

SOUTH KOREA'S NORTH KOREA POLICY IN THE POST INTER-KOREA SUMMIT ERA: REALITY AND PROSPECTS

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For the past three years since the beginning of the Kim Dae-jung administration, remarkable performances in inter-Korean relations have been achieved. In addition, the South-North Korean Summit in June of 2000 has accelerated this increasing trend in inter-Korean relations. Nevertheless, whether or not there has been a basic change in Pyongyang's strategy toward the South has not been made clear. North Korea's will for peace remains as just rhetoric and has not been verified. Furthermore, North Korea's foreign policy is showing an even higher level of flexibility, elements of psychological war, camouflage tactics, and even unified front tactics in their strategy toward the South. At present, South Korea is facing a critical period of time in inter-Korean relations. South Korean people have mixed perceptions and views on the North Korea policy — hope and uncertainty, optimism and pessimism together. At this critical moment in terms of national security, South Korean people should not be lured by the symbolic changes in inter-Korean relations into a sense of complacency.

I. Introduction

For the last few years, the Korean Peninsula has faced a period of tremendous change and transition. The historic inter-Korean summit provided a new momentum for change and transition. Since the summit, a number of events have transpired such as routine meetings, visits between leaders from the two Koreas, the reunion of separated families (which also took place in 1985), various cultural exchanges and events, the joint entry of Olympic teams at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics, the project to re-connect the Kyung-eui railroad line, the South-North Defense Ministers' meeting, a visit to the DPRK by US Secretary of State, and other events. Although whether Kim Jong-il will pay a return visit to Seoul remains to be seen, these are clearly the direct results of South Korea's new "Sunshine Policy" toward North Korea.¹

Being influenced by this rapid development in inter-Korean relations, the security environment surrounding the Korean peninsula has also been swiftly changing. Among other things, North Korea's crisis, which culminated a few years ago, is quickly entering on the path toward restoration and recovery.² The recovery of the North Korean regime is becoming a decisive factor influencing the new distribution of power in regional relations in Northeast Asia. Having survived and overcome its internal crisis, which lasted more than a decade, and was caused by shortages of food, energy, and foreign currency, North Korea is currently re-arranging its foreign relations.

First of all, North Korea is restoring and strengthening its traditional

1 Refer to Albright's interview with Diane Sawyer on ABC Television October 30, 2000. She emphasized that the US policy is being implemented based on the concerted efforts with South Korea, saying that "we are standing on his (President Kim Dae-jung) giant shoulders."

2 The Bank of Korea reports that North Korea's economy showed an increase of 6.2% in 1999, which was the first GDP growth since 1990. The Bank of Korea estimated that "North Korea's economy already escaped from the worst situation."

friendly relations with China and Russia. Also, North Korea has already normalized diplomatic relations with most Western countries including Australia, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Luxemburg and Greece, and is also seeking diplomatic normalization with the EU as well as the US and Japan. As is well known, North Korea recently joined some international organization such as the ARF and is also making efforts to enter the IMF. In appearance at least, North Korea seems to want to open up and is showing a new positive attitude toward the international community.

The asymmetry and imbalance of power that has been maintained since the late 1980s between the two Koreas, which has been clearly in favor of South Korea primarily due to North Korea's crisis, is now changing toward a new type of symmetry or balance of power between both Koreas. The stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula, which has been maintained due to South Korea's absolute superiority in power over the last decade, is now facing a new era of uncertainty due to the possibility of the North's survival, which has been clearly helped by the South's large-scale aid.

This new order has some unique characteristics: First of all, it is being established under the slogan of 'unification' of the Korean nation, with a prevailing atmosphere of 'reconciliation-interaction-cooperation between both Koreas,' and 'co-existence and co-prosperity' of both Koreas. It should be noted, however, that this radical change may inevitably be accompanied by the potentially dismal prospect that large-scale aid to North Korea could lead to another confrontation, and may facilitate renewed tension between the two Koreas at a later date by recovering and strengthening the Northern regime. Certainly, these changes will become a great challenge and opportunity for Korean security in the years to come.

What are implications of the recent changes in the security environment of Northeast Asia for us? What should an effective North Korea policy and security strategy for South Korea be, which has the historic

mission to achieve national unification based on liberal democracy and free market system in the 21st century? This paper attempts to answer these questions.

