, ROK, Japan, or a treaty similar to a three-party declaration on the liquidation of nuclear weapons in Ukraine (1994), or a six-party treaty, or a five-way armistice treaty, including Japan and the ROK.<sup>27</sup> After

27 *ITAR-TASS*, Oct. 26, 2003; *The New York Times*, Oct. 26, 2003; *Nihon Keizai*, Tokyo,

some hesitation, probably caused by struggle between hawks and doves, North Korean accepted the initiative about “written assurances of non-aggression,” seeing it as a first step of building confidence and “peaceful coexistence.”<sup>28</sup>

But that might be too little, too late. Politics is the art of possibilities. Usually we have to agree not on the best option, but to one that least unacceptable. And such an option today, unlike a year ago, might be a *responsibility for North Korea - but still with a limited nuclear capability*.

In explaining Pyongyang’s rationale, it should be taken in account that even the absence of direct invasion plans of the DPRK, stressed by American officials, changes little in its eyes. North Koreans see the cause of undesirability of a military solution for the US in an unacceptably high price because of the damage from the counter-strike from the DPRK.<sup>29</sup> But Pyongyang may fear that the US could try economic and political blockade to “stifle” the regime, or try to undermine it through demands of openness and democratization. Unlike the USSR case, the US may miscalculate with regard to the DPRK, as it did in the past, on the speed of this process and grow frustrated. Under such a logic, even a “non-aggression treaty” is not a sufficient guarantee—only a “physical deterrent” can be regarded as one—both for containment and as a bargaining chip. In that case (as Pyongyang “hawks” might think) negotiations are useful for sounding out the intentions of their opponents and buying time for increasing the “physical deterrent.”

At the moment of writing there is still no clear answer to whether North Korean nuclear bomb is a bluff or a reality. In the first case, there

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Nov. 5, 2003.

28 *Korean Central News Agency*, Oct. 25, 2003.

29 Yu Fedorov, *Korean Nuclear Problem*, Institute for Applied International Research, Moscow, analytical notes. no. 1, vol. 2, 2003, p. 3, 4; James Laney, Jason Shaplin, “How to Deal with North Korea?,” *Russia In Global Politics*, Moscow, vol. 1, no. 2, 2003, p. 84.

is a chance that North Korea would agree to dismantle its plutonium program and come clear on the uranium enrichment issue, reenter the NPT and let the IAEA or international inspectors into the country in exchange for guarantees of security and recognition on the part of the US.

However it is more likely that in the name of survival and consolidation of the regime, Kim Jong Il will have irreversibly decided to obtain and keep the nuclear deterrent at any cost. Does Pyongyang aim to continue the nuclear program using the lack of control and verification as the negotiations slowly progress? And more importantly, is Kim Jong Il going to keep whatever nuclear devices he has as a deterrent and make the world regard the DPRK as a nuclear power, even if he agrees to tear down the production facilities and to exercise restraint in testing the nuclear weapons, let alone exporting it?

That would mean that the world community could be *de facto* offered to *accept a new type of relations with North Korea, similar to those with India and Pakistan*. In this case the DPRK will have to exist—at least for some time—in isolation and in the conditions more or less in a sharp confrontation with the whole world, but Kim Jong Il might consider that kind of existence better than total annihilation of his state.

How is it possible to minimize the negative fallout under such a scenario, provided we see a catastrophic military solution as unacceptable? It should be noted that Russia, using its capabilities of interaction with Pyongyang and its own assessments, developed a concrete plan of step-by-step synchronized measures for defusing the crisis, known as “package deal” at the end of 2002.<sup>30</sup> The so-called “main elements of a package decision” developed by Russian experts were handed down by the special envoy of the President of the Russian Federation A. Losukov in January 2003 to the North Korean leaders and afterwards

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30 Georgy Toloraya, “Korean Peninsula and Russian Interests,” *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn* (International Affairs), Moscow, no. 12, 2002, p. 47.

to the US (China, South Korea and Japan were also acquainted with them).<sup>31</sup> In summer of 2003, Russia presented the idea of multilateral guaranties to Pyongyang and Seoul.<sup>32</sup> Pyongyang reacted cautiously to the idea, but did not reject it.<sup>33</sup>

Is the deal still possible under these new, more challenging and gruesome circumstances? Unfortunately, yes. Unfortunately because the terms of such a deal would be much worse for the cause of non-proliferation and the DPRK itself than a year ago.

What has changed from a year ago is that now multilateral mechanisms have emerged which can become an important framework for the regional security. The ideal goal of the current six-party talks (which could be succeeded in years to come by more comprehensive ones) could be described as follows: the DPRK winds up its nuclear program through a verifiable method (nuclear materials and equipments are taken away from the country) and perhaps the export of missiles, production of chemical and biological weapons are terminated. The US in response lifts sanctions and embargoes, officially recognizes the DPRK, takes on an obligation not to use force and other means of pressure against the North under the UN Charter, as well as provides the DPRK with assistance, first aimed at meeting its energy demands. The 6-party talks, as some insiders suggest, could even become a nucleus of the future Northeast Asian organization of cooperation and security, much along the lines which Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SOC) was created.<sup>34</sup> We will keep our fingers crossed for such beautiful developments to take place.

But what if in the course of the talks North Korea declares itself a nuclear country and insists on keeping its existing (even if imaginary)

31 *Kommersant*, Moscow, Jan. 16 & 23, 2003.

32 *Nezavivsimaya Gazeta*, Moscow, Oct. 21, 2003.

33 *The New York Times*, Aug. 14, 2003.

34 Materials of the international conference, “*Japan and East Asia in a Globalizing World*,” Tokyo, Sep. 28 - Oct. 2, 2003.

nuclear devices while pledging to forego all future nuclear programs and even to discontinue production of other types of WMD and/or their deployment and exports? Would the world be ready to buy such a solution? Certainly not at once.

But the choice boils down to an alternative—war or compromise. Blockade, isolation, sanctions and pressure on Pyongyang are not final decisions: it is just a prelude (more or less lengthy) to either of these choices.

If and when a compromise is found, the crux of the matter is not the essence of the bilateral concessions on the part of the DPRK and the US, but *the international control mechanism of their fulfillment*. Past experiences, including the one of the Agreed Framework showed that bilateral agreements between the two partners with distrust of one another necessitates a “monitoring mechanism.” Under the conditions of weakening (in the eyes of the US and the DPRK) of the UN role, such a “monitoring mechanism” can be created with the participation of the six countries. They could also be instrumental in making arrangements for the fulfillment of the deal itself and its economic implications.

Speaking of the Russian role, it could be unexpectedly significant. Russia could act as a unique “mediator” role in the successful search for compromise between the DPRK and the US. Its role is quite different from much hyped role of China. Beijing, on the one hand, exerts pressure on Pyongyang which the latter deplors and on the other hand is less and less trusted by North Koreans who think it might have egoistic interests (among other things being horrified by a nightmare prospect of receiving nuclear Taiwan after nuclear North Korea). Moscow believes its mission is to prevent the DPRK from escalating its demands (like withdrawal of US troops from South Korea) and provocative hard-line position on the one hand, and on the other—to assist the US to “save the face” and not to allow the compromise be regarded as a defeat.

Russia could also be a part of eventual deal. For example, Russia (as the country most trusted by Kim Jong Il) could take for safe-keeping the DPRK nuclear “weapons” or “devices” and materials with a pledge to return them in case the DPRK becomes the object of aggression or “the other party” would not fulfill its obligations properly. Russia has the facilities (though it would need some external financing and new legislation) to properly keep these dreadful objects and has the right to do so under current non-proliferation regimes. The question of what to do with North Korean nuclear materials will have to be solved and there is lots of doubt Pyongyang would agree to have them be taken to the US for scrutiny.

An important issue is the destiny of KEDO program, currently suspended, causing new frictions with the DPRK.<sup>35</sup> If the construction of LWR is categorically out of question for the US, an alternative for satisfying the DPRK energy needs should be sought. Ministry of Atomic Energy of Russia suggested construction of LWR, supplying electricity to the DPRK on the Russian territory bordering this country (then it would be located on the territory of a nuclear state).

Should the nuclear choice be totally abandoned, the probable alternative may be a thermal power plant in the DPRK operating on Russian gas. The outwardly attractive pipeline project from Sakhalin through North Korea to South Korea is unlikely to become a reality because South Korea would become a hostage of North Korean goodwill in the transit of gas in this case. Supplying LNG from Sakhalin to a terminal in the Republic of Korea near the demilitarized zone with further distributions through pipelines’ net in the ROK and across the 38th parallel to the DPRK seems more reasonable (than a thermal power plant could be constructed not only in the area of the current activity of KEDO in Shinpo but, for instance, in Gaeseong, where an industrial zone based on South Korean investment is about to take off).

Concerns of North Korea on the possibility that the South would use gas delivery as a political weapon, could in this case be eliminated with the guaranties of Russia as a gas supplier—in particular, by a corresponding bilateral agreement with the ROK.

But before a basic solution is found, it all remains no more than a wishful thinking. Such a solution should be sought for in the coming months—certainly before November 8, 2004, when the US presidential election is to be held.

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35 *The New York Times*, Nov. 5, 2003.

# THE TRIPARTITE NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN NORTHEAST ASIA: A LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE OF THE SIX-PARTY TALKS

*Cheon Seongwhun and Tatsujiro Suzuki\**

Although the ongoing nuclear problem of North Korea is resolved either peacefully through the six-party talks or militarily following the example of Iraq, that does not settle the inherent nuclear problem harbored in Northeast Asia. Besides North Korea's persistent nuclear weapon development activities, Japan's stockpiling of excessive plutonium has been a major source of regional and international concerns. Some politicians' pro-nuke advocacy has exacerbated such concerns. Facing North Korea's nuclear ambitions, South Korea has been under constant suspicion that it might choose to counter the North with its own nuclear weapon program. In short, the non-nuclear commitments of South and North Korea and Japan have been tainted in varying degrees and thus failed to acquire full trust from the international society. A failure of providing their non-nuclear commitments with full legality has added weights to these suspicions. This article proposes the tripartite

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nuclear-weapon-free zone (TNWFZ) among North and South Korea and Japan as a practical measure to faithfully implement and solidify the non-nuclear commitments made by the three countries. The TNWFZ aims at creating a legally binding and multilaterally formed institutional mechanism where the three parties reconfirm their non-nuclear will, build mutual confidence, and create environments conducive to regional peace, stability and prosperity. It can further its contributions in this respect by gradually extending geographical areas and enlarging memberships of the nuclear-weapon-free zone. The TNWFZ can be an objective of the ongoing six-party talks as well. If the most urgent problem of North Korea's nuclear development comes into settlement, the six parties could make use of the negotiating momentum to reach out to creating a broader nuclear-free region in Northeast Asia. The first step, as argued in this paper, would be a creation of the TNWFZ.

### **Introduction**

North Korea's stepped-up nuclear drive has astonished the international community. It started in October 2002 by Pyongyang's brazen admission of a secret uranium enrichment program in violation of the Agreed Framework. Since then, the DPRK obstructed monitoring activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and evicted on-site inspectors from the country. It also has formally withdrawn from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) since January 2003. Thus, North Korea's decade-old nuclear problem has entered a new and more serious stage and once again, the nuclear problem is tabled as a top security agenda in Northeast Asia, thereby increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula.

The North's revelation of a uranium enrichment program was

made when a senior North Korean diplomat, Kang Sukjoo, a chief architect of the Agreed Framework, met with U.S. presidential envoy James Kelly in Pyongyang on October 4th, 2002. North Koreans first strongly denied, but with Kelly's pressing insistence they confessed, the existence of the enrichment program.

The DPRK is the only country in the world that has violated the NPT twice and finally withdrew from the treaty. The second nuclear standoff has hardened bad images of North Korea as an unreliable and unpredictable rogue state trying to do all sorts of messy things. It further fixated the North Korean leadership as a dictatorial regime obsessed with clinging to power at all costs while taking its people as hostage.

In December 1991, North and South Korea announced their intentions to denuclearize the Korean peninsula in the mutually agreed Joint Denuclearization Declaration. The DPRK further committed their non-nuclear will to the United States by signing the Agreed Framework in October 1994. North Korea's clear violations of these agreements led us to rethink whether it is possible to make a sincere agreement with North Korea. There has been no change in the North Korean position that it is willing to forgo the nuclear weapon option if sufficient inducements are given by the United States. Despite the North's persistent demand of bilateral talks with the United States, past experiences with the North Korean nuclear problem necessarily lead to highlighting the importance of multilateral assurances and supervision of the DPRK's compliance behavior.

On the other hand, South Korea has been strictly up to the spirit and the letter of the Joint Denuclearization Declaration. The commitment to achieve a non-nuclear Korean peninsula has been firmly upheld by the South Korean government for the last two decades. Japan has adhered to the three "non-nuclear" principles for more than three decades. Regardless of occasional pro-nuke remarks by some politicians, Japan's public sentiments against possessing nuclear weapons remain quite

strong.

Although the ongoing nuclear problem of North Korea is resolved either peacefully through the six-party talks or militarily following the example of Iraq, that does not settle the inherent nuclear problem harbored in Northeast Asia. Besides North Korea's persistent nuclear weapon development activities, Japan's stockpiling of excessive plutonium has been a major source of regional and international concerns. Some politicians' pro-nuke advocacy has exacerbated such concerns. Facing North Korea's nuclear ambitions, South Korea has been under constant suspicion that it might choose to counter the North with its own nuclear weapon program.

In short, the non-nuclear commitments of South and North Korea and Japan have been tainted in varying degrees and thus failed to acquire full trust from the international society. While Pyongyang has lost non-nuclear credentials entirely, Seoul and Tokyo have not been entirely free from international suspicions. A failure to provide their non-nuclear commitments with full legality has added weight to these suspicions. These circumstances bring a conclusion that although in different degrees, each country's non-nuclear policy is more or less incomplete, leaving much to be done.

This article proposes a tripartite nuclear-weapon-free zone (TNWFZ) among North and South Korea and Japan as a practical measure to faithfully implement and solidify the non-nuclear commitments made by the three countries. The TNWFZ aims at creating a legally binding and multilaterally formed institutional mechanism where the three parties reconfirm their non-nuclear will, build mutual confidence, and create environments conducive to regional peace, stability and prosperity. It can further its contributions in this respect by gradually extending geographical areas and enlarging the membership of the nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Propping up the creation of the TNWFZ in Northeast Asia, nine rationales are put forward in this article. They explain why the

TNWFZ need be seriously considered and what effects it could bring forth for peace and stability in the region. The rationales will become the basis of developing concrete measures for establishing the TNWFZ. Before getting into the details of the TNWFZ, for better grasping of the regional situation faced by the three countries, the pending problem of North Korea's nuclear is analyzed by comparing the early 1990s and the present.

### Differences between Ten Years Ago and Now

There exist five major differences between the first nuclear problem in the 1990s and the second we are facing now. First, North Korea's American counterpart is different. Compared to the Clinton administration, the Bush administration has very different perceptions on the leadership of North Korea and takes fundamentally different approaches toward the DPRK. Such differences are highlighted in dealing with the Agreed Framework and demanding higher and more rigorous levels of transparency and verification.

Distressed with providing incentives to rogue states for ending their misdemeanors that should not have occurred in the first place, the U.S. Republican Party had been a vocal critic of Clinton's North Korea policy, and the tone of these criticisms was inherited by the Bush administration. In his confirmation hearing, Secretary Powell referred to the DPRK leadership as "the dictator" and said that the United States and its allies in the Pacific would remain vigilant as long as the North's military threat continues.<sup>1</sup> He also pointed out that verification and monitoring regimes were missing in the Clinton administration's negotiation with North Korea.<sup>2</sup> President Bush expressed "some skepticism

<sup>1</sup> Text: Powell Opening Statement Before Senate Foreign Relations Committee, January 17, 2001, available at <http://www.usinfo.state.gov>.

about the leader of North Korea” and worried that part of the problem in dealing with North Korea is the lack of transparency.<sup>3</sup> The three leading House members urged President Bush not to prejudice his ability to refine U.S. policy toward North Korea by committing himself to the Agreed Framework.<sup>4</sup> Congressman Henry Hyde further elaborated a hard-nosed Republican position on the DPRK, saying that verification is the key to dealing with North Korea since the DPRK’s demonstrated willingness to embrace adequate verification measures is “a signal of a genuine break with the past and a commitment to future cooperation.”<sup>5</sup> In the end, North Korea was labeled as part of the “axis of evil” by the Bush administration.

Second, there have been dramatic changes in the international security environment after the 9/11 terror attacks. Since 9/11, it has been regarded as part of a war against terrorism to bar rogue regimes and terrorist groups from developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). International understanding and cooperation against WMD proliferation has never been as strong as today. Whoever the target is, multilaterally coordinated efforts, often coercive, will be justified with full support of the global community. North Korea is no exception in this context. China and Russia, having their own war against terrorism, will not be able to protect North Korea when more pressing steps are taken in case current mild approaches of soothing the North eventually

2 *Secretary of State Collin Powell’s Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Fiscal Year 2002 Foreign Operations Budget*, Federal News Service, Washington, D.C., March 8, 2001.

3 *Remarks by President Bush and President Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea*, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, March 7, 2001.

4 House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry Hyde, House Republican Policy Committee Chairman Christopher Cox and Rep. Edward Markey sent a letter to President Bush on March 2, 2001. Steven Mufson, “Flexibility urged on N. Korea,” *Washington Post*, March 3, 2001, p. A16.

5 *Henry Hyde’s Speech at the American Enterprise Institute* in Washington, D.C. on March 13, 2001. See <http://www.nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/index.html#item2>.

fail.

Third, today’s nuclear problem—Pyongyang’s kick-out of IAEA inspectors, withdrawal from the NPT, and avowal of accumulating nuclear weapons and deterrence capabilities—is a reality whose existence was confirmed by the North Korean authorities. However, the nuclear problem in the 1990s was a suspicion due to Pyongyang’s persistent denial. This means that North Korea has little ground to justify its refusal to accept international demand to dismantle the relevant facilities, to reveal all necessary information, and to fully cooperate with the IAEA for thorough inspections.

Fourth, the North Korean confession is full proof that it has violated four major international agreements: the NPT, the IAEA Safeguard Agreement, the Joint Denuclearization Declaration and the Agreed Framework. Reluctance and willful deceptions against international norms and rules have hardened bad images of North Korea as an unrealistic and unpredictable rouge state. Making little of international obligations it assumed, the North Korean regime is indeed a renegade leadership. This gives added credit to the Bush administration’s rigid perceptions and approaches toward North Korea.

Fifth, the current international conditions in North Korea are far worse than those of ten years ago. Despite food and other assistances from abroad during the last ten years, a series of natural disasters in the mid 1990s made already fragile economy even worse. And an economic hardship disrupts the political order that is the main prop of North Korean society. According to a North Korean defector, in the early 1990s, North Korea was able to sustain itself without foreign food aid and there existed self-confidence in the elite community that they could stand outright against external pressures and steer a so-called brinkmanship strategy.<sup>6</sup> Nowadays, North Korea is not as strong as before in terms of mental as well as economic power. On the verge of collapse, its economy cannot sustain itself without foreign assistance, and societal control is loosened in depth and width.

## Rationales for the TNWFZ

### 1. *Overcoming the Limitations of Other NWFZ Proposals in Northeast Asia*

It is John Endicott's proposal of Limited Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Northeast Asia (LNWFZ-NEA) that is most widely discussed and well known. Since 1992, the proposal has been formulated by a group of experts from the concerned countries. Up until now, two promising ideas have been discovered. The first one is a circular area centering on the DMZ in Korea with an extent of 1,200nm covering North and South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and parts of China, Mongolia, and Russia. The second is elliptical, again centering on the DMZ, and additionally includes a part of Alaska.<sup>7</sup> All the countries within the area should be members of the treaty. The term "limited" means that weapon systems and geography are two constraining factors. First, in the case of China, which has significantly fewer nuclear warheads than those of the U.S. or Russia, only tactical weapons are dealt with and strategic ones excluded. Second, geography is defined with the aim of minimizing the impacts on deployment and operation of Chinese and Russian strategic nuclear weapons.

Kumao Kaneko has proposed to make a nuclear-weapon-free zone of a full circular area with a 2,000km radius from a center point at Panmunjom in the DMZ.<sup>8</sup> North and South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, China, the U.S., Great Britain and France belong to the treaty. Com-

pared with Endicott's idea, Kaneko's proposal is comprehensive in terms of the obligations of both non-nuclear and nuclear parties. Kaneko asks non-nuclear parties not only to give up a nuclear weapon option, but also to forgo ballistic missiles development for military purposes. Non-nuclear parties are also required to accept the full-scope IAEA safeguards and to increase transparency of their peaceful nuclear activities. For nuclear parties, the proposal demands strict negative security assurances, a no-first-use commitment, removal of all non-strategic nuclear weapons within the NWFZ in 10 years, and elimination of all strategic nukes through bilateral or multilateral arrangements in 20 years.

At the moment, the two proposals seem to have stalled, with no significant progress expected in the near future. Several factors might have affected their rather slow progress. First, and most significant, is that they create a sort of obligatory asymmetry among the parties by covering nuclear haves and have-nots simultaneously in a single legal framework. Second, by including nuclear weapon states, the sensitive security issue of redeployment or dismantlement of nukes is put forward in the very beginning of what might have to be a long cooperative process. That deep-rooted mistrust and tension among the countries remained high in Northeast Asia will have negative effects on any cooperative effort. Third, in a region with little experience in multilateral security cooperation, increasing the number of parties will make negotiations less smooth and more difficult than with fewer members.

Basically, the two proposals are too ambitious to produce a meaningful result in the foreseeable future. Northeast Asia may need intermediate, feasible and practical measures that can overcome these obstacles. The TNWFZ presented in this article is an appropriate candidate for this purpose as it specifically focuses on the three non-nuclear parties in Northeast Asia and thus limits its membership, obligations and applied area.<sup>9</sup>

In the discussion on creating a nuclear weapon free zone, two ques-

6 Seongwhun Cheon's interview with a formal North Korean official, October 29, 2002.

7 *The Bordeaux Protocol of the Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone for Northeast Asia*, Center for International Strategy, Technology and Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia March 1997, pp. 61-63.

8 Outline of a "Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty" by Kumao Kaneko, October 1999; Kumao Kaneko, "Japan needs no umbrella," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 1996, pp. 46-51.

tions are typically raised; whether the idea is desirable and whether it is feasible. For the issue of desirability, no objection could be made against the necessity and usefulness of a nuclear weapon free zone. The ultimate goal of a nuclear weapon free zone—to eliminate all nuclear weapons and achieve stable peace in the region—is worth a sincere pursuit. On the other hand, there exist many reservations as to the second question of feasibility. The idea of the tripartite NWFZ results from such reservations.

There are two very practical reasons for these reservations.<sup>10</sup> First, the LNWFZ-NEA mixes two categorically different statuses of membership of the NPT: a nuclear weapon state (NWS) and a non-nuclear weapon state (NNWS). This aspect of the LNWFZ-NEA is what makes its implementation most challenging. With the mixture of NWS and NNWS status, the LNWFZ-NEA brings about doubly heavy burdens; that is, not only creating a NWFZ among non-nuclear weapon states, as is a traditional mission of a NWFZ, but also by making parts of NWS territories nuclear-free and carrying out reduction of tactical nuclear weapons. It is doubted whether nuclear arms control among the three nuclear weapon states in Northeast Asia can be negotiated and conducted in parallel with a nuclear weapon free zone among the other non-nuclear weapon states. It seems possible only in the theoretical context or at first glance. But with some second thoughts, it is easily understood how difficult it would be to combine the two already immensely difficult jobs. It is more plausible that either a nuclear arms control or a nuclear weapon free zone among non-nuclear weapon states comes first and the other follows.

9 The first appearance of the TNWFZ idea was the following newspaper article, Cheon Seongwhun and Tatsujiro Suzuki, "A nuclear-free zone in Korea and Japan," *Korea Herald*, June 13, 2000, p. 6.

10 Cheon, Seongwhun, "The Limited Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Northeast Asia: its limits and the road ahead," *The International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Winter 2001, pp. 206-208.

Secondly, the current LNWFZ-NEA lacks a clear-cut objective. In the Expanded Panel's deliberations, there are some phrases that reflect what the LNWFZ-NEA is trying to achieve; for example, "to create a new cooperative security system," "to support enhanced transparency, dialogue and confidence between all the parties," and "the ultimate goal to realize the removal of all nuclear weapons."<sup>11</sup> These are, however, just expressions of principles with no practical details. In order to draw as much support and interests from the regional countries as possible, it is important that any idea of the NWFZ harbors clear-cut and realistic objectives that could provide some tangible benefits to the member states.

Each country has its own individual objectives, and they are not necessarily overlapping. Therefore the question comes down to how much common ground is shared by the countries working for the LNWFZ-NEA. If there exist significant differences between their objectives, the prospect of the LNWFZ-NEA would not be as bright. The Beijing Summary Report that categorizes various proposals in three baskets demonstrates the wide spectrum of issues expected to be covered within the context of the LNWFZ in Northeast Asia.<sup>12</sup> In consequence, this report manifests the fact that the objectives of the LNWFZ-NEA are not well defined and members' interests are diverse and dispersed.

## **2. Endowing Legally Biding Status to Non-Nuclear Commitments**

The TNWFZ provides North and South Korea and Japan with a legally binding institution that would help to demonstrate their non-

11 Expanded Senior Panel's Deliberations at the Meeting of Expanded Senior Panel for *Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone for Northeast Asia* held on October 8-9th, 2001 at Swiss Grand Hotel, Seoul, South Korea.

12 "Beijing Summary Report," Sixth Expanded Senior Panel on the Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone for Northeast Asia, September 16-20, 2000.

nuclear will to international society. A major drawback in their non-proliferation policies has been the lack of legalities. Only North Korea ratified the Joint Denuclearization Declaration, a violation of which could be made quite conveniently under the totalitarian dictatorship. Seoul was concerned that parliamentary ratification of a document signed with Pyongyang might produce the wrong impression that it was formally recognizing North Korea, which is against the Constitution. So the Joint Declaration is no more than a tactical arrangement susceptible to changes in the political environment. To make matters worse, it has yet to be sincerely implemented.

Similarly, Japan's three non-nuclear principles is merely a political commitment with no solid legal back-ups. It is entirely free and right for the Japanese government to change or discard the principles anytime when it thinks necessary. The absence of legal follow-ups diminishes the integrity of the principles. Encroaching on the credibility of Japanese government's non-proliferation commitment, it has become a major source of international suspicions. Even in Japan, there is a persistent demand to change the principles into a legally binding format.<sup>13</sup>

One of the major purposes of the TNWFZ is to provide the three countries' non-nuclear commitments with internationally binding legal status. With multilateral parties, the South Korean government will become less reluctant to ratify such an agreement since it can be considered as one of many international agreements where both South and North Korea retain membership. In the case of Japan, Tokyo will be able to make use of the TNWFZ as a vehicle to reinforce its non-nuclear commitments toward both domestic and international audiences. By having a more concrete institution to internationally super-

13 Cheon Seongwhun's Interview with Kumao Kaneko, December 12, 1999. There exist different views as well. For example, one opinion argues that Japan should not legalize the three principles and should go for nuclear. See Joe Ogata, "Nuclear allergy: Japan's aversion to nuclear acquisition," *The International Relations Journal*, Summer 1997, pp. 109-125.

vising their living up to the commitments, the TNWFZ will be conducive to reinforcing mutual confidence among the three parties as to each other's nuclear intentions and activities. It will also increase the international community's confidence of the nuclear policies of the three parties together.

### **3. Assisting Positive Evolution of the Korean Declaration**

The Joint Declaration has failed to be put into practice, largely due to a showdown as to mutual inspection procedures.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the Geneva Agreed Framework has played a major role in curbing the North's nuclear ambitions during the past decade.

Several points prevent us from anticipating a prompt implementation of the Declaration. First of all, it is hardly likely for North and South Korea to resume bilateral inspection talks in the foreseeable future. Since the nuclear issue remains an effective bargaining tool in dealing with the United States, North Korean elites seem not eager to discuss it with South Korea. Despite the improved relations between Seoul and Pyongyang driven by the sunshine policy of Kim Dae Jung and followed-up by President Roh Moo Hyun, North Korean attitudes have not shown much change, as they stick to opening only limited channels for sucking in economic benefits from South Korea. Being in such a fragile condition, the Pyongyang regime worries that the aftermath of active exchanges and cooperation with fellow South Koreans might lead to the end of its existence.<sup>15</sup> It is hardly expected that a full-

14 For more details on the mutual inspection negotiations, see Cheon Seongwhun, "Regional non-nuclear options from South Korea's perspective," in Kihl Young Whan and Peter Hayes, eds., *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: the Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 398-401.

15 For reasons why it is difficult for North Korea to accept extensive cooperative offers from western countries including South Korea and for North Korean regime's special characteristics, see Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1999).

scale and enduring bilateral dialogue regarding nuclear issues can be held anytime soon. Proportionally, the prospect of implementing the Joint Declaration becomes dim.

Second, neither the Agreed Framework nor the ongoing six-party talks can guarantee the simultaneous implementation of the Joint Declaration. Although North Korea mentioned its intention to comply with it in the Agreed Framework, there were no detailed provisions on how to harmonize the Agreed Framework with the Joint Declaration. If the parties to the Agreed Framework had been sincerely committed to a successful implementation of the Joint Declaration, at least some measures, even symbolic ones, could have been adopted for that purpose. For example, South Korean inspectors, as part of inspection teams, could have been invited to verify North Korean nuclear facilities in return for similar North Korean inspections of South Korean nuclear facilities. All parties of the six-party talks have agreed, in principle, to a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. However, it cannot be assured that the outcome of the six-party talks would be different from that of the Agreed Framework in regard to the Joint Declaration.

Under the circumstances, the Joint Declaration is no more than a piece of paper. It is of no use rhetorically repeating intentions to implement a document. Leaving the Joint Declaration unimplemented may trigger misunderstandings and suspicions that North and South Korea attempt to nullify the document by letting down its profiles. Of course, it would not be possible to scrap the document in an abrupt manner. International society has appreciated the progress made by the two Koreas in signing the Joint Declaration and has shown keen interests that their non-proliferation commitments remain intact. The TNWFZ is a promising alternative that allows North and South Korea to disembark from the old wrecked ship and to board a new one with the support of their confident neighbor—Japan.

#### 4. *Stemming North Korea's Attempts to Go Nuclear*

North Korea's nuclear ambition has been persistent and enduring. Among the three apparatuses to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons—the Agreed Framework, IAEA full-scope safeguards, and the Joint Declaration—the first two have been crippled and the third has been left moribund.

In fact, there have been many suspicions that North Korea violated the Agreed Framework and continues to have a secret nuclear weapon program. For example, a Republican-led North Korea policy group argued that since 1994, North Korea has sought nuclear assistance from Pakistan and Russia and attempted to purchase dual-use items in Europe and Japan. It also made it clear that there is “significant evidence” of the nuclear program being continued, including uranium enrichment and high explosive tests.<sup>16</sup> According to the group's report, North Korea's nuclear activities at Yongbyon were frozen, but Pyongyang kept its nuclear weapon program on track using other routes in other areas. The DPRK's nuclear confession proves the report's arguments to be correct. Even President Clinton indirectly confirmed that North Korea was continuing its efforts to secretly develop nuclear weapons.<sup>17</sup> In the presidential memorandum authorizing \$15 million for KEDO, Mr. Clinton said he would send KEDO the money even though *he could not legally certify that Pyongyang had stopped acquiring uranium-enrichment technology* [emphasis added].

By confessing its second secret attempt to develop nuclear weapons and by withdrawing from the NPT in the end, North Korea has exacerbated its nuclear standoff against the international community. Clearly, revelation of the enrichment program is to rub salt into the wound. At

<sup>16</sup> North Korea Advisory Group, *Report to the Speaker U.S. House of Representatives*, November 1999, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, “Inside the Ring,” *Washington Times*, March 3, 2000.

the same time, however, it draws sharper attention from the international community and consolidates its willfulness to bring a final and complete resolution of the problem. The simple reason is that nobody wants to be fooled twice by a rogue state. Such a rigid mood is articulated in the phrase: “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me,” and this is a prevalent atmosphere in the U.S. Congress.<sup>18</sup>

Some vagueness as allowed in the Agreed Framework would not be permitted this time. A complete dismantlement of nuclear weapons and related facilities and comprehensive inspections are going to be the only end point. The question is how to get there. A renewed North Korean nuclear problem will take either of two courses, depending on Pyongyang’s response.

