

## The 2013 New Year's Address by Kim Jong-un

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Kim Jong-un, the First Chairman of the National Defense Commission, delivered the New Year's Address on the morning of January 1, 2013. Following the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, it has been 19 years since the North Korean Supreme Leader personally delivered the New Year's Address. Under the Kim Jong-il era, North Korea released its annual New Year's Joint Editorial via three publications – *Rodong Sinmun*, *Korean People's Army and Socialist Youth League*. The New Year's Address can be interpreted as part of "Kim Jong-un's Code of Conduct" since the power succession by mimicking Kim Il-sung and evoking nostalgia from the Kim Il-sung era. Prior to this, the Korean Central News Agency hinted on December 31, 2012 that Kim Jong-un would personally deliver the 2013 New Year's Address, claiming that Kim Jong-un had created miracles and innovations by introducing the contents of his five previous speeches, including the one he delivered during a formal military parade to commemorate the centennial birthday of President Kim Il-sung.

This year's New Year's Address was composed of a brief acknowledgement of last year's achievements and a long presentation of this year's challenges. The address defined 2012 as a historical year to deify the deceased Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il "as their eternal *Suryong* (leader) of the revolution and to fulfill and complete the great achievement of the *Juche* (self-reliance) revolution under the auspice of the Party," and evaluated the accomplishment of a monumental victory last year by carrying out all-out attacks in order to realize the vision and

final injunctions of Kim Jong-il. According to the address, the specific successes of 2012 are as follows: ① Development in science and technology, ② Acquisition of modern military equipment, ③ Establishment of a powerful and prosperous socialist nation and advancements to improve the people's livelihood, ④ Expansion of cultural facilities in order to promote the people's welfare, and ⑤ Strengthening of the socialist education system.

The New Year's Address defined 2013 as "the year of grand creation and revolution that will be a turning point in the establishment of a powerful and prosperous socialist nation on a march towards a new century of *Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il Chosun*," and emphasized that "the Party and the people must follow only the Juche way" and that "the ever victorious banner of our revolution is the Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il way." The New Year's Address also emphasized 2013 as the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of North Korea's government as well as the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the end of the national liberation war, and outlined this year's goals for the construction of a powerful and prosperous socialist nation and the task of national unification in the following order: ① Economy, ② Politics, ③ Military, ④ Society and culture, ⑤ Inter-Korean relations, and ⑥ External relations.

This New Year's Address demonstrated the following characteristics. First, in addressing the economy, a highly conservative stance on economic policies was revealed as seen in the increased use of such conservative terms as the strengthening of "the foundation of an independent national economy," strict adherence to the "People's Economic Plan" and the "firm adherence to the socialist economic system," etc. The tasks in the light industry and agricultural sector which had been previously emphasized as the highest priority were down-graded to the second tier and instead the people's economy and a strong industrial foundation were accorded the highest priority. This seems to suggest that strengthening the foundation of the country's productivity has been recognized as a greater priority over improving the people's living standards. On the other hand, emphasis on the successful launch of "the Kwangmyongsong-3 Unit 2" as a pivotal accomplishment of Kim Jong-il's final injunctions as well as demonstration of North Korea's "space science and technology" and "comprehensive national power" altogether shows to highlight that it is possible to build an economic powerhouse based on a "self-reliant national economy." As seen in this year's New Year's Address slogan, entitled "Let us bring about a radical turn in the building of an economic giant with the same spirit and mettle as were displayed in conquering space," Kim Jong-un is capitalizing on the success of the Unha-3 long-range missile as an important means to legitimizing his reign.

Second, in the political realm, a notable feature is the fact that the Supreme Leader personally announced the speech unlike the previous years. It can be assessed that mimicking the "People friendly" Kim Il-sung, which evokes nostalgia from the Kim Il-sung era, reflects the leadership style of Kim Jong-un and its need to ensure a stable regime. The fact that the length of this year's New Year's Address is much shorter than that of last year is another characteristic. Overall, it can be assessed that the exaggerated and grandiose sentence formats were mitigated, but the presented goals are relatively abstract and thus, the meaning of the goals are unclear. The New Year's Address emphasized the importance of political and ideological duty for internal unity – "to strengthen the political and military power in every way" by

emphasizing that “the single-minded unity that firmly unites millions of people centered around the Party is our ultimate weapon and the driving force behind the power of establishing a great socialist nation.”

Third, in regard to the military, the importance on strengthening national defenses has continued but the constant emphasis on Military First (*Songun*) Politics has weakened. It appears that the Party is now playing the central role in support for the Kim Jong-un regime with increasing frequency emphasizing its roles. In addition, it is assessed that a more practical tone is utilized in comparison to the unrealistic slogans of the Kim Jong-il era. This New Year’s Address claims that it has been 50 years since Kim Il-sung presented the “Manage the work of many by oneself” (*Ildaebaek*) slogan, in which “the revolution of the armed forces should induce its transition in order to strengthen its development of revolutionary forces and complete battle preparations.” Moreover, the national defense industry was emphasized: “we should further develop sophisticated military equipment in large numbers in order to realize the Party’s military strategy.” On December 29, 2012 at the Central Report Meeting for the first anniversary of Kim Jong-un’s rule as the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army (KPA), Hyon Yong Chol, the Chief of the General Staff of KPA, insisted on the creation of a nationwide impenetrable fortress, claiming that “we must prioritize the development of the defense industry and strengthen our deterrence capabilities.”

Fourth, in addressing the socio-cultural realm, Kim Jong-un insisted on cultivating a blossoming period in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to spur the establishment of a more civil socialist nation, and brought forth the need to “fundamentally improve the workers’ ideological perspective, business ethos and work ethics.” In addition, the slogan “everything is for the people, everything is in accordance to the people” was raised as usual, while the people’s participation and endeavor were encouraged.