II. Change In the Security Environment of Northeast Asia and North Korea Policy of the ROK

1. Re-arrangement of the Security Order in Northeast Asia

For the past few decades, the security order in Northeast Asia has been maintained based on the ROK-US, US-Japan alliances, and especially in recent years, a trilateral security cooperation mechanism among the three nations. With the emergence of China following its ambitious modernization project, the three nations' policy toward China has taken on the form of 'constructive engagement,' which implies a strategy of developing cooperative relations with China as far as it adapts to international norms on the one hand, while deterring the expansion of its hegemonic power in this region on the other. During this time, North Korea was not able to escape from its diplomatic isolation and economic decline due to the collapse of the Northern Triangle System. On the other hand, the influence of Russia in this region has remained negligible owing to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the internal problems that followed.

As North Korea's crisis further deepened, the main interests of the countries in this region have been focused on how to manage the chaotic situation after the collapse of North Korea and, after that, how to eventually accomplish Korean unification. Under these circumstances, North Korea has continuously tried to develop its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as a means of assuring the survival of its regime and has pursued a foreign policy that threatens either a suicidal attack or the use of 'brinkmanship' tactics.

Through the recent revolutionary changes in inter-Korean relations, the security order surrounding the Korean Peninsula is also undergoing a critical transition. North Korea is emerging as a 'credible' member of the international community, which is fundamentally different from its past position as an irrational, cruel, and dictatorial regime of tyranny. During the inter-Korean summit in June of 2000, Kim Jong-il succeeded in transforming his past image of being an isolated, enigmatic terrorist into that of a rational, humorous leader who we can communicate with and is in firm control of North Korean society. The improvement in Kim Jong-il's image also improved Pyongyang's image in the eyes of the international community. Secretary of State Madeline Albright's visit to Pyongyang seems to have contributed to some extent to this shoring up of his image.³

The Northern Triangular system, which has disintegrated since the collapse of the Eastern European socialist systems, has nearly been restored, although it is not as firm as in the past. China seems to be satisfied with the recent developments on the Korean peninsula, therefore it is making efforts to further deepen its relations with North Korea. China, having worried about the feasibility of the collapse of the North Korean regime, now seems to believe that the recent developments are a good opportunity to maintain the status quo on the Korean peninsula and hopes to further expand its influence over both Koreas. For North Korea, China is its only ideological partner and significant ally that can provide substantial economic and military aid.⁴ Kim Jong-il's second visit to the PRC in less than seven months signifies North Korea's clear interest in following Chinese-style reforms and in introducing an open-

3 Albright mentioned in her interview with ABC television that Kim Jong-il was not the "peculiar person" and that "he is somebody that I had quite a logical and pragmatic discussion with. But we have to test what his intentions are and I think it's worth doing." (October 30, 2000).

4 Yong-pyo Hong, "Change in North Korea's External Relations," a paper presented in the 38th Domestic Seminar of the KINU (August 28, 2000).

door policy. Of course, it cannot be denied that one of Kim Jong-il's major intentions when he visited the PRC would be to enhance ties between the DPRK and the PRC by coordinating their diplomatic policies toward the US under George W. Bush's new administration. Chairman Kim must have discussed with Chinese leaders the North's policy direction for US-North Korea and inter-Korean relations under the Bush administration, which advocates 'peace through power.'

In terms of its relations with Russia, North Korea successfully concluded the "Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation" in February of 2000, thereby ending 10 years of estranged relations and recovering its friendship with Russia. In the wake of the treaty, Russian President Putin's visit to Pyongyang became a chance to re-affirm the new spirit of the treaty and establish a common front in confronting the establishment of NMD by the US.

North Korea's efforts to negotiate diplomatic normalization with Japan are also being continued. There still exist some complicated issues such as the resolution of past problems and the amount of compensation to be paid to North Korea. The Japanese government does not seem to be anxious or in any hurry to engage in negotiations over normalization with North Korea. The "don't miss the bus" psychology that was shown after the "China shock" of 1972 does not seem to be re-appearing this time.⁵

Indeed, re-distribution of power and the re-arrangement of the security order surrounding the Korean peninsula is progressing and accelerating with increasing speed.

2. Changes in North Korea's Situation

Following the historic inter-Korean summit, a controversial debate

5 The Japanese government has decided to send the rice of 400-500 thousands ton, more than UN WFP originally requested, to North Korea (September 21, 2000). Refer to "*Ashahi Shinmun*" (September 22, 2000).

erupted in South Korean society as to whether North Korea's sudden change in its attitude toward the South symbolized in its acceptance of the Summit, can be seen as a fundamental change in its policy toward South Korea or merely a tactical and flexible application of its long-standing goal of communizing the South.

First of all, it is clear that there are some signals of change in North Korea although North Korea's basic strategic goal toward the South seems to remain intact. Not long ago, North Korea's major mass media put forward unequivocally their arguments that: "Western ideas should not be permitted in North Korean society"; it is still emphasized, no less than before, that, "socialism should be firmly protected and maintained" and that, "the task of ideological indoctrination of the people should consistently be pursued;" it is also emphasized that, "the greatest weapon that can strike down capitalism in the forthcoming class struggle is the people's strong belief in socialism."⁶ However, the North Korean leadership seems to be undergoing a remarkable change and transition in its way of thinking with respect to its policy toward the outside. For example, the DPRK leadership publicly mentioned, "new thinking" in his New Year's message. Further, the chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) Kim Jong-il, toured some important industrial sites in China and praised China's economic performance achieved on the basis of a market economy. This shows that North Korea is profoundly interested in Chinese-style reforms and an open-door policy.⁷ Also, Kim Jong-il is keenly interested in obtaining new technology, especially information technology. He apparently wants to learn from the Chinese experience in developing the economy, but it is too early to conclude that he will strictly follow China's

6 Hyunjoon Cheon, "Internal Change in North Korea: Reality and Prospects," *Is North Korea Changing?* (Domestic Academic Seminar, KINU: August 2000).

7 *The Korea Herald*, "N.K. Following China's Example, President Says," 01/01/18. Refer to President Kim's remark on January 17. See *Chosun Ilbo*, "Government to seek Permanent Peace System," 01/01/17.

steps.

The most important determinant in Korean security is undoubtedly North Korea's South Korea strategy, especially North Korea's military intentions and capabilities against the South. In this regard, North Korea's military, especially after the summit, is the most important aspect to consider.

In 1999, it was reported that there were major movements in North Korea's military such as the placement of large numbers of artillery and rocket launchers near the DMZ. Even after the summit of last year, Kim Jong-il reportedly does not neglect his regime's preparedness for war. Although a renewed war between the two Koreas is unlikely at this time, it is clear that the DPRK has the military capability to wage such a war.⁸ For the ardent desire to improve inter-Korean relations on the part of South Korea to be realized, some visible measures should be taken on the part of the DPRK. In other words, North Korea must respond to the ROK's efforts to reduce tensions and build confidence on the Korean peninsula by beginning substantial discussions on critical issues such as the pulling back of forces from the DMZ and eliminating its WMD.

In contrast with the stalemate in the military sector, North Korea has been showing signs of attempting to implement the 6·15 Joint Communiqué in such areas as economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, sports, and the reunion of separated families. Regarding the issue of separated families, the prospect for large-scale meetings such as the South hopes for is not very bright, despite the fact that Korean authorities from both sides have agreed upon another exchange of visits by 200 members of separated families. The issue of separated families can never be a humanitarian one in such a closed and oppressed society as the North is. Rather, it is very much a political issue because

8 Steven Lee Myers, "Pentagon Says North Korea is still a Dangerous Military Threat," *New York Times* (September 22, 2000).

it could profoundly threaten the security of the regime and the existing internal order of North Korea.

3. South Korea's North Korea Policy

As is already well known, the North Korea policy of the current ROK government can be epitomized as: "pursuing the co-existence, reconciliation, interaction and cooperation with the North as much as possible, inducing North Korea toward change and opening through aiding the regime," thereby "eventually dismantling the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula and gradually establishing the foundation for peaceful unification." This policy is well described in "The Three Principles of North Korea Policy" proclaimed immediately after the President Kim's inauguration, "The Three Principles of the Security Policy" stated in January of 1999, "The Principle of Separation between Political and Economic Matters," and "The Principle of Flexible Reciprocity."

The year 1999 was a year in which the ROK's new North Korea policy, referred to as the "Sunshine Policy," was put to the test. North Korea's test launching of a long-range missile following the detection of a suspicion site at Kumchangri for nuclear development was enough to bring the Korean peninsula into another crisis situation, which was the most dangerous since 1994. The ROK government responded to this crisis with trilateral security coordination and cooperation with the US and Japan. After several months of policy coordination, the three nations introduced the so-called "Comprehensive Approach" or "Perry Processes." Afterwards William Perry, the US's Korean Peninsula Policy Coordinator, delivered it to the North Korean leadership and attempted to persuade them to accept it when he visited Pyongyang in May of 1999. Due to Pyongyang's refusal of this proposal, tension on the Korean peninsula heightened again and reached a culmination in the summer of 1999. However, the coordinated military

pressure of three nations against Pyongyang succeeded in bringing North Korea into acceptance of the Berlin Missile Agreement in September of 1999.

Together with the conclusion of "Perry Report," the "Perry Processes" were regarded as the only alternative to a nuclear-missile crisis. The methodology of the Perry process is simple and clear-cut: If North Korea continues the development of WMD, coordinated military pressures by ROK-US-Japan will be put toward the North; instead, if North Korea gives up its WMD development program, large-scale aid will be provided. In this sense, the Perry process is called a two-track approach.⁹ This approach is also regarded as a strict application of the "principle of reciprocity" in North Korean affairs.¹⁰

The year 2000 marked a watershed in the history of inter-Korean relations because of the South-North Korean Summit Talks. Since the summit, the ROK's policy toward North Korea has been further articulated and elaborated upon: "If North Korea's economy recovers and improves, the threat of war will disappear and peace can be achieved on the Korean peninsula; through a balanced and symmetric development of the economies of both Koreas, they can achieve a mutual aid system, interdependence, co-existence, and co-prosperity."¹¹

In brief, the North Korea policy of the Kim Dae-jung administration can be praised for its successful contribution to the expansion and improvement of inter-Korean relations, at least in scale and quantity. The visible improvement in various sectors that has been achieved over the past three years supports this argument. Also it is a new development that the "central point" in relations with Pyongyang has moved from US-DPRK relations to South-North Korea relations,

9 Refer to "Perry Report."

10 William Perry emphasized in his report several times the importance of "reciprocity" in negotiations with North Korea.

11 ROK President Kim Dae-jung's speech in the meeting of the separated families at the Blue House on August 15, 2000.

although after Albright's visit to Pyongyang this pattern seems to be undergoing yet another change.

However, the expansion of ties between the two Korean societies and any "spill-over" effects, which are the goal that the reconciliation policy generally pursues, are not as visible as expected considering the current status of inter-Korean relations. This is because of Pyongyang's cautious, and so far effective, interception and isolation policy towards its own people. In other words, Pyongyang continuously fears the possibility of "spill-over" effects that the expansion of inter-Korean relations could bring about and the impact that these could have on the North Korean people. Therefore, one possibility that must be taken seriously is that the provision of large-scale food, fertilizer, and even hard currency aid to North Korea could threaten peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula if they are used to increase North Korea's military capability. The problem is that the ROK's new policy, although having the primary objective of achieving a permanent peace on the peninsula, could allow the Kim Jong-il regime to survive and recover. Large-scale aid to North Korea without ascertaining the North's true intentions regarding the reduction of tensions and peace-building measures could result in sowing the seeds of tension on the Korean peninsula in the future. The feasibility of this prognosis depends upon the North's attitude, which has so far been unclear.

III. Prospects for Change in North Korea and Some Policy Suggestions

Following the South-North Summit and developments in the US-DPRK relations this year, several prospects and points with respect to the change in North Korea and inter-Korean relations could be inferred.

The first prospect is that North Korea will manage to recover its

strength by taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the current reconciliation atmosphere.

Pyongyang seems to pursue or envisage a Chinese or Vietnamese style of development or a South Korean style of “dictatorial development,” or a mixture of these to reform and open the regime. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that Pyongyang will stick to its goal of building a “Powerful and Prosperous State.” Among other things, Pyongyang is expected to expend a great deal of effort to recover from its regime crisis, strengthen its economic infrastructure in areas such as energy, SOC, computers, food supplies, and gradually introduce a partial market system. Despite debate and controversies as to the future of the North Korean economy, the North Korean economy is expected to show remarkable improvement, even faster than anticipated, given the continuous large-scale aid to the North and political stability based on Kim Jong-il’s firm hold on power, as long as Kim Jong-il himself remains healthy.

The second prospect is that the effect of “change through contact,” which is the most widespread expectation among the South Korean people, will not affect North Korea.

The on-going humanitarian and material exchanges and contacts between both Koreas could create momentum for internal change in North Korean society. In this case, a gradual change in the North Korean people’s belief system and their perception towards the capitalist system could emerge first among the elites who have more frequent contacts with the outside world than ordinary people.

As mentioned, however, there is no signal at the present time that the North Korean leadership under Kim Jong-il’s control has essentially changed its long-standing goal of unification by force, nor have they realized the inefficiency and structural problems of their socialist system, and therefore the historic inevitability of having to transform it into a capitalist system. Instead, it is quite true that the North Korean leadership has a strong fear that the reform and opening of its regime

could disrupt its internal order and ultimately even bring down the regime.

Therefore, the prospect of this type of “soft-landing” is not high and thus cannot be estimated or predicted confidently. We should be reminded that German unification is also a lesson to North Korea as well as South Korea. The Korean peninsula is much more heavily militarized than Germany and the extent of the spread mass media in North Korea is even more limited than it was in East Germany. Both Koreas have experienced a civil war while the Germans did not. Considering these unique characteristics of the Korean peninsula, it should be pointed out that the possibility that Korea will follow the German model is indeed slight.¹²

The third scenario is that South and North Korea will not follow the road to peaceful unification based upon mutual agreement.

Kim Jong-il’s return visit to South Korea this year and the potential ensuing of regular inter-Korean summits could be considered as a sign favorable to and supporting the prospect of peaceful unification based upon mutual agreement. In fact, both Koreas seem to have found a solution to the problem of the method of unification, which is to establish a middle step on the way toward ultimate unification: the adjustment and agreement between South Korea’s idea of a “confederation” and North Korea’s idea of a “low-level federation.”¹³ In this unification formula, the existence of two different local states (or governments) having their own autonomy is recognized, including the areas of defense and foreign policy. In this formula, a type of “National Supreme Council” above the two local states (or governments) could be set-up. But some questions naturally arise from this unification formula, as follows:

12 Albright mentioned, while on the way returning to the US on October 26, “From my own perspective, I’d say that the differences between East and West Berlin were much less than between Pyongyang and Seoul.”

13 Refer to *the 6-15 Joint Communiqué Article 2.*

First, since this “confederation-low level federation” formula assumes the autonomy of both states (or governments) in the military sector, it will make for extremely difficult or ineffective management of the unified (under the confederation-low level federation) state. In reality, rather, there is a high possibility of it being short-lived or of the formula even failing.

Second, a critical question regarding the identity of the political-economic system can arise, especially in South Korea, which is currently based on the ideas of a liberal democracy and a free market system. In other words, the problem is whether or not unification based on this formula is compatible with democracy and capitalism. Currently, the debate has already begun inside South Korean society.

Third, another critical problem is how we should deal with the stationing of foreign troops on South Korean soil as it is unnatural to recognize the existence of foreign troops under a unified state: Probably this will be an argument that the North will employ. In terms of the current contrast of military power between both Koreas, it is clear that South Korea is inferior to the North without US troops on the Korean peninsula. South Korea has no defense mechanisms against the North's WMD and large numbers of artillery near the DMZ. Without the presence of US troops, if the North Korean leadership pursues its long-standing strategy toward the South, “unification by force,” the situation could be very dangerous for South Korea's security.

The possibility is not high that this scenario will be realized. But as US-DPRK relations are swiftly improving, the issue building a peace regime might be dealt with only between the US and DPRK without the ROK. As President Kim Dae-jung emphasized, any peace agreement on the Korean Peninsula should absolutely be made between South and North Korea, which are the central players in Korean peninsula affairs.¹⁴

14 Refer to the President Kim Dae-jung's comment: He repeatedly emphasized that the two Koreas should reach an accord on a peace system, with the US and the PRC

The Fourth perspective is that the DPRK's desire to develop WMD will not be easily abandoned.

The DPRK seems to have strongly wished to have US-DPRK missile talks as an opportunity to obtain missile technology and compensation money. Previously, the DPRK offered to halt its missile development program in exchange for assistance with launching satellites into space. As the 1994 Agreed Framework could provide North Korea with dangerous nuclear technology and know-how, a deal that helps the DPRK to launch satellites could provide it with the technology to perfect its long-range missiles.¹⁵

It is true that the US is primarily concerned about the North's long-range missiles while South Korea and Japan are more concerned about the North's short-range and medium-range missiles.¹⁶ If the US unilaterally makes a deal with the DPRK only covering long-range missiles without consideration of short- and medium-range missiles, then there may arise some complaints and mistrust on the part of South Korea and Japan. Then the result could be that North Korea will succeed in driving a wedge between the US, ROK, and Japan over the missile issue. The issue of WMD needs to be dealt with comprehensively between the trilateral team (ROK, US, and Japan) and the DPRK as in the Perry processes.

For South Korea's part, the DPRK's chemical and biological weapons are perceived as being more threatening than its missiles, since Seoul is located only 50 km from the DMZ. One more thing to note in regards to the missile deal between the US and the DPRK is the

supporting and guaranteeing it. Renewing of the Four-Party Talks is justified necessary from this background.

15 Henry Soloski, "This is No Way to Curb the North Korean Threat," an essay in *Washington Post* on October 29, 2000.

16 In Albright's bilateral talks with Kono, Japanese Foreign Minister, following the three-way meeting, she was quoted as saying that her talks with the DPRK leader Kim Jong-il covered "all kinds of missiles." Nevertheless, Japan's attitude is still skeptical on the deal between both countries.

possibility of 'KEDO-like compensation' to the DPRK. Seoul's position on this issue appears to be very cautious and negative. South Korean people consider it a luxury for a country still grappling with Asian crisis to participate in any compensation plan for missiles.¹⁷

<Some Problems in the Discussion of the Permanent Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula>

Currently, as is well known, the Korean peninsula is under the security arrangement of the Armistice Agreement, which, it is argued by the North, is unnatural, and so should be revised with a normal "peace regime." In the past, North Korea insisted that a peace regime should be arranged exclusively between the US and North Korea without South Korea because South Korea was not a signatory to the armistice truce. However, around the end of last year when Special Envoy Jo Myong-rok visited Washington, North Korea's attitude seemed to have changed a little: the Joint Communiqué emphasized the idea that a permanent peace arrangement should be made mainly between South and North Korea.

The problem is that: In the situation where a controversial peace regime of any type is formed and realized, the status and size of the US troops can be questioned although North Korea accepts the existence of US troops on the Korean peninsula. For instance, North Korea may insist that, as a "stabilizer" and also as a "guarantor" of the security of both Koreas, the status of the US troops should be changed to a UNPKO (Peace Keeping Operation) type and that, in terms of the size of the troops, it should be decreased substantially to a symbolic level.

17 *Hankook Ilbo, Chosun Ilbo*, October 26, 2000.

IV. Concluding Remarks

For the past three years since the beginning of the Kim Dae-jung administration, remarkable breakthroughs in inter-Korean relations have been achieved. Furthermore, the South-North Korean summit in June of 2000 has accelerated this trend in inter-Korean relations. Ironically, North Korea is the greatest beneficiary of active South-North Korean relations. North Korea is emerging as a new element in the re-arrangement of the security order in Northeast Asia.

Nevertheless, whether or not there has been a basic change in Pyongyang's strategy toward the South has not been made clear. North Korea's desire for peace remains only rhetoric and has not been verified. Furthermore, North Korea's foreign policy is showing an even higher level of flexibility, elements of psychological war, camouflage tactics, and even unified front tactics in their strategy toward the South. This is fundamentally distinguishable from the past ideologically inflexible and hard line policy toward the outside world.

North Korea seems to be attempting to delay specific and clear responses to the issues that South Korea hopes to deal with such as tension reduction, confidence building, arms control, and eventually peace building on the Korean peninsula, while attempting to get as much aid as possible from Seoul by prolonging the inter-Korean dialogues as long as possible. Furthermore, North Korea is showing its intention to raise nationalistic sentiments through "unification" propaganda, thus increasing anti-American sentiment, thereby inducing a split in the national consensus with respect to the issue of inter-Korean relations and unification.

At present, South Korea is facing a critical period of time in inter-Korean relations. The South Korean people have mixed perceptions and views on North Korea policy — hope and uncertainty, optimism and pessimism mixed together. What is clear at this moment is that the North's military capabilities have not diminished, and that Pyongyang

has remained a “totalitarian dictatorship of the most extreme kind.” That is why the South Korean people should not be lured by the symbolic changes in inter-Korean relations into “a sense of complacency.”¹⁸

18 Robert Dujarric (Hudson Institute), “Changes on the Korean peninsula and Prospects for the Establishment of Peace in Northeast Asia,” in *the International Symposium on Changes in Inter-Korean Relations* (November 2, 2000) jointly held by the KINU, Korea Press Foundation, and Korea Information Service.