The hopeful course is to follow the peaceful resolution scenario where the DPRK follows the South African model. The North Korean leadership would announce its intention to halt its nuclear weapon programs, deliver the relevant information to the IAEA, and accept full-scale inspections from the Agency. In accordance with the North’s moves, the U.S. would take responsive measures to meet the DPRK’s demands. A detailed schedule of reciprocal actions will be decided in the bilateral talks expected to open once a positive step is taken by North Korea.

The gloomy course is to follow the military clash scenario where the DPRK resists yielding to the international pressures and sticks to its nuclear weapon program. Escalated tensions and failure to compromise in the course of diplomatic and economic pressures will lead to an inevitable use of military force. Since much patience from the west is not expected, it will largely depend on North Korea whether the gloomy course is diverted to a peaceful resolution or not. When all the measures except the military one are exhausted, a preemptive and sur-

18 Steve LaMontagne, “North Korea’s nuclear program: an assessment of U.S. options,” *Policy Forum Online*, The Nautilus Institute, October 30, 2002.

gical strike option to the nuclear facilities will be exercised. It will add fuel to the preemptive strike flames that the Bush administration bestowed a legal trapping on the preemptive strike option in its National Security Strategy report.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the international community is determined to root out North Korea’s nuclear weapon gene at this time.

While resolving the current nuclear crisis with North Korea following one of the two paths or other interim ones, the TNWFZ can be an additional solid layer to forbid North Korea from going nuclear and to become complementary for the ultimate resolution of the North Korea’s nuclear problem. Information-sharing, transparency and verification measures embodied in the TNWFZ would allow South Korea and Japan to double-check the North’s nuclear activities and intentions.

### ***5. Ridding International Suspicions over Nuclear Intentions of South Korea and Japan***

The TNWFZ is conducive to enhancing transparency and thus reducing international suspicions over South Korea’s and Japan’s nuclear policies and activities.

South Korea

Despite consistent and arduous efforts to demonstrate its peaceful uses in the nuclear field, concerns are frequently raised about Seoul’s true intentions. Such concerns often misunderstand Seoul’s will to devote itself to peaceful uses of nuclear energy for the well-being of its people and hinder its research and development programs for that

19 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002).



purpose. South Korea's military standoff with North Korea may be a major contributor to such deflected views. For example, the U.S. Department of Energy noted, "in North and South Korea, they interact dangerously with painful energy vulnerabilities, storage problems, and *political-military incentives to at least seriously consider nuclear weapons*" [emphasis added].<sup>20</sup> North Korea's persistence on acquiring nuclear weapons would be another important impetus.

Resolving international nuclear suspicions is vital for South Korea's national interest. Several points can be addressed in this regard. First, nuclear power is the key energy source in the ROK, as shown in its current reliance on nuclear energy for more than 40% of its electricity demand. This trend will continue in the future. Unless reliable alternative energy resources are found, dependence on nuclear energy will be growing. So in terms of energy security, peaceful uses of nuclear power are a critical national policy. The problem with nuclear suspicions is that it causes visible or invisible adverse effects that stand in the way of South Korea's nuclear industry and R&D activities.

Second, suspicions that South Korea can break the most widely agreed international norm of non-proliferation could degrade the South's national image and harm the credibility of its national policies as a whole. In the tightly interwoven international society, nuclear discredit will bear much negative burdens on South Korea by isolating the ROK, diminishing its diplomatic capabilities, and thus bringing out much difficulties and frustration in key issue areas.

Third, nuclear suspicions will keep neighboring states in constant nervousness. This will induce unnecessary tensions and could cause an arms race in the region, which is obviously not what the South Korean government and people would like to see.

Fourth, nuclear suspicions will have adverse effects on the unifica-

20 U.S. Department of Energy, "Policy Forum: Energy Futures," *The Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, p. 94.

tion process. This is a much more serious repercussion on Korean interests in the long term than the previous three points. Believing that a unified Korea will go nuclear, neighboring countries understandably will make every effort to stand in the way of Korean unification. Unless South and North Korea make sure that they are non-nuclear and will remain so in the future, they cannot expect the external support and assistance that will be essential in the unification process. It should be remembered that West Germany's strong advocacy that unified Germany would not pursue weapons of mass destruction facilitated German unification by allaying the security concerns of neighboring states as well as the four key countries. In a recent U.S. national security report, the concern of unified Korea's nuclear possession also led to demands that the U.S. forces should remain in Korea after unification in order to ensure a non-nuclear Korean peninsula.<sup>21</sup> For Koreans, a nuclear weapon option is a useless "card," if it was ever thought to be so, and should be readily discarded for the more sacred and desperate goal of national unification.

Unfortunately, in spite of all these rationales, it may not matter how much effort South Korea puts into resolving international suspicions unless the North-South showdown does come to an end. Here is where there is an important role to be played by a reliable third party. If Japan joins North and South Korea to make a nuclear-weapons-free region, the TNWFZ can transform the bilateral confrontation into a more lenient and less conflicting mode, at least in the nuclear field. This will bring about changes in the perspective of the international community toward being more comfortable and trustful of South Korea's nuclear policies and activities.

21 The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Seeking A National Strategy: A Concert For Preserving Security And Promoting Freedom*, April 15, 2000.

## Japan

Japan, as the only victim of nuclear bombs, has been a loyal member of the global non-proliferation regime. Japan's non-nuclear policy based on the three non-nuclear principles, "not to possess, not to bring, and not to introduce," is also well known. However, there have been constant suspicions over Japan's nuclear intention despite her strong commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament. Most recently, three important factors have contributed to renewed concerns over Japan's nuclear intentions.

First, Japan's technical capability has grown, especially its civilian nuclear fuel cycle capability, with an increasing inventory of separated plutonium.<sup>22</sup> As of the end of 1998, the plutonium inventory in Japan was about 5 tons, and 25 tons or more are now stored in Europe (UK and France) as a result of commercial reprocessing contracts.<sup>23</sup> Although Japanese efforts to increase the transparency of its civilian nuclear programs, such as the adoption of a "no plutonium surplus" policy, have been noteworthy, the fact remains that Japan's nuclear capability is now sufficient to develop nuclear weapons in a very short time. With other advanced technical capabilities, such as missile and guidance technologies, political will is the only remaining barrier for Japan to develop nuclear weapons.

Second, Japan's security policy has adapted itself to the changing

22 For information about Japan's nuclear capability, see S. Harrison, "Japan and nuclear weapons," in S. Harrison, ed., *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996), pp. 3-44. For international concerns over Japan's civilian plutonium programs, see E. Skolnikoff, T. Suzuki, and K. Oye, *International Responses to Japan's Plutonium Programs*, Center for International Studies (CIS) Working Paper, C/95-5 (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Cambridge, Massachusetts), August 1995.

23 D. Albright and L. Barbour, "Separated inventories of civil plutonium continue to grow," *Plutonium Watch* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Science and International Security), May 1999.

security environment in the post-Cold War era. The most important change is the newly revised "Guidelines for US-Japan Security Cooperation," adopted by the Diet in 1999. The new Guidelines now allow Japan to cooperate with US military operations outside Japan, in the "surrounding region." Another important policy decision made by Japan was to participate in the development of a Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system with the U.S. This policy was clearly influenced by the situation in North Korea, especially after the missile launch in 1998, although it is not clear how the TMD system could be effective against North Korean missile attacks on Japan.

Thirdly, Japan's domestic taboo regarding security debates has been loosening. For example, for the first time since the end of World War II, the Japanese Diet has formally set up an Investigation Committee on the Constitution. Although there is no explicit pre-condition, it is generally assumed that setting up the committee itself will open up the public debate over the revision of article 9 of the Constitution. In addition, questions have been raised regarding the credibility of the Japanese government's non-nuclear policy. Recently declassified information from the US government shows that Japanese government was aware of the fact that nuclear weapons were moved into Japanese territory, a violation of one of the three non-nuclear principles (i.e. introduction).<sup>24</sup>

Given those changes described above, it is important for Japan to strengthen its commitment to its non-nuclear policy. In fact, it is a good timing for Japan to take new security initiatives in Northeast Asia. Dialogue between North Korea and Japan has been resumed, and a historic summit talk with North Korea took place. There are good

24 H. Krinstensen, *Japan Under the Nuclear Umbrella: U.S. Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War Planning in Japan During the Cold War*, A Working Paper by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, Berkeley, California, July 1999, and R. S. Norris, W. M. Arkin, and W. Burr, "How much did Japan know?," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/February 2000, pp. 11-13, pp. 78-79.

rationales for Japan to promote NWFZ in the region.<sup>25</sup>

### **6. Facilitating Cooperation in the Nuclear Field**

The TNWFZ can be a concrete basis for facilitating cooperation between Japan and South Korea in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in two ways. In the policy dimension, Japan is a leading country to faithfully accept the concept of openness and put various transparency measures to use in the nuclear industry. With strenuous efforts, such as allowing more intrusive inspections than is required by the IAEA, Japan has maintained a high level of credibility on peaceful nuclear activities. The Japanese government has been laborious in educating the public by launching the so-called a “peace education” program regarding the dangers and uselessness of nuclear weapons. It has effectively taken advantage of the historical scars of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At the same time, Japan has been very active in non-proliferation diplomacy by organizing important international gatherings, fostering healthy policy debates, and proposing constructive alternatives. This is why Japan’s credibility is kept at a high level despite intermittent pro-nuclear remarks from government officials.<sup>26</sup> From the South Korean

25 See for example, M. Halperin, *The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance*, The Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, Berkeley, California, 1999, and Asahi Shimbun Asia Network Report 2000, “Cooperative security in northeast asia,” *Asahi Shimbun*, Marh 2000. Both papers reexamined Japan’s security policies in the region and suggested promoting NWFZ in the region is one reasonable policy option for Japan.

26 For example, on October 20, 1999, Shingo Nishimura, Vice Minister of Japan Defense Agency, said that Japan should acquire nuclear weapons. *Associated Press*, October 20, 1999. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kono Yohei, made an immediate refutation against his remark and said that Japan’s three non-nuclear principles will remain intact. Mr. Nishimura resigned immediately when his remark became a political contention.

perspective, the TNWFZ is expected to create auspicious environments where Seoul’s nuclear credibility can be elevated to the level of Japan. If international society comes to regard more a trustful South Korea as closely engaged with Japan rather than being alone, it will pave the way for removing barriers to the developments of South Korea’s nuclear industry.

In the technology dimension, the TNWFZ can foster favorable conditions where bilateral cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is promoted. According to some scientists in South Korea, Japan has been less forthcoming in technology cooperation with South Korea than they hoped. Commercial interests may be a significant factor that leads to Japan’s hesitation. Another important factor is believed to be Japanese suspicion over South Korea’s non-nuclear will. The TNWFZ will effectively get rid of this obstacle and provide a solid foundation for stronger bilateral cooperation in nuclear R&D.

### **7. Contributing to International Non-Proliferation Efforts**

The TNWFZ will have contributions to reinforcing international non-proliferation regimes in many ways. First, the three countries and other nuclear weapon states that participate in the TNWFZ can demonstrate their commitments to international non-proliferation efforts. Second, incorporating North Korea, a notorious rogue state, will eliminate a major threat to the non-proliferation regime. Third, the TNWFZ will increase the nuclear transparency of the three countries and reduce suspicions over the non-nuclear commitments of the parties among themselves as well as internationally. Fourth, by providing negative security assurance in the region where major powers’ nuclear forces are positioned closer at hand than in any other NWFZ, nuclear weapon states can demonstrate strong commitments against using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states. This will reinforce the nuclear weapon states’ position to

encourage non-nuclear weapon states to adhere to non-proliferation norms and rules. Fifth, by resolving the nuclear issue, the three countries can be relieved and readily move on to tackle other proliferation-related issues such as chemical and biological weapons developed by North Korea.

### **8. Supporting Peace Building Efforts on the Korean Peninsula**

The TNWFZ can be an important political confidence building measure (CBM) in the process of searching for a new peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula. Political and diplomatic reconciliation efforts have been very visible since the mid 1990s. South Korean President Kim Dae Jung released Japan and the U.S. from the long-time South Korean demand of “harmonization and parallelization,” which required linking the two countries’ relations with North Korea to inter-Korean relations. As a result, active dialogues have been carried out between Pyongyang and Washington. Issues such as missile development and export and the return of remains of American soldiers who died during the Korean War have been negotiated and some tangible results obtained. U.S. humanitarian aid has been increased. Tokyo also started resuming political talks with Pyongyang last December since its abrupt stop in November 1992, when a suspicion was raised that North Korea kidnapped a Japanese woman. A historic summit meeting between the two countries was held in September 2002. The TNWFZ can become a complementary measure to the ongoing trend for dialogue, giving momentum for completing cross-recognition in Northeast Asia and the creation of a stable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula.

In addition, the TNWFZ is a significant military CBM for enhancing regional security. By reinforcing their will not to possess nuclear weapons, the three parties will be able to increase mutual confidence in the military area. In turn, the TNWFZ will also provide other countries

within and without Northeast Asia with more confidence and less worries about the security policies of North and South Korea and Japan.

### **9. Promoting Multilateral Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia**

Since the end of cold war, cooperative security has been highlighted as a new security concept guiding the security order in the 21st century. Cooperative security is to seek increased security and stability through cooperative engagement. Cooperative engagement is a strategic principle that attempts to accomplish security through institutionalized consent rather than threats and coercion.<sup>27</sup> At the practical level, cooperative security seeks to devise agreed-upon measures to prevent war and to do so primarily by preventing the means for successful aggression from being assembled.<sup>28</sup>

Following this trend, establishing international norms and rules, rather than arms race and competition, is emphasized to curb arms build-up, reduce tension and pursue peaceful coexistence. Multilateral security cooperation and dialogues are mainstream. For instance, in Europe, the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plays an important role for stability and peace in the region. The treaty regulating Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) has been successfully implemented. In the Asia-Pacific, multilateral frameworks such as the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) are performing vivid activities. There are numerous proposals to organize multilateral security frameworks in Northeast Asia.<sup>29</sup>

27 Janne Nolan, “The concept of cooperative security,” in Janne Nolan, ed., *Global Engagement: Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994), p. 4.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

29 For example, former Japanese Prime Minister Yashiro Nakasone argued for the

The TNWFZ is a timely measure fitting into the current trend of strengthening multilateral cooperative security. Creating a NWFZ by the three countries is a measure for achieving cooperative security and enhancing regional peace through rules and institutions. If successfully implemented, the TNWFZ would make it possible to enlarge the area of cooperation by incorporating other countries and help facilitate broader security cooperation in the region.

### Concluding Remarks

The TNWFZ is an issue of condensation and comprehensiveness. Various issues in the areas of politics, diplomacy, military and economy and diverse positions of the concerned countries are interlaced. Indeed, the TNWFZ is a representative model of how keen national interests of the states in Northeast Asia are entangled. This hints that creating the TNWFZ would not be an easy task at all. Such difficulty, however, should not be an excuse for giving up our efforts to establish the TNWFZ. Quite the reverse, it should give a motivation to move on to the TNWFZ, which bears much significance for regional security, prosperity and stability.

The TNWFZ can be an objective of the ongoing six-party talks as well. If the most urgent problem of North Korea's nuclear development is settled, the six parties could make use of the negotiating momentum to reach toward creating a broader nuclear-free region in Northeast Asia. The first step, as argued in this paper, would be a creation of the TNWFZ.

Of course, it should be noted that the TNWFZ is not the end of a

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necessities of an Asian security system. *JoongAng Ilbo*, September 22, 1992. Former President Kim Dae Jung has proposed, in several occasions, to establish a multilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia.

long journey for perpetual peace in the region. If successfully implemented, it is essential to broaden membership and the region; for example, by involving Mongolia, which announced a nuclear-weapon-free status unilaterally, and some parts of Russian and Chinese territories. In the long run, the TNWFZ is hoped to become a basis for a Pan-Pacific Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (PPNWFZ) connecting Southeast Asia, the South Pacific and Latin America, covered by the Bangkok Treaty, Rarotonga Treaty and Tlatelolco Treaty.

The nine arguments presented in this article provide sufficient illustration that the TNWFZ is a subject worth seriously pursuing among the concerned parties. For the purpose of embracing the TNWFZ as a desirable and feasible policy measure, more in-depth studies need be focused on the following areas:

- Objects and activities that are prohibited in the TNWFZ
- Possible geographical area of application
- Issue of visits and passage rights of nuclear ships and aircraft in the TNWFZ area
- Role of nuclear weapon states and regional non-participants and possible protocols to be signed by these countries
- Safeguard and verification measures
- Location, organization and administration of the Headquarter apparatus
- Dispute settlement procedures and mechanism
- Measures to enhance peaceful uses of nuclear energy and mutual energy cooperation
- Means to induce North Korea's active participation
- Impact of TNWFZ on security strategies of neighboring nuclear weapon states.

This package of agenda can be studied in the track-II level initially between South Korea and Japan, later inviting North Korea. When

there are some concrete findings and mutual understandings about these research subjects, the government of the three nations will be able to take up the TNWFZ as a formal agenda for policy consultations.

## TOWARD A DURABLE PEACE IN NORTHEAST ASIA

*C. Kenneth Quinones*

The most pressing challenge facing the people of Northeast Asia in the 21st Century is the forging of a durable peace on the Korean Peninsula. But today, prospects for peace in the region remain dim. North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, and the United States' reluctance to engage Pyongyang in diplomatic negotiations, have created an impasse that could quickly explode into a second Korean War. The Six Party Talks holds out the hope that a "peaceful diplomatic solution" can be forged in the near future. But the process of diplomatic dialogue and resolution of the nuclear issue alone cannot dissipate the threat of war. Even if a negotiated settlement is achieved, as now seems increasingly possible but still far from certain, implementation of any accord between the United States and North Korea will prove extremely challenging. The fundamental problem is neither the participants in the process, be it two, four or six nations. Nor is it in the terms of any agreement. Inevitably, successful implementation of any accord will require mutual trust between the Washington and Pyongyang. Building that trust began in 1994 with the first US-North Korea nuclear negotiation and the forging of the Agreed Framework of 1994. But that agreement, and the subsequent trust it fos-

tered, has now been rejected by both parties. If any accord is to be successfully implemented and a durable peace built in Northeast Asia, it will require nothing less than a radical transformation of the region's balance of power and network of international relations. To many, this may seem a distant and rather idealistic wish. Looking back over the past half century, however, nurtures perspective and fosters hope that such a transformation is indeed a realistic goal. After all, half a century ago, the emergence of stability, prosperity and democracy in the region then seemed wishful thinking.

### Introduction

Forging a durable peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia is the most pressing challenge facing the people of Northeast Asia in the 21st Century. The continuing impasse between Washington and Pyongyang over North Korea's nuclear ambitions does not auger well for the future. Despite the intense diplomacy of China, South Korea, Japan and Russia, progress toward a negotiated resolution has been extremely slow and uncertain. Hopes of a peaceful solution soared when these nations convened the so-called Six Party Talks in Beijing at the end of August 2003. While little substantive progress was achieved, at least tensions subsided as the two primary antagonists, the United States and North Korea, shifted their focus from matching each others efforts to escalate tensions to restraining their rhetoric and searching for common ground.

Some hesitant progress toward compromise has been achieved because of the Six Party Talks process. In October, President Bush shifted from refusing to give North Korea any concessions to expressing the willingness to consider giving North Korea its long sought security

assurances Pyongyang responded by giving up its insistence on "legally binding" US assurances and promised to accept "multilateral" assurances instead. Both sides appear to be destined to compromise regarding the timing for the exchange of their respective concessions. Pyongyang wants the United States to agree to a "simultaneous" exchange before it will agree to phase out its nuclear program. Washington insists upon a "step by step" process that begins with North Korea renouncing publicly its plans for a nuclear arsenal. The phrase "coordinated" steps offers a way out of this impasse.

Other, more formidable impediments remain. Probably the most problematic of these will prove to be the issue of "verification." Washington was extensive, and yet to be fully defined regime of rigorous inspections to confirm whether North Korea has in fact "irrevocably" dismantled all of its nuclear weapons related programs. Pyongyang can be expected to quarrel over the extent and intrusiveness of "verification process," just as it did a decade ago during the first US-North Korea nuclear negotiations.

The Six Party Talks process itself is an impediment to progress toward a settlement. Bringing together six nations to resolve any issue is a complex and time-consuming endeavor. In the past, the so-called Four Party Talks of 1996-98, that involved China, the two Koreas and the United States, proved unproductive. Whereas during those talks, the primary obstacle to progress was the rivalry between Seoul and Pyongyang, that has subsequently abated and been replaced by mutual distrust between Washington and Pyongyang. Either or both sides' adamancy and mutual hostility could eventually undermine the Six-Party Talks process.

But even if we take the optimistic point of view and project that the Six Party Talks will yield an accord, still there is reason to be concerned about long-term prospects for peace in Northeast. No diplomatic accord can be successfully implemented without mutual trust between the participating parties. North Korea's previous promises and subse-



quent breaking of its previous pledges regarding its nuclear ambitions has devastated its credibility in the eyes of the international community. Thus, even if we are optimistic that a “peaceful diplomatic solution” will be forged, few can say with confidence that North Korea can be expected to abide by the accord’s terms. In other words, prospects for an eventual confrontation with North Korea over its nuclear ambitions will continue to loom over Northeast Asia, particularly the Korean Peninsula.

Looking to the future, we need not be so pessimistic if we consider the awesome accomplishments of the people of Northeast Asia in recent decades. Our purpose here, in short, is to place the current, rather bleak situation regarding the Korean Peninsula and North Korea’s nuclear intentions into the broader perspective of the past. In so doing, we might find reason to be confident that prospects for forging a durable peace are not as dubious or idealistic as many might conclude given present circumstances.

After all, the people of Japan, South Korea, and China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan)—one quarter of humanity—have transformed the region during the past century with their intense effort. One century ago, the region was in political turmoil, economically backward and its people struggling to survive despotic rule, war, famine and disease. Today, these nations are among the most prosperous, productive, healthy and technically sophisticated in the world. Also, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan are maturing democracies. China’s economic development is pushing that nation toward more representative government. These impressive accomplishments strongly suggest that the people and governments of Northeast Asia have the potential to transform their region’s highly unstable Cold War-era balance of power into a durable peace.

## Looking Back

The situation in Korea seemed hopeless when I first arrived in South Korea. I arrived at Kimpo Air Force Base on a frigid, dark Christmas Eve at the end of 1963; only ten years after the Korean War Armistice had been signed. I was a young American soldier ignorant about East Asian values. From behind the barbed wire fence that surrounded my US Army compound in Yongdongpo, Korea, I saw intense poverty. Wherever I looked, I saw dark factories, unpaved sidewalks and streets, and poorly feed and clothed people.

Politically, Korea was dominated by a despotic ruler, former army general and then President Park Chung-hee. He had won election because of corruption. I knew this very well. During the South Korean presidential election of 1963, I was a crypto-analyst at the super secret National Security Agency (NSA) at Ft. Meade, Maryland just north of Washington, D.C. My job was to help break the South Korean diplomatic codes that reported the election’s results to the South Korean embassy in Washington. From this I learned how the results were changed to ensure Park’s election. In short, South Korea’s government was not only despotic, it was corrupt. Eventually, Park’s rule would discard all respect for human rights.

In June 1964, I traveled widely in Japan from Tokyo by train to Kyoto and Osaka, then by boat to Shikoku and Hiroshima, and back to Tokyo. Japan was still recovering from the war and far from becoming the economic world power that it is today. Nevertheless, relative to South Korea, Japan’s post-war reconstruction was proceeding at an impressive pace. But who could have guessed that Japan would soon become an economic superpower and South Korea would soon join the ranks of the world’s most productive, technologically advanced and economically prosperous nations.

## War's Legacy

After these initial impressions, I learned to look beyond the obvious. My American colleagues four decades ago claimed East Asia's poverty and despotism were a consequence of the East Asian people's ignorance of Western ways, laziness and reluctance to discard their "traditional" values in favor of "superior" American values. Gradually I learned that these views were completely inaccurate and reflected the sense of racial superiority many Americans then felt toward the people of East Asia at that time.

Once back in the United States, my efforts turned to the study of East Asian history, philosophy, language and culture soon taught me an entirely different explanation for the problems that plagued East Asia in 1963. I discovered that the people of East Asia, particularly Korea, had been the victims of repeated wars. Since 1894, war has repeatedly interrupted and reversed Northeast Asian nations' drive to escape poverty and despotism. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, fought over mastery of Korea, crumpled the two millennium-old Chinese Empire. It also confirmed the rise of Imperial Japan. In 1904-05, Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War shoved the Russian Empire toward eventual collapse. Again, Korea was the cause and stage for this war.

World War II in East Asia and the Pacific raged from 1931 to 1945. Millions died and economic development was severely impeded. This time, Korea was not the war's cause. But Korea's division at the end of World War II became the impetus for continuing instability in Northeast Asia. The Korean War of 1950-53 devastated the Korean Peninsula. Japan benefited from the war because the United States relied on it as a logistical base. But again economic development in Korea and China was severely disrupted.

The Cold War's rivalry between the capitalist United States and communist Soviet Union intensified instability in Northeast Asia.

Japan aligned itself with the United States against China and Russia. Korea's division oriented each half of the Korean Peninsula toward distant allies rather than close kinsmen. South Korea's political culture and economic practices became intertwined with those of Washington, D.C., while Pyongyang looked in the opposite direction, toward Beijing and Moscow.

A century of foreign power rivalry over Northeast Asia and superpower efforts to impose their wills and ideologies on Japan and a divided Korea retarded progress toward prosperity, reunification and a durable peace, especially on the Korean Peninsula. I concluded that traditional East Asian values were not the reasons for Northeast Asia's problems.

## Beyond the Obvious

What I had observed in Korea and Japan forty years ago was obvious to the human eye, but it was also very misleading. What is reality today does not necessarily enable us to foresee the reality of tomorrow. Forty years ago, what I witnessed in Northeast Asia convinced me that Korea was a hopelessly impoverished land that could never escape poverty, nor could it ever achieve true democratic government. As for Japan, I failed to foresee the potential for it to become a world economic power and model for democracy in a non-Western society. Obviously I was wrong.

Invisible to me in 1963 and 1964 during my travels in South Korea and Japan were the values and aspirations that motivate the people of both nations. Despite their troubled historical legacy, Koreans and Japanese share a Confucian tradition. Parents educate their children to prepare themselves for a life of contributing to the common good of one's family and society. This preparation encompasses respect for the wisdom and experience of one's elders, for teachers and for the mem-

bers of one's family. Parents teach children the values of sincerity, loyalty and hard work.

Also, both Japanese and South Korean societies after 1945 came under intense influence from the European Christian tradition as Americans interpreted it. Americans accented democracy and capitalism, and demonstrated the benefits of these value systems to the people of South Korea and Japan. After 1960, tens of thousands of young East Asians flocked to the United States to study at universities. At the same time, thousands of Americans ventured to Japan and South Korea to teach, work, study and serve with the US Armed Forces. The mingling of Confucian and Christian values forged the system of values that guided post-war Japanese and South Korean societies toward democracy and prosperity.

I was unaware and insensitive to this gradual synthesis when I first arrived in East Asia. Only through my own subsequent study of Confucianism, East Asian history and international politics did I become increasingly aware of how the East Asian people were adapting Christian views to their traditional Confucian values. Today, the people of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Philippines merit the praise for East Asia's transformation from pervasive poverty, despotism and war into one of the world's most prosperous and stable regions. China reluctantly and belatedly joined in this transformation, but its progress toward prosperity is equally impressive. This in turn brightens prospects that China too will gradually transition from its current authoritarian toward a more representative government.

Despite this most laudable accomplishment, the Cold War persists on the Korean Peninsula. Increasingly, war threatens to destroy in the near future what the people of East Asia have achieved so diligently over the past half century. If East Asia's transformation is to be completed, and its prosperity and progress toward democracy are to be protected and perpetuated, a durable peace must be forged in the near future.

## **Work in Progress**

Such a transformation has been underway since 1990. It began with the normalization of relations between Seoul and Moscow. Then came the quickened pace of North-South Korea dialogue in 1991 that culminated in the two Korea's Basic Agreements of 1992. The two Korea's simultaneously enrolled in the United Nations. Normalization of relations between Seoul and Beijing soon followed in 1992. But then the process abruptly halted. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors and US satellite imagery provided convincing evidence that North Korea had not, as it had promised South Korea and the international community, given up its pursuit of a nuclear weapons arsenal.

Two years of intense diplomatic effort restored positive momentum to the Korean Peninsula's transformation. The US-North Korea Agreed Framework held out renewed hope of the region's peaceful transformation and Korea's reunification. That hope, however, once again was smashed in October 2002 when North Korea admitted to having established a second nuclear weapons program.

## **War's Haunting Shadow**

War on the Korean Peninsula lingers as a future possibility. A second Korean War would have catastrophic consequences, not just for the Korean Peninsula, but the entire region and even around the world. The most devastating impact would be on the Korean peninsula, and the Korean people, both north and south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Panic would sweep across the region as tens of thousands of people died and were wounded. All economic activity in the region would halt abruptly, interrupting commerce around the world for an extended period of time.

A future Korean War would be even more deadly and devastating

than the first. During the first Korean War, the region was still impoverished and struggling to rebuild after World War II. Today, Northeast Asia is second only to the United States in terms of economic importance to the world economy. In the previous Korean War, South Korea's population was much more scattered than it is today. Now, the Seoul metropolitan area is home for upwards of one third of South Korea's nearly 50 million people. As for Japan, in 1950, it was beyond the battlefield. Today, however, Japan is within easy reach of North Korea's ballistic missiles and possibly also commando teams that might wreck havoc on Japan's communications and transportation systems.

### **The Clash of Priorities**

Obviously, there is a pressing need to minimize the risk of war. The apparent cause of the current crisis in Northeast Asia is weapons of mass destruction—nuclear bombs, ballistic missiles and chemical/biological weapons. But behind this highly visible facade lurk much more fundamental causes—the perpetuation of the Cold War in East Asia, lingering mistrust between the primary antagonists, the United States and North Korea, and the continuing inability of the Korean people to achieve national reunification.

The US Bush Administration, with Japan's concurrence and South Korea's hesitant compliance, is striving to end the Cold War and reunify Korea by first disarming North Korea and pushing it toward economic collapse. The Bush Administration has discarded the previous Clinton Administration's preference for diplomatic and commercial engagement of North Korea, a strategy that was backed by armed deterrence. President Bush prefers a more assertive and unilateral strategy. It accents armed deterrence, allows for diplomacy, yet also holds open the option of military action to compel North Korea to give up its

weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. Otherwise, the Bush Administration appears intent upon forcing North Korea's eventual collapse through economic and diplomatic isolation, and possibly even military action.

China and Russia favor engagement to the Bush Administration's confrontational strategy. These nations are striving first to convert North Korea from its Cold War strategy of armed deterrence and coercive diplomacy to compliance with international norms of conduct. Beijing and Moscow, with quiet encouragement from Seoul, seek to induce both Pyongyang and Washington to favor and pursue a process of gradual, mutual discarding of their hostile stances toward one another.

Washington and Pyongyang, however, continue to mirror image one another's words and deeds. President Bush's condemnation of Kim Jong Il and boasting about the United States' military ability to defeat North Korea have given North Korea's generals ample evidence to convince their leader Kim Jong Il that Washington is pursuing a "hostile" policy toward it that is designed to "strangle" and destroy his regime. Kim Jong Il's similarly hostile response to President Bush has convinced him that North Korea is intent upon using its weapons of mass destruction to "blackmail" the United States and other nations into submitting to Pyongyang's demands.

Fortunately for all concerned parties, the other nations most concerned about Northeast Asia's peace and prosperity—Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia have intervened. Their formation of the Six-Party Talks forum holds out the promise that war can be avoided. If this diplomatic forum is to be successful, then the "Six Parties" must draw upon their priorities and values to formulate a comprehensive plan of action not just to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons, but to end the Cold War in East Asia and to outline a path toward Korea's reunification.

Priority should go to erasing the need for the weapons of mass

destruction in Northeast Asia. But this can be accomplished only if the political and military context for the entire region has been dramatically altered. So long as North Korea is convinced that it faces a hostile and nuclear armed enemy, i.e. the United States, it cannot be trusted to relinquish its nuclear capability. At the same time, so long as the United States is convinced that North Korea cannot be trusted to fulfill its pledges not to build a nuclear arsenal, distrust will perpetuate tensions in the region.

### **Cart Before the Horse**

The only way out of this cycle of distrust for the United States to shift its basic approach to North Korea from the Bush Administration's preference for containment and confrontation and back to engagement. Engagement of communist nations dates from the Republican Nixon Administration and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The Nixon Administration moved to phase out containment, a policy first formulated by Democratic President Truman, and phase in engagement when it approached China in 1971. Within a few years, the US overture had defused tensions between the two nations and set the stage for the normalization of their relations.

The Republican Reagan and former Bush Administrations pursued engagement with the former Soviet Union and its satellite nations in East Europe and Central Asia. Again, within a few years, bilateral relations had improved greatly and the reduction of their nuclear arsenals initiated.

Similarly, South Korea initiated engagement with communist nations in the 1980s, with the full support and urging of the Reagan and Bush Administrations. The endeavor reaped bountiful rewards for South Korea. Engagement's consequence included convincing North Korea that it would be better off engaging South Korea. Subsequently,

the two Koreas have made impressive progress toward reconciliation and peaceful co-existence and economic cooperation. Both halves of the Korean nation now are engaged in economic cooperation and cultural and educational exchange even while maintaining their respective military forces. They eventually hope to reach a point of mutual confidence which will facilitate a phased reduction of their military arsenals.

In each of the above cases, the normalization of relations came before the resolution of each sides' outstanding bilateral issues. Seoul normalized relations with Russia and China despite their half century support of South Korea's arch rival Pyongyang and possession of weapons of mass destruction. Because of growing mutual trust, Seoul now is much less concerned about Moscow and Beijing as potential threats, although they continue their friendship with North Korea. In other words, Seoul, Beijing and Moscow have put the Cold War behind themselves.

Washington and Pyongyang must agree to do like wise. They must eventually agree to simultaneously phase out their reliance on the Cold War strategy of armed deterrence, both nuclear and conventional. But this will become possible only if United States initiates the process by recognizing North Korea as a sovereign nation and normalizes diplomatic and commercial relations with it. Doing so would open the way for each side to nurture mutual respect and trust through diplomatic dialogue, economic activity and educational exchange.

This would require that the incumbent US president resume his predecessors' strategy of engagement toward North Korea. As mentioned earlier, this would not mean a radical shift in traditional US policy since 1971. Rather it would be a return to previous Republican presidents' policy.

But the present Bush Administration has chosen to ignore the fact that his father actually initiated engagement with North Korea in 1991-92 when president. Normalization of US-DPRK relations in the

same pattern that Seoul pursued with Moscow and Beijing would require nothing less than a complete reversal of the incumbent Bush Administration's current strategy. The younger Bush insists that all outstanding bilateral issues be resolved before normalization becomes possible. This would require that North Korea unilaterally disarm itself of all weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, the Bush Administration insists that North Korea submit to a still to be defined process of verification.

Here we encounter the fundamental shortcoming of Bush's strategy—verification. North Korea might sign another agreement to halt and dismantle its nuclear weapons programs. Technologically, however, it is impossible to achieve 100 percent verification that North Korea is complying with its commitments. In short, mutual mistrust will persist, and it will inevitably erode the credibility of any agreement produced either by the Six Party Talks process or bilateral US-North Korea negotiations.

### **A New Marshal Plan for Northeast Asia**

The best way to end North Korea's quest for a nuclear arsenal is to erase the conditions that have convinced both North Korea and the United States that they need to maintain such arsenals in Northeast Asia.

Eventually, the Six Parties would do well to formulate a new "Marshal Plan" for the Korean Peninsula. The United States developed and implemented a similar plan to rebuild post-World War II Europe. The Six Party plan would aim to rebuild post-Cold War North Korea with two purposes in mind. While inducing North Korea to re-orient its economy away from military and toward civilian industrial production, the economies of the two Koreas' also could be gradually integrated. Already South Korea and Russia are working

with North Korea to merge the two Koreas' railroad networks. North and South Korea are making hesitant progress toward re-opening land and air transportation links. China appears positively inclined toward such an approach. The United States and Japan support these efforts.

President Bush has berated Kim Jong Il for his people's poor quality of life, lack of sufficient food and medicine, and human rights. Pointing out these shortcomings does nothing to improve the situation for the people of North Korea. President Bush would do well to recall his often-repeated proclamations about being Christian. An essential feature of Christianity is emphasis on forgiving those who offend you, and helping those in need. President Bush could replace his rhetoric with deeds. This would mean providing diplomatic and financial support for a new "Marshal Plan" to promote the opening of North Korea to outside influence so that the people of North Korea could better realize the benefits of adapting foreign methods to domestic conditions.

Consistent with the need to replace the present status quo is the normalization of diplomatic and commercial relations between all of the so-called Six Parties. This will require that all the participants draw upon their traditional values to resolve their lingering reasons for mutual irritation. North and South Korea, Russia and China already have established precedents for the United States and Japan to emulate in this regard. South Korea, without preconditions, has normalized relations with its former enemies Russia and China. It did so without clinging to past grievances. Likewise, Seoul and Pyongyang are making gradual progress toward reconciliation. Only Japan and the United States remain reluctant to release themselves from past grievances with North Korea.

## Resolving Bilateral Issues

For Japan, North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens remains the most outstanding grievance. North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's display of insincerity regarding resolution of this issue, more than the abductions themselves, probably is the greater cause for the Japanese public's intense outrage over this issue. Kim Jong Il would do well to recall Korea's traditional respect for those who establish their sincerity through actions. He cannot erase the past misdeeds, but his more recent apology should be matched with equally earnest actions such as allowing all the immediate family members for the abducted Japanese citizens to return to Japan. Kim Jong Il should repeat his apology to the people of Japan, and provide a fuller accounting of what happened to the abducted Japanese citizens who died in North Korea. At the same time, Japan's government and public must recognize that it is impossible to erase past misdeeds. Instead, it is better to work toward changes that will ensure such outrageous acts are not repeated.

## Conclusion

Before a durable peace can prevail in Northeast Asia, North Korea must be transformed. But before this can happen, we must transform our intentions regarding it. Instead of striving to isolate and bring about its collapse, we should work together to quicken the pace of economic change in North Korea. Such change requires learning foreign techniques, which in turn require knowledge of foreign languages and working with foreigners. The quicker the pace of change in North Korea, the sooner and greater will be its transformation. Eventually, North Korea, like all the other nations of East Asia, will face the choice of either rejecting engagement with the international community, and thus risking the loss of all the benefits gained from engagement, or

remaining engaged and continuing to receive the benefits of its transformation. As Pyongyang has come to realize through humanitarian aid, it cannot survive should it become estranged from the international community.

In the past, America's engagement of East Asia combined with the diligent cooperation of the East Asian people helped transform the region into one of the most dynamic economically and technologically in the modern world. But process was voluntary on both sides. It also was gradual over a century of intense encounter and effort. Often misunderstandings disrupted the process, sometimes even reversing it. But persistence prevailed. Ultimately, America's Christians and East Asia's Confucians forged the mutual understanding and respect that enabled the two sides to achieve the synthesis of ideals and values that has transformed East Asia.

If the Cold War is to end in Northeast Asia, and Korea is to be reunited, then the Six Parties must work together to forge a new synthesis of values and priorities conducive to peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. Essential to the success of this undertaking are Confucian sincerity, Christian forgiveness, Yankee ingenuity, East Asian diligence, and hard work by everyone. If war is to be avoided, prosperity preserved and perpetuated, and East Asia's transformation completed, the time has come to restrain the rhetoric and to begin the real work of ending the Cold War in East Asia.

Obviously, North Korea is the last of the nations of Northeast Asia to be drawn into modernity, and the broader international community. Surely the combined resources of the region's other nations are sufficient to reorient North Korea's economy away from its concentration of armaments and convert it into a productive trading partner. Once prosperous, North Korea, like all other nations, will come to realize that prosperity requires peace. Such a new "Marshal Plan" would set a standard for the United States to emulate.

Toward this end, the United States would do well to review the

amazing accomplishments of the East Asian people over the past century. That success was not unilateral nor achieved solely by the United States. Surely such a review of the past would convince the government of the United States to place trust in its allies and friends in the region, particularly South Korea and China, to begin to work with them to forge a durable peace in Northeast Asia.



## CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURES OF THE NORTH KOREAN POLITICAL ELITE

*Kwon Soyoung*

It is contended that the structure of the Soviet and Chinese political elites underwent evolutionary changes under state socialism, becoming larger, widely differentiated, functionally specialised, and socially heterogeneous. This trend was particularly conspicuous in the 1980s. This paper examines changes in the North Korean political elite between 1980 and 2000, and investigates whether its composition and structure have diversified as in the case of the Soviet and Chinese political elites. An in-depth study of the Korean Worker's Party Central Committee pinpoints relative personnel stability and continuity in the North Korean political elite structure with regards to members' social attributes. Some signs of widening differentiation in the political elite were detected in the 1980s, where its size grew and the representation of the state elite consisting of technocrats and managerial personnel increased. Facing internal and external crises in the 1990s, however, it showed a reverse pattern. The North Korean political elite became smaller in size, closed, and homogeneously centralised, in which members were interconnected by similar demographic, education and career backgrounds. A narrowing differentiation of the

political elite, featuring decreasing representation of state elites and the rapidly increasing numbers of Party and military elites, also marked a distinctive characteristic of the 1990s. In contrast to the Soviet and Chinese political elites which have experienced a radical turnover following leadership change, the North Korean political elite under Kim Jong-il has developed into a compact cohesive elite without any abrupt personnel change.

## I. Introduction

Elite theorists define the political elite in state socialist formation as being ideologically unified, with narrow differentiation and strong unity. Long-term studies of the political elites in the USSR and China, however, present quite a different picture.<sup>1</sup> Although the pace of change differed, both the Soviet and Chinese political elites underwent gradual changes under state socialism, which transformed from the original 'ideocratic' type to a more diversified pluralistic type. The

1 E. Mawdsley and S. White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: the Central Committee and its members 1917-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); T. H. Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990); J. Higley, J. Pakulski and W. Wesolowski (ed), *Post-communist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998); D. Lane, "The Gorbachev Revolution: the Role of the Political Elite in Regime Disintegration," *Political Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1996); L. Cheng and L. White, "The thirteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: from Mobilizers to Managers," *Asian Survey*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1988); L. Cheng and L. White, "The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Full-fledged Technocratic Leadership with Partial Control by Jiang Zemin," *Asian Survey*, vol. 38, no. 3 (1998); S. Kwon, *An Elite Analysis of the Disintegration and Survival of State Socialism*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cambridge (2003), chapters 4 and 5.

gradual change in the composition of the political elite stretched over generations, in which Party professionals and revolutionaries were replaced by those with 'managerial and technological skills' who were younger, better-educated and more competent in organising industrial development and associated social complexity. The co-option of people with varying career and social attributes resulted in an elite group that is more numerous, organisationally diverse, functionally specialised and socially heterogeneous. The elite diversification process in the Soviet and Chinese elites was further accelerated in the 1980s under Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping. A high turnover and revolutionary change in the composition accompanied the within-system reform, which brought about the substantial influx of younger, technically trained elites.<sup>2</sup>

Change in the structure and nature of a political elite can offer one window on political change and transformation of a state socialist regime. Infusion of elites from different backgrounds who advocate their different interests induced elite differentiation and the polyarchic characteristics in the Soviet Union and China. The nature of the political elite began to change as people who are not strongly, ideologically or emotionally connected to the Party joined the group. Accordingly, the intensity of commitment to ideology and the institutional framework of Communism as well as the degree of ideological conviction, upon which elite legitimation and organisational integration is based, diminished. Associated with the significant change in the structure and nature of the political elite was some form of system change, either system disintegration or system reform, depending on the degree of change from the original 'ideocratic' configuration.

Studying developments of the political elite can be a means to speculate on the direction of political development in a state socialist regime. This paper investigates one specific case—the North Korean

2 S. Kwon, *ibid*, pp. 62-83.

political elite, focusing on its composition and structure between 1980 and 2000. It aims to examine how the North Korean political elite changed over time and whether it displayed a similar changing pattern to that of the Soviet Union and China. The analysis also compares and contrasts its major characteristics in the 1980s and 1990s in order to identify any structural adjustment in the elite group under the new leader, Kim Jong-il. The paper is structured to discuss the following: the concept of 'political elites' under state socialism, the methods of analysis, major analytical findings, and their implications.

### ***Definition of the Political Elite***

In defining the parameters of the political elite for empirical investigation, there has been marked preference for positional definition, which considers people holding key positions in a large powerful organisation who directly and regularly influence political decision-making of national significance.<sup>3</sup> Following this line of positional conception, 'elites' may be defined as "persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organisations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially."<sup>4</sup> Whereas the political elite in general refers to those who exert power only in the formal political arena, and the political elite in a state socialist power structure may include selected elites from other fields as long as they occupy positions in the most powerful organisation, the Communist Party, and exercise power at a national level.

3 For varying definitions of 'elite' by different authors, see table 12.1 in M. Burton and J. Higley "Invitation to Elite Theory" in G. W. Domhoff and T. R. Dye (ed.), *Power Elites and Organizations* (Newbury Park: Sage publications, 1987), p. 223. For positional definitions of the political elite proposed by various authors, see S. Kwon, *ibid*, p. 41-42.

4 R. J. Higley and R. Gunther, *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 8.

State socialism is characterised by the political domination of society by the Party, which incorporates a multitude of social, economic and political forces. Within the Communist Party, the Central Committee ratifies all the important decisions and the members of this body participate in decision-making and decision implementing processes. The Central Committee thus gives political legitimacy to acts of the Party, state, and government institutions; it forms the major ideological, executive and political support system under state socialism. The Central Committee includes members of the Politburo and the Secretariat,<sup>5</sup> the top decision makers and executors in the Communist Party. Therefore, changes in the representation of groups at the Central Committee level may have significant bearings on the management of the country.<sup>6</sup>

For the aforementioned reason, most of the studies on the Soviet and Chinese political elites have been predominantly concentrated on the members of the Central Committees. Likewise, this paper employs the positional definition of the North Korean political elite on the basis of their occupancy of post in the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) Central Committee.<sup>7</sup> Limiting the investigation to the Party Central Committee may neglect other sectors, which may be equally influential, though organisationally distinct from the Party. However, the Central Committee itself includes representation from these apparatuses, comprised of the most influential leaders of the political, economic, cultural, military and other fields in North Korea. Additionally, this kind of positional and institutional definition of the North Korean elite is advanta-

5 The Politburo makes the vital decisions on concrete political directives and fundamental policies, which are prepared by the Secretariat. The Secretariat, on the other hand, heads the Party Bureaucracy and executes all the work of the Central Committee.

6 D. Lane, *The Socialist Industrial States: Towards a Political Sociology of State Socialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 122.

7 This concept is taken in full knowledge that it cannot be assumed either that membership of the elite is always congruent with a position of power or that power is equally distributed among all members of the Central Committee.

geous for analytical purposes since it permits a cross-national comparison with other state socialist regimes and helps a long-term comparison of the political elite at different times.

## II. Research Design and Methods

The profile analysis of the North Korean political elite is composed of two main parts. Firstly, it scrutinises personal profiles of full-fledged members of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee (CC), and pinpoints major characteristics of the North Korean political elite in decade periods.<sup>8</sup> The base years for tabulation of the CC members are 1980, 1990 and 2000, and the number of people being examined was 145 in 1980, 180 in 1990 and 158 in 2000. Secondly, it analyses the type of elites being co-opted to the Central Committee to identify emerging trends in the composition and nature of the political elite as well as important changes in personnel policy.

The study is designed to scrutinise social and career attributes of each member. Eight social (demographic) attributes of the elites are selected: gender, age, place of origin (birth), kinship with Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il, generation group, educational backgrounds, overseas study experiences and schools attended by the members. The coding sheet constructed for the analysis of social attributes of the members of the Central Committee is shown in table 1.

The age of each CC member in three different analytical years (1980, 1990, 2000) is calculated based on his or her birth year. For the place of origin, the USSR and Manchuria are added to the list variables of nine

<sup>8</sup> It would obviously be desirable to include data on the alternate membership, but limitations on the information currently available on the alternate members of the Central Committee do not permit this. Instead, I incorporate the study of biographical data of the alternate (candidate) members who were promoted to full-fledged membership in the period of analysis.

Table 1. Coding Sheet for the Social Attributes of the CC members

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### A. Social Attributes

- a. Name
- b. Sex 1) male 2) female
- c. Age (birth year)
- d. Place of Birth 1) South Pyongan Province 2) North Pyongan Province 3) South Hamgyong Province 4) North Hampyong Province 5) South Hwanghae Province 6) North Hwanghae Province 7) Jagang Province 8) Kangwon Province 9) Yanggang Province 10) USSR 11) Manchuria (China) 12) South Korea 13) Pyongyang 14) Kaesung 15) Japan
- e. Kinship with the leader 1) Family and relatives 2) Comrades in the Partisan War with Kim Il-sung
- f. Generation group
  - 1) *Revolutionary first*: those who were born before 1920 and participated in the revolutionary movement (i.e. Partisan War)
  - 2) *Revolutionary second*: offspring of the revolutionaries and born in the late 1920s, 1930s, 1940s
  - 3) *Party & Technocrats group*: those born in the late 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and who have no privileged family backgrounds
  - 4) *First, non-revolutionary generation*: those born in the 1900s, 1910s, 1920s and who have no experience in the Partisan War
  - 5) *The third (post-war) generation*: those born after 1950
- g. Education I: Primary & Secondary (High) School
  - 1) Mangyongdae Revolutionary School 2) High school graduates
  - 3) Junior high graduates 4) Primary school only 5) No formal education
- h. Education II: Special School
  - 1) Kumkang Political School (Training school for special agents)
  - 2) Central Party Schools 3) Military Academy
- i. Education III: University
  - 1) Kim Il Sung University 2) Kim Chaek Engineering College 3) International Relations School 4) Teachers' College 5) College of Economics 6) Other universities
- j. Education IV: Study Abroad
  - 1) Moscow University 2) Other Universities in the USSR 3) China 4) Japan
  - 5) Eastern Europe 6) Western Europe & US 7) Military Academy in the USSR
  - 8) Party Schools in the USSR
- k. Field of Study
  - 1) Literature and Foreign Language 2) Politics, Law, Social Sciences 3) Economics
  - 4) Engineering and Science 5) History and Philosophy 6) Education 7) Military
  - 8) Arts and Music 9) Medicine

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administrative provinces in North Korea. During Japanese colonisation, a significant number of Koreans emigrated to the USSR and Manchuria where guerrilla activities took place. As a result, some members, including the leader Kim Jong-il, were born outside of Korea. Considering the peculiar and chaotic Korean historical setting, it cannot be said that the place of birth represents the regional affiliation of the CC members. However, regional background of the members is an important social variable that may reflect regional distribution of the political elite in North Korea.

Kinship relations to the top leader are a variable unique to the study of the North Korean political elite. Since the North Korean regime characterises a monolithic power structure centred on Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, it may be assumed that personal relations with the leaders may be linked to the elevation of one's social status. The study aims to perceive the proportion of those with personal connection with the leaders in the political elite, and hence, to determine the importance of this variable as a criterion for elite selection. It is often specified in the North Korea People's directories<sup>9</sup> whether a member is related to the leader, either as family and relatives, or revolutionary comrades, making it possible to identify members who are related to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.

The generation group variable categorises CC members into five different groups. People who participated in the Partisan war with comrades of Kim Il-sung and contributed to the establishment of the DPRK fall into the 'first revolutionary group.' The 'second generation revolutionary group' is identified as those who are offspring of the first

generation revolutionaries who were born after the late 1920s and educated in the Mangyongdae Institute.<sup>10</sup> Kim Jong-il, the current leader, represents this generation group. A variant of the second generation, which consists of members who were born after the late 1920s, lacked revolutionary background, but came into tenure in the Central Committee through a Party career or government bureaucracy is called the 'Party and Technocrats group.' This group is distinguished from the second-generation revolutionaries in the sense that their career path was not determined solely by their family backgrounds. The fourth group is referred to as the 'first, non-revolutionary generation' of people born before 1920. They belong to the same age group as the 'first generation revolutionary' group, but are differentiated by the fact that they have never participated in revolutionary activities such as the Partisan War. They were either recruited or co-opted to the Party and government in their later years. The fifth group, the 'post-war third generation,' includes people who were born after the establishment of Communist rule in North Korea and the Korean War. The generation born post-1950, however, is not represented among the top leadership and not a single Central Committee member falls into this 'third generation' group.

Educational background variables analyse the level of education attained, schools and institutions attended, whether the individual received overseas education, and if so, the country in which the person studied. The analysis, in particular, scrutinises members who were educated in the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute and Kim Il Sung University, which are valued as the elite training schools in North Korea, and establishes the significance of school ties in the North Korean elite group.

9 For instance, see the *North Korean People's Dictionary* (Seoul Daily Newspaper Agency); *Directory of North Korea* (Yonhap News); *North Korean People's Dictionary* (North Korea Research Center); *Dong-A Yearbook: the North Korean People's Dictionary* (Dong-A daily newspaper); *The North Korean People's Dictionary* (Korean Daily Newspaper Agency); *North Korean People's Dictionary* (Joongang News Agency) [all in Korean].

10 Mangyongdae is a special educational institute established exclusively for the bereaved children of fallen revolutionary fighters in the Partisan wars. The institute, however, accepts offspring of revolutionaries and privileged children with revolutionary family backgrounds.

The career attributes of individuals are analysed based on six variables: the year of starting the Party Career, the year of being elected as a CC member, whether the person was promoted from an alternate membership, elite type by occupational sector, and engaged functional sector. The second part of the coding sheet is designed to analyse career attributes of the members of the Central Committee (see table 2).

The first two variables seek for the specific year in which an individual joined the Workers' Party and the Central Committee. These variables are significant in demonstrating the composition of the political elite in terms of the years of members' experience in the Party and the Central Committee. Another important variable is whether a member started his or her career in the Party apparatus or was co-opted from other apparatuses. Because the increasing proportion of those co-opted to the Central Committee indicates the degree of diversification, the analysis of members' career patterns may be useful in gauging the extent of elite differentiation that has occurred within the North Korean political elite.

The occupational sector variable identifies the category in which an individual has spent the majority of his/her time, and thus determines the elite type. The following are the criteria of classification for the elite type of the members and are self-explanatory. The 'Party elite' consists of people who have spent most of their time in Party posts and who have made a career in sections of the Party apparatus such as Politburo, Secretaries' bureau, Central Committee departments, city, county and province Party organisations, and other Party subordinate offices. The 'State (government) elite' includes people who have for the most part been engaged in the Central People's Committee, administration councils, ministries and commissions, and other government subordinate offices. The 'military elites' are those who served in the Korean People's Army as high-ranking officers and/or involved in the organs dealing with military affairs, including the Central Military Commission and the National Defence Commissions. The 'Social elite' is com-

prised of people who were involved in social and public organisations such as the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, Socialist Youth League, Korean Democratic Women's Union, Union of Agricultural Working People of Korea, United Front for Unification, Friendship Society with various foreign countries, and the Press.

Most of the CC members have overlapping membership in the legislative organ, the Supreme People's Assembly. Therefore, SPA members are not categorised separately as the 'legal elite' in the analysis. A significant number of members have been involved in more than one occupational sector or changed their occupational sectors frequently. In the highest Party organ, in particular, it is often the case that elites interchange and circulate to different posts. In the case of people who have changed their occupational sectors and have spent a significant amount of time in more than one sector, the classification of individuals is determined by the formal position held at the time of entry into the Central Committee.

The functional sector variable simply categorises individuals by the kind of work in which they are engaged in, rather than the institution of employment. Since it is common for the North Korean Party elites to change their field of engagement over time, coding is based on the field in which the individuals were engaged in, in the particular analytical year. This method of classifying individuals assesses the actual representation of functional engagement of individuals in the respective base year for the analysis and illustrates the representation of various occupational-institutional groups in the Party leadership at the time. I have constructed four main categories and nineteen subcategories, as listed in table 2.

The social and career attributes of those target elites chosen by period based on the criterion given above are analysed so as to discern the composition of the political elite in each base year (1980, 1990, 2000). Data analysis results and findings are discussed subsequently with tabulations and graphs.

Table 2. Coding Sheet for the Social Attributes of the CC members (Cont.)

<b>B. Career Attributes</b>		
<b>a. Year of joining the KWP</b>		
<b>b. Year elected as Central Committee members</b>		
<b>c. Promotion from alternate member</b> 1) yes 2) no		
<b>d. Career Pattern I</b> 1) Party Career 2) Co-opted		
<b>e. Career Pattern II</b>		
1) Party Elite (Party careerist)		
2) State (government) Elite		
3) Military Elite		
4) Social Organisation		
<b>f. Functional Sector</b>		
Main Category	Sub Category	Code no.
<b>I. Direction &amp; Control</b>	<b>Direction and Control (DC)</b> CC organization and guidance dept. Chief secretary of the City, County and Province Party committee	11
	<b>Propaganda and Ideology (PI)</b> Party newspaper editor, ideological sector, CC dept. of Propaganda and agitation dept. of documentation	12
	<b>Internal Party Affairs (IPA)</b> Party subordinate organs	13
	<b>Economic Policy making and Planning (EPP)</b> Dept. of economic planning, State planning commission, Premier and Vice-premier	14
<b>II. Foreign Affairs &amp; Defence, Security</b>	<b>Foreign Affairs (FA)</b> Ambassadors, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Overseas intelligence & investigation, external affairs	21
	<b>Defence and Security (DS)</b> Military, Social Safety Agency, Intelligence	22
	<b>Agitation against the South &amp; Inter-Korea affairs (ASI)</b> South Korea-directed operations, dept. of unification propaganda, Fatherland unification front	23
<b>III. Economics &amp; Science</b>	<b>Finance and Trade (FT)</b> Ministry of External Economic Affairs, Dept. of Finance and Accounting	31
	<b>Industrial Production (IP)</b>	32
	<b>Agriculture and Fisheries (AF)</b>	33
	<b>Transportation and Communication (TC)</b>	34
	<b>Mining &amp; Natural Resources (MN)</b>	35
	<b>Science &amp; Technology (ST)</b> The Academy of Science	36
<b>IV. Social &amp; Cultural</b>	<b>Culture, Literature, Music and Sports (CLMS)</b>	41
	<b>Education (Edu)</b> University professors, intellectuals, education commission	42
	<b>Social Welfare (SW)</b> Ministry of Public Health	43
	<b>Press and Journalism (PJ)</b> Broadcasting and Telecommunications	44
	<b>Legal and Judicial (LJ)</b> SPA, judges	45
	<b>Social Organisation (SO)</b> Trade Union, Women's Union, Friendship societies	46

## Sources

Being a closed society, available data on the ruling personnel in North Korea are very limited. Since structural changes in North Korean organisations and appointments and dismissals of officials are not regularly announced, it is extremely important to constantly check on the names of officials and their titles. With respect to the Workers' Party of Korea, the movements of full-fledged and alternate members of its Politburo, Secretariat and Central Committee have been followed closely since the Party's 6th Congress held in October 1980. The lists of names, the present positions of the leadership and the latest changes in the membership are taken from the North Korea Directory,<sup>11</sup> the CIA directory, and directories published by the Ministry of Unification in Seoul. The lists of names of organisations and new positions of important personnel are also deduced through careful and continuous checking of official North Korean reports, *Rodong Sinmun* (Korean Workers' Party organ) and *Minju Choson* (government organ).<sup>12</sup>

A compilation of biographical data of the Central Committee members is based on numerous North Korean people's dictionaries, directories of North Korean officials, documents and reports from the South Korean government, and other secondary sources.<sup>13</sup> Collecting bio-

11 *The North Korea Directory* is published by Radiopress in Japan, a short-wave broadcast monitoring service. The information they acquired was mainly from Radio Pyongyang and *The Korean Central News Agency* and was relatively accurate and updated. It has been annually published since 1988. *North Korean People's Dictionary* (Radio Press Inc., Japan) [in both English and Japanese].

12 The list of full-fledged Central Committee members and alternate members announced at the 6th Party congress and the list of the funeral committee members for high officials can be found in *Rodong Sinmun* and *Minju Choson*.

13 For the list of the North Korean People's Directories, see footnote 9. See also *Directory of Officials of the DPRK* (CIA, Washington); *Profile Documents on North Korean Core Ruling Elites 1999* [in Korean] (Seoul: The Ministry of Unification, Seoul); H. J. Chon, I. Ahn and Y. Suh, *A Study of North Korean Power Elites* [in Korean] (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1992); Y. Han, *A Study of North Korea* [in Korean]

graphical data and profiles of all the members is the most difficult part of the analysis, mainly due to inconsistent information from different sources. Information on the recorded dates of birth, birthplaces, and educational backgrounds of the members, in particular, varied considerably. Furthermore, missing biographical information on birth dates, educational backgrounds, and career attributes for some members presents added difficulty to the analysis. In order to lessen validity and reliability problems, crosschecking of the biographical information in different sources was necessary. Obituaries of high officials carried in *Rodong Sinmun* (Korean Workers' Party organ) and other North Korean publications were particularly useful for such a purpose.

There were six members of the KWP Central Committee whose biographical data were not found in any of the sources; they are either new to the Central Committee or of relatively little importance. A lack of biographical information of some of the members as well as some lacunae in the criteria inevitably caused missing values. The missing values cannot be ruled out completely, however, as it was less than 5 percent of the total number of the CC members studied, except for the place of birth and educational background criteria. Moreover, the information gap tends to be the same over all the study periods. For instance, many members whose biographical data could not be known remained in the Central Committee from 1980 to 2000, constituting the same missing value respectively in 1980, 1990 and 2000. Thus, they are unlikely to have a significant effect on assessing specific patterns in the structural changes of the power elite group over a period of twenty years.

(Seoul: Pakyoungsa, 1989); N. S. Kim, "Prospects of Change of North Korea's Power Structure," *A Study of Unification Issue* [in Korean] (Seoul: National Unification Board, 1991); S. C. Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems: A Comparative Analysis* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

### III. Data Analysis of the Central Committee

With the collected biographical data of the members of the Central Committee (CC), the composition and characteristics of the group are analysed on the basis of decade periods. The results of the data analysis of the North Korean political elites are displayed under the following headings: size and turnover, gender, place of origin, age distribution and generational shift, kinship with the leader; educational background, years of experience in the Party, career pattern by the elite type and functional sectors of the CC members.

#### *Size and Turnover*

The size of the political elite constantly increased from the first Party Congress in 1946 till the sixth Party Congress in 1980. As shown in table 3, the number of full-fledged members more than tripled and the number of newcomers increased simultaneously. A remarkable turnover of the CC members took place in 1970 at the fifth Party Congress, which may reflect a massive restructuring of the leadership following the purges of factional rivals in the 1960s and replacement of the ousted members by Kim Il-sung supporters.

Table 3. Number of the CC members elected at the Party Congress 1946-1980

The Party Congress	No. of full-fledged CC Members	No. of newcomers	% of newcomers
The first (1946.8)	43	–	–
The second (1948.3)	59	29	49.2
The third (1956.4)	71	42	63
The fourth (1961.9)	85	56	66
The fifth (1970.11)	117	85	72.2
The sixth (1980.10)	145	60	41.4

Source: Party Congress record and Rodong Sinmun (Party organ).



In 1980 at the 6th Party Congress, 145 people were elected as full-fledged members and 103 people as alternate members. 60 of the 145 full-fledged CC members of the 6th Congress were new to the Central Committee, which marked a turnover of 41.1%. Since 1980, however, significant turnover in the composition of the Central Committee has ceased. This is possibly due to the fact that a Party Congress has not been convened for over twenty years. Concerning the turnover of the Central Committee since 1980, table 4 shows that there were 67 members who either passed away or were dismissed, and 80 newcomers in 20 years. The turnover rate remained the lowest (less than 23 percent) since 1946.

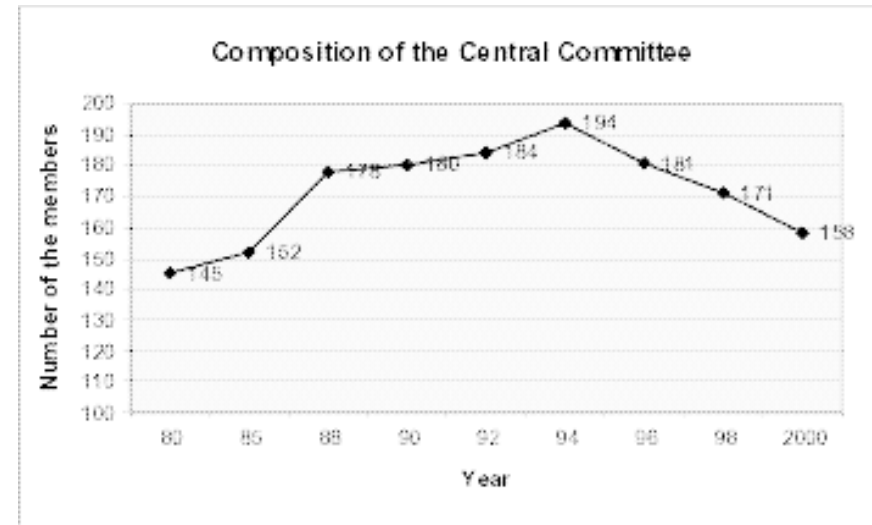
There has been no newcomer to the Central Committee since 1995 in spite of the increasing number of deceased members. 55 out of 80 newcomers were promoted from alternate members, which may indicate that the leadership has given top priority to stability of the power structure. Bringing in people who have had career experiences in the CC to fill in the full-fledged membership vacancies seems a preferable way to maintain a lesser degree of mobility within the Central Committee and prevent an influx of new elites into the positions of leadership.

According to the Party Constitution, it is not permitted to change more than 1/5 of the members in between the Party congresses. Never-

Table 4. Turnover of the Central Committee Full-fledged Members 1980-2000

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	1980-2000
Composition	145	152	180	183	158	-
Newcomers	60	17	40	24	0	80
No.(%) of those promoted from CC alternate members		9 (52.9%)	28 (70%)	19 (79.2%)	0	
% of newcomers	41.4	11.2	22.2	13.1	0	-
Dismissed or Deceased	-	10	11	23	25	69

Graph 1. Changing Pattern in the Composition of the Central Committee



Source: North Korean Directory, (Radio Press, Japan), published annually from 1988.

theless, as shown in the table above, the KWP Central Committee continued to expand up to the mid 1990s, then continued to decrease. Graph 1 shows such a changing trend in the size of the Central Committee, based on the numbers of the CC full-fledged members every two years from 1988. The shrinking size since the death of the “great leader” Kim Il-sung implies that the rise of a new leader did not bring about any radical change in the composition of the political elite. Rather, the political elite became condensed and clustered, as suggested by the decreasing size and low turnover of the Central Committee in the post-1995 period.

**Gender**

The gender ratio among the CC full-fledged members is shown in table 5, which reveals that more than ninety percent were men in all

Table 5. Gender Ratio in the Central Committee

	1980	1990	2000
Male	139 (95.9%)	171 (95.0%)	149 (94.3%)
Female	6 ( 4.1%)	9 ( 5.0%)	9 ( 5.7%)

three-time periods. Although it has increased slightly, the proportion of women in the Central Committee has remained at less than 6%. Despite emphasis on the elevation of women's social status and gender equality in North Korea, the proportional imbalance between men and women in the political elite is distinct.

### *Place of Origin*

Although there are many gaps in the available information for this criterion, which makes generalisations more tentative, the analysis of the available data reveals that the largest number of the Central Committee members come from the Hamgyong Provinces, especially North Hamgyong. South Pyongan Province, where Kim Il-sung was born and raised, ranks second largest in the CC, followed by Manchuria. Other studies on regional background of members show similar results.<sup>14</sup> The regional distribution of the full-fledged members of the Central Committee by the place of birth is as seen in table 6.

The high percentage of those from the Hamgyong provinces may be explained by the historical fact that the North Hamgyong province along with Manchuria and a part of Soviet Siberia used to be the centre stage of anti-Japanese guerrilla activities. Since the core of North Korea's political leadership was mainly recruited from the

Table 6. Place of Origin of the Central Committee Members

	1980	1990	2000
<b>Pyongyang</b>	4 ( 3.7%)	9 ( 6.5%)	8 ( 7.1%)
<b>Pyongan Province</b>	<b>27 (25.0%)</b>	<b>36 (25.9%)</b>	<b>29 (25.9%)</b>
South Pyongan	16 (14.8%)	23 (16.5%)	21 (18.8%)
North Pyongan	11 (10.2%)	13 ( 9.4%)	8 ( 7.1%)
<b>Hamgyong Province</b>	<b>45 (41.7%)</b>	<b>55 (39.6%)</b>	<b>43 (38.4%)</b>
South Hamgyong	14 (13.0%)	16 (11.5%)	13 (11.6%)
North Hamgyong	31 (28.7%)	39 (28.1%)	30 (26.8%)
<b>Hwanghae Province</b>	5 ( 4.6%)	8 ( 5.8%)	6 ( 5.4%)
<b>Kangwon Province</b>	4 ( 3.7%)	5 ( 3.6%)	5 ( 4.5%)
<b>Yanggang Province</b>	4 ( 3.7%)	5 ( 3.6%)	6 ( 5.4%)
<b>Kaesong</b>	1 ( 0.9%)	1 ( 0.7%)	1 ( 0.9%)
<b>USSR</b>	2 ( 1.9%)	2 ( 1.4%)	1 ( 0.9%)
<b>Manchuria</b>	<b>10 ( 9.3%)</b>	<b>10 ( 7.2%)</b>	<b>8 ( 7.1%)</b>
<b>South Korea</b>	6 ( 5.6%)	7 ( 5.0%)	5 ( 4.5%)

Missing values are 37 in 1980, 41 in 1990, and 46 in 2000.

anti-Japanese partisan guerrilla groups in the early stage of development, people from the Hamgyong area may have risen to the political elite in large numbers. Elites who were born in this area, where the revolutionary heritage originated, were still significantly large in number between 1980 and 2000. Although data are missing for around 10% of the members, based on the analysis of 108 members in 1980, 139 in 1990 and 112 in 2000, it can be said that the majority of the elite were from the provincial areas, particularly the Hamgyong and Pyongan regions.

### *Age Distribution and Generational Shift*

The membership of the Central Committee is continuously aging,

14 W. Y. Lee, "Generational Switch and Potential Factionalism among the North Korean Power Elites," *The Korean Journal of National Unification* (Seoul: The Research Institute for National Unification, 1994), p. 58; S. C. Yang, *ibid.*, p. 295.

which implies that a significant intake of younger personnel has not occurred within the group since the 1980s. A lack of radical changes in the age structure can be confirmed by the fact that the backbone age group in 1980 was the fifties, the sixties in 1990, and the seventies in 2000. The number of missing values would not alter the evident aging phenomenon. As demonstrated in table 7, the mean age of the group constantly increased, signifying the persistence of gerontocracy in the North Korean political elite. A decrease in the mean age of the group, which was commonly the case in the USSR and China after the leadership change, was not the case in North Korea. The analytical finding supports the previous supposition that an infusion of younger generation members or a significant reshuffling of the membership has not occurred in the North Korean political elite.

Table 7. Age Distribution in the Central Committee

	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	Missing value	Total	Mean age
1980	1	16	<b>68</b>	34	9	0	17	145	57.3
1990	0	5	25	<b>91</b>	31	4	24	180	64.6
2000	0	0	7	30	<b>77</b>	16	28	158	72.1

Despite the aging trend of the Central Committee, a generation change from the first revolutionary generation to the second revolutionary generation was noticeable between 1980 and 2000. As indicated in the table below, the proportional balance between the first generation and the second generation in 2000 had shifted in comparison to that of 1980.

The distribution of the four different generation groups in the Central Committee illustrated in table 8 shows three distinctive characteristics. Firstly, the number of the first generation Partisan Revolutionary group has visibly declined. Most of the first revolutionaries and the old generation disappeared from the posts due to death. Although the

Table 8. Generation Groups in the Central Committee

	First Revolutionary	First, non-Revolutionary Generation	Second Revolutionary Generation	Second, Party & Technocrats, generation	Missing
1980	34 (26%)	15 (11.5%)	34 (26%)	48 (36.5%)	14
1990	29 (18.4%)	16 (10.1%)	49 (31.0%)	64 (40.5%)	22
2000	16 (12.0%)	4 (3.0%)	44 (33.1%)	69 (51.9%)	24

Note: For the definition of different generational groups, see table 1.

number of those with 'revolutionary experience' declined, revolutionary veterans were still active at the highest level of the Party. Among the North Korean political elites, the first generation, both revolutionary and non-revolutionary, accounted for 15% of the Central Committee in 2000. Secondly, the proportion of the second-generation revolutionaries has constantly risen in membership of the political elite. Considering that the new leader, Kim Jong-il, represents this group, the trend of an increasing proportion of the second-generation revolutionaries may be related to Kim Jong-il's power succession. The second revolutionary generation group is privileged to enter a special institute called the 'Mangyongdae Revolutionary School.' The school is known to be an educational institute that cultivates a new generation elite group with strong revolutionary spirit and loyalty to the leader. A radical change in the system, therefore, is unlikely to be initiated by this group of people. Thirdly, the proportion of the second generation Party and Technocrats group has been increasing at twice the rate of the second-generation revolutionary group in the last 20 years; by the year 2000, it accounted for more than half of the Central Committee.

A generation shift is still in progress in the North Korean elite structure, featuring a constant increase in the proportion of the second revolutionary and the Party & technocrats generation groups. However, such a generation shift would not alter the aging trend of the Central

Committee because the second revolutionary and the Party & technocrats generation groups consist of people who were born between 1925 and 1950. Since people in the second generation groups were mostly in their 60s in 2000, a shift to the second generation has no significance. It can be speculated that the rise of the third generation of people who were born after 1950 may foster significant and revolutionary changes, however, the presence of the third generation in the group has not yet been seen in the Central Committee.

### ***Kinship with the Leader***

The overall percentage of those with kinship to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and that of Kim Il-sung's Partisan Comrades remained at about 20% throughout the analytical period.

Table 9. Kinship with the leader Kim Il-sung in the CC Membership

	1980	1990	2000
Relatives	12 ( 8.3%)	20 (10.9%)	19 (12.0%)
Partisan Comrades	23 (15.9%)	20 (10.9%)	14 ( 8.9%)

As shown in the data, the percentage of Kim's relatives increased slightly over time. The Partisan Comrades of Kim Il-sung comprised 16% of the Central Committee in 1980, but the number of the Partisan group decreased over time, mainly due to aging and death. This survey discloses that a certain degree of nepotism exists in the North Korean political elite, where family background and personal ties with the leader provide informal channels for career advancement and inclusion in the Party centre. Accommodating relatives and comrades into the political elite group may have been a useful means for maintaining a strong political support base and consolidating loyalty within the leadership.

### ***Educational Background***

The rising level of education of the North Korean political elite is apparent in table 10. Despite the relatively large number of missing values, the table shows a high proportion of college graduates and its rising trend.

Table 10. Educational Background of Full-fledged Central Committee Members

	Primary & Junior High, No formal education	University graduates	Foreign education	Party School	Military School	Missing
1980	8 (8.2%)	68 (70.1%)	73 (75.3%)	11 (11.3%)	17 (17.5%)	48/145
1990	6 (4.5%)	99 (75.6%)	93 (71.0%)	12 ( 9.1%)	22 (16.7%)	49/180
2000	0 (0%)	85 (76.6%)	75 (67.6%)	11 ( 9.9%)	18 (16.2%)	47/158

Note: People who were educated in more than one institution are counted more than once.

Among those whose education background is known, the share of those who had completed their advanced education accounted for over 70%, and marked 76.6% in 2000. The number of people who had only primary education, on the other hand, fell significantly. CC members who were educated in foreign countries also dropped in percentage over time.

Concerning the school attended by the CC members, as shown in table 11, Mangyongdae Revolutionary School graduates accounted for about 35% of those whose education background is known. It is especially noteworthy that the share of Mangyongdae attendees in the political elite has increased since 1980s. The trend seems to be related to Kim Jong-il's power succession; the Mangyongdae Institute, founded in 1948, is the alma mater of Kim Jong-il. The graduates of Kim Il Sung University compose over 60% of those with university education in the Central Committee. A high and constant percentage of those who stud-

ied at Kim Il Sung University indicates that the graduates from this top elite school are more privileged to rise to rule positions in North Korea. A large Kim Il Sung University alumni cohort in the Central Committee also implies relative homogeneity and coherence of the political elite in terms of school background.

Table 11. The Percentage of Graduates of Top Elite Schools

	Mangyongdae School	Kim Il Sung University
1980	32.9%	67.6%
1990	34.8%	62.0%
2000	35.1%	67.1%

Among those in the Central Committee who had studied abroad, the Soviet Union had been the most popular overseas study locale (see table 12). Since the establishment of the North Korean regime and right up to 2000, an overwhelmingly large number had studied in the Soviet Union. Though the change was small, the percentage of people who studied in engineering colleges in Eastern Europe increased from 1980 to 2000.

Table 12. Overseas Areas for Study

	USSR	China	Japan	Eastern Europe	U.S. & Western Europe	Total
1980	52 (71.2%)	3 (4.1%)	8 (11%)	9 (12.3%)	1 (1.4%)	73
1990	65 (69.9%)	3 (3.2%)	9 (9.7%)	15 (16.1%)	1 (1.1%)	93
2000	53 (70.7%)	3 (4.0%)	5 (6.7%)	14 (18.7%)	0 (0%)	75

Note: Overseas study on two or more occasions were cumulative. The people who attended schools in the US or Japan had educational opportunities before the national liberation in 1945, and therefore, they have little importance to the analysis.

The majority of people who were educated in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were technocrats and economic experts. Analyzing the field of study of those who had studied in these two areas, the engineering and science field was most dominant. There was a particularly strong correlation between the engineering field and Eastern Europe as an area of study. It can be inferred that North Korea encouraged studies in the country which is most advanced in the socialist bloc in terms of science and technology since it needed advanced knowledge in the science field, especially in the technical area. The overall percentage of people with foreign education fell slightly over time, which may be due to the declining representation of technocrats in the Central Committee in the 1990s (see 'functional sector' of the CC members in this paper).

### *Years of Experience in the Party and the Central Committee*

On the basis of the year of Party entry of each member, table 13 displays the years of experience in the Party that the Central Committee members have had. As shown in the tabulation, the years of experience in the Party of the members increased over time: the majority of members had 10 to 20 years of Party experience in 1980, 20 to 30 years of experience in 1990, and 30-40 years of experience in 2000. A similar trend can also be noticed when we consider the years of members'

Table 13. Experience in the Party

	Less than 10 yrs.	10-19 yrs.	20-29 yrs.	30-39 yrs.	40 yrs. and over	Total
1980	36	<b>52</b>	38	10	0	136
1990	18	40	<b>59</b>	49	6	172
2000	7	20	37	<b>51</b>	33	151

Note: missing values are 9 in 1980, 8 in 1990, and 7 in 2000.

experiences in the Central Committee (see table 14). The average years of experience in the Central Committee of the members increased from 6.6 in 1980 to 12.6 in 1990, and to 19.2 in 2000.

Table 14. Experience in the Central Committee

	Less than 5 yrs.	5-9 yrs.	10-19 yrs.	20-29 yrs.	30-39 yrs.	40 yrs. and over	Mean	Total
1980	74	2	60	5	4	0	6.6	145
1990	41	16	64	52	4	3	12.6	180
2000	0	23	46	51	38	0	19.2	158

The characteristic of increasing experience of the members in the Party and the Central Committee seemed to parallel the aging trend of the Central Committee members and low turnover in the membership. This reflects continuity of the North Korean leadership. Absence of substantial change in the composition of the political elite may have contributed to the accumulating years of experience of its members, thus securing political stability in the Party centre. The finding also implies that those who were skilful and familiar with the workings of the Party and the Central Committee increased in the Party leadership. These old guards in the political elite were likely to advocate and support the existing political system and the regime, rather than initiating radical changes.

### *Co-optation Practice*

More than half of the Central Committee members were co-opted into the Party Central Committee from different occupational sectors. Among the co-opted members, the majority of people came from either the state apparatus or the military. Although over 60% of members were co-opted, the proportion of members who had a Party career all

their lives remained constant and relatively significant in the last 20 years. As the table below shows, over 35% of the North Korean political elite were Party careerists.

Table 15. Career Pattern of the Central Committee Members: Co-optation

	Party Career	Co-opted
1980	53 (38.1%)	86 (61.9%)
1990	60 (34.7%)	113 (65.3%)
2000	55 (36.2%)	97 (63.8%)

Note: missing values are 6 in 1980, 7 in 1990, and 6 in 2000.

Active co-optation practices must have promoted diversification of the Central Committee. The fact that a greater number of the Party Central Committee members were co-opted from the government and military apparatus in North Korea may be interpreted in two ways: it may reflect the intention of the regime to diversify the leadership by bringing in various experts and professionals from different functional fields. Or, it may reflect the intention of strengthening the links between the State, Party, and Military to constitute a unitary political elite. The second interpretation seems more likely in the case of North Korea, particularly in the 1990s.

### *Career Pattern by the Elite Type*

The career pattern of the Central Committee members was evaluated by analysing the sector in which a person spent the majority of his or her career. Each member was classified into Party, state, military, and social elite type by the major duties in which they were engaged. When a person held numerous duties, the job performed over the longest period was counted. In the case of a person who changed occupational background over time, the one in which the person spent the

longest time and for which he/she is best known has been counted. There are cases in which a member spent an equally large amount of time in more than one sector—in such cases, the member is categorised according to the official posts of the member around the time of being selected to the Central Committee. The number of people who spent an equally substantial amount of time in more than one occupation sector was 32 in 1980, 19 in 1990, and 28 in 2000. This indicates that it is common for the Central Committee members to have overlapping positions and to be involved in more than one occupational sector. The most common movements in the North Korean Party elite were from the government sector to the Party, and from the Party to the social organisation sector. Table 16 and graph 2 display the changing representation of different elite types in the KWP Central Committee.

Table 16. Career Pattern of the Central Committee Members: Elite Type

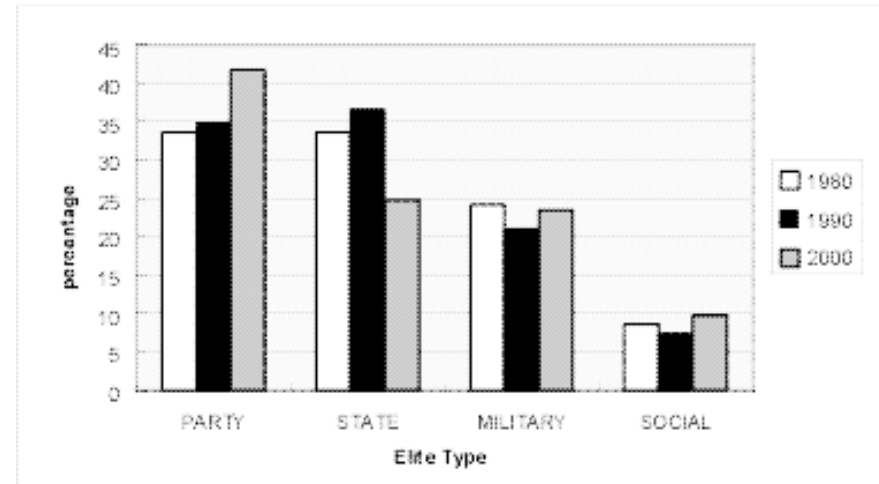
	Party	State	Military	Social
1980	47 (33.6%)	47 (33.6%)	34 (24.2%)	12 (8.6%)
1990	61 (34.9%)	64 (36.6%)	37 (21.1%)	13 (7.4%)
2000	64 (41.8%)	38 (24.8%)	36 (23.5%)	15 (9.8%)

Note: missing values are 5 respectively in 1980, 1990 & 2000.

Up to the 1990s, the proportion of the state elite surpassed that of the Party elite. A relatively high proportion of the state elite in the 1980s may have been due to the accentuated role of technocrats and experts in the leadership for economic development. Towards the end of the 1990s, however, the representation of the Party elite increased, while that of the state elite declined.

By 2000, the composition of the Central Committee was marked by a considerable increase in the Party and military representation and a significant proportional decrease of the state elite. This is in contrast to the structural changes that occurred in the USSR and China. The pro-

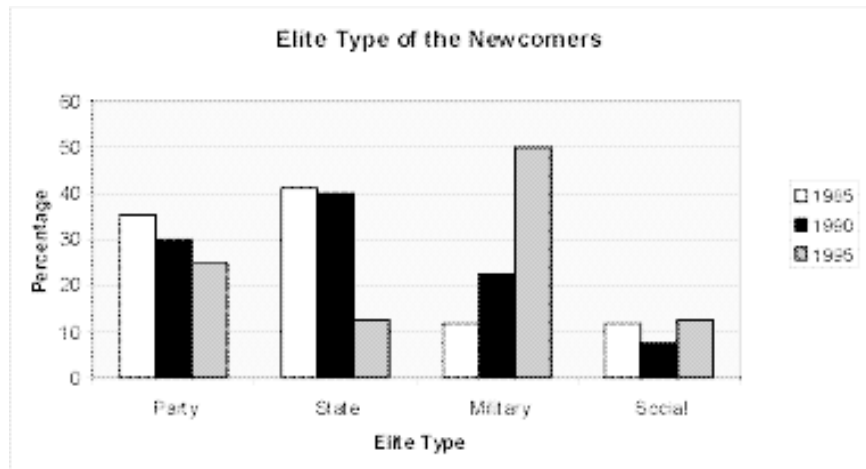
Graph 2. Career Pattern of the Central Committee Members



portion of the military elite, in particular, stayed significantly high in North Korea compared to other state socialist elite structures, which may be taken as a sign of the political elite becoming more conservative. If we consider that the military and the Party elites are likely to have greater interests in advocating and safeguarding the state socialist regime, the regime survival in North Korea may be explained by the increasing representation of these particular groups in the 1990s. Such a trend is particularly noticeable in the analysis of the newcomers to the Central Committee in the 1990s. The following graph displays a considerable proportional increase of military representation in the newcomer group, in which fifty percent of newcomers in the period between 1990-1995 were members of military elites in the Defence and Security sector.

Bringing in a large number of people with a military career to the Central Committee coincided with the rise of Kim Jong-il as the Chairman of the National Defence Commission. Based on this finding, it can be deduced that the North Korean power structure has been readjusted

Graph 3. Elite Type of the Newcomers



to reinforce the military, which shows strong loyalty to Kim Jong-il, for consolidating the new leadership and crisis management relying on the military. It may also be interpreted as an integration of the Military and the Party, which puts the military under Kim Jong-il's direct control. This tactic might have targeted curtailing military threats, formation of any potentially powerful military faction, and possible seizure or coups by the military.

### Functional Sectors

As to the field of engagement of the CC members, people involved in the Foreign Affairs & Defence Security (FADS) and Direction & Party Control (DPC) sectors have been dominant in the North Korean political elite. The proportion of technocrats who were engaged in the Industrial Production (IP) sector increased up until 1990, then declined towards the end of the 1990s. The representation of members in Economics and Science (ES) decreased drastically, while those involved in Defence and Security (DS) increased significantly at the end of the

Table 17. Functional Sector the Central Committee Members are engaged in (%)

	1980	1990	2000
<b>I. Direction &amp; Party Control (DPC)</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>37.2</b>
Direction and Control (DC)	16.4	14.9	15.0
Propaganda and Ideology (PI)	2.1	2.9	5.9
Internal Party Affairs (IPA)	5.0	7.4	6.5
Economic Policy-making and Planning (EPP)	8.6	9.1	9.8
<b>II. Foreign Affairs &amp; Defence Security (FADS)</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>37.3</b>
Foreign Affairs (FA)	7.1	6.9	7.2
Defence and Security (DS)	25.7	22.3	25.5
Agitation against the South & Inter-Korea affairs (ASI)	5.7	3.4	4.6
<b>III. Economics &amp; Science (ES)</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>13.8</b>
Finance and Trade (FT)	2.9	1.7	1.3
Industrial Production (IP)	7.9	12.0	7.8
Agriculture and Fisheries (AF)	2.9	2.3	1.3
Transport and Communication (TC)	4.3	3.4	2.0
Mining & Natural Resources (MN)	1.4	1.7	0.7
Science & Technology (ST)	0	0.6	0.7
<b>IV. Social and Cultural (SC)</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>11.9</b>
Culture, Literature, Music and Sports (CLMS)	3.6	2.9	1.3
Education (Edu)	2.1	3.4	3.3
Social Welfare (SW)	0	0.6	0.7
Press and Journalism (PJ)	1.4	0	0.7
Legal and Judicial (LJ)	0.7	0.6	0.7
Social Organisation (SO)	2.1	4.0	5.2

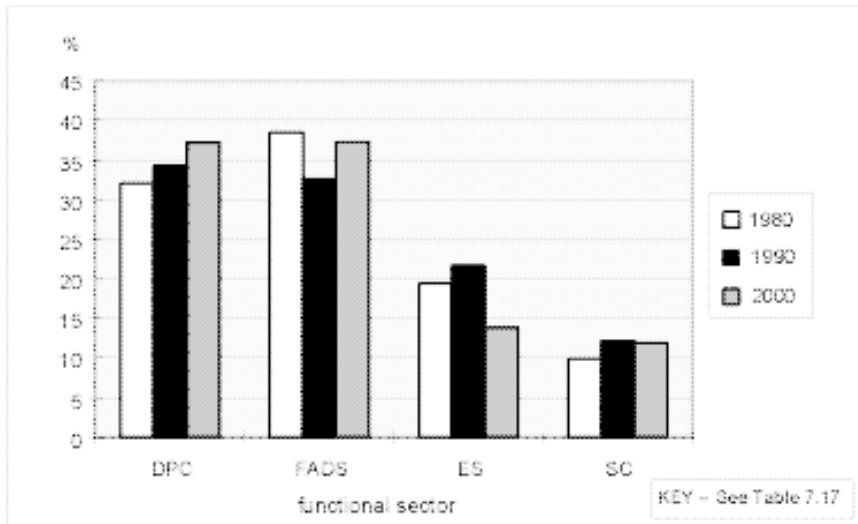
Note: the missing value was 6 persons respectively in 1980, 1990 and 2000.

1990s. An increasing proportion of people engaged in the Propaganda and Ideology (PI) sector was also noticeable in the 1990s. Graphs 4 and 5 clearly illustrate this trend.

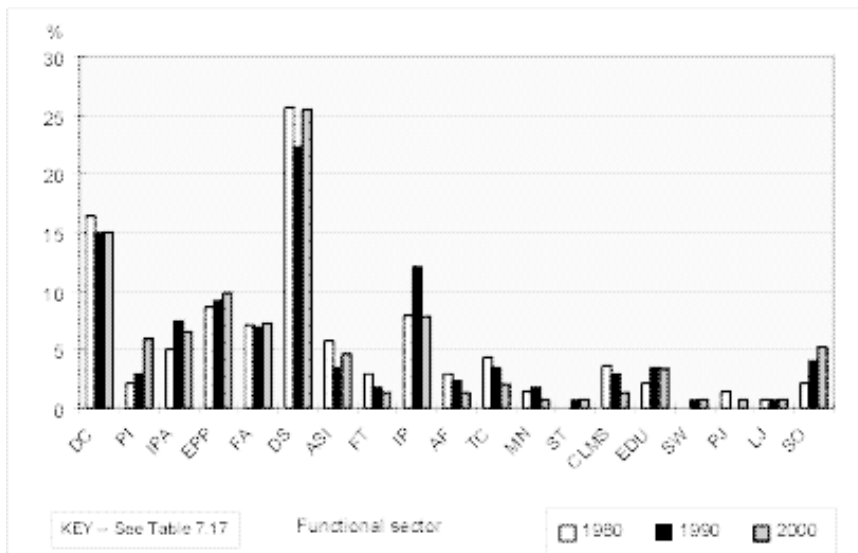
Concerning the functional sectors in which the CC members are engaged in, graph 4 shows that there has been a prominent proportional imbalance, which mainly concentrated on the Defence and Security



Graph 4. Functional Sector of the CC Members



Graph 5. The Fields of Engagement of the CC Members



(DS) and Direction and Control (DC) fields. Although a dispersion of graph bars indicates that members from diverse fields composed the apparatus of the Central Committee, the disproportional distribution of the field of engagement signifies relatively narrow differentiation in the overall structure of the North Korean political elite.

**Development of the North Korean Central Committee: Overview**

The analysis of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party has demonstrated the continuity of leadership in terms of social attributes between 1980 and 2000. Despite the change of leaders in the 1990s, there has not been any significant change in the composition of the political elite. The aging of the members and increasing years of members' career experiences in the Party and the Central Committee substantiates this point. A majority of the political elite belonged to the second generation who were born in the 1930s and the 1940s, and shared similar educational backgrounds of studying at Kim Il Sung University and in the USSR. The representation of the graduates of Mangyondae Revolutionary School and Kim Il Sung University in the political elite was significant during the analysed period. Overall, the North Korean political elite featured a cohesive group, bonded by personal relations and school ties.

Despite this general trend of continuity and cohesiveness in social attributes of the political elite, the analysis found a marked difference in the functional group representation of the Party Central Committee in the 1980s and 1990s. Its composition in the 1980s showed a widening differentiation with increasing numbers of people with technical and managerial skills. In the 1990s, however, it displayed a different pattern with an increasing representation of military and Party elites and a decreasing representation of state elites. The Central Committee became smaller in size, and the number of members who were engaged in the Defence and Security sector and the Propaganda and

Ideology sector significantly increased. Since this trend appeared following the collapse of the socialist bloc, it may have been a deliberate attempt to secure political stability and regime security.

Rapid turnover and an accelerated diversification process of the political elite, following the accession of Gorbachev in the USSR and Deng Xiaoping in China, did not take place in North Korea. While the Gorbachev and the Deng Xiaoping leaderships brought about radical changes in the political elite structure with infusion of a younger and more technocratic-inclined generation, the Kim Jong-il leadership painted a contrasting picture of declining representation of technocrats and increasing representation of the Party and military elites. The overall characteristics of the political elite under Kim Jong-il were those of concentration and limited differentiation.

#### IV. Conclusion

In the case of the USSR and China, elite diversification is considered one of the preconditions for change to occur in a state socialist system. Therefore, what is crucial to understanding the system survival in North Korea is to determine whether such a diversification process has occurred in the political elite structure. A major change in the structure and composition of the political elite is generally noticeable and easily identifiable following a Party Congress. Although the congress is supposed to convene every five years, since the 6th Party Congress in October 1980, North Korea has not had a Party Congress. Absence of a Party congress, however, does not completely freeze the personnel movement within the Party centre. The composition of the political elite can still be altered gradually by means of co-optation. This explains some important changes detected in the structure of the KWP Central Committee between 1980 and 2000.

The North Korean political elite in the 1980s shared a trend of struc-

tural diversification, although to a lesser degree than that in the USSR and China. The structure of the Central Committee gradually changed, targeting economic development and modernisation of the country. A generational shift was in progress, in which the second revolutionary generation and the Party & technocrat generation began to outnumber the first revolutionary generation. The military elite decreased, whereas that of the state elite consisting of technocrats and managerial personnel increased. The infusion of the better-educated and specialists from diverse functional sectors into the political elite was an apparent characteristic of the 1980s.

The structure of the North Korean power elite changed and headed towards an unusual direction in the 1990s. When the “great leader” of North Korea, Kim Il-sung, died of a heart attack on July 8, 1994, more radical changes in the leadership centred on the new generation were anticipated. However, the pluralisation and diversification process in the political elite, which was observed in other state socialist countries in the 1980s, discontinued under the new leadership of Kim Jong-il. Instead, the political elite became condensed, exclusive, and homogeneously consolidated. The size of the leadership shrank significantly with a sharp rise in the proportion of the military elite and the Party careerists and a significantly decreased proportion of technocrats and managerial elites. The representation of people who have personal and school connections with Kim Jong-il has drastically increased. The analysis concludes that change in the political elite in the 1990s was directed towards minimising elite differentiation, strengthening the Party and the military, and promoting elite cohesion and integration.

The 1990s was a critical period of time for the North Korean regime, which was challenged by numerous exogenous and endogenous crises such as the collapse of the Socialist bloc, death of the ‘Great Leader,’ tension over the nuclear issue between the US and North Korea, the leadership change, natural disasters and surmounting economic problems. Therefore, the deliberate structural readjustment

towards narrowing elite differentiation and reinforcing elite cohesion should be understood in the context of crisis management. The relatively compact size of the ruling elite, in general, enables its members to act together in a conscious and cohesive manner, and thus manage and manipulate the political sphere—at least in the short run—to perpetuate its domination. Considering the change in the North Korean political elite in the 1990s, it may be argued that the elite characteristics were one of the contributing factors to survival of the North Korean regime.