Fifth, in dealing with South Korea, North Korea revealed a willingness to resume official talks for the sake of “alleviating the current status of confrontation” between the two Koreas and presented “the respect for and implementation of the North-South Joint Declaration” as a prerequisite for progress in inter-Korean relations. This year’s address followed a different direction from that of last year concerning anti-government struggles and incitement, in which the 2012 Joint Editorial insisted that “nationwide struggles to batter the anti-unification and hostile policies from the South’s rebellious factions must be unfolded.” The 2010 and 2011 New Year’s Joint Editorial each stated, “we must open the road for the improvement of inter-Korean relations” and “we must actively promote dialogue and cooperation projects.” Thus, the 2013 New Year’s Address can be seen as a recovery to a more conciliatory stance towards the South. With Park Geun-hye’s upcoming inauguration, the North seems to be expressing its willingness for dialogue with the South with the intention of promoting the implementation of the June 15<sup>th</sup> Joint Declaration and the October 4<sup>th</sup> Declaration.

Sixth, in foreign policy, the New Year’s Address claims that the Asia-Pacific region, including the Korean Peninsula, is considered “one of the world’s major regional hotspots” and stresses the need to “carry the banner high and walk the road of Military First (*Songun*).” This indicates that the North will

continue to closely monitor the unfolding events in East Asia, while practicing policies in accordance to their so-called foreign policy ideology of “independence, peace and friendship.” In a departure from the North Korea’s norm, this year’s Address did not include the usual insistence for the withdrawal of U.S. troops (2012), denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (2011), cessation of hostility in the U.S.-North Korea relationship (2010), and a peninsular peace system (2010). The New Year’s Address also did not mention the North’s relations with China and Russia, as emphasized in the 2012 Joint Editorial. This is an indication that North Korea will implement its foreign policy after monitoring the tones and directions of the new leaderships in the region (South Korea, China, Russia and Japan), as well as the second-term Obama administration.

North Korea will most likely concentrate on the consolidation of Kim Jong-un’s control over the military in order to solidify the new regime. For that purpose, the North may provoke military tension in the peninsula for improved mobilization and internal cohesion of its society. The claims for a “progression toward armed revolution” and “our way of high-tech armament” indicate the will to further its nuclear and missile capabilities. The possibility of a third nuclear test and/or sixth launch of a long-range missile within the first half of this year certainly exists.

With the inauguration of the Park Geun-hye administration early this year, it is expected that North Korea will play the dual cards for the resumption of talks between the two Koreas and its tactics for unification front. The new Park Geun-hye administration will need to prepare for the North’s intent to incite a divide in public opinion and manipulate the South-South conflict in South Korea by utilizing the “dialogue vs. confrontation” and/or “war vs. peace” dichotomies. North Korea will attempt to undermine the ROK-U.S. Alliance and to cause qualitative changes in current security order in Korea by publicizing a need for signing a peace treaty in 2013, which marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice agreement. Although North Korea did not explicitly mention the withdrawal of American troops, it will continue to advocate the withdrawal through stressing the need to replace the armistice agreement with a peace treaty – to negate the need for American troops - by claiming “to reject any invasion or war manipulation.”

The 2013 New Year’s Address demonstrates an aggressive tone in the overall policy in accordance to the strengthening of Kim Jong-un regime’s control over the military and the successful “Kwangmyongsong-3 Unit 2” launch. In light of this reality, our response should proceed along the following directions: ① ROK government’s management of the North Korean situation and exploring official inter-Korean talks, ② Deterring the North’s military provocations during the annual U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises, ③ Preventing the splitting of national discourse, such as internal conflict in the South, amid the air of official talks, and ④ Proceeding to manage the North Korean situation through international cooperation (regarding denuclearization and increasing deterrence on weapons of mass destruction, etc.) with regional countries.

The newly inaugurated South Korean administration should carefully consider the measures, such as lifting the May 24<sup>th</sup> Measures taken in 2010, revitalizing the Kaesong Industrial Complex, and

resolutions to issues such as humanitarian aid and separated families, while exploring official dialogues. In her election pledges on foreign policy, security and unification, President-Elect Park Geun-hye made clear that existing pledges must first be upheld in order to establish trust between South and North Korea, and that “the spirit of peace and mutual respect in the existing inter-Korean agreements must be realized while the details must also be adjusted in accordance to reality.” She maintains a position in which the spirit of existing inter-Korean agreements is respected, including the June 15<sup>th</sup> Joint Declaration and the October 4<sup>th</sup> Declaration, while the contents that affect national security and require legislative consent must be adjusted in accordance to reality. Finding convergence between President-Elect Park Geun-hye’s insistence on “respecting the existing agreements while amending the necessary parts of the contents,” and North Korea’s demand on a “thorough implementation of the June 15<sup>th</sup> and the October 4<sup>th</sup> Declarations” will be an important turning point for inter-Korean relations in 2013.

It is highly likely that North Korea will carry out a “third nuclear test” as a trump card to strengthen its bargaining power over the newly inaugurated leaderships in South Korea, Japan, China and Russia in addition to the second-term Obama administration and to secure the initiative in the regional political dynamics. It is probable that North Korea will use brand-new types of nuclear warheads, which are completely different from the current ones, in the upcoming third nuclear test, and it may even go as far as carrying out two consecutive tests. The new South Korean administration should take proactive measures against the security threats that the North Korean nuclear test will cause. Within the international community, the South Korean government should also enhance its diplomatic efforts to prevent the Obama administration from abandoning the current policy for the dismantlement of North Korean nuclear program, and leaning toward the so-called “Non-proliferation,” which intends to recognize North Korea’s existing nuclear capabilities under the condition that it suspends further nuclear development. © KINU 2013